VSEVOLOD MEYERHOLD

theatre, dialogue can easily merge into melodic declamation and melodic silence.

The task of the director in the stylized theatre is to direct the actor rather than control him (unlike the Meiningen director). He serves purely as a bridge, linking the soul of the author with the soul of the actor. Having assimilated the author's creation, the actor is left alone, face to face with the spectator, and from the friction between these two unadulterated elements, the actor's creativity and the spectator's imagination, a clear flame is kindled.

Translated by Edward Braun

For a biographical note on Meyerhold see p. 101.

After working with the Moscow Art Theatre for four years, and running his own company in the Ukraine and Georgia, Meyerhold was invited back by Stanislavski to run the Art Theatre's new experimental studio. There he began to explore the stylisation he is concerned with here—experiments he pushed further after the closing of the studio following the 1905 Moscow rising, when he was invited by the actress Vera Komissarzhevskaya to join her theatre in Petersburg to promote the 'new' drama. Meyerhold's methods, however, proved too much for her, and in the year this essay was written, Meyerhold was dismissed to pursue his work elsewhere.

LOÏE FULLER

FROM Light and the Dance (1908)

Since it is generally agreed that I have created something new, something composed of light, colour, music, and the dance, more especially of light and the dance, it seems to me that it would perhaps be appropriate, after having considered my creation from the anecdotal and picturesque standpoint, to explain, in more serious terms, just what my ideas are relative to my art, and how I conceive it both independently and in its relationship to other arts. If I appear to be too serious I apologise in advance....

Colour is disintegrated light. The rays of light, disintegrated by vibrations, touch one object and another, and this disintegration, photographed in the retina, is always chemically the result of changes in matter and in beams of light. Each one of these effects is designated under the name of colour.

Our acquaintance with the production and variations of these effects is precisely at the point where music was when there was no music.

In its earliest stage music was only natural harmony; the noise of the waterfall, the rumbling of the storm, the gentle whisper of the west wind, the murmur of the watercourses, the rattling of rain on dry leaves, all the sounds of still water and of the raging sea, the sleeping of lakes, the tumult of the hurricane, the soughing of the wind, the dreadful roar of the cyclone, the crashing of the thunder, the crackling of branches.

Afterwards the singing birds and then all the animals emitted their various sounds. Harmony was there; man, classifying and arranging the sounds, created music.

We all know what man has been able to get from it since then.

Man, past master of the musical realm, is to-day still in the infancy of art, from the standpoint of control of light.... Yet, notwithstanding, colour so pervades everything that the whole universe is busy producing it, everywhere and in everything. It is a continued recurrence, caused by processes of chemical composition and decomposition. The day will come when man will know how to employ them so delightfully that it will be hard to conceive how he could have lived so long in the darkness in which he dwells to-day.

... A clear sparkling day produces upon us quite a different effect from
a dull sad day, and by pushing these observations further we should begin to comprehend some more delicate effects which influence our organism.

In the quiet atmosphere of a conservatory with green glass, our actions are different from those in a compartment with red or blue glass. But usually we pay no attention to this relationship of actions and their causes. These are, however, things that must be observed when one dances to an accompaniment of light and music properly harmonised.

Light, colour, motion and music.

Observation, intuition, and finally comprehension. . . .

Our knowledge of motion is nearly as primitive as our knowledge of colour. We say "prostrated by grief," but, in reality, we pay attention only to the grief; "transported with joy," but we observe only the joy; "weighed down by chagrin," but we consider only the chagrin. Throughout we place no value on the movement that expresses the thought. We are not taught to do so, and we never think of it.

Who of us has not been pained by a movement of impatience, a lifting of the eyebrows, a shaking of the head, the sudden withdrawal of a hand?

We are far from knowing that there is as much harmony in motion as in music and colour. We do not grasp the facts of motion. . . .

At present dancing signifies motions of the arms and legs. It means a conventional motion, at first with one arm and one leg, then a repetition of the same figure with the other arm and the other leg. It is accompanied by music, each note calls for a corresponding motion, and the motion, it is unnecessary to say, is regulated rather by the time than by the spirit of the music. So much the worse for the poor mortal who cannot do with his left leg what he does with his right leg. So much worse for the dancer who cannot keep in time, or, to express it better, who cannot make as many motions as there are notes. It is terrifying to consider the strength and ability that are needed for proficiency. . . .

Music, however, ought to indicate a form of harmony or an idea with instinctive passion, and this instinct ought to incite the dancer to follow the harmony without special preparation. This is the true dance.

To lead us to grasp the real and most extensive connotation of the word dance, let us try to forget what is implied by the choregraphic art of our day.

What is the dance? It is motion.

What is motion? The expression of a sensation.

What is a sensation? The reaction in the human body produced by an impression or an idea perceived by the mind.

A sensation is the reverberation that the body receives when an impression strikes the mind. When the tree bends and resumes its balance it has received an impression from the wind or the storm. When an animal is frightened its body receives an impression of fear, and it flees and trembles or else stands at bay. If it be wounded, it falls. So it is when matter responds to immaterial causes. Man, civilised and sophisticated, is alone best able to inhibit his own impulses.

In the dance, and there ought to be a word better adapted to the thing, the human body should, despite conventional limitations, express all the sensations or emotions that it experiences. The human body is ready to express, and it would express if it were at liberty to do so, all sensations just as the body of an animal.

Ignoring conventions, following only my own instinct, I am able to translate the sensations we have all felt without suspecting that they could be expressed. . . .

To impress an idea I endeavour, by my motions, to cause its birth in the spectator's mind, to awaken his imagination, that it may be prepared to receive the image.

Thus we are able, I do not say to understand, but to feel within ourselves as an impulse an indefinable and wavering force, which urges and dominates us. Well, I can express this force which is indefinable but certain in its impact. I have motion. That means that all the elements of nature may be expressed.

Loïe Fuller (1869-1928), American dancer, was originally a singer and actor. Her career as a dancer began fortuitously, following her success in a part where, supposedly hypnotised, she made play with the long full Indian dress she was wearing. From this she developed the idea of dancing under changing light whilst swirling the voluminous materials of her costume on sticks. Her European fame dates from her first appearance in Paris (at the Folies Bergère) in 1893. Her system of using reflected rather than direct light had been first developed in Paris by Mariano Fortuny, praised by Appia for his 'brilliant invention', (Œuvres Complètes, vol. 2, Lausanne, L'Age d'Homme, 1986, p. 99), who also devised projections of clouds, using glass slides. For an account of Fuller's technical innovations in lighting and costume, see Sally Sommer, 'Loïe Fuller', Drama Review, vol. 19, no. 1 (T65) March 1975, pp. 53-67.