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OSKAR KOKOSCHKA'S

THEATRICAL VISION

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Absent from former studies about Oskar Kokoschka is any analysis of his contribution to the new theatre. Neither is there any positive statement on how far advanced his theatrical vision was.[1]

While much critical attention has been focussed on the visual elements of his paintings and graphics, there have been few detailed examinations of the visual elements of Kokoschka's dramas. Yet, while a great deal of his visual enterprises should be understood as "painters theatre", it is not so. Ironically, this may be due to a weakness in our history of art, as well as literary and drama research, which does not meaningfully examine O. Kokoschka's work as a part of interdisciplinary studies.[2] Traditional methodology separates theatre from literature and fine art from other areas of human activity.

This thesis aims at expanding a contemporary concept of Kokoschka's theatrical vision, accepting all his activities and interests with less prejudice and exclusion than in the past.

There have been several publications providing selective interpretation of Kokoschka's work, but all of them enforced a very rigid and unconvincing biographical approach. Some authors of existing studies and critics, concentrated on Kokoschka's personality, his life story, on the myth behind the artist, on gossip, on his painting and graphic works. They ignored almost completely the important contribution he made to the evolution of drama and modern theatrical production.[3]

The objectives of this study are :

i. to provoke a confrontation between what Kokoschka saw as the basis of a new theatrical image and what he actually achieved.

ii. to show O. Kokoschka's activity as the "painter's theatre" in its complexity, diversity and novelty.

iii. to explore the phenomenon of Kokoschka's myth and his mythologies.

iv. to examine the source of the success and the failure of his visual theatre.

Hopefully we should be able to differentiate between the traditional and experimental character of O. Kokoschka's theatrical experience. I shall not confine myself here to facts, ideas, theories and their interpretation, but also I will present an intuitive description of the phenomena.

INTRODUCTION : FOOTNOTES

1. H. I. Schvey; Otto Kamm.

2. G. J. Lischka; R. Brandt; H. I. Schvey; H. M. Wingler; they all interpret O. Kokoschka's play as if it was a literary work, paying a lot of attention to the verbal fabric of the theatrical message.

3. H. I. Schvey omitted in his study Kokoschka's contribution to stage design as far as other plays and dramas are concerned. His evaluation of Kokoschka's plays is limited only to interpretation of his five plays and their connections with other works - paintings, graphics and drawings.

   G. J. Lischka divided his study about Kokoschka's "double talent" into separate parts, and he does not analyze the details common to both.

CHAPTER I

The Heritage of the Past

- breaking away from the mould of tradition

Oskar Kokoschka's creative oeuvre which was diverse, complex and at times contradictory, largely reflected the specific features of the ideological and artistic life of Austria, where he was born in 1886.

Regarded as "principal exponent", because his writing revealed the most evident features, he could be classified among the "forerunners" because some of his stage design and his plays were regarded as milestones in the beginning of Expressionist stagecraft. Kokoschka's remains a controversial case.

Instead of examining and analysing the complexity of Kokoschka's drama as a literary phenomenon one should become aware of what it is that makes his position so special and draw a more positive conclusion from it.[1]

We should point to all sorts of inspirations, European and Asiatic, yet the innovative artistic value of O. Kokoschka's theatrical vision cannot be traced straight back to any sources or any known tradition; the fabric of his dramas, stage design and relevant paintings or drawings, was multiform. Alongside innovation and discovery, we have in all his theatrical work, cases of reference to tradition, even to archetypes of the most distant past. He never lost his respect for the European tradition, which is grounded in ancient Greece. He felt he had the right to dismiss the present or the future, if necessary, but never the past.

Taking from the past never cramped his creative freedom of action as it might have done in the case of a slavish follower; on the contrary, in placing himself under the governance of law and tradition "he constantly enlarged his radius of action, inasmuch as this gave him the assurance that he was building upon

unshakeable foundations."[2] It was the Austrian Baroque inheritance in art and the tradition of nineteenth-century Austrian popular theatre, which he took over and adapted to his own needs. Additional influences one can find in the works of his friends, K. Kraus, A. Loos or A. Schoenberg, who sympathized with Kokoschka's aim of rebellion against the "prettiness" in the art of the period, and the hypocrisy and spiritual lassitude behind the pleasant facade of the Secession style. His formative years coincided with the decades of intellectual and artistic discontent. His admiration of K. Kraus and A. Loos explains this nostalgic respect for the past, but it makes it impossible to characterize them as revolutionaries in the stereotyped sense of the word.[3]

Kokoschka's challenge had begun deviously and he knew how to be an agitator and how to break a convention. He did not believe in art criticism or the theories of art and literature, because - as he said - "they lead nowhere"; this forced him to take imagination as the only guide. He insisted :

> "I am not a reformer, yet I dislike remaining passive while an uncontrollable mechanized production process attempts to mould me into its own prefabricated creature. I am not a follower of fashion; I ignored the artistic modes of my own day. (...) I have not made a break with the past, for without it there can be no future."[4]

His contemptuous dismissal of the intellectual and artistic trends of his age provoked understandable resentment. His apprehension to conform to the stereotype now seem quite obvious.

E. Gombrich, questioning the cliché about the artist expressing his age, said that

> "in the Austria of Kokoschka you could be a non-conformist without being a revolutionary. Man's inhumanity to man, the parroting

> of slogans and the surrender of the individual conscience are not the monopoly of any one party. Needless to say it is the determined and even defiant individualism that marked Kokoschka's career as an artist in an age he considered daft and inhuman." [5]

In 1925, Hanz Tietze described his theory of Kokoschka's position as an outsider to Expressionism, because of the artist's Austrian origin. He was not alone in doubting the aptness of the description, which seemed to create a lot of misunderstanding in an interpretation of Kokoschka's work.[6]

The samples of O. Kokoschka's style and thought obviously reveal his proximity to the Expressionist movement, but he never liked being called an Expressionist because his non-conformist nature rebelled against all such labels.[7]

O. Kokoschka was anxious to remain a defiant non-conformist. Maybe after his discovery of the Austrian baroque and the power of classical culture, he expressed his act of faith :

> "Neither theories nor directions for use, such as are recommended for an understanding of art, not the belonging to this school or that movement, and not even the membership of a political party can be a substitute for the faculty of direct vision, once this has been lost." [8]

Literary historians still have some reservations about the position of Kokoschka within the history of twentieth century theatre. In comparison with the attention given to the visual aspect of the plays, in relation to his paintings and drawings, surprisingly little has been said about the content and next to nothing about the structure and symbolism of the text and the artist's intentions.

There is a conflict of opinion regarding so called "Literary Expressionism" and especially drama. The worth of Kokoschka's

dramas and the visual quality of his plays was hardly recognized by any of the critics at the time of their publication and performance. This is hardly surprising when so little of his experience was known to the public and his work seemed so different from the current production in the German speaking literary and theatrical world.

Some German scholars argue that Kokoschka's literary Expressionism is unknown and forgotten; even in Germany it is no more than a vague notion for students of literature and the theatre.[9] He was criticized for being in revolt against modern life and technology; therefore the literary critics said that his awareness of human problems and the presentation in his theatre are in their most rudimentary form. That Kokoschka's plays were examples of a new trend in German literature, yet again, justified its inclusion in the "Sturm" in 1910. They showed a new departure in style, a new approach towards the script, acting and stage design; through the violence of subject matter and set in imaginary space, it presents the perennial struggle between the sexes and between light and darkness. They seem to be removed from the great political, social and economic issues of the age. As a consequence, Kokoschka's humanism in his literary works was assessed as "too limited and nebulous".[10] This kind of professional critique which was done by "Men of Letters", does not leave too much to say about Kokoschka's humble place among the German Expressionists. It is true to say that in the literature published in Europe and America he is seen almost exclusively as a painter who was sometimes good enough to write and also to stage plays.[11]

W.I. Lucas' opinion about Kokoschka's position is very typical. He described Kokoschka as effusive, passionate and even

hysterical, as many German writers were in the earlier years of this century, but that is not enough to create great literature. Kokoschka's imagination overflows with an abundance of colourful images but he has not always been able to give them adequate form in language, or to make them sufficiently meaningful to his readers.[12]

Although O. Kokoschka began his career as a playwright and designer, he always refused to be type-cast. His beliefs furnished perhaps an explanation why even well-known literary critics ignored him. He admitted that visual language was for him the most natural; as a result of such statements his efforts to write, even for the theatre, have been assessed as successful only to a limited degree.

Yet the art historians suggest that "at first the poet's imagination was bolder and richer in colour than the painter's. In painting Kokoschka showed himself for the first few years of his career decidedly unliterary".[13] He did not receive formal training in painting at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna and he taught himself to paint and draw human figure. Kokoschka began with a background in the applied arts and a lot of his early work bears evidence of the Vienner Werkstätte' craft and design origin.

His early paintings and plays are the key to the process of penetrating beneath the surface; they are emblems of the state of the times. Certainly they seem to express the fears of subsequent generations and find an echo in much that was spoken and written at the time. Whenever O. Kokoschka himself speaks of the determination of youth, he was describing his own situation as a prisoner in a form governed by Klimt or Hodler.

Pictures and writings are Kokoschka's journal of life, testimonies of his awareness and vision. He never dissembled his will or his beliefs, doing only what moved him personally. But he felt

that there was no common language in which he could talk to people about the things he saw in them (the myth of second sight). There is an interpretation, dividing his dramas and pictorial work, which suggests that the literary world is of archetypes and the latter reveals the drama of an individual. Yet such a distinction between his work in both media is rather superficial.[14]

Instinctively, he began to search and question the distinction of "mythos" - communication in action, images, physical signs - versus "logos" - the analytical use of verbal language, and the direct nature of mythopoeic representation, only to find that the generic emotion is the basic of expressionist theatre.[15] Yet in words he was as little concerned with propagating artfully contrived versions of events, or descriptions or syntheses and ideologies, as he was concerned in his pictures with the use of colour and colour values for political agitation.[16]

It was essence and absolute, expressed in archetypal images, that interested Kokoschka and not a subordination of reality to the autonomous vocabulary of art. This accounts for his understanding of image and word as an amalgam of meaningful signs. In a sense, Kokoschka's dreams of emotional regeneration through theatre proved more difficult than he had imagined.

Hugo Ball's ambitions to change the theatre image were quite close to that of Kokoschka's. From 1910-1914 many artists expressed their interest in the theatre medium and everything revolved around it. Ball brought to public attention his thoughts :

> "there is a distinct need for the truly moving passions; a need for an experimental theatre above and beyond the scope of routine daily interests. Europe paints, makes music, and writes in a new way. A fusion of all regenerative ideas, not only of art. Only the theatre is capable of creating the new society. The backgrounds,

the colours, words and sounds have only to be taken from the subconscious and animated to engulf everyday routine along with its misery." [17]

Yet, O. Kokoschka's ideas were different. He was quite determined that his theatre was not didactic and his plays did not belong to the tradition of theatre as a moral institution. "My plays have nothing to do either with a rejection of society or with projects for its reform, and these two characteristics are proper to the literary movement that is called Expressionism."[18] His early plays are now regarded as forerunners of Expressionism, even the Viennese and the Berliners could not understand them at the time. It seems that at the beginning of his theatrical adventure he worked on the fringe of the theatre medium, in searching for something of a sensation. At the time theatre was occupied and run by professionals who executed the craftmanship which he did not possess, neither did he like. He created his own "painter's theatre" the way he did, because from 1907-1914 he had to look for alternative ways of producing a play; he could not afford to go to work on the traditional stage.[19]

It is quite interesting that around this same time as Kokoschka's experiment occurred, H. Ball searched for new plasticity of literary language, just as visual artists, among them Kokoschka, were inventing it for themselves. It seems that for both the utilization of language was designed to reform it. Ball :

"Each word is a wish or a curse. One must be careful not to make words once one has acknowledged the power of the living word. People who live rashly and precipitately easily lose control over their impressions and are prey to unconscious emotions and motives. The activity of any art (painting, writing, composing) will do them good, provided that they do not pursue any purpose in their subjects, but follow the course of a free, unfettered imagination. The independent process of fantasy never fails to bring the light again those things that have crossed the threshold of consciousness without analysis. In an age like ours, when people are

> assaulted daily by the most monstrous things without being able to keep account of their impressions, in such an age aesthetic production becomes a prescribed course. But all living art will be irrational, primitive and complex; it will speak a sacred language and leave behind documents not of edification but of paradox." [20]

H. Ball must have been attracted by Kokoschka's ideas and plays, if he acknowledged his indebtedness to the artist. Sphinx and Strawman is worth more attention than the other plays because it was the precursor of another trend in German literature, the theatre of the absurd. H.M. Wingler assumed that the play was welcomed in Zurich in 1917 as an up-to-date example of Dadaism.[21] Already in 1914 H. Ball was considering a play for a new "Artist's Theatre" in Munich. He was quite clear about who was to be included on the list. He pointed out the avant-garde character of several artists and he placed O. Kokoschka side by side with W. Kandinsky, Marc, Fokine, Hartmann, Klee, Yevrenov, Mendelsohn, Kubin and Ball himself. He wanted to exercise his skills and to use the experience he gained in Max Reinhardt's Drama School in Berlin. The project seemed very promising. He was convinced that :

> "The purpose of the expressionist theatre is the festival play; it contains a new conception of the total work of art. The form of the present-day theatre is impressionistic. What happens on the stage appeals to the individual and his intellect. The subconscious is not touched at all. The new theatre will use masks and stilts again. It will recall archetypes and use megaphones. Sun and moon will run across the stage and proclaim their sublime wisdom." [22]

In 1907, seven years before H. Ball's project, O. Kokoschka's visionary play Murderer, Hope of Women - with Sun and Moon running across the stage - would probably escape public attention, if it was not for its novelty. It is significant that, although Murderer

was written in 1907, staged in 1908, it was not published until 1910, a year that is frequently given as the point of departure for Expressionism in German literature. This stirred up controversy in the arts and in literature, propagating a new approach towards theatre.[23]

Particularly in studies of O..Kokoschka the artist and the dramatist have been kept distinct, which suggests a division within his oeuvre and distorts the relationship between his paintings, graphic work and plays. Some critics make little mention of his dramas other than to cite them as the "curious by-products of a great painter," or pinpointing only few relationships between his plays and paintings, as secondary artwork.[24]

The division between art forms, both the theory and the practice, is an indication of the scepticism with the interdisciplinary connections. This assertion is at variance with Expressionists who sought to emphasize the visionary character of their work, and their technical and formal concerns were subordinated to their creativity. According to the Theory of Literature, "the various arts - the plastic arts, literature and music - have each their individual evolution, with a different tempo and a different internal structure of elements".[25]

H. Spielman exposed Kokoschka's great experience and interest in theatre. "Between the age of fourteen and eighteen (1900-1904) Kokoschka's view of the world was to a considerable extent formed, by the plays he read and attended."[26] As was the case throughout his life, he identified with the heroes of his dramas, operas and comedies, and he remained particularly faithful to the Jewish popular theatre in Vienna even in the 1920's. Yet what he produced from 1907 on his own initiative was nothing short of revolutionary. He knew that he

could not accept anything "second hand", that in fact, he must begin at the very beginning. One of the works produced in 1907 - The Speckled Egg, the Shadow Play figures, bear witness to the direct and stimulating effect of these consultations with Eastern and Asiatic theatre, that he was concerned with the problem of the body in space.[27]

The Speckled Egg was O. Kokoschka's very first theatrical production; without any doubt we can say that the event took place in "Cabaret Fledermaus" in Vienna - October 20th 1907.

P. Vergo and Y. Modlin[28] suggested that, "In fact his comedy Sphinx and Strawman was his first theatrical statement" in the Cabaret Fledermaus in Vienna - March 1909. This information is incorrect because the first performance of his play Sphinx and Strawman - Comedy for Automatons - took place at the School of Art and Craft in Vienna also in 1907. In March 1909, the "Cabaret Fledermaus" presented all three of Kokoschka's plays during its matinee : The Sphinx and Strawman, The Speckled Egg and Murderer, Hope of Women. But the most important and most publicized event was the "Kunstschau in Vienna in 1909.

