

# *Patriarch Enoch's Seven Heavens*

## *A play as an icon*

The experiment of working with nontheatrical text and artistic ceramics  
as a part of a scenography

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As a foundation of my dissertation I decided to use the monodrama „Patriarch Enoch's Seven Heavens” written and performed by me. I also designed and made a scenography for the play. From 2017 to 2020 the performance has been shown several dozen times across Poland.

My treatise describes a vast range of artistic steps I took within the mentioned project. In the first chapter „Preparing the script” I present the process of writing the scenario for the play. It is based on the Second Book of Enoch, a Jewish apocryph written in Greek at the turn of the Common Era. Later on it was adopted by Christians and got popular in Byzantium during the Middle Ages. To the present day only an Old Church Slavic translation from the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries has remained. To make a script for the monodrama I had to conduct research about the origins of the apocryph and also enrich it with motifs derived from Greco-Roman and, what is more important, Ruthenian-Byzantine culture. Thanks to my efforts a nontheatrical, archaic and hermetic text became a universal story about a human journey to the Absolute.

The second chapter „Scenography” describes a process of preparing the stage set. It consisted mainly of ceramic icons made by me. Before I designed them I had studied the tradition of Ruthenian-Byzantine religious images. I wanted to create a scenography based on artistic ceramics, which is rarely seen in theatre plays. My efforts gave an interesting scenical result.

In the third chapter „Staging and role development” I describe the process of creating the character of patriarch Enoch and his scenes. I started with thinking up his way of speaking, making gestures, etc., in a word - his whole stage persona. I wanted to show on the one hand an archaic biblical hero and on the other a universal „icon” of a traveller seeking of wisdom and self-consciousness. Also in this section I describe purely technical scenical activities.

In the fourth chapter of my treatise „Staging in different spaces” I describe and analyse many factors that influenced the final forms of my performances given in various places and at different times. It is interesting to me how places such as theatre, church, synagogue, museum of icons, etc., were influencing me as an actor and my scenical creation. Also in this chapter I study how audiences of various types were reacting to my play.

The play, considering also all the actions taken within the project, can be contemplated as an „icon” in its primary meaning, which is „reflection”, „representation” – representation of a reality formed from a material absorbing the mentioned substance. As I wrote in the conclusions of my dissertation:

*All the mentioned actions and experiences concluded in a play, which became an „icon” in a sense I wrote about at the beginning of my treatise: it is a reflection of an archetypal image. A manifold reflection. First the archaic apocryph was mirrored in the scenario of the monodrama. Second images contained in a story of Enoch’s journey found their reflection in earthenware icons that were part of the scenography. Third the text and images were mirrored in the staging of the play. But there is also a fourth and a fifth reflection. Another one can be found in the spectators and their strong impressions after the play - cited opinions clearly show it. And there is the actor, whom all the mentioned aspects of the work simultaneously affected. It was a unique and unforgettable experience, hard to describe in words. Certainly it will help in my further artistic work and also, what is very important to me, in my didactic work at the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw.*

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