dynamic principle of combining visually effective elements of rakurs, using excentric shapes of human positions (postures) in movement, is to create the entire image of a figure as a result of ‚compressed' associations and meanings in a vivid shape. This way, one may see the entire performance as a rakurs: the compressed meaning, given in a visual form.
The extremely visual and dynamic expression of Meyerhold's stagings was the final result of his attempt to define theatre as an art, that is determined by perceptible outer forms of movement.

Biomechanics and Production

Meyerhold created in his productions, similar to a choreografer in ballet, scores of movements for his actors to learn. After the repetition of these scores the actors had to add a score of emotional expressions and words. In this way, working on the role and on the entire production followed the same principle, Meyerhold had established in his studio in St. Petersburg and in his biomechanic exercises. For this technique of training actors and this acting-style he invented the artifical word: dancantnost – ‚danceness'.

Dircecting plays Meyerhold simply showed each actor the role's score of movements. He, as a former scholar of Stanislavsky, was able to ‚experience' the role and to find the emotional expressions. Often confusing his actors Meyerhold showed while rehearsing a highly dramatic scene how to act. He suddenly turned pale, tears poured from his eyes. In one case, infuriated the actor Mologin, who was shocked by this violation of the principles of constructivist theatre, cried: "What is that? He ‚experiences' and doesn't ‚play'.... That is the technique of the Art theatre, the Stanislavsky system!" [18] Meyerhold - who had been caught red-handed – was forced to apologize. He could hardly explain, that this was only a technically produced trick, that he provoked the appearance of tears artificially and that there was no connection with any kind of emotional experience.

There is, of course, no doubt, that ‚outer' corporeal processes influence the ‚inner' processes of feelings and sensations and vice versa. These inter-relationships were well known and emploid by the traditional Asian theatres as well as by Lessing, who described them in detail in chapter 3 of his "Hamburg Dramaturgy". However, the creation of emotions out of movements and bodily postures by resorting to‚educated' conditioned reflexes, similar to the famous dogs of Pavlov, never really worked.

Therefore, Meyerhold demanded that his actors fill their scores of movements with images. This would lead them to emotions. However, he didn't teach them how to insert images into these scores of movements. Except for a few leading actors the majority of them were not able to free themeselves from copying the drilled scores in order to improvise on them. So, Lee Strassberg, visiting Moscow and attending the Meyerhold theatre in 1934, wrote in his Russian Notebook: "The acting on the stage at the Meyerhold theatre was not satisfactory, and Meyerhold himself was the first one to recognize it. When I confronted him with it (...), asking wether he didn`t want his actors to feel, to experience on the stage, he looked at me with annoyance and said he did. I then asked him: ‚Well, why don't they?' And he very abruptly said: ‚Because they are bad actors."[19]

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[18] N.N. Tschuschkin, V sporach o teatre, in: Vstretschi s Meyerholdom, Moskau, 1967, S. 416
[19] Lee Strassberg, Russian Notebook (1934), in The Drama Review, New York, 1973, Nr. 1 (March), p. 108

Meyerhold was not given time to solve this problem. Since the mid-twenties he had spent all his energies experementing with directing – the most important productions were "The Forest" (1924) and "The Government Inspector" (1926) – and took less time to educate his actors personally. His productions at that time tended to become in outlook more ‚realistic' than ‚excentric'. He also emphazised that his system and the Stanislavsky System would not exclude each other. They should be seen as two different approaches with the same aim. Two circumstances caused this shift. On the one hand, he was trying to broaden the limitations of his artifical and stylized (uslovny) theatre, to enhance the potential to deal with incorporated different acting-styles and dramaturgies. On the other hand he was beginning to feel the pressure exerted by the campaign against Formalism in Soviet Art. In the 1930's the deepening Stalinization of Soviet society and the reglementation of artistic thought by the normative dogma of Socialist Realism stopped the further development of Meyerhold's theatre. After the party's newspaper "Pravda" declared his theatre as "alien theatre" it was closed in 1938. In 1939 Meyerhold himself was arrested and accused of being a spy. In 1940 he was executed.
For years his name disappeared from the pages of Russian Theatre History.

The legend of the seemingly mysterious technique and the corporeal visual sensuality of Meyerhold's theatre lived on. The interest in Meyerhold survived the end of the avantgarde of the modernistic age due to Meyerhold's ‚traditionalism' within modernism. Traditionalism one can find as well in the occult interests of many other artists at that time or in the religious and cultic tendencies of modern art. Modern Dance in Germany, for instance, was born with Rudolf Labans cultic "Dance to the Sun" in 1913 – at the same time the Russian futurists staged the famous futuristic opera "Victory over the Sun". In this way, Modernist art responded contradictionarly to the fundamental changes in social life, technology and communication. Meyerhold's artistic practice was to certain degree contradictionary to the strict rationality of his theory.