The performance of Murderer Hope of Women was successful without any doubt, because of Kokoschka's certain artistic reputation. It caused some violence and the reviews were very harsh, but as a gesture of defiance the experimental play was successful not because the author was called "savage" and "degenerate", but because it proved Kokoschka's premeditated concept. The pre-intellectual involvement of the audience during the performance was the proof that O. Kokoschka's theatrical concept worked. It is quite significant that some spectators who "participated" in that performance had no great experience nor great understanding of the theatre.[29]

The reviews in the press were few in number and unanimous in their

bewilderment, but they nowhere refer to public riots as well as police and soldiers involved. It is very tempting to accept such critical or entertaining reports at face value but alas there is no reliable evidence for their accuracy. But if the work O. Kokoschka exhibited and produced on stage in 1907 and in the 1909 Kuntschau in Vienna revealed that his art had taken a new direction,

> "his plays, and especially Murderer, Hope of Women, did nothing less than announce the arrival of a new style of drama which would quickly influence an entire generation of avant-garde playwrights throughout the German-speaking world. Indeed, it was as dramatist rather than artist that Kokoschka first established his reputation in some quarters."[30]

In 1910 O. Kokoschka moved to Berlin, the very centre of theatrical activities, where he experienced also a lot of difficulties to assure his artistic position. Despite his great success in "Sturm", he was not terribly excited to write reviews from circus and cabaret performances in Berlin. From 1911 till 1914 Kokoschka's problems with the Austrian censorship increased substantially and prevented him from work in any theatre in Austria. During the postwar years he benefitted from the new - revolutionary spirit and his plays were performed again and anthologized. (See : Data).

In the early 1930's Kokoschka was exposed to a totally new and previously unknown to him - slavic theatre in Prague. Chech theatre made a great impact on him because of its modern staging methods. These musical revues and avant-garde performances were a real experience for him even though he did not understand a word of the Chech language.[31]

In London Kokoschka's contact with English theatre and music was a particularly important and rewarding experience. It maintained his morale. He remembered English performances during the Second

World War : The symbolism of the warning lights intrigued him :

> "During performances, two little lamps, one red, one green, lit up to signal the Alert and the All Clear. People could, if they wanted, go down into the air-raid shelter but I can hardly remember anyone actually leaving." [32]

Kokoschka's confusion about life and its theatricality was expressed in numerous essays. As sceptical as he was, deeply involved with the refugees during the war (the cooperative Refugee Theatre, "Lanterndl" in the Austrian Centre), he knew that this world was producing the spectacle of its own destruction. "It is like a stage. Someone else gets killed and when the curtain comes down you are free to return to reality".[33]

A. Marnau expressed his comments about the artist's theatrical experience in London, assuring us that "Kokoschka who was a formidable playwright himself, loved the theatre perhaps second only to painting."[34]

Evidence for his dedication to the theatre medium can be seen not only in Kokoschka's biographical notes, but is also provided by his own plays, completed and incomplete stage design, portraits, friendship with leading theatrical figures, directors, musicians.[35]

One can notice that between 1950-1975, Kokoschka began his third and last creative period, which was particularly fruitful. His "School of Seeing" in Salzburg, opera and other plays in the guise of set and costume design, occupies an important place in his work.(see: data). His illustrations and drawings as well as etchings for Shakespeare's King Lear, H. von Kleist's Penthesilea or Aristophanes' The Frogs are testimonies to his utterly comprehensive and compelling fascination for the theatre (see : data).

A comparatively minor success is connected with his last drama "Comenius" (1972) which never reached the stage. Kokoschka was invited

to supervise the filming and to draw the set. Despite his emphasis on dramatic and visual elements of the film, his role in these films was relatively insignificant. This is partly due to Kokoschka's visual rhetoric of the theatre, which appears oversized in the intimate lens of the camera, which acts as a magnifying glass. Kokoschka had very little interest in the silent films but his dramas and generally Expressionist theatre provides further evidence that both registered the same shift to Realism that was occurring at the same time in the other arts. Kokoschka's drama Comenius was an example of these changes.[36] What was suitable for the stage was not right for motion pictures or television. In film everything has to be so exact, so fine and right. With stage you can exaggerate, it has to carry further, it has to be larger than life.

Among the earliest reviewers of Kokoschka's plays there is a pervading tone of dismissal. Even an audience familiar with the innovations of A. Strindberg and the German Expressionists found Kokoschka's visual conception of drama shocking.

B. Diebold judged O. Kokoschka's play very unfairly by saying :

> "Far more significant than the mere renunciation of the word out of the inability to articulate emotion is the pretentious Decoration Drama that without characters, without language, and even without a clear direction simply offers screaming images for the public to interpret." [37]

Incidentally, this same play - Murderer Hope of Women was performed just two years later in this same theatre and received wonderful reviews. Kenneth Macgowan describes L. Sievert's dramatic solution of space for this opera (music - Hindemith) as not only a high achievement for the designer but also for O. Kokoschka as an author and for the German expressionist theatre of the twenties. The design was described as strong and arresting with symbolic elements and with

successful if not very subtle use of colour.[38] (See Fig. 22,23)

At the time the revolution of Schönberg's atonality and his twelve-tone-technique was taking place, but conservative opera audiences were not exactly predestinated for the propagation of new ideas in music. Thus the examples of O. Kokoschka's expressionist's operas were short-lived successes at the time, and they can only be judged as experiments.

Another critic R. Breuer, commented on the Murderer, Hope of Women with great understanding and enthusiasm on its visual aspects, except for the reduced role of language. Yet overcoming his initial distaste, O. Kamm admits that Kokoschka's literary and visual work needs united critical attention because his visual images are inseparable.[39]

P. Kornfield alone judged O. Kokoschka's plays not by the conventional literary standards but as a revolutionary breakthrough in the conception of modern theatre. "Everyone present must have realized that they were participating in a highly unusual event. We suspect a new possibility in style, perhaps even a new art form, which comes closest to that of opera: verbally supported pantomime."[40]

The theatre critics expressed both through their condemnation and positive attitude towards O. Kokoschka's theatre how profoundly original and avant-garde was his visual concept of the painter's theatre.

Kokoschka's first dramas show the break with tradition and are evidence of the different frame of mind of the young generation which, as usual, intended to shock the passing conservative attitudes and middle-class public.

> "Whatever may be the defects of this first experiment in dramatic presentation Kokoschka aimed at something deeper than the surface reality of middle-class drama with its petty virtues and vices - he was concerned to

present a depth of primitive human experience stripped of convention, class distinction, religious differences or anything else that superficially distinguished one human being from another". [41]

Unfortunately compromises could also be seen in his mature work because his first plays had not been understood.

Today's reading of O. Kokoschka's theatrical vision should be different than it was in the past, yet it is not so.

In 1962 Jane Stockwood called Kokoschka a man of extraordinary vision, at once penetrating and panoramic, showing the suffering or hopes of a human soul, whether in colour or in words.[42]

Twenty years later, in 1982, Werner Schweiger revised this opinion in perspective and said that O. Kokoschka's work was not innovatory and that he was just another personality.[43]

But in 1986, Richard Calvocoressi yet again questioned the value of O. Kokoschka's contributions to Expressionist drama, notably Murderer Hope of Women, and in the final analysis he pointed out that they must count as juvenilia.[44]

It was perhaps insularity that had led to Kokoschka's neglect in some countries and that the image "as an uncompromising savage" still prevails.[45]

One cannot be sure whether a mature O. Kokoschka might share the also mature E. Pound's belief, that artistic integrity and vision is "a brief gasp between one cliche and another". But it is possible that Kokoschka might agree, that when experimental forms are followed - the recapitulations of earlier avant-garde became eclectic and lack imaginative integrity of the original. In 1963 O. Kokoschka painted E. Pound's portrait. He talked to him about J. Joyce's transformation, in which, in an age when the language of poetry was impoverished, he pioneered the literary use of clinical

vocabulary. Kokoschka had wished that Joyce's ghost could witness "the Spirit of Melancholy sitting outside a Paris avant-garde theatre the night when in front of an elite audience an actress urinated on the open stage."[46]

Today one can only speculate on what O. Kokoschka really did think of all the dramatic changes which have occurred on the modern stage. Since his first appearance in 1907 in Vienna, both the meaning and the image of avant-garde theatre have changed irreversibly.

CHAPTER 1 - FOOTNOTES.

1 Eckehart Nölle, Expressionist Theatre, pp. 10-11.

2. H. M. Wingler, Oskar Kokoschka, the work of the Painter, p. 45.

3. E. Gombrich, Kokoschka in his Time.

4. O. Kokoschka, My Life, pp. 197-198.

5. E.H. Gombrich, p. 13.

6. Hans Tietze, Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft, p. 27.

7. E. Gombrich, Kokoschka in his Time, p. 26.

8. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 85.

9. Eckehart Nölle, Expressionist Theatre, p. 3.

10. W.I. Lucas, p. 50.

11. Ibid. pp. 37-52.

12. Ibid., p. 50.

13. Werner Hoffmann, Modern Painting in Austria, p. 112-162.

14. H.E. Schwey, p. 28.

15. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 197.

16. Remigius Netzer, Postscript. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 219.

17. H. Ball, Flight out of time, p. 8.

18. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 28.

19. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

20. H. Ball, p. 49.

21. H. M. Wingler, p. 458.

22. H. Ball, p. 9.

23. In 14th Ed. (1929) of Encyclopaedia Brittanica, O. Kokoschka's plays have been described as the first Expressionist dramas and as such they point forward to the new type of drama which is associated with Sorge, Hanseuelever, Ibsen or Strindberg.

24. E. Hoffman, H.M. Qingler, B. Bultmann, Y. Sprengler, G. J. Lischka; there is particularly popular trend in dividing Oskar Kokoschka literary and visual work.

25. Rene Wellek
Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 134.

An argument about the division between art forms. Even in the case of double talents or artist working in several different media, there is no reason to see any significant parallels or analogies between artist's work in other media.

26. H. Spielman, O. Kokoschka. Music and theatre, p. 33.

(The best theatre companies from the Austrian sector of Poland and from Hungary used to make guest appearances in Vienna. Kokoschka knew classical drama, Shakespeare's plays, Jewish theatre).

27. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 3, p. 68.

28. P. Vergo, Y. Modlin, O. Kokoschka Tate Gallery Catalogue, 1986, p. 25.

29. Neue Freie Press, 5 July 1909, Vienna.

(In 1908 Kokoschka was labelled "the super-savage". The events of 1909 were serious and he left the Art School and Vienna).

30. F. Whitford, Oskar Kokoschka. A Life, p. 38.

31. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 154.

32. Ibid. p. 163.

33 O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 4, pp. 254-272.

34. A. Marnau, Oskar Kokoschka. "Chance encounters of a lifetime." Tate Gallery Catalogue 1986, p. 47.

35. Max Reinhardt, Donal Wolfit, Wilhelm Furtwängler, H. Ball, A. Schönberg.

36. O. Kokoschka used a screen and film sequences and slides, that was integrated with his opera stage design in 1955 in Salzburg - The Magic Flute. What he wanted was quasi-magical fabrication reflecting the conflict between the darkness and brightness of consciousness.

37. B. Diebold, Review, "Frankfurter Zeitung", 12 April, 1920.

38. K. Macgowan, "Continental Stagecraft", The theatre of tomorrow.

See D. Oenslanger, Stage Design, Four Centuries of Scenic Invention, p. 222.

39. O. Kamm, Oskar Kokoschka under das theater, p. 44.

40. P. Kornfeld, pp. 40-41.

41. W. I. Lucas, p. 42.

42. J. Stockwood, "Harpers and Quinn", October 1962.

43. W. Schweiger, "Es gibt keine Neukunst aber es gibt Neukünsther", Parnas, Marz/April, 1982, p. 69.

44. R. Calvocoressi, O. Kokoschka, Tate Gallery Catalogue, 1986, p. 52.

45. W. Feaver, "Kokoschka: Up to his elbows in paint". The Observer, 15 June 1986, p. 21.

W. Januszczak, "The art at the end of Oskar's anger," The Guardian, 11 June 1986, p. 9.

A. Graham-Dixon, "Chef savage: on the Kokoschka retrospective, Harpers and Queen, June 1986, p. 228.

46. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 190.

CHAPTER 2

The Painter's Theatre

At the turn of the century, when painting was going through changes that ended the domination of illusionistic tendencies, the theatre still remained trapped behind the proscenium.

When retheatralization began, a few trends became evident in the theatre, two of them prevailing: one saw the basis of theatre in the play which the performance interpreted more or less freely; the other treated the performance as a creative act, as a homogeneous work of the theatrical, spectacular art - that is where the dramatic literature or the actor did not dominate. The Painters theatre has been one of the forms of the creative theatre. The former trend was classical, the latter represented the avant-garde.

Oskar Kokoschka would have entered the theatre scene with as much confusion as any other creative artist, after attacking the Naturalist Theatre Establishment, which reflected life by imitating it through the play, the actor and scenery. He tried to define the theatre of the future in his plays and writings. From the very beginning O. Kokoschka's productions have differed from the performances staged by other directors, usually professionals. As a painter and writer, he used all that was visible, in his attempt to shape motion and gesture in a different way, to show a novel adaptation of the literary text itself and to go beyond it.

In a sense it can be said that O. Kokoschka created his own painter's theatre since, wherever he worked and with whomever he cooperated he demonstrated his vision of a play. Often his interpretation in terms of design remained the hallmark of a mise-en-scene. For O. Kokoschka the illustration of drama, that was universally used, degrades the theatre to the rank of a craft. It only translates the drama into the traditional means of expression. The so-called modernization or updating constituted a method of half-measures. He knew from the start that he had to organize an independent world of the stage, expressing it with his own signs and

actions that do not imitate life literally; a world that is not limited by the place and time of action but notionally defined. It does not serve only as the area, a home or the open air, but can be an emptied space, open or closed, active or passive, alternative forms of scenery and acting that constitute the everchanging mood of the performance.

O. Kokoschka was able to combine not only the dramatic content with the formula of stage design but also to follow the principle of counterpoint. Often his scenery developed as the personae emerged at rehearsals. This was only possible in the theatre of a designer-director. It showed that a performance was not an amalgam put together at a dress rehearsal, but an integral whole, where the actor, the action and the text, (including all sounds) provoked scenery and vice versa. His idea was: first to be a painter, to forget it on the stage, and to remember only one's senses and the power of vision. This creative idea of a theatre was not exploitative and productive but continuously seeking.

It comes as something of a shock to discover how little we really know about Kokoschka's first performances and productions of his dramas. Such contemporary accounts as exist say next to nothing about the sets and costumes, though the reviews and Kokoschka's description of his actors and sets corresponded perhaps to the images from the surviving photographs.[1]

It seems from O. Kokoschka's early plays that he was trying to see the future of his visual theatre not in different interpretation of works already created or written, but in a completely new kind of drama. He used to say that "there is never so much talk of reforms as when people have no idea where to start."[2] However, Kokoschka did not share ideas current at the turn of the century about the "total work of art". The way Wagner, Diaghilev's Ballets or Jugendstil artists approached this concept struck him as too superficial and directed too much towards external effect - too decorative.

He was trying to create a drama which could be a script for theatre, that would comprehend all facets of life, be in a way all-inclusive.

This aim could be served by a synthesis of sound, scenery, movement, light, language, or sentences uttered, the sense of which would be defined only by an internal, purely scenic construction. A sort of verbal and visual polyphony filling a multiple space. It can be seen that he, so early, had quite similar ideas to A. Appia and G. Craig. The ideas and visions of Appia and Craig influenced three generations of directors, designers, actors and dancers. If Appia could impress with his imaginative projection of light in space and the spatial possibilities of the stage, then Craig must have even greater impact on O. Kokoschka because of his evident success in breaking through the old barriers of naturalism.[3]

E. G. Craig's thoughts about the theatre published in 1905, were particularly crucial as an introduction to a new theatrical vision on the continent. He found himself the spokesman of a new movement. One can see how profoundly his ideas influenced others and brought about the evolution of the theatrical art. Craig said :

> "And the reason why the theatre is being kept back today is because the poet is pulling one way, saying they should only be given words, using the theatre and all its crafts as a medium for those words; and the people are pulling the other way, saying they desire to see the sights, realistically and poetically shown, not turned into literature. (...) I am now going to tell you out of what material an artist of the future will create his masterpieces. Out of action, scene and voice... And when I say action I mean both gesture and dancing, the prose and poetry of action. When I say scene, I mean all which comes before the eye, such as the lighting, costume, as well as the scenery. When I say voice, I mean the spoken word or the word which is sung, in contradiction to the word which is read, for the word written to be spoken and the word written to be read are two entirely different things" [4]

O. Kokoschka presented his Sphinx and Strawman in 1909 and the Murderer Hope of Women in 1908, only two-three years after Craig stated his ideas about the theatre. This indicates an experimental trend in

European theatre.

