

Tango

By **Slawomir Mrozek**

Play no. 226

Opening show: 07/03/1967

Creative team

Hebrew Version By: Shulamith Hareven

Directed by: Alexander Bardini

Set and Costumes by : Eli Sinai

Lighting by: Michael Lieberman

Cast

Eugenia: Ada Tal

Arthur: Alexander Peleg

Eugenius: Raphael Klachkin

Eleonora: Lia Konig

Stomil: Shraga Friedman

Edek: Ilan Toren

Ala: Dalia Friedland

With Mrozek the absurd lies in his thought, but as Durrenmat has said: "what is once in the mind cannot be erased". Mrozek's plays reveal the absurd as a dynamic factor; they do not represent reality as absurdity, but, rather the absurd is the form in which his characters perceive reality. The differences between the western theatre of the absurd and that of Mrozek are not hard to distinguish. The difficulty, somewhat paradoxically, is in tracing the resemblance. While running the risk of over-abstractness, let us state some of the differences. Firstly, and from this the rest follows, is that whereas the theatre of Beckett or Ionesco, for all the lack of similarity between them, represent a form of world in miniature, are essentially microcosmic, that of Mrozek is micro-social.

Man is portrayed in absolute terms of his social class and status, more than in any other way; this definition in terms of social station is as rigid and clear cut as that by biology in the theatre of the absurd. In the world of Mrozek, human relationships are transformed into rigid functions. The division of power is as incontrovertible as the laws of nature in the theatre of the absurd which it resembles in this respect. Reality is seen in absolute terms of the mystic or the grotesque. There are no alternatives, the possibility of their existence being dismissed as merely relative or compromise. The absolute borders on the absurd, a philosophical trap well-known to theology, which avoids it by demanding faith. Mrozek is no mystic. He is reasonable, though his reason leads him to absolute concepts from which stems the absurd... Yosofski has written that: "The roots of Mrozek's humour is in parody". It should be added that these roots do not only shoot up to the skies, but also cut down deeply into the sub-soil. The scalpel of parody is generally wielded to lay bare the external in order to focus attention on underlying importance. Mrozek on the other hand, parodies not the superficiality but the deeper meaning itself.

The development of the plot of "Tango" is dialectical. Thesis: the old order leads to revolt. Antithesis: revolt brings in its wake absolute freedom, anarchy, lawlessness. Synthesis: Lawlessness becomes law; the new order, freedom from restraint. The offspring of anarchy is the reign of unrestrained freedom.

In "Tango", Arthur genuinely desires to reform the world, seeking the role of law, the right setting, a sense of vision, and rightly so, for the world of "Tango" is caricature. There is not only wisdom in the lofty quest for order, it is almost an obligation. Mrozek portrays the process of "absurdification" of the vision, through which reality evolves into myth – reason in its absolute form. The running of the world once deified demands sacrifice, in demonstration of its essential truth.

A totalistic world outlook is transformed into totalitarianism. The drama of vision crosses the threshold of reality and enters the realm of the grotesque. The foundations of myth having been laid it only remains to build it up and expand. The mechanism is operated and around the whole structure there develops a very real power structure, which functions perfectly as has been shown in Mrozek's earlier shorter pieces, which may be seen retrospectively as dramatic sketches of the conclusion of "Tango".