The idea of the new man, created by Biomechanics, has to be seen in a wider cultural context. That is why major theatre reformers after 1945 were so interested in Meyerhold. Although their approaches were quite different from Meyerhold's and as well different from each other: Jerzy Grotovsky, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook and the Living Theatre, they all were interested in the athropological dimensions of Meyerhold's Biomechanics. However, there is not only this direct reference to Meyerhold's heritage. It seems to me to be more important to compare Meyerhold's approach to developments in contemporary theatre that do not directly and openly refer to Meyerhold.

Robert Wilson's theatre, for instance, is an attempt to create a theatre which draws attention to the separeted codes of theatre themeselves: movements, sounds, language and images. Wilson creates scores of movements that are parallel to and independent of the narrative structure of the texts. These scores were developed by the principle that - in Wilson's terms - only if something in art becomes totally mechanic it becomes free'. A principle that sounds very similar to the paradox formulated by Meyerhold.

Moreover, the emphasis on "surfaces", on the body and its "revalations" is characteristic of many forms of theatre in a contemporary world where bodies seem to disappear altogether.

Before having a closer look at the similarities and the differences in Meyerhold's and Robert Wilson's theatre I would like to refer briefly to Lyotard's views on differences between modernism

and postmodernism. This is just to point to some aspects of the paradigm-shift in the arts from the first half to the end of the 20th century.

Lyotard's idea of an energetic theatre

On the occassion of the exhibition "Les Immateriaux" in 1985 Lyotard mentioned the following criteria to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism. The project of the Moderns is, first, determined by "an intelligent individual, talented with imagination and intention", (that) "divides analytically the given facts of the world in separate elements and then either recreates them (as fictions) or creates totally new facts (as artefactes)." That is the expression of the "metaphysics and politics of the individual" in his/her relationship with the given facts of the world. Secondly man in modernism is determined by the idea "to make himself the master not only of space, but also of time. The principle ‚to economize time' spreads from every day life ... to the knowledge ... and to the art."[20]
The postmodern view is, first, determined by the idea that the individual has no more the privilege to be the one and only creator and receiver of messages. He/she is a translator, an imminant part of the given facts of the world. Secondly, postmodernism is determined by the idea that "the generalization of the principle of movement generalizes the relativity, as well the relativity of the cognition of man's situation." Further it is determined by the "loss of an ideal of a simple and transparent society" and by "the search for immediacy that finds everywhere a complexity, which can not be mastered immediately and by one stroke."[21]

One of Lyotard's models of a contemporary art is the "energetic theatre". His energetic theatre is also determined by turning away from the metaphysical privilege of the individual and by the idea of the "absence of the signified" . Instead of playing the game of symbols, of represantations, which are always determined by a hierarchic discourse of power, the energetic theatre would break through this type of hierarchic discourse. Instead of complaining about or critically laying bear the alianation in the capitalistic mode of production one could see alianation as a positive development.
"The law of values puts us potentially in a non-hierarchic circulation where the tooth and the hand (here Lyotard refers to the symbolisation of the toothache by clenching one's fist) are not in a relationship of truth and illusion, of cause and effect, of signifier and signified (or vice versa), but they both coexist independently of each other... They are forces, intensities, affects in their own presence."[22]

The energetic theatre, which according to Lyotard had already appeared in some of Cage's, Cunningham's and Rauschenberg's performances, would be determined by the presence of the actors instead of the acts of representing roles and by the independence of the different theatrical codes and channels of communiaction. Therefore, in this energetic play of intensities the hierarchic power-relations and the hierarchy of the producer over the symbols and the audience would be impossible.

Meyerhold and Wilson: similarities and differences

One may interpret the structural principles of Robert Wilson's work, seen from this perspective, as an example of an energetic theatre evisaged by Lyotard. Similar to Meyerhold, Wilson creates scores of movements for his actors that are even more strongly fixed than in Meyerhold's theater and which

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[20] J.-F. Lyotard, Immaterialität und Postmoderne, Berlin, 1985, S. 84/85
[21] ebda.
[22] J.F. Lyotard, Essays zu einer affirmativen Ästhetik, Berlin, 1982, S. 20/21