There has always been a special relationship between Austrian stage design and painting. As late as the beginning of the twentieth century Vienna supplied the whole theatrical world with "ready made" sets and stage furniture.

One can see how these ties with painting became closer when O. Kokoschka found in his work the dramatic restlessness of Expressionism relating to the theatre.

O. Kokoschka does not separate his theatrical searches from his painting experience, but treats the art totally as an integral entity. "A play of Kokoschka's is only a variation on his paintings, and vice versa. The tone and melody, rhythm and gesture of his words are parallel to those of his paintings".[5]

But whereas his plays and the graphic works that are contemporary in an attempt to act through satire, sarcastic comedy, tragedy, self-parody or philosophical drama, the paintings reflect the need for a less satirical and aggressive, more introspective statement.

According to O. Kokoschka, the artistic melting pot has always cooked unevenly, but it has never cooked separately.[6] Similarly, in his new theatre, the distinction between the stage and the auditorium, between the audience and the performer, between their personal lives and the discussion of the play, were continually erased and the elements intermeshed and intertwined.

O. Kokoschka's early interest in the theatre was nonliterary, based on visual orientation and intuition. This theatrical initiation was enriched by introducing him to the animated plays, marionettes, and to the tradition of the nineteenth century popular Jewish and Polish theatre visiting Vienna frequently. Their influence and the source of the Austrian Baroque, its fantasy, intensity, dramatic spectacle and painterly approach

to colour, had the greatest impact on his development as a writer, stage designer, director and painter. However, it had not been possible for him to eliminate literature altogether. The union between the word and image had been for him an "Ark of Covenant" between the old and the new times. Yet the language of drama is specifically theatrical and not literary.[7]

It is quite significant that by the rejection of discursive language by expressionists and reduction of dialogue to rhythmic exclamation, this style of acting was carried over into silent film and had strong affinities with modern dance. Yet at the beginning of his career, Kokoschka was very hostile towards film and even photography; only in his later life did he change his opinion about these media.

What is significant at this point is that O. Kokoschka came to the theatre almost uniquely with his literary and visual ability and not out of the theatre itself. He insisted : "My play is not for reading. It must be spoken, acted and lived, as an antidote to the torpor that for the most part, one experiences in theatre today."[8] The experimental staging was the integration of the painter's imagination and appreciation of the possibilities of the theatre. By creating a single language, which can be described as a remarkably early example of the "stream of consciousness", Kokoschka used a method of allowing the mind to speak from inside.

> "The world of the subconscious wells up finding expression not in terms of objective reality but in the coherent and illogical flow of the inner life let loose. Objectively this world seems mad, it is however the characteristic flow of subjective life at a particular stage in the artist's development towards manhood".[9]

The spectator of his plays was presented with all the sensuous and sensual imagery full of vivid colours that the imagination of the painter can conjure up in words.

W.I. Lucas analysed Kokoschka's language and expressed his opinion

that, "the handling was very modern, as if to reinforce the novelty of attempting to convey so dramatically an interior life..."[10]

But more than in speech itself, Kokoschka was interested in a language in visible palpable form; the formative arts were a language for communicating a specific knowledge of purer origin than that relayed by words.

> "Pictorial language emanated from the vision of creative man. And in articulated forms that language is and will be a message of a common humanity and a common existence in this world when the spoken word has become a dead letter and people and races have vanished." [11]

In his first dramatic efforts, O. Kokoschka throws overboard all causal connection in the continuity of the action, all syntax and all logic in the sentence, but as counterpoise, he isolates the single, individual word and thereby bestows upon it an immense power of suggestion. As a student of the Arts and Craft School in Vienna, he presented an improvised version of his own play Sphinx and Strowman, as well as The Speckled Egg in the Cabaret "Fledermaus" in Vienna in 1907.

The Speckled Egg was performed by the artist himself, behind the screen, probably in the Balinese style. The shadow play puppets were made of metal sheeting and paper and they had movable limbs. In their bright colours and style the figures recalled oriental miniatures and the simplicity of old woodcuts. It would need little imagination to recognize the value of the play; some of those figures have been preserved and have, not surprisingly, something of the illustrations to The Dreaming Youths. There was compulsive poetry in them. Unfortunately the text of the play has disappeared and one can only speculate about the play.[12]

It is interesting that Kokoschka's first version of Sphinx and Strawman (1907) was not performed by marionettes or puppets, only by actors, even though it was written as a "comedy for automatons". It reflects more than

the artist's youthful enthusiasm for the puppet theatre, but is an attempt to stage an "antiplay", maybe a "tragic farce" or a break through the outworn conventions of realistic theatre. Sphinx and Strawman is built around a visual statement which is both a serious symbolic image of man's blindness towards women and the comic, grotesque effects which Kokoschka may have borrowed from the cabaret or popular theatre. Since the play is about the power of woman called Anima (Enigma, Sphinx) and the failure of man called Firdusi (Job-Strawman), Kokoschka transforms them and the other figures of speech into a visual metaphor. Critics suggested that Sphinx and Strawman (after 1917 Job) was the most visually orientated play :

> "More than in any other play Kokoschka has in this comic, scintillating piece, also carried out pictorial effects. Words and visual art, no longer have been subordinated, no longer running parallel, are inextricably interwoven, refined and indissolubly one." [13]

It comes as no surprise that the Dadaists were interested in Sphinx and Strawman because of its antirealist production, its apparent spontaneity, its use of the grotesque, and its modern manipulation of the visual elements of the stage. The language of this play reveals, in the midst of the farcical elements, Kokoschka's deep conviction that the effects of comedy or drama can be expressed in animated intellectual jargon (chorus of dummies was an important element of stage design and visual acting). It is obvious that it did not fit into an Expressionist concept. O. Kokoschka was not involved in the Dada production of 1917, which was directed and designed by Marcel Janko in "DaDa Gallery" in Zurich.[14] Hugo Ball's account testifies to their unusual working methods, while performing Kokoschka's play and also to the power Dadaists possessed to produce something convincing.[15] According to Tristan Tzara's report from that performance, Kokoschka's Sphinx and Strawman had a great impact upon the conception of the DaDaist theatre.[16]

An examination of the fabric of the play makes it clear that it has been transformed in terms of depth, light, language, sound and visual components. Kokoschka's lithographs and drawings captured also the tragicomic atmosphere of Job; they convey in pictorial form the grotesque, dissonant atmosphere of the agitated and fantastic theatricality. The resemblance in style and atmosphere is remarkable: "The figures are puppet-like, ridiculous and terrifying, it is an absurd scene which the artist has executed in a frenzy of lines."[17]

What attracted the Dadaists to Kokoschka's play was not the spiritual or emotional quality, but "the heavy language, filled with aphorisms and nonsense, and often bordering on incomprehensibility, and the possibilities inherent in the staging."[18] Kokoschka's own concept of the performance in 1909 in Vienna was quite to the DaDaists' taste and had similar construction.

Possibly the main reason for the Zurich production of Sphinx and Strawman was the attraction, the scandal and mystery, which surrounded O. Kokoschka as a playwright and producer in Vienna.

Yet in Hugo Ball's diary we have proof that in this play Kokoschka provided a vehicle for the deployment of many of DaDaists scenic games...[19] Ball recalls the methods of the commedia dee'arte, which the DaDaists introduced in the production of the Sphinx and Strawman. His recollection of the production provides important information about the stage design in Zurich in "Cabaret Voltaire" in 1917.

The language of drama, with which a great number of Kokoschka's contemporaries could not cope, but which they treated as taboo, was reinforced by him with other living elements of the theatre. His visual images, keyed in by emotionally charged words and accompanied by suggestive vocal sounds with as much unconventional as uncontemplated music, become the primary means of communication, theatrical hieroglyph. Kokoschka appreciated the important difference between theory and practice: that

the play on the stage is not the same as the play on the page.[20]

It seems that his drama can communicate what remains beyond words, particularly when read as a text (even if O. Kokoschka is not recommending it) and divorced from performance, dialogue sounds loaded with more weight of emotion than the words can bear. It comes as no surprise that four of his works were set to music (opera, musical drama) and one appeared in film version, which exposed that Kokoschka's dramatic language is both musical and poetic, yet the artist himself was not sure that his plays could really benefit from being set to music.[21]

Oskar Kokoschka's "painter's theatre" does not mean that he translated the language of painting into a theatre, but rather he broadens the area of his activity and his attitude towards the text. His plays are significant not only for their literary content, which is limited and expressing the spirit of rebellion, but for their novel method of employing visual elements of the whole play. He felt that in use and performance the verbal and visual arts are constantly intertwined. Rituals have both masks and myths, movements and songs. Oral narratives create, or build upon, known images in the mind, and proverbs could be the solutions for visual metaphoric enigmas. Artistic messages, which Kokoschka used in his dramas, are both verbal and visual, and affect as well as meaning are expressed through the interdependence of words and images, sound and sight.[22]

From the very beginning there was no statement of a new theatrical formula of a new scenic language; Kokoschka attempted to experiment - as a theatre without literature in favour of visual effects. The only fixed value, regarding the directions of his work, one can find in his "essay-manifesto" On the Nature of Visions.[23]

Surely it can be no coincidence that in January 1912, O. Kokoschka was ready to formulate his philosophy of art, as Kandinsky's famous

Concerning the Spiritual in Art was written in 1910 and published in December 1911/January 1912.

In Kokoschka's "manifesto" he pleads for the power of the imaginaton, attacking "purposive thought"[24]. He considered the devaluation of the senses a crime against humanity. At the time, because of the strength of his conviction and the context of his beliefs about the gift of sight, his isolation was obvious. He was a controversial artist and his voice was as passionate as Appia's or Craig's before him, and as extreme as that of Dada's, or, later, the Bauhaus or the Futurists.

However briefly, O. Kokoschka provided us with some information about his interdisciplinary interest, yet he was quite obscure and silent on some crucial issues concerning theatre. He describes the creative process of perceiving reality - a state of heightened consciousness in which one sees the world.

The impact of his first theatrical experiments rested primarily on unconventional visual means of expression, but it is rather doubtful that it was heading towards the directions where for some artists the visual and the dramatic art became one "pure form"[25].

R. Brandt suggests that all Kokoschka's plays and stage design should be seen in the context of his essay On the Nature of Vision, which is supposed to be the key to all his dramas and visual work, as a symbolic example of the process of self-discovery. She noticed that Kokoschka's pictorial and poetic works derive from a single artistic source; the same process in which image and word carry the same expressive weight, unlock the same world and form a unity.[26]

H. I. Schvey argues that Kokoschka's plays are about the transformation of physical desire into spiritual light. The light is the dominant visual element and the use of stage design and colour symbolism are of comparatively minor importance and are never completely

divorced from Kokoschka's use of light symbolism, to enhance the dramatic tension in human relationship on stage.[27]

The medium of light was used by Kokoschka to depict the process through which human beings will attain salvation and psychic rejuvenation, and as the most basic symbol of conscious life. As the key to visionary as well as visual experience, it has a similar function, combining sight and insight.[28]

Yet, O. Kokoschka's own belief in the pre-eminence of the spirituality of light in visual art and drama is totally different from W. Kandinsky's .

Kokoschka criticized those who abandon the human image to technological inventions. Yet technology has accompanied his theatre too. One could ask, if changes in his stage design have been the effects of changing artistic trends or the changing technology of lighting.[29] The interplay of association and sensations in the productions of Kokoschka's visual theatre was so powerful that the spectator's thoughts and emotions were kept on the border of knowledge, whether what he perceives is what he actually sees in front of him, or whether it has been conjured up in his imagination. All his plays reveal, more or less successfully, how completely the "use of light as a visual element is interwoven with his use of literary symbolism."[30]

Darkness and light played the leading parts in the theatre design; the actor was often cornered by spotlights. It indicates that Kokoschka staged rather than decorated a theme; he erected a subjective world of anxiety and hallucination using most of all light - as the "fourth dimension".[31] The scenic image built by light was often mobile, significant in the construction of space - engaged in reflecting the obscure mood of a scene but never appearing alone.[32] So striking were the visual parallels between the use of light in the plays, that

some critics had the impression that they revealed similar opaque or strong colouring and illuminations as in his paintings.[33]

Kokoschka's early plays (1907-1913) had been called "verbally supported pantomimes", because instead of the spoken word the course of the dramatic action has been often defined through purely visual means. It demanded a new approach to scenic design as well as to acting. He endeavoured to design settings eloquent in their simplicity which would provide the actor not with a background but with an environment, dramatic light effects and space. His particular attraction to space allowed him to see it as fluid, dynamic and multi-focal. "For as long back as I can recall, I have lived in space not in time. Space is infinity."[34] It fascinated him more than anything; talking about "interior", his sense of space was unrestricted. He urged: "Think of a Greek theatre - past, present, future. An actor steps in, brings the world to the present, creates a mood - space, past, present, future. It is space, you see, not details..."[35]

But Kokoschka's quest for light and space in the theatre was not limited to scenery: he opted for an open-air spectacle because this would create new possibilities, as we can see in 1955 production of The Magic Flute in Salzburg. Actually, he never expressed his views on the subject of priority - indoor or outdoor stage - but one could suspect that with his classical education he probably wished to continue the great tradition of open-air, garden theatre, if not a "circus" or "amphitheatre" style.[36]

His rejection of the prevailing realism in drama is equally seen in the setting. Kokoschka's dislike of Wagner's " dream machine" forced him to look for a different method of creating theatrical vision.[37] His designs have a predilection for metaphor, generalization and synthesis, which he attempts to express consciously or intuitively.

The playwright and painter seems almost determined to destroy any attempt that might be made to create the illusion of a familiar world on the stage by giving no more than vague details.

At the beginning of his career in the theatre medium, between 1907-and 1913, the actors which Kokoschka chose for his performances were drama students. Lack of money forced him to improvise the setting and costumers which were made from rags and cloth, with heavy make-up; actors' faces and bodies painted to suggest certain feelings and nerves, veins and muscles. Kokoschka's aim was to turn the figures of the actors inside out, to make the inner man visible, and he did exactly the same in the illustrations to his plays.[38]

O. Kokoschka indicated a lot in his stage directions, which enriched the text of his play (colours, sounds, screams, gestures, movements, light and special effects). The overall concept is not accidental and could be understood as a sum of the metamorphoses of opposing elements, for example : in the Murderer Hope of Women the tower is being understood as a phallic symbol and the cage as a vaginal symbol.[39]

In addition to using stage images, Kokoschka also employs colour to suggest the sexual conflict in the play; on the superficial level, opposition between the sexes in Murderer Hope of Women is revealed through the colours : red - woman - dress - blood; blue - man, armour, sky, spirit : white - symbolic death. In order to reach greater ambiguity he eliminated obvious use of colour; its symbolism operates at a more subtle level and was made explicit by the stage directions built-in to the play.

Kokoschka's student-actors provided for flexibility, both in acting and directing methods. It meant that he was able to introduce new ideas, sure enough that his cast was "better than professional ones

from the Vienna Burgtheater".[40] This departure from professional and traditional methods of acting, towards the magic and rituals of Eleusinian mysteries, expresses his longing for the spectator to become part of the play.[41] This is why it was so important for him that the audience was not passive, that a change occurs in the relationship between the actors and the spectators in the course of the play. Theatre must involve the audience, even shock, as much as possible in the process of existential purification. Under these conditions O. Kokoschka's theatre also depended on an active audience. His aim of creating "a new model of theatre in which the stimulation of the audience by dynamic movement in space, would replace the traditional draining of feeling through emotional transference".[42]

More than anything, Kokoschka wanted to explore the inner being of his figures and, by removing individuality, he was able to reach to the deep layers of emotions and spirituality of the body. An actor is reduced to a sign or reference, to symbolic meaning.[43] Such an insubstantial appearance lends a visionary quality to the actor and the play itself. This is intensified by the blank, anonymous background, which isolates the subject even further.[44]

The technique of theatrical make-up was similar to his expressionist pen and ink drawings; it corresponds to the expressionist premises that external forms disintegrate under the intensity of extreme emotion and leads to the disappearance of the self, and the transfer from ego to archetype.[45] His paintings and drawings give a fair indication of how the stage design must have appeared under his direction. The drawings for the Murderer Hope of Women, published in "Sturm" in 1910, exercised a powerful influence on avant-garde artists and traces of that influence could be followed long after and even today in contemporary ballet. Kokoschka did his face-painting not as decoration but to underline essential character.

"It was all meant to be effective at a distance, life fresco painting. All I was after was this enhancement of expression. I treated the members of the cast quite differently. Some of them I gave cross stripes, like a tiger or cat, but I painted the nerves on all of them. Where they were located I knew from my study of anatomy." [45]

Kokoschka organised his stage movement on lines derived from early art. This reinforced the status of the acting figure as archetype, either representing caricatured aspects of external society versus intristic moral qualities or projections of the artist as protagonist. He used repeated and rhythmic movement for hypnotic effect, heightening emotional states: the subjective turns into the archetypal, illuminating the ritualistic aims of his theatre.

During his Dresden period 1916-1924, he was aware of Hellerau experiments; the closeness of the connection between modern dance and expressionist drama can be traced quite clearly in the Hellerau Dance Centre near Dresden (Germany) in the works of Laban, Dalcroze and M. Wigman. There is a trace of that influence in O. Kokoschka's Orpheus and Eurydice , particularly in those parts where dance was introduced.[46]

In Murderer Hope of Women Kokoschka used violent physical action, tribal dance steps, whirling torches and orgiastic music, to create a wild atmosphere. The music itself was based on percussion and woodwind drums, as well as cymbals and pipes which could bring an atmosphere of primitivism. The speeches were chanted or intoned, broken down into sounds and intended to have arbitrarily stressed syllables. Voices were harsh, emphatic, staccato. Choreography and patterns of visual images, colours and light were used to communicate instead of a fully articulated text. Staging aimed to be artificial and exaggerated and the acting become become elusive and ambiguous, escaping into multiple masks.[47]

It was the Murderer Hope of Women that made Kokoschka's name in the world of the theatre. Fascinated by the simplicity and perfection of archaic Greek art, he decided to introduce it into his scenery and costumes. He had conceived hieratic, static oppressiveness as symbolic of the tragedy's basic message. In his desire to create an effect reminiscent of the ancient theatre, he introduced a chorus placed around the proscenium, town and gate. With great attention paid to every detail, O. Kokoschka sketched all the props and used make-up on the actors' bodies as well as on their faces, to create greater expression. Yet his characters on stage have voices that belonged to no particular society or even civilization (with the exception of Comenius which is historically orientated). He conjured up all that was primeval in man and woman suggesting depths of the soul, which, after all, was not easy to cast for the theatre.

He had the ability to offer an independent, original and bold interpretation, and his novel understanding of the role played by acting, set, costume, light on stage; this happened to coincide with his other efforts to reform the basic fabric of the play - the script. Yet he attached the greatest significance to colour and light, which he viewed as the most crucial component for conveying the basic message.

The colour symbolism suggests that a state of perpetual vampirism, which is evident by the war between the sexes as a continual movement from death to life and vice versa. Also symbolic is the struggle between light and darkness.[48]

In Murderer Hope of Women it is emphasized by the painted backdrop in which the Sun (Man = day, light) is elipsing the Moon (Woman = night, darkness) at the finale, when the burning stage and the cock crows three times, as a symbol for the betrayal and self-destructive passion between the sexes. The conflict is tragic for

both man and woman, as well as for the chorus; the poster (Fig. 4) and the play have indicated it by the allusion to the martyrdom of Christ implicit in the Pieta. The light, Moon and Sun, are mirroring the human struggle in cosmic terms. O. Kokoschka strongly opposed this kind of interpretation, but he said that if Expressionism has any meaning the poster must be counted among its earliest manifestation.[49]

The Murderer Hope of Women from an early date has been the subject of different interpretations. Even as late as 1917, the Dresden production was described by R. Brauer :

> "The words, which were simultaneously spoken, are remembered only as the subtitles under extremely powerful images... He (Oskar Kokoschka) works from a painterly conception, and when he writes prose or verse, changes the medium, but not the perspective, from which he conceives the world." [50]

It was definitely admitting numerous conflicting layers of significance and clearly intentionally symbolic, mythological and Christian in its iconography. However, such influences do not rule out other possible interpretations of the audio-visual elements, nor do they exclude other layers of symbolism and meaning. Some scholars draw a direct comparison between Kleist's Penthesilea and O. Kokoschka's Murderer, to emphasize the love for Greek mythology that first influenced the young playwright's experience and theatrical vision.

The imagery of Murderer was considerably violent and explicit but the incoherent mixture of words spoken by the actors did little to help the understanding of the action. The theme of the play, the woman's sexual desire and man's insecurity, reveals much of Kokoschka's and his contemporaries' state of mind at the time.[52] Also it has been suggested that the Murderer presents the seven stations of the Cross as an extended orgasm with the sexual climax being the Crucifixion.[53] Crucifixion can signify rape, the process of

physical possession of the body and the liberation of feelings and erotic phantasies through orgasm. Probably Kokoschka's purpose was to demoralise the public by destroying unquestioned moral assumptions aimed also towards breaking down conventional responses through outrage. His attack on society, aimed to reveal the religious nature of an "inner experience". Instead of reproducing faithfully the external form of Nature, Kokoschka showed it as seen through "the mind's eye".

In The Burning Bush as in his previous play Murderer Hope of Women, Kokoschka relies upon the stage image of the Pieta to suggest the transformation of physical hate and desire into spiritual love. There is no photographic record or any illustrations to support the understanding of visual elements of the play, except a series of twelve litographs Columbus Enchained (Fig. 9-11), which have a close thematic relationship with this play and reveal its basic pattern. They have strong but broken rhythms, the composition is geometric but the shadings escape through the boundaries of the forms, and the delicacy of line.

For example, the lithograph The Pair by Candlelight is a very precise analogy to the play's symbolism of light (Fig.11); the image of candle seem to radiate an inner glow.

The Burning Bush recognizes the motif of redemption through the biblical allusion to Exodus 3:4 and describes Kokoschka's perception of vision and his beliefs in primacy of space which "takes shape like water, air and earth. Fire burns it forever and consumed it."[54]

The Orpheus and Eurydice involved Greek mythology and the fact that Kokoschka's sources can be identified as consistent suggest he relied more heavily on traditional literary symbolism and the visual element could be slightly ignored. As one of the critics, Otto Kamm suggests, Kokoschka's theatrical vision in Orpheus and Eurydice was extraneous to the dramatic action: "This can only be an evocation of

mood for the reader and a purely optical representation ... In any case, these visual images are irrelevant to the unfolding of the dramatic action and without influence upon it."[55] Yet, the significance which the symbolic use of colour, light, darkness, dance and lack of movement, the world Above and the Underworld, expresses the basic polarity between the sexes, a dichotomy present throughout Kokoschka's dramas. There is almost "a plot, a well-knit story, but it is while in fever, torn in weeping ... a drama of inner radiances, a tragedy of visions".[56] The language has strong reminiscences of Murderer Hope of Women in its clipped, fragmented form of linguistic symbolism. Yet O. Kamm believes that the visual elements are by no means ignored in Orpheus and Eurydice, although the play was so obviously conceived by the eye and imagination of the painter.

> "Painter and poet are an indivisible unity in Kokoschka. Just as in his paintings there is always something poetically lyrical, or more properly dramatic, so in his work there is much that is pictorial. Word and visual expression are united and rendered inseparable." [57]

H. I. Schvey argues that both plays have the nonverbal action of pure pantomime, but Murderer has more stage images than Orpheus and Eurydice. One could speculate also about the implications of conscious and unconscious which could be supported by Kokoschka's paintings, drawings or etchings, expressing the theme of the myth but somehow in terms of collective consciousness. How far he has been successful in transforming the classical myth into a medium of theatre is a debatable question: it is however his finest attempt to come to terms with life in a literary work. Somehow the theatrical vision and the aspect of the play, as the painter's theatre, has strong dramatic quality and a less successful stage impact. The play is recognisably dramatic, not an improvised structure, mature and less

obscure than his earlier works; it represents all that Kokoschka was fighting against in his very early stage of theatrical development. It is quite clear that Orpheus and Eurydice was a turning point in his career as a playwright and painter.

O. Kokoschka affirmed his theory of the primacy of sense and the influence of J. Comenius existed on his work, offering intellectually very satisfying content of his artistic beliefs in an essay As I See Myself.[58] Also his last drama Comenius (1935-1936, 1972), which was intended to explain his fundamental belief in the miracle of "the inner life", suggests that it has much in common with earlier plays. "All of Kokoschka's plays are about the process of "seeing" or "spiritual perception".[59] They move from darkness or night towards morning or light, suggesting the development from blindness to sight, or signifying the absence of vision.

When O. Kokoschka finished his last play Comenius, subject matter and dramatic form were quite different from those employed in his four plays written between 1907 and 1919.

> "Whatever the differences separating them, the previous four plays are nonetheless related in their subject matter and to some extent in form. Most clearly of all, they are unified by their common approach to the stage, which is decidedly visual in nature." [60]

Comenius too relies more heavily on dialogue to convey its meaning and plays down the visual elements. Despite potentially brilliant use of the stage the impact on Rembrandt and Comenius is lost through language; it might have been more successfully exploited by means of stage image, like for example the whole idea of introducing "Night Watch" is lost in O. Kokoschka's philosophical discussions.[61] (Fig. 26).

Seventy five years after O. Kokoschka's very first contribution towards the theatre, H. I. Schvey admitted that O. Kokoschka's plays are "above all, visual theatre. It is therefore, the nonverbal aspects of his approach to the stage -scenic imagery, colour, and light symbolism..."[61] After all, he believed in the universality of the language, which will transmit its basic message above and beyond word. The unconventional stage design, light and colour symbolism and acting deserve recognition as O. Kokoschka's painter's theatre. "These five plays form an indivisible unity with Kokoschka's work in the visual arts and confirm him as one of the foremost innovators of the Twentieth Century theatre, the first German Expressionist dramatist."[63]

Only in recent years, there has been a new interest on the part of theatre historians as well as art and drama students, who tried an authentic reconstruction of O. Kokoschka's plays. This "again focused attention on their visual and not literary aspects, on the details of costumes and staging, leaving to one side questions as to their symbolism and meaning."[64] It must be said that in spite of all objections, the Expressionist style of performance has enriched contemporary theatre immeasurably.

CHAPTER 2 - FOOTNOTES.

1. P. Vergo, J. Modlin, Oskar Kokoschka, 1886-1986, Tate Gallery Catalogue, pp. 23-25.

2. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 22.

3. It is worth pointing out that some great reformers of theatre drove at the elimination of a word, to the elimination of literature. For example, new trends in painting had greater impact on Craig's or Kokoschka's than trends in literature.

4. E. G. Craig, The art of the theatre. pp. 47-49.

5. P. Kornfeld, Programme note to the premiere of O. Kokoschka's plays in Dresden, 1917.

6. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 3.

7. Styan, J.L. The elements of drama. (The author makes a definite distinction between the language of drama, which is specifically theatrical, and the language of prose and poetry.)

8. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 30.

9. W. I. Lucas, "Oskar Kokoschka", Expressionism and After, pp. 37-38.

10. Ibid. p. 39.

11. O. Kokoschka, "The Essentials of the Visual Arts," Universitas, vol. ix, 1954, Dec. No. 12. p. 1297.

    Oskar Kokoschka :

    "I was accused a few times of desire to destroy a spoken word. That is nonsense of course, yet there is something true about it. A word got devaluated and ceased to be the only and universal means of communication. Hence symbol, ritual return to the roots".

12. H. M. Wingler. Oskar Kokoschka : the work of the painter, p. 40-75.

13. H. I. Schvey, Oskar Kokoschka, The Painter as Playwright, p. 71.

    (He says that on April 1917, Kokoschka's play "Sphinx and Strawman" as performed at "DaDa Soirée" in Zurich. This information is incorrect because the play was performed at the second Sturm - Soiree, which took palce in the DaDa Gallery. See : H. Ball, Flight out of time.)

14. G. Rühle, Theatre für die Republik 1917-1933, pp. 64-65.

15. H. Ball, Flight out of time, pp. 4-49, 105-111.

16. T. Tzara, The Dada Painter's and Poets, pp. 237-8.

17. E. Hoffman, O. Kokoschka. A life, p. 167.

("These 'Job' drawings are very strongly reminiscent of Jewish theatre scenes... They have the same grotesque picturesqueness, the same wild gestures, which are as expressive as any words, the same rhythmic movement and the same pathetic humour of people schooled in resignation.")

18. Annabelle Nelzer, Latest Rage the Big Drum, p. 79.

Dada's used masks and painted backdrop with the figures and with holes for heads. This was O. Kokoschka's idea and he said that "in order to economise on actors, which were few, and on material, of which there was none, I used for the first time the trick of painting minor parts and props not essential for action on the background."

19. H. Ball, p. 106.

20. O. Kokoschka, "I have deliberately broken all taboos", Die Neue Zeitung, 27/28 December 1952.

21. See : Appendix: Data of O. Kokoschka's theatrical activity. Also, Encyclopaedia Britannica (1929) allies A. Schönberg's experimental period (atonal music) with Kokoschka's achievements in visual art and drama.

22. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk. Vol. 3.

23. O. Kokoschka, On the Nature of Visions. A lecture given at the Academic Society for Literature and Music in Vienna on 27 January 1912 - "On the Consciousness of Visions" - about his artistic philosophy. The substance provides insights into Oskar Kokoschka's artistic credo, which remained the same throughout his life.

24. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 67; he contributed no manifestoes and refused to submit his independence of thought.

25. See : S. I. Witkiewicz, New Forms in Painting. Introduction to the Theory of Pure Form in Theatre, (1919).

26. R. Brandt, The Komposition and Figuration of O.K. dramas, p. 15.

27. H.I. Schvey, p. 134; The performance is marked by clearly visible sacralization of space and strong opposition between light and darkness.

28. Ibid, p. 51.

29. O. Kokoschka, On the Nature of Visions.

30. H. I. Schvey, p. 130.

31. Ibid. p. 116.

32. Ibid. p. 53.

33. R. Breuer, Die Schaubühne, (1917).

34. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 8.

35. O. Kokoschka, Critique in Boston School of Art, 1948, p. 2 (unpublished manuscript owned by Barrie Cooke).

36. Greek and Roman theatre, Oberammergau in Germany; The Munich Artists Theatre; Hellerau near Dresden, Germany; Vienna Kunstschau Salzburg Festival. Also : Max Reinhard's "circus" stage and Italian outdoor stage.

37 One should anticipate the possibility of influence by A. Appia and G. Craig.

38. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 20. This could be called a prototype of the "theatre of cruelty".

39. H. I. Schvey, p. 36.

40. O. Kokoschka, My Life, pp. 22-3, 28.

41. This participation can be understood also as an awareness of visions.

42. Ch. Innes, Holy Theatre, Ritual and the Avant Garde, p. 105.

43. Ibid. p. 105.

44. The principle of the composition of the costume became more universal and extended to fine arts; it showed in the deformation of the personae and characterization.

45. L. Goldscheider, O. Kokoschka, p. 14.

46. Between 1913-1916 in Dalcroze's Dance School in Hellerau near Dresden, there was an experimental play based on Gluck's opera Orpheus and Eurydice. This performance attracted an international audience including A. Appia, A. Roller, R.E. Jones, G. Craig, Copeau, Diaghilev and Max Reinhardt. Max Reinhardt's production of Orpheus in the Underworld in his theatre in Berlin was in 1916.

47. Ch. Innes, p. 103-105.

48. H. I. Schvey, p. 37.

49 Ibid. p. 39.

50. Robert Breuer, Die Schaubühne, (1917).

51. Donal Gordon, Oskar Kokoschka and the Visionary Tradition. Also : G. J. Lischka, O. Kokoschka.

52. The battle of the sexes, The idea that the female gains dominance over the man by enslaving him through sex, was central to Schopenhauer's philosophy, informs much Viennese literature, and one of the aspects of Otto Weininger's book "Sex and Character" (1903). He argued that the female, the libido, was in struggle against the male, intellectual element. O. Kokoschka knew of these theories.

53. Ch: Innes, p. 103.

54. O. Kokoschka, The Burning Bush (1911-1913) Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 1.

55. Otto Kamm, Oskar Kokoschka und das Theater, p. 48.

56. Joseph Sprengler, Kokoschka's Buhnendichtungen, pp. 677-78.

57. Otto Kamm, pp. 44-48.

58. O. Kokoschka, "As I See Myself," (1936) Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 3, pp. 251-255.

59. H. I. Schvey, p. 130.

60. Ibid. p. 116.

61. The T.V. film Comenius (1974) with the potentially superb visual qualities of the play, is inadequately conveyed through the medium of language.

62. H. I. Schvey, p. 11.

63. Ibid. p. 116.

64. Peter Vergo, Yvonne Modlin, O. Kokoschka The Tate Gallery Catalogue, p. 25.

CHAPTER 3

The Myth and Mythology of the Artist.

Oskar Kokoschka was one of the many artists who did not allow themselves to be driven into "anonymity".

Under all the masks taken on by himself, there was always an archetype hidden underneath - Prometheus, Orpheus, Ikar, Narcissus, Job, Christ, Eros, Everyman, persecuted exile. In his work Kokoschka assented to a cult of an unfinished and open work, which would exhibit not the classical perfection but the way of imagination.

The theme of fundamental irreconcilability is always present in Kokoschka's theatre and explains his use of the myth. The dominant myths which he employed in his plays have essential elements in common - as the means of freeing himself from the living reality. The fragments of his personal myth which appear in his plays, paintings and drawings are rather like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Pointing out the complexity of the creative process, Kokoschka dramatized it suggesting that the clues to his theatrical vision can be found in one's own experiences. He admitted :

> "I am the hero of my plays. (...) What is the tie that binds man and woman together? Our own imagination! What fools it makes of us! What more did you have, did I have, than what fancy conjures up in dreams, which belong to all women, all men, as night belongs to day?" [1]

Yet myths don't operate like an arbitrary fantasy shuffling and reshuffling the facts according to whim. The facts in themselves are of no interest to the mythological mind: it is the facts as they affect the human condition that matter, the facts as they are experienced by human beings.

An enormous work, complex and with endless source material would be necessary to grasp Kokoschka's personal myth and the myth he fostered in his art.

Even Kokoschka's autobiography is a bright but not terribly

honest account of the artist's achievements. It never lacks narrative vitality, shape, name dropping, but it often omits what we mostly want to know. It is a piece of Expressionist writing, of self-mythologizing of a kind that recurs elsewhere in the artist's scattered reminiscences. His penchant for the fanciful or invented, clothed in the unexpected, even gruesome imagery is found in his writings.

The important element of his development as an artist of the theatre are missing and his ideas about his theatrical vision not emphasized enough.

It has to be said that Kokoschka's own statements are often obscure or contradictory, but his biographers and the authors of various studies followed the path of his personal myth too.[2] In writing about him, they tend to be either critical or factually biographical with no bridge between. Few have more than a hazy impression of what the artist was like or what impelled him to take the direction he did.[3]

The more that is written, the more elusive Kokoschka has become, as critics, friends, and biographers build up a variety of unconnected pictures.[4] These portraits are not easily reconcilable, and the tendency has been to prove certain of them as essential. Kokoschka is partly to blame. He wrote a great deal about himself; he spent much of his life attempting to understand the deep contradictions within his mind, and was perhaps most alive to that which separated the man of action lost in revery from the man of revery who could not find himself in action.

Equally clear might be, that Kokoschka exaggerated his persecution at the hands of critics and wanted to continue an elaborate process of self-advertisement because of his need for a personal

mythology.[5] Unsure which qualities were his, he posed and acted, then wondered whether pose and acting were not more real that what they covered over. Then too, there was his tendency to construct myths, but he does not usually break his myth as quickly as he makes it.

Alma Mahler, who lived through many of the same events as O. Kokoschka, remarked that his autobiography and his work gave little indication of the intensity and enthusiasm which raged in his youth; the self-possessed man had buried the extravagant boy. She added even more myths into Kokoschka's life by calling him a "DorianGray".[6]

It is interesting that the action in most of O. Kokoschka's plays is composed of mythic elements drawing strongly upon erotic violence and impotence, designed to evoke strong emotional responses on a subliminal level.

He could also be a hero who fought past weakness and conventionality only with the utmost labour. He said that, "there are many men looking over my shoulder now. Sometimes they help me when I am working on a painting or writing. They tell me what to do sometimes. Yes, I have many ghosts. The only real living man is here, Now."[7]

With great courage and will, O. Kokoschka tried to become the hero of whom he had dreamed. So armed by his "Visions" he was able to enter more completely into life than before without fear of losing his identity; but now his vision was more than a vision of consciousness; it is a symbol, a stylistic arrangement of experience, a representation of the flux of life which transcends it, but is also imminent in it.[8]

He tried to make his "Visions" impregnable by relating it to everything that happens, and as he finds his life fits into it he lives more and more in this stylistically arranged world of his theatrical, painterly and poetic visions. Though he never ceased to regard himself as a rebel, he builds his own ivory tower and keeps asking the same

question over and over, until they are profound: what is vision? what is consciousness? what is man? His answers one can find in his writings, stage design, paintings, drawings and theatrical productions. His visions descended and demanded not an intellectual belief but an emotional response to his art of allusion.[9]

Kokoschka's preference for allegorical titles for his paintings and dramas serves largely to disguise the nature of their real content. For example, the contemplative painting of the Woman and Parrot has significant connections with Kokoschka's play Job .[10] The bodily aspect is but a mirroring of the spiritual, and therefore a dependent and variable expression of life. He looked to history and mythology for parables and allegories, which in his own work could be their commentators. (Fig. 20, 21).

He does not fear allegory in its wider sense: it is part of a tradition to which he holds fast, and on which he lays emphasis. Allegory - felt, not reasoned - is very much a part of his artistic personality.

Kokoschka's Job (Sphinx and Strawman before 1917) is toyed and tormented not by God and Satan but by his desire for woman. Like other twentieth century writers and artists, who use myth as a means of depicting man in an age devoid of myth, Kokoschka used it as a fundamental structuring principle to reveal the sexual torment of modern man. He incorporates the story of Job into his own struggle between the sexes.[11]

Yet his symbolism is multi-layered and confusing, employing biblical and other classical or literary imagery to weave together an allegory of his personal life, couched in ecstatic Expressionist language. We can see the connection between Kokoschka's personal myth and the visual version of the Book of Job in the Old Testament. In

keeping with the importance of myth is the play's increased use of allegory and literary allusion (Job = Adam = Faust) + (Anima = Eve = Margaret). Seemingly, this preoccupation with allegory, allusion and myth in Job suggests that "in this version of the play Kokoschka was attempting to create a self-conscious and wide-ranging literary work, with less emphasis on the purely visual."[12] This suggestion is not true, as Job's visual elements are prevailing (and we will discuss this problem in the Chapter "The Painter's Theatre").

In Orpheus and Eurydice and Job, Kokoschka used myth as a means of maintaining the necessary distance from his subject and not, as H. I. Schvey suggested, as a means of autobiographical method of reaching catharsis. This biographical method of interpretation in Kokoschka's dramas is very popular, but it appears to be unwise to overlook the obvious analogies.[13]

It seems that this pervasive belief, that the well-documented link between the drama and O. Kokoschka's personal life is, for most researchers, a rewarding avenue of exploration. Even though he says quite clearly that :

> "to cover up the autobiographical traces, I have used Greek myth. There is something disagreeable in seeing immediately recognizable people on the stage and exposing their doings to the public eye. It was not my intention to stage a Greek myth."[14]

The fidelity to mythic sources was clearly not Kokoschka's main purpose in writing his plays, particularly after the myth lost its seriousness and became empty of its previous meanings.[15] Kokoschka's attempt to come to terms with the tragic character of human sexuality by a new treatment of the classical myth, becomes an apotheosis of woman (Eurydice = Anima = Mary). He believed that man is mortal and woman immortal because of her children expanding life. As one can see,

the mythical and archetypal elements in Job and Orpheus and Eurydice are unable to carry the weight of symbolism that made the classical hero a paradigmatic tragic focus.

It is far too often assumed that Kokoschka's plays are purely autobiographical and subjective, a realisation of his own subconscious mind. His work bears only the characteristic expressionist approach, in which the central figure is the artist, the hero - mouthpiece of the playwright, the victim-saviour of mankind, dreaming the other characters, who are no more than projections of different aspects of his life.[16]

Kokoschka's "Man" and "Woman" characters in Murderer Hope of Women and Burning Bush have lost their individuality and have become archetypes, whose traditional polarity modern society has come to question. There is no logical development in his archetypal plays because they are set outside the experience of any rational life. "The characters are blindly driven by instinct and all-devouring passion, by senseless desire from horror to horror, circling in empty space, caused by the splitting of humanity into sexes."[17] Allegory and vision underline Kokoschka's primeval experience as well as the liberation of the Ego from the taboo of sex. It is virtually impossible to understand fully O. Kokoschka's intention in his plays. One can believe that the symbolism is of crucial importance, since it makes clear that the Man and Woman are intended as archetypes, and the conflict is to be understood not merely in terestial but in human terms. A symbol reveals here some deepest strata of reality that are resistant to any other means of cognition. Kokoschka employs the basic conviction of Expressionism which is an image of man who is stripped of all his prestige; he reveals himself naked as if the truth of nature and the axiom of the beauty of form were abandoned.[18]

In his Murderer Hope of Women (1908), in Job (1907-1917) as well as in Orpheus and Eurydice (1917) and in The Burning Bush (1911), one of the constant elements of Expressionism appears indirectly - the myth of "naked man" - the relationship between man and woman. Kokoschka had the agitated vision of a man who sees a great many things, even negligible details in a single field of vision, dancing before his eyes and enriching his perception.

All elements of Kokoschka's theatrical vision and dramatic craftsmanship move from a visual imagery traditionally understood, to a visionary and imaginative plan (as violent introspection as well), going beyond the sensible world to a kind of intuitive vision that discovers unknown movements, lines and meanings, suspended in an atmosphere that is silent yet full of shouting, or absurd yet real. This obsessive fragmentation is in fact the original way Kokoschka proposed to deal with the Expressionist dualism.[19]

H. I. Schvey's methods of interpretation were carried out intentionally in order to point out that O. Kokoschka's plays constitute the mask of artist's life.[20] The points on which H. I. Schvey's interpretation can be attacked are also where O. Kokoschka would be most vulnerable as an artist. The image cannot embrace an infinite or self-contradictory range of content, because the means overshadowed the meaning. Schvey's method of thinking diverts our attention from what is being stated to the reasons for making such statements. It is of questionable value if the author's suggestions represent his own intellectual game of knowledge and not objective comprehension about O. Kokoschka as a man of theatre.[21]

Many interpreters of theatre know a lot about their own area of intellectual concern, but little about performance. For example, anything created by man, according to Freud's interpretation was a

revelation of the unconscious.

Many critics have yielded to the temptation of linking O. Kokoschka with S. Freud's theory of the human soul, but Kokoschka rejected them as not adequate to his vision of consciousness.

One can imply that an appearance of pseudo-Freudian intellectuals offering their opinions to Anima (Sphinx woman) and to Firdusi (Strawman - Job) in Kokoschka's play Job, was his way of showing his discontent with modern psychology of his time.

As E. H. Gombrich pointed out that the alleged similarity between Kokoschka's portrayals of his "dramatis personae" and Freud's theory is presumed.[22] O. Kokoschka's principle of consciousness expressed his belief that, "when we no longer inhabit our perceptions they do not go out of existence; they continue as though with a power of their own, awaiting the focus of another consciousness."[23]

H. I. Schvey suggests that the process by which Kokoschka tried in his portraits and dramas to capture the subconscious fears and desires of a personality, can be compared with the technique employed by S. Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). Just as Freud delved into his turbulent world of repressed sexuality and hostility in his patients, Kokoschka explored the innermost psyches of his models and actors. These similarities are not accepted by O. Kokoschka.[24]

The power of empathy and projection in featuring his dramatic characters suggests that a psychic conflict of the Ego - Anima variety was part of his life experience and was transposed into the content of his work.[25] The motif of the union of opposites is seen very clearly in their direct juxtaposition. One may believe that they even contain the conjunction of the light and dark anima.

The interpretation of the personal myth and psychology of O. Kokoschka as an artist may explain many aspects of his work, but not

the work itself. Otherwise the artist's creativity would be revealed as a mere symptom; the creative act, rooted in the immensity of the unconscious will elude our attempts at understanding; it cannot be wholly grasped.

C. G. Jung believed that

> "the work of art exists in its own right and cannot be got rid of by changing it into a personal complex. As to what it means to the artist, whether it is just a game, or a mask, or a source of suffering, or a positive achievement..." 26

We should stress a point that the essence of O. Kokoschka's work, his painterly vision or theatrical, cannot be found in the personal idiosyncrasies that creep into it.

It is rather distressing to find out that the personal aspect of O. Kokoschka's art can be a limitation and even a vice, while interpreting its character.

H. I. Schvey's study of O. Kokoschka as "a painter and playwright", may be true of the artist as a man, but it is not applicable to the man as an artist. Furthermore we have no right to expect the artist to interpret it for us.

"A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness is always ambiguous. A dream never says "you ought" or "this is the truth".[27] This is why the personal life and the myth behind O. Kokoschka is at most a help or a hindrance, but is never essential to explain his art and visions.

CHAPTER 3 - FOOTNOTES

1. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, Vol. 1-4.

2. P. Vergo, Y. Modlin, O. Kokoschka 1886-1986, The Tate Gallery Catalogue, p. 25.

3. It may seem quite normal for one man to write a book about another whose autobiography has been published. Yet F. Whitford's material has been assembled with repetition of Kokoschka's own account of his life, that anyone familiar with the details of his career will not be much the wiser at the end. This method of looking at Kokoschka's life and work does not solve the problem of the artist's personal myth and the myth revived in his work. Kokoschka rejected historicism and biographical approach and opted for a less therapeutic and richer method of bringing relief through myth. The only historical play is Comenius.

4. An Interview with Barrie Cooke, October 1987.

   B. Cooke said that O. Kokoschka's life was self-theatricizing and that his gestures were always bigger than life. He was definitely playing roles all the time. As being very theatrical person during his talk he was very much the master-performer.

   B. Cooke attended O. Kokoschka's "School of Seeing" in 1955 - in Salzburg (Austria) where he witnessed the preparations for the stage design of The Magic Flute.

5. In preparation for Murderer Hope of Women O. Kokoschka intended to insult public opinion and he shaved his head like a condemned criminal as an act of rejecting social values and provocation.

6. Alma Mahler, Mein Leben (My Life), p. 47.

   A. Mahler's response to O. Kokoschka's plays was that they were ambiguous and presumptious, but had great significance. She insisted that O. Kokoschka was lost in meditating about the truth and the imitation; selfish, incapable of feeling anything else with the exception of his illness. O. Wilde's portrait of Dorian Gray was a vivid example of tragic myth; A. Mahler's suggestions may have some reservation.

7. O. Kokoschka, Critique in Boston, 1948 on different subjects and themes, p. 13.

   Owned by B. Cooke, unpublished manuscript.

8. O. Kokoschka, "La conscience et l'imagination" (1913) consciousness and imagination. Galerie-Jardin des Arts No. 140. Sept.Oct. 1974, p. 77.

A mystical text written by O. Kokoschka and published in Paris in 1913 in the book "L'Anee 1913". He describes consciousness as the soul in a state of attention and consciousness and being as one entity. Thus there is no place for death, for if images dissolve and dissipate themselves, it is only in order to re-assemble in another manner.

There is connection between this text and "On the Nature of Visions".

9. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 216.

According to O. Kokoschka "true Expressionism does not live in an ivory tower, it addresses itself to a fellow being whom it awakens."

10. Anima is Kokoschka's main archaic symbol in his play Job (former Sphinx and Strawman). She is the female shadow figure in a man's conscious Ego. According to Emma Jung, the Anima is the guide and inspiration of the artist or for the ordinary man. The archetypal figure experienced inwardly is a symbol of the relationship between man and all that is feminine at whatever level. A Parrot - is a representation of symbolic flights which carry man into the realm of the unconscious. See: Tom Chetwynd, A Dictionary of Symbols

For example, a visual image clearly reveals the Parrot's allegorical role as Job's denied spirit disintegrates; O. Kokoschka's stage directions note that the bird explodes and drifts as pinkish cloud up through the sky. See Fig.20,21.

11. G. J. Lischka, Oskar Kokoschka: Maler und Dichter. Eine literar - ästhetische Untersuchung zu seiner Doppelbegabung; pp. 13-85.

12. Ibid. pp. 55-74.

13. H. I. Schvey, p. 92.

14. O. Kokoschka, Catalogue, Hamburg 1965, p. 48. Adduction to myth is a mere pretext for deep and equivocal reflections over human condition and existence.

15. Kokoschka's earlier alter ego was Everyman, then Job and Orpheus, the failed artist whose lyre was crushed; thirty three years later he transformed the myth of Prometheus in his painting indicating the purifying power of fire and the artist's vision. Also in nineteenth century the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice lost its deep meaning.

16. E. I. Lucas, pp. 32-50.

17. H. I. Schvey, p. 107.

18. This concern with the physical is suggested in both - "Orpheus and Eurydice - play and in the painting where the myth of naked man occurred again.

In the purely painterly way, Kokoschka communicated the conflict between man and woman having them sitting with crossed legs. It echoes in the pictorial terms of the play the wild dance of love-hate relationship performed by Orpheus and Eurydice.

19. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, Vol. 1-4.

20 For example: The first scene of the First Act, in "Orpheus and Eurydice"; the garden. The child's ball has been symbolized as a human foetus. This is suggested by H. I. Schvey by the fact that the ball is thrown into Eurydice's lap (= Alma Mahler) and then kicked out (= abortion); O. Kokoschka's guilt is passed on to Orpheus.

21. H. I. Schvey's interpretation links Kokoschka's symbolism with S. Freud.

22. E. H. Gombrich, Kokoschka in his Time, p. 21. "In speaking of Kokoschka in the context of his time, the attraction which this heady doctrine (Nietzche's) had for him cannot be omitted. Some of the products of his youth, notably his play "Murderer", are pretty crazy in all conscience. It is all the more important not to yield to temptation of regarding them as symptoms of his mental condition".

23. O. Kokoschka, On the Natue of Visions. H. M. Wingler, O. Kokoschka. The work of the painter, p. 91.

24. H.I. Schvey, The Painter as Playwright, p. 145.

25. D. R. Kelm, Oskar Kokoschka, p. 145.

26. G. G. Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, p. 93.

27. Ibid., p. 104.

CHAPTER 4

The success and failure of Oskar Kokoschka.

The phenomenon of Oskar Kokoschka's "double talent" has crossed the dividing line between different forms of artistic expression. Several of his contemporaries were unusually versatile too, working in two or more media.[1]

O. Kokoschka presents the case of an artist who found expression for his visions through two different art forms. To write about him only as a playwright is impossible, without paying due regard to his achievements as a painter and designer, for he obtained unity of the dramatic and the plastic arts.[2]

The conception of his theatrical vision helped to form the fundamental attitude of the painter and the playwright. In the case of Kokoschka it would, however, be wholly erroneous to assume that it was vain ambition which drove the artist to achieve a double distinction. His visual and literary experiences were so interconnected that at first he was unable even to think of attempting a reform of his network technique.[3]

His dramas formed an indivisible unity with his paintings and drawings and confirmed him as one of the foremost innovators of Twentieth Century theatre. He was the first German Expressionist dramatist although the value of his productions and stage design could not at the time be fully recognised.[4]

It was said that "if Kokoschka had not painted a single picture his reputation as a writer would be assured."[5]

H. M. Wingler, who studied Kokoschka's art quite closely, placed less importance on his literary and theatrical experiments than on pictorial art. The comparison with his visual work, the transformation taking place in Kokoschka's dramas and selective writings is of secondary importance.[6] Wingler's image is accompanied by a mood of reflection

about O. Kokoschka's verbal and visual preference.

> "Then the mood passes, the word no longer serves his purpose, and all in him that is both poet and philosopher flows again into his chosen world of pictorial art, at first haltingly, but after the Second World War, with confidence and power." [7]

Kokoschka questioned the analytical conception of the world, expressed in the language of mathematical formulae, different from the world he sees. An in his essay, Image , Language and Script, he expressed his views on the interdisciplinary connections between visual art and literary works.[8] Unfortunately in his Writings there are very few thoughts about his theatrical vision or theatre itself and it is only available in German. He never said why his idea of a visual theatre, his drama and stage design ("the very important milestones in the early history of the Expressionist theatre") were never developed to its full potential and why his visual concept was never revealed as an important and valid one.

Yet he influenced the artist of the Sturm, he was respected by many including the Dadaists, and as late as the 1920's he inspired other dramatists working in other languages.[9]

He wrote and talked in parables as a preacher and his arrogation of uniqueness is archetypal. Allegory and vision underline his experience yet he talks about it with great bitterness :

> "When you strive to create what people are not yet prepared to understand, you are bound to suffer the consequences. Their incomprehension turns to laughter and they feel superior because your effort to solicit their attention has failed. (...) And so modern man finds himself in the position of lacking the means he would need if he wanted to express an individual idea, issue of a human imagination." [10]

O. Kokoschka had a point when he claimed that the critics had overlooked some of the stylistic factors and criticised him by inappropriate standards.

The research up to date finally agreed to acknowledge

Kokoschka's experimental dramas and theatre productions, however it contains almost no factual information about his theatrical vision and affinity with other theatre "reformers". It sounds like a paradox to say that, what has escaped the eye of the critic of the day were important theatrical events. But how important they are today one can find out only after applying an interdisciplinary perspective.[11]

Some critics and historians who, after all, are largely responsible for future recognition, made an initial judgment by rejecting Kokoschka's theatre, assuming that he threw everything into confusion for the sake of appearance.[12]

Kokoschka addressed himself to a public without any theories or manifestoes. His initial position as an avant-garde artist was rather disguised by strong opposition of the critics.

The situation of both literature and the plastic arts was a very difficult one, as they reacted almost simultaneously against the logical positivism of early twentieth century Europe. In the same way that the public of the day hissed Kokoschka's dramas, it also refused to have very much to do with their pictorial analogue. The objections as always were twofold, for not only was the public annoyed by the disturbing quality of his technique and their brutality, but there was also a great distaste for some of Kokoschka's subject matter.

There were a few incidents when the press referred only to Kokoschka's dramatic experiments and observed that the public greeted his plays with sympathy as a piece of fund but also the public was not only furious but shocked.[13]

On account of his unusual themes and the novelty of his idiom, these plays met with a hostile reception from the time of their performance onward.

"Today it is a little difficult for us to see anything radical in the nervously elegant portraits of those years. His drawings have a sharpness ... that is more emphatically expressionist but his direct contribution to the wider world of Expressionism lies in his plays."[14]

Since many of Kokoschka's theatrical contributions have since disappeared, it is hard to assess just what occasioned such public reaction.

As vital as the image of the artist as visionary is, equally vital is the image of the artist as victim. He was the victim of blind and savage critics (in Vienna), of a hostile public, and of dealers and artists who sought to profit from travesties of his own unique achievement.[15]

Kokoschka was angry when somebody made the suggestion that he had always worked in styles originated by others. The earlier self-image as a rebel was no longer enough, but the new - conservative one, as a philosopher, did not yield to reality. This phenomenon is frequent when a young artist is a rebel but at old age a model academician. "He had once been a revolutionary artist, proud to assert that he was the first to work in what was manifestly a new way."[16]

Again as at one time in the case of G. Craig or A. Appia, O. Kokoschka's discoveries within the theatrical field failed to be noticed positively, not only by critics, but also by directors and discounted on the international scnene.[17] He has been dismissed by the majority of his contemporaries as being gifted but unbalanced. G. Craig, A. Appia and O. Kokoschka - young visionaries, possibly unknown to one another, each in his own fashion invented, simplified, designed new scenic space full of fluid light, which would become the modern theatre's fourth dimension. Yet, it is quite possible that Kokoschka knew Appia and that he even met Craig, who contributed to

1909 Kunstchau in Vienna, but there is no record of their meeting.

Like all reformers or visionaries, Kokoschka did little: we are left with only a few sketches and designs; he dreamed of much in his stage directions, essays and dramas. He was so precise in his description of each colour, the position of each prop and actor on stage, each lighting effect and acting stages, as if this were a record of an actual performance, not an imaginative vision.[18] What is most striking about his works are colour and light effects - functional in conception and foreseeing each dramatic motion, combining the monumentalism and symbolism of Appia and Craig.

He went beyond these limits in showing a stage bereft of all illusion, and creating before the eyes of the audience a new space, that looked to the past and the future - a simultaneous composition that used abbreviation, that was ambiguous in meaning and did not conceal the theatre. He also went beyond this limit in creating the symbolic personae whose significance went beyond the range of his plays. Kokoschka thought of himself as uniquely endowed with visionary gifts. Like many others, he believed that "he had no right to censor the words and images that he felt welling up from the depth of his being."[19] As if he broke down all the barriers between the modern and the classical, the avant-garde and the legible and between interpretation and creation. Kokoschka knew that the unique principle of the Expressionist theatre was however an experiment - limited to a few stages, while in most theatres upholsterers, tailors, box office and literature prevailed.[20]

Yet, the relationship with fine art did not lie here in his adaptation of some trends in painting or other fields for the stage in the form of scenery and costumes but rather in the theatrical thinking of the artist, called retheatricalization. It was the quintessence of the

space and form, light and colour, sound and silence, consciousness and unconsciousness, proper to the given age and to the given artistic and intellectual trend.

O. Kokoschka did not learn his stagecraft from careful study of classical drama or mise-en-scene of his day. His desire for artistic unity in the presentation of a play, envisaged a theatre completely controlled by one man - author, designer, producer, director - which would require total dedication to the theatre medium. It seems that he was not prepared to do so. He was afraid that his plastic experiments might fall into a rut of schematic conventionalism. It was enough for him that he had demonstrated this method of realisation and had enriched his own experience.

His aim was the replacement of verbal communication by the dynamic relationship of visual images and archetypes; the quest for a new form of expression, a vision which was a tangible phenomenon, marked not by utilitarian values but by the painter's tragic knowledge and humanistic approach.

The most frequent criticism of the expressionist approach is its undramatic abstraction.

J. Bab, who never gave any credit to O. Kokoschka for his dramatic and stage design activity, attacked expressionism as a kind of "horror vacui", a vertigo in the face of the void, of this abstract space where only ghosts of emotive exclamation marks move about.[21]

This negative and inadequate evaluation survived till now and is generally based on reading O. Kokoschka's plays, in literary form. Yet, the paradox of reading his plays as a literary statement, as H. I. Schvey and other researchers do, exposed that the contemporary critic or historian does not know O. Kokoschka's plays at all, because most of them never saw them on stage performed.

Like many other Expressionist playwrights, Kokoschka relegated his dialogue to a minor role. His plays were more deliberately incomplete scripts and they might be seen as abbreviated stage directions, a framework for mime accompanied by exclamations.

H. I. Schvey made a substantial contribution evaluating O. Kokoschka's writing, paintings and drawings. But the living speech of his book turns on these yet unknown, or already forgotten plays, written and sometimes staged and designed by Kokoschka, into a somehow "dead language". It looks like a theatre performance itself needed a translation and exegesis in the written and spoken word, or this seems to be necessary in order to make itself intelligible to the public. One can say that this private vision, of what Kokoschka's dramas and theatrical vision were all about, is very superficial and not convincing at all.

As "live" theatre art does not have an adequate form of recording (this being both its weakness and its strength), it seems impossible to reconstruct Kokoschka's plays, to show his stage work in progress. However, the importance of the illustrative material, letters, critique, numerous publications about the artist and people who worked with him cannot be overemphasized.

The problem of reconstructing theatre performance is quite serious, because "it" is an event, not an object or text. The whole process of reconstruction embraces what the critic - researcher - author has proposed as a reconstruction of the event. The assembled material become an evidence for the confirmation of a hypothesis. But there is another way to examine a theatrical presentation.

M. Kirby suggests that

> "it is enough to accept the possibility that a performance may be studied as a series of pictures. The style of each picture can be analyzed and categorized just as we analyze and categorize painting style." 22

O. Kokoschka's early plays belong to his (I) - experimental period and his (II) - transitional, which marked his artistic climax within a visual theatre. His last play, from (III) - mature and final stage, is better skilled from a literary viewpoint but is less successful visually.[23]

> "Many of the visual feature of the later works are embedded in literary discourse (Comenius; Orpheus and Eurydice) resulting in a less highly charged visual spectacle than in the early plays (Murderer Hope of Women, Sphinx and Strawman) where startling visual images undermine complacency. In their capacity to shock and lay bare elemental conflicts these plays, therefore, are comparable in achievement to the early portraits." 24

O. Kokoschka's interest in expressionistic "psychological" portraiture may usefully be understood by comparing it to the distortions of the caricaturist, or a good playwright.

Yet, his plays are not the curious by-products of a painter. His contribution therefore is significant because they anticipate the most radical experiments of contemporary live theatre; the reliance on stage imagery, the importance of light and colour rather than of language, the significance of myth, ritual, dreams and vision, embodied in anti-Aristotelean dramaturgy with its open possibility for interpretation.

There can be no question of a conflict between O. Kokoschka's pictorial and verbal way of expressing himself, for the two techniques were fused for him together in a complete unity. He has always been well aware of the danger that lies in having to repeat himself; even if that self-repetition was necessary, as a reference to the preliminary work for a play or stage design, or on the contrary, if it was a painting or drawing, to follow up, after staging one of his dramas.

Yet, it seems that Kokoschka's painting and the graphic works

not only contain more of the artist's individual risk but also because of their material structure and illusionist character, may create for him a story full of digressions of no consequence.

After many years it turned out that Kokoschka's myth of creative freedom had begun to wear thin. Its limitations became most fully apparent in the formal restrictions of his "visual theatre" that had been driven away from its initial stage. It could be said that theatre of this type constituted a spontaneous expression of artistic and intellectual freedom in the face of cultural restrictions and rigours of socially accepted morality.

As a point of new departure Kokoschka started to deny the whole artistic and cultural validity of the avant-garde, condemning methods and techniques that would criticize his own work, if they were used against him.

> "Can the artistic avant-garde still have a guilty conscience, when ideas like that of the Fall of Man are outdated? Personality, individuality are words that lost their meaning. In their place is a vacuum." 25

Today, looking at Kokoschka's avant-garde theatrical activity, one must notice that it has diminished, has become unwanted, outdated and the thematic aspirations as inflated and pretentious. Kokoschka never realised that his plays could reach a form of inflation that devalue their own symbolic currency. Yet, when a widespread, radical, nonconformist, antiestablishment attitude disappeared, interest in an antagonistic avant-garde disappeared with it.

In addition, working with different theatres and random teams, he has not been able or willing to stay long enough to be recognized for the novelty of his work in two media, or he never had a chance to implement it consistently and enduringly. But however intense and

honest was Kokoschka's interest in the theatre, he seems to have had difficulty coping with these craft orientated daily routines. Once his years of youthful impetuosity were over, he becomes conscious of his responsibility to the historical past, and he accepts as a categorical imperative the obligation to cherish that ever-living and ever-working inheritance, which he would have preferred to destroy.

In the past, he did not wait until modern and great theatres appeared, but used the tools at his disposal. As a young designer he caused a lot of scandals and protests; his proposals were not praised by critics, the audience was not enthusiastic, while most directors and theatre managers did not seek his cooperation.

Most definitely he was not a mature master like Bakst or Wagner, with years of dogged effort and protracted searching behind him; when he became a personality in the theatrical world he new very little about the theatre "business". It seems that Kokoschka's entry into the theatre between 1907 and 1914 was nothing more than a gamble.[26] The theory of his theatrical vision could be understood as a drastic manifestation or an exaggerated protest.

Fortunately for Kokoschka, a number of theatres and directors were prepared to work with him. As a result a series of productions made theatre history.[27] After 1955 only the major theatres could afford to engage him to design sets and costumes. The spectacular stage history of some of Kokoschka's plays, taken up as they were by the whole spectrum from M. Reinhardt and Viennese scandals to the iconoclastic Dadaists, suggests that his approach was as applicable to the conventional stage as to experimental anti-theatre. Yet, his theatrical legacy seems less assured almost forgotten, and the image of his visual threatre has been challenged and misapprehended.[28]

In the literature of art criticism, the moment of subjectivity,

from which no one can escape, has so far stood in the way of the composition of any all-embracing objective examination of O. Kokoschka's dramatic, stage-design and visual works as a whole, although there have been approaches to such a study. All value judgments are, by definition, subjective. Even without historical dimension, biographical attitudes and the reviews about Kokoschka's contribution to the theatre can be used to exemplify the positive and negative function of criticism; to represent the destructive or generous possibilities of evaluation.

CHAPTER 4 - FOOTNOTES

1. A. Schönberg, H. Ball, W. Kandinsky, E. Barlach, A. Schwitters, H. Arp, P. Klee, A. Kubin.

2. H. I. Schvey, Oskar Kokoschka. The Painter as Playwright. The first consideration of Kokoschka's work from an interdisciplinary perspective.

3. Tonikawa, K., "Kokoschka: success and failure in its selfness," Mizue, no. 878, May 1978, pp. 46-9.

4. H. I. Schvey, p. 17.

5. F. Whitford, Oskar Kokoschka, A Life, p. 21.

6. H.M. Wingler, Oskar Kokoschka: The work of the painter, p. 58.

7. Ibid. p. 17.

   Incidentally, after World War II O. Kokoschka's stage design had developed with the element of universality, tradition, retaining the Austrian individuality.

8. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 3, p. 10.

9. H. Ball, Flight out of Time, A Dada Diary.

10. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 21.

11. An issue of the World and Image (German version) to appear in Jan.-March 1989, is to be devoted to O. Kokoschka's work from an interdisciplinary perspective. The author: Prof. John Dixon-Hunt.

12. Some reviews were anonymous.
    Also: B. Diebold, "Frankfurter Zeitung", 13 April 1920.
    Josef Strygowsky, "Die Zeit", Jg. 1o, 1911, Nr. 3010.
    R. Schaukal, "Der Merker", Jg. 3, 1912, Nr.21, s. 810-850.
    W. Serner, "Karlsbader Zeitung", Jg. 25, 1911, Nr. 30, s.12-14.
    C. Zuckmayer, "Frankfurter Zeitung", 12 April 1920.

    "The performance ends in a brawl. Any more of this sort of thing and culturally Germany is finished".

13. "Neues Wienner Journal", Jg. 17(1909) Nr. 5640, p. 4.
    "Neue Frei Presse", Nr. 16117, p. 8. (1909).

14. N. Lynton, "Expressionism", Concept of Modern Art, pp. 38-39.

15. F. Whitford, p. 204.

16. Ibid., p. 205.

17. Oskar Kokoscha received his recognition as an avant-garde artist in Der Sturm and also by being introduced by Max Reinhardt in his Berlin theatre, also by H. Ball in Dada Gallery in Zurich.

18. O. Kokoschka, Das Schriftliche Werk, vol. 3. pp. 287-290.

19. E. Gombrich, Kokoschka in his Time

20. At the time Vienna supplied the whole Europe with props and Berlin was the centre for costumes.

21. J. Bab, "Die Weltbühne", 22 August 1918, p. 176.

22. M. Kirby, A formalist theatre, p. 53.

23. The early plays:

i. Experimental period (1907-1914):

(1) The Speckled Egg
(2) The Sphinx and Strawman,
(3) Murderer Hope of Women,
(4) The Burning Bush.

ii. Transitional period (1916-1924)

(1) Job (final version of The Sphinx and Strawman).
(2) Orpheus and Eurydice

iii. Mature and final stage (1936, 1950-75)

(1) Comenius.

24. H. I. Schvey, p. 135.

25. O. Kokoschka, My Life, p. 202.

26. The Sphinx and Strawman (1907), appears to be the result of Kokoschka's bet made with drama students that he could write a play.

27. In 1954/55 Oskar Kokoschka claimed that in The Magic Flute he introduced a novelty, coloured light effects. In fact much earlier, before 1914, the Munich Artists' Theatre was renowned for its effective use of coloured light and had increased the conventional spectrum to five with the addition of blue.

28. Denis Bablet, Revolutions in Stage Design of the XXth Century.

This respectable publication is just one of many which ignore O. Kokoschka's achievements through the medium of theatre. See bibliography.

Also: Gottfried Sello, "Ekstase als Stil" Die Zeit, Nr. 10. 29 February 1980. An important essay about O. Kokoschka's contribution to modern art; his theatrical work is not held in high repute.

RESUMÉ

In all attempts at systematizing, interpreting and evaluating the art of the theatre, rectifications made by history present the greatest difficulties. It is extremely easy to overlook some of the events and to over-emphasize others. Therefore a biographical approach is not desirable.

What I was looking for was material that would substantiate my intuition that Oskar Kokoschka's theatrical experience and vision was deserving of better recognition and that he had done wilder, more significant things on stage and in life than he is credited for.

What I had envisaged as his success or failure were actually a complicated set of circumstances in which he has not been fully understood. The passage of time since these events has played its part as well.

The specific fabric of theatre art is always transitory and unrecoverable, while public reception may be retrospective. Often the "successful" dramatists, designers, directors or producers were those who won public acceptance.

O. Kokoschka was neither single protagonist nor a prophet, but either right or wrong. His failure and success depends entirely on the audience which accepts or rejects his work.

Drama evoked by O. Kokoschka's visual theatre cannot be re-told as there are no words to express the most profound human passions, fears and hopes. Only a specific analysis of the real event (not the text of it), though deforming to a certain degree the essence of the matter, can reveal some elements of perception, of performance and

of its genesis. There is an urgency to consider all O. Kokoschka's stage productions and miscellaneous designs, as well as his writing, as an act of his great awareness of the objectives of modern drama and new emerging theatre.

APPENDIX

Data.

1907 - 20 October. "The Cabaret Fledermaus" in Vienna; first contribution - a special shadow puppets The Speckled Egg. Also one-act play Sphinx and Strawman performed on the stage of the Arts and Craft School in Vienna. He writes Murderer Hope of Women.

1909 - 29 March. "The Cabaret Fledermaus" in Vienna presents Kokoschka's matinee with the motto "I'm struggling for women". Three plays were performed: Sphinx and Strawman, The Speckled Egg and Murderer Hope of Women.

Kokoschka began to work on text for A. Schönberg's musical drama The Fortunate Hand. They did not cooperate to produce together this play because of their different approaches.

- 4 July. Murderer Hope of Women and Sphinx and Strawman (directed by E. Reinhold) are performed in the open-air theatre at the Kunstschau in Vienna by friends and fellow students from the School of Applied Arts. Press reaction : mixture of amusement and incomprehension.

1910 March. The publication of Murderer Hope of Women in the Sturm with illustrations specially created for it. They arouse a lot of interest among avant-garde artists (O. Schlemmer, Marc, Kandinsky). Reviews of circus and cabaret performances in Berlin. An interest in Ibsen's and Strindberg's plays.

1911 June. The production of The Burning Bush was interrupted. Kokoschka planned to present it during The Hagenbund Show in Vienna. The authorities banned the play just before the opening night because of its alleged obscenity.

1912. 26 January. The Academic Association for Music and Literature: Kokoschka gives a lecture On the Nature of Visions.

1913 With Ernst Reinhold O. Kokoschka rehearses the production of The Burning Bush for the "New Viennese Stage". On 2 June, after the censor declares it offensive to public morals, the performance is cancelled. The play is published together with Murderer Hope of Women, Sphinx and Strawman, in the first monography on the artist.

1916 O. Kokoschka works on the drama Orpheus and Eurydice and presumably also paints the picture of the same theme and makes some drawings. Introduced to Ernst Deutsch - actor from Prague, the Expressionist dramatist Walter Hasenclever, Käthe Richter - actress from the Albert theatre in Dresden, Kokoschka discussed the cast of his play.

1917 Sphinx and Strawman (1907) was substantially changed and published as Job. On 14th April the premiere of this first

revised version was performed at the Dada Gallery in Zurich (under Marcel Janco's direction, Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara play the main parts). The Sphinx and Strawman or Job is given its premiere at the Albert Theatre, Dresden, together with Murderer Hope of Women and The Burning Bush Oskar Kokoschka directs and designs the production himself, with Käthe Richter and Ernst Deutsch taking the main parts.

1918 Kokoschka finishes his fourth drama Orpheus and Eurydice, illustrating the text with six etchings for an edition. Max Reinhardt announced that he would direct any play by Kokoschka on the Berlin stage.

1919 25 May : production of The Burning Bush and Job at Max Reinhardt's "Kammerspieltheater" in Berlin, with Oskar Kokoschka directing: the first performance of any of his plays in Berlin.

Cassirer publishes the four dramas Murderer Hope of Women, Job, The Burning Bush and Orpheus and Eurydice - in a single book entitled "Four plays".

1920 11 April; Production of Job and Murderer Hope of Women in the Neue Theater in Frankfurt.

Paul Hindemith writes an opera based on Oskar Kokoschka's Murderer Hope of Women. O. Kokoschka published his essay On the Nature of Visions.

The Burning Bush is performed in the Metropoltheater in Köln, and in Heidelberg (Germany). From 1917-1921 O. Kokoschka was involved with M. Reinhardt's Theatre Company. It was very fruitful cooperation and showed search for new theatrical expression on both sides.

1921 February 2nd, the premiere of O. Kokoschka's play Orpheus and Eurydice in the Schauspielhaus in Frankfurt under the direction of H. George and stage design by L. Sievert.

June 4th - Hindemith's opera Murderer was first performed in the Landestheater in Stuttgart. Produced and designed by Oskar Schlemmer (it has significant traces of the Bauhaus theatre).

1922 The Tate Gallery Catalogue - O. Kokoschka 1886-1986. Chronology compiled by K. Schulz contains false information under the date 1922: "Oskar Kokoschka underkes his first opera production: designs the set for Hindemit's Murderer Hope of Women.

Also H.M. Wingler in his book about Oskar Kokoschka presented similar incorrect information. The research showed conflicting reports about this opera of Oska Kokoschka's play Murderer Hope of

Women, which in fact was performed at the Staatsoper in Frankfurt under the direction of E. Lert, with the setting and costumes by L. Sievert.

Ref: D. Oenslanger, Stage Design, Four centuries of Scenic Invention, p. 225.

1923 Erns Krenek sets Orpheus and Eurydice to music of the opera.

1926 27 November, in Kassel, the premiere of Krenek's opera Orpheus and Eurydice. G. Bodenwieser worked out a ballet - The Burning Bush. Music : Alexander Tscherepnin. The Great Vienner Koncerthall.

1930 Paris. Augustus John introduced Kokoschka to James Joyce.

1936 Oskar Kokoschka started his last play Comenius about the great Moravian educationalist Jan Amos Comenius.

1939 The Austrian Centre/Club House in London. Kokoschka attends performances at the "Laternall" the Club Theatre. No information given about the programme.

1942 An essay What do we expect from theatre?

1944 London. Frequent visits to the "Old Vic" to see performances of Ibsen, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Strindberg, Shaw and others.

1947 22nd March. At the Kunstmuseum in Basle, Kokoschka gives a lecture on "Image, Language, and Script. The Österreichisches Tagebuch publishes his essay I am a Visionary.

1950 1 December,Frankfurt, the production of his drama Orpheus and Eurydice.

1951 Hamburg - Orpheus and Eurydice.

1952 Kokoschka's article I have Deliberately Broken all Taboos appears on 27-28 December in "Die Neue Zeitung", Frankfurt.

1953 Preliminary plans with Head of Design Gustav Vargo, and with Wilhelm Furtwängler for set designs for a production of Mozart's The Magic Flute at the Salzburg Festival.

1955 Production of the opera The Magic Flute in the Felsenreitschule in Salzburg (conducted by G. Sotti).

Bavarian Radio broadcasts his talk My Designs for the Magic Flute.

1956 O. Kokoschka was commissioned to stage set for opera Oberon (by C.M. Weber).

1960 The set and costume designs for three plays by Ferdinand Raimund, performed between 196-1962 at the Burgtheater, Vienna

i. Moissur's Magic Curse,
ii. The Captive Imagination
iii. The Ominous Crown

1961 Illustrations for the King Lear (1961-1963).

1962 Burgtheater, Vienna, Consultation on the set designs for Raimund's plays.

1963 The scenery and costumes for the Florentine production of Verdi's The Masked Ball at the Opera Festival in Florence.

1964 In London Oskar Kokoschka begins to sketch out set and costume designs for The Magic Flute for Covent Garden (negotiations come to nothing).

The Midsummernight's Dream by Shakespeare never executed on stage (the preliminary drawing for sets were abandoned.)

1965 Kokoschka completes the sketches begun in London for The Magic Flute, for a production at the Grand Theatre in Geneva.

1967/
1968 The etchings cycle The Frogs (by Aristophanes).

1970 Ten Etchings for Penthesilea (Kleist's tragedy).

1972 Comenius is finished.

Kokoschka draws The Women of Troy (based on the tragedy by Eurypides - The Trojan Women -lithographic project.)

1973 Preliminary discussions with Gyula Trebitsch about filming his drama Comenius; the sketches for the set designs.

1974 Supervision of the filming of "Comenius".

1975 28 February - premiere of the television film - "Comenius" directed by Stanislav Barabas.

1978 Summer production of Raimund's plays during the Vienna Festival with set designs sketched by Kokoschka.

1980 Film Comenius in German and Austrian television to pay a tribute to O. Kokoschka's memory.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

* All the designs and plays are by O. Kokoschka, otherwise as stated.)

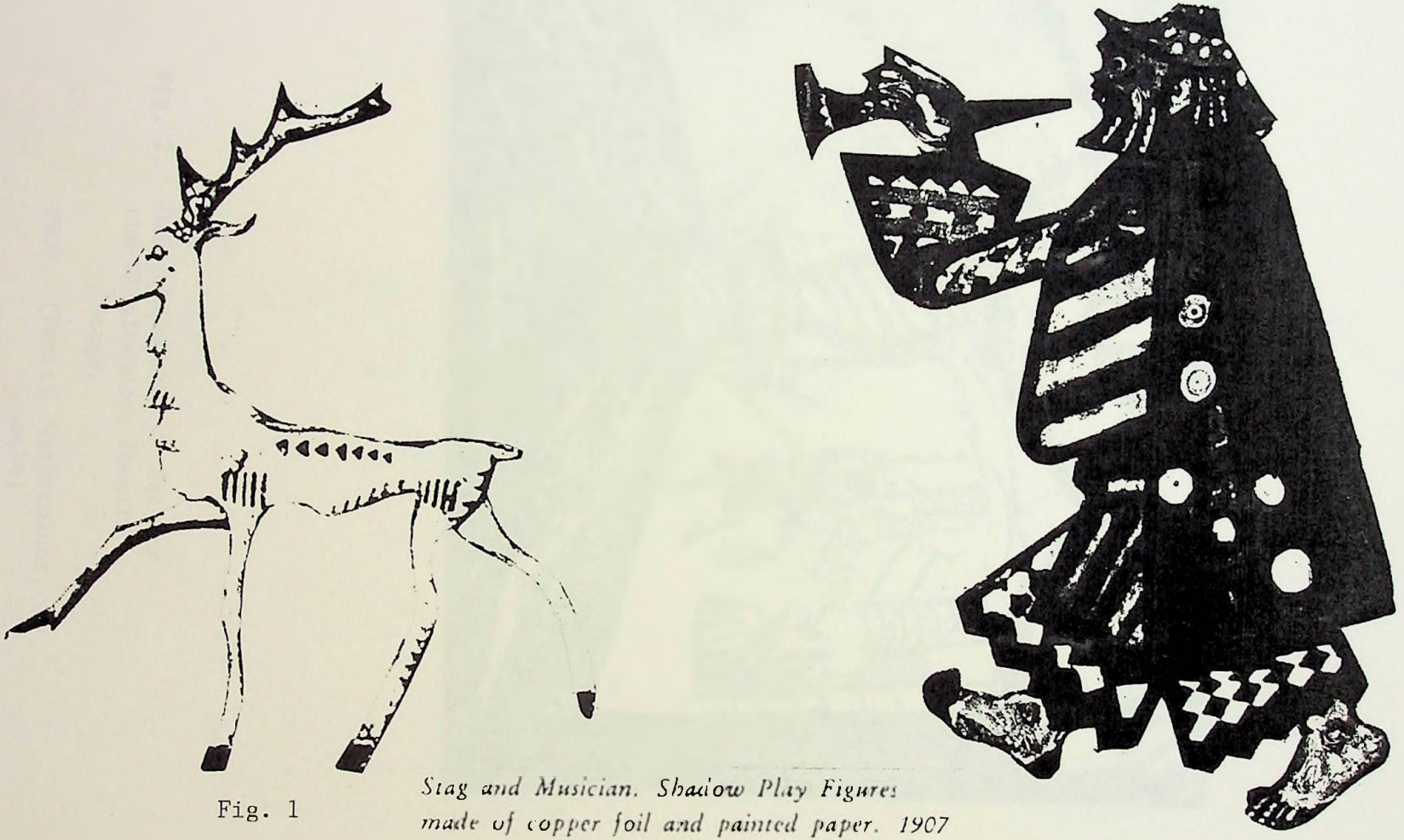

Fig. 1

Stag and Musician. Shadow Play Figures made of copper foil and painted paper. 1907

Fig. 2. Oskar Kokoschka : Set for the Simultaneous Theatre Stage.

1909. (Pencil, Watercolour, Gouache)

28.5 x 38.5 cm.

Oskar Kokoschka. Fürst Platon Subow. Figurine. 1909. Feder, Tusche, aquarelliert. 18,2 × 8,9 cm

Fig. 4. Oskar Kokoschka. Pieta.
Poster for the 1909 Kunstschau in Vienna.
Colour lithograph. 122 x 79.5 cm.


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Über Kultur

Himmlische und irdische Liebe

Zeichnung von Oskar Kokoschka

Fig. 5

Fig 7.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 8. Illustration to Murderer Hope of Women, Der Sturm, 1910, wash drawing in India ink.

Fig. 12. Scene from Murder Hope of Women. Albert Theatre, Dresden 1917.

Fig. 13. The last scene of *Job*, direction and stage design by Kokoschka, Dresden, 1917. Photograph from Hans Maria Wingler, ed., *Oskar Kokoschka: Schriften 1907–1955* (Munich: Langen/Müller, 1956).

Fig. 14. *Gentlemen Dressed in Mourning*, from *Job*, 1917, lithograph in black chalk, 11¼ × 9¼ in. (28.5 × 23.4 cm.). Courtesy Verlag Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

Sphinx und Strohmann Zeichnung von Oskar Kokoschka

Fig. 15. Illustration to Sphinx und Strohmann
Der Sturm

Fig. 16. *Job and the Young Ladies*, from *Job*, 1917, lithograph in black chalk, 12½ × 9¼ in. (31.9 × 23.5 cm.). Courtesy Verlag Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

Fig. 17. *Cupid and the Pair at Table*, from *Job*, 1917, lithograph in black chalk, 6 × 8¾ in. (15.4 × 22.7 cm.). Courtesy Verlag Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

Fig. 18 *Job, Anima, and the Rubberman*, illustration to *Job*, 1917, lithograph in black chalk, 11¼ × 9¼ in. (28.8 × 23.5 cm.). Courtesy Verlag Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

Fig. 19 . *Job with Antlers*, from *Job*, 1917, lithograph in black chalk, 11¼ × 9¼ in. (28.5 × 23.4 cm.). Courtesy Verlag Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

Fig. 20.

Parrot pointing to the head of Job, from the 1919 production of Job, direction and costumes by Kokoschka.

Photograph from Hans Maria Wingler, ed., Oskar Kokoschka: Schriften 1907-1955

(Munich: Langen/Müller, 1956.)

Fig. 21.

O. Kokoschka, Woman with Parrot, 1916, oil.

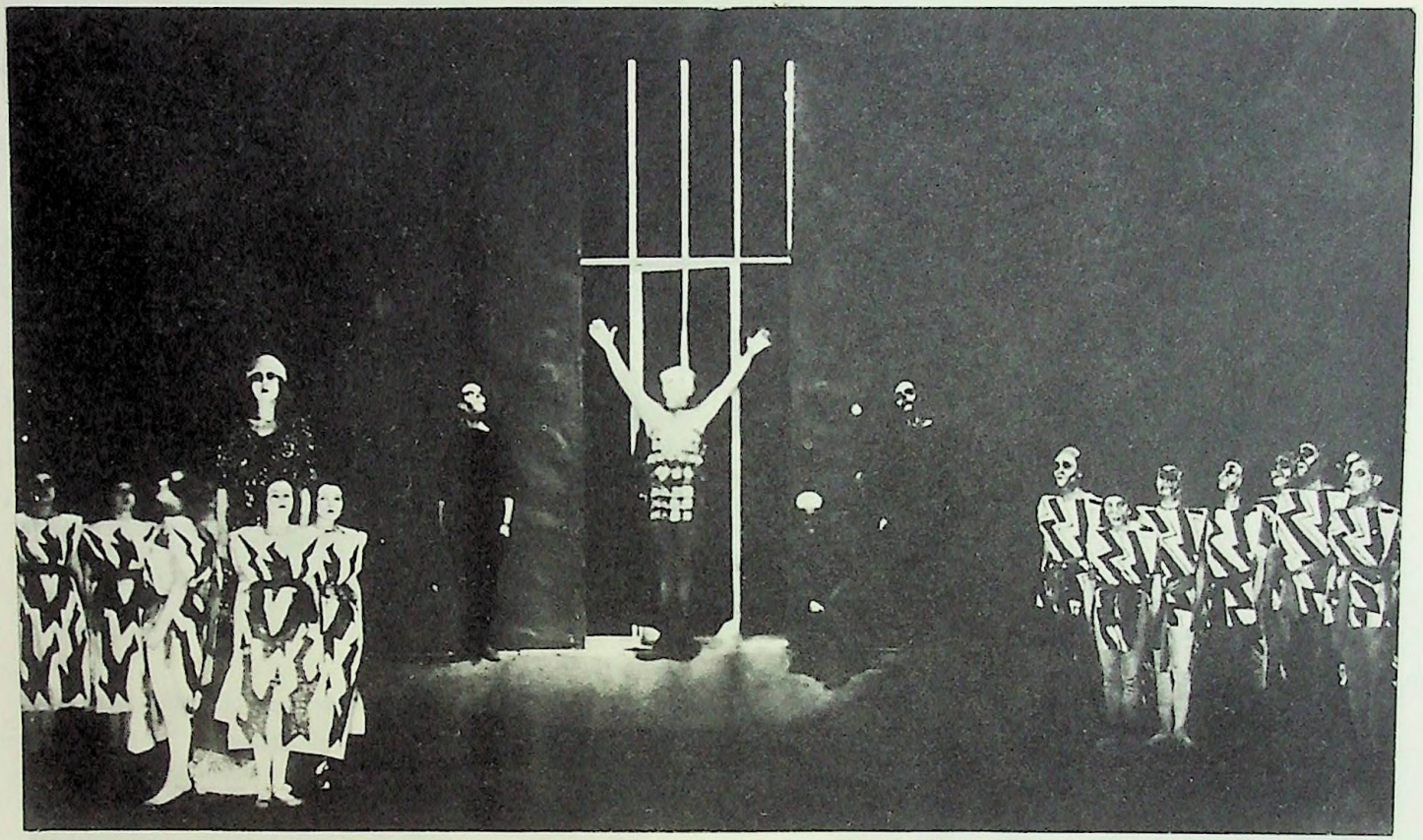

Fig. 22. O. Kokoschka, Murderer Hope of Women, Frankfurt 1920.

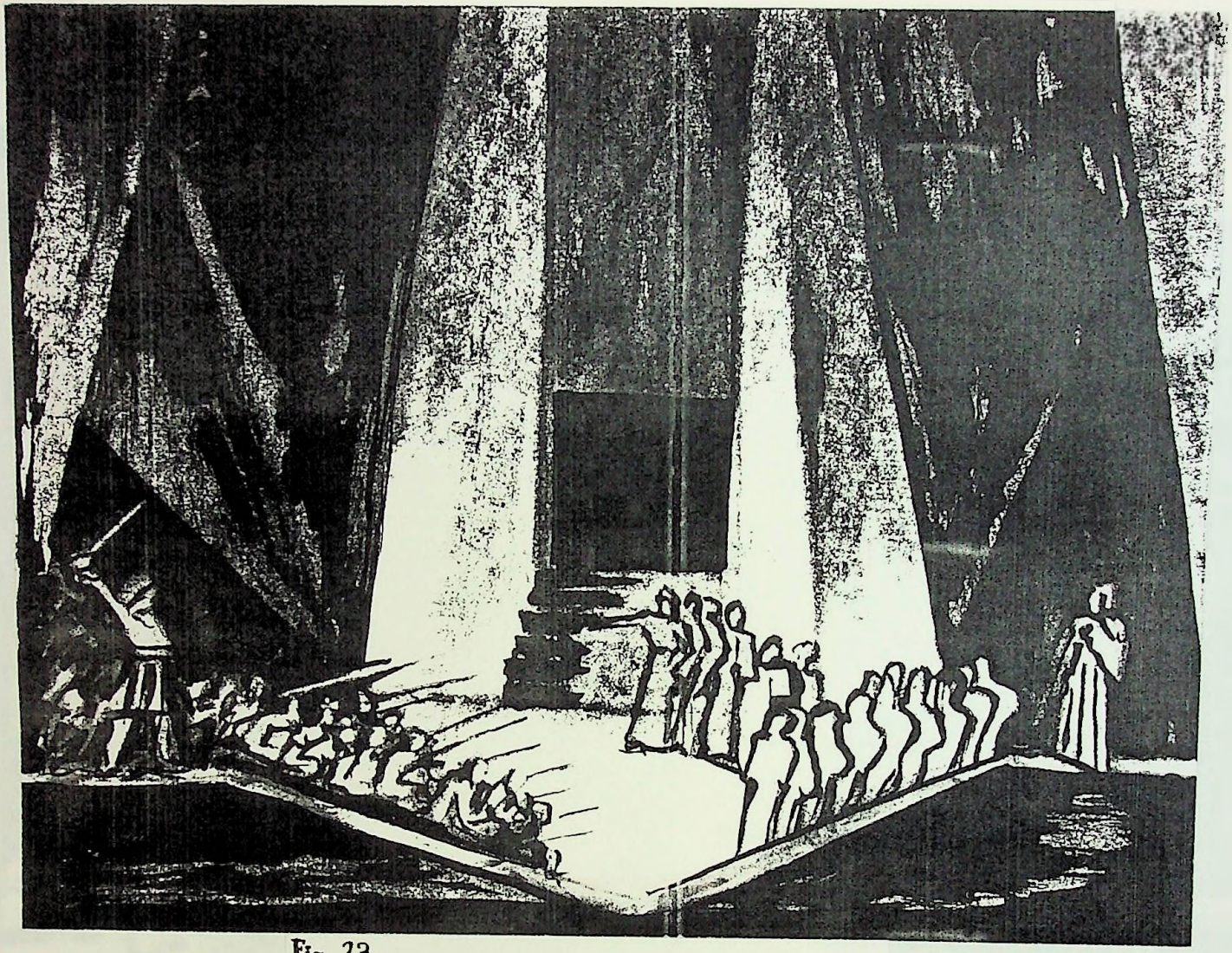

Fig. 23
Sievert, Ludwig
Besieged Fort for Kokoschka-Hindemith's *Murderer, Hope of Women*, 1922

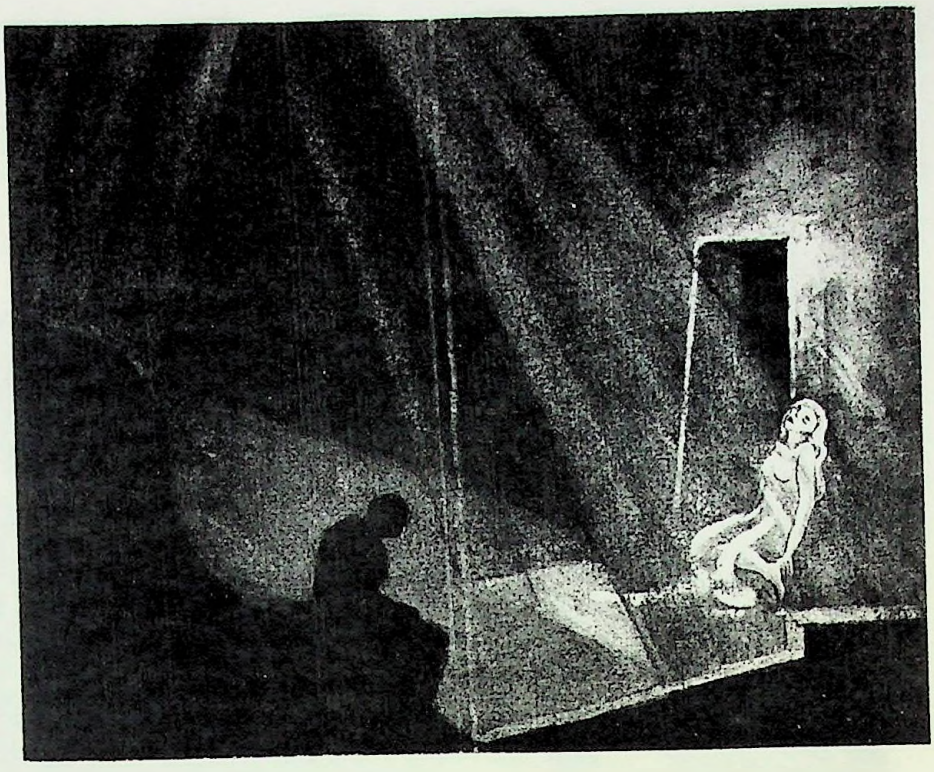

Fig. 24. O. Kokoschka. Orpheus and Eurydice.
Frankfurt 1921.

Fig. 25. O. Kokoschka. The Magic Flute.
Salzburg Festival, 1955.

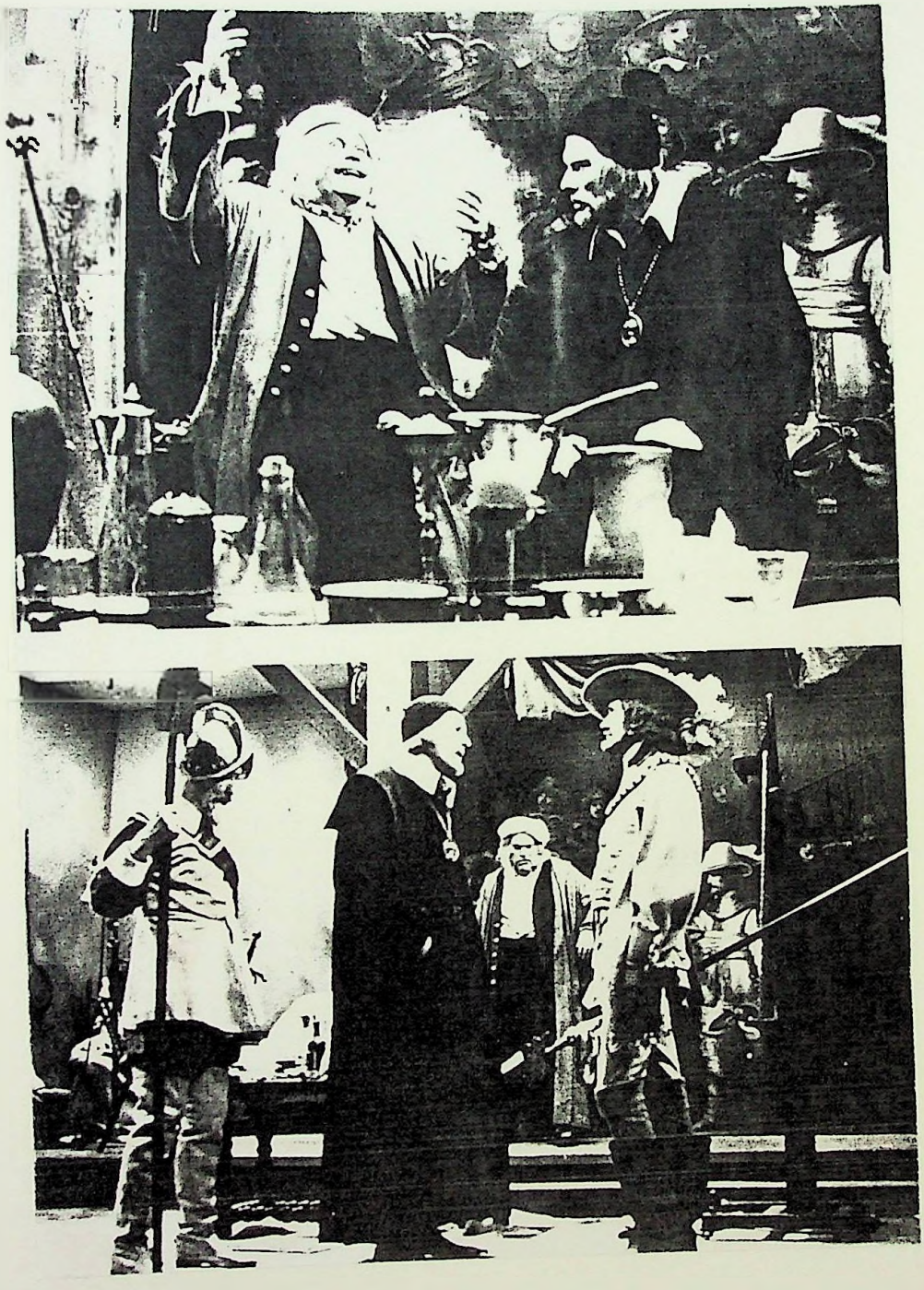

Fig. 26. Rembrandt and Comenius from the televised production of Comenius, 1974.