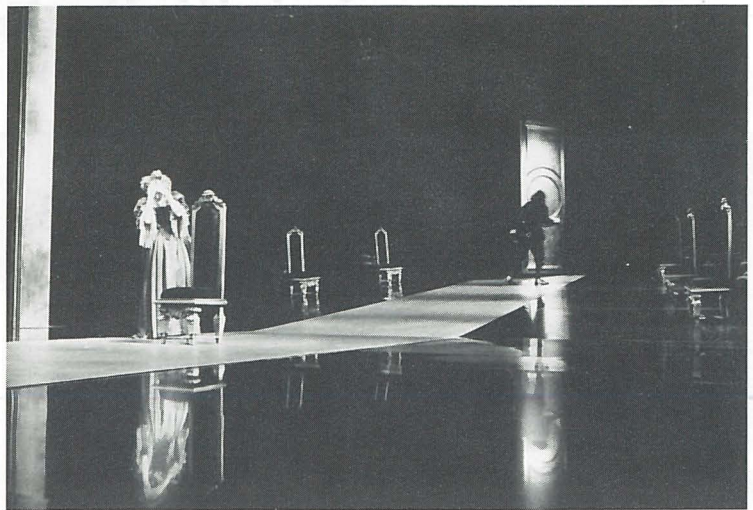




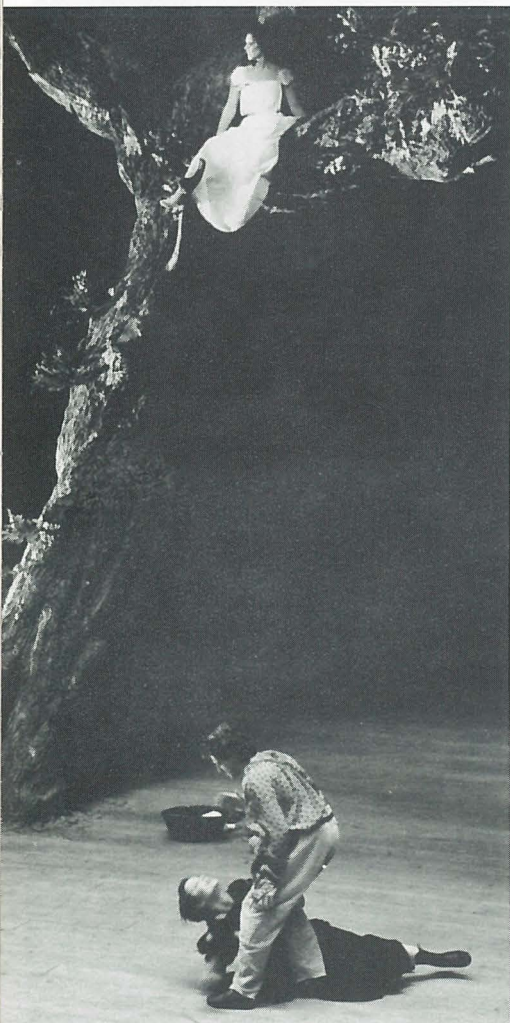
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stages of a production, Vitez needs to be able to visualize the space in which he will work in order to ground emerging ideas in reality. "I find that you can't have theatre if you don't have a theatrical space. That's important because often actors believe the work of an actor is an art in itself, tied only to the sensibility of the actor. But that's not so. His work is totally related to the space in which it will take place. So it's indispensable that the actors are conscious of the decor and space in which they are." If not, Vitez complains, they act always in the same manner. "I often work in bifrontal or trifrontal spaces, rather than a traditional front and interior setting, and naturally the actor's work is completely different. I can't create or direct if I don't have an idea of the decor, of the room."

This being the case, an idea of the decor, but not the actual set, is created as soon as Vitez approaches a new project. "When I am directing, I don't need the real set on stage to rehearse. It suffices to have a drawing. In fact, that's better than working with an existing decor because then it can easily be modified by the performance of the actors as it develops. The final result will be somewhere between the work of the actors and the idea of the decor. Then the decor will be really used by the actors."

As much as decor is important to Vitez, lighting and costumes are not. These come in the latter stages and bear less in-

fluence on the development.

That Vitez has been able to bring new blood into the Comédie Française is not surprising, given the smooth, evolutionary ascent of his own career. The man described as "provocative, purist, popular, and elitist" by a leading news journal made his debut as director at age 36. By 1972, he was co-director of the National Theatre of Chaillot.

Two years later, Vitez founded the Theatre of Ivry. Among the works he directed during his nine years there were four Molière plays in the same decor, with which his high reputation was soundly established. Prior to the Comédie Française, Vitez returned to the head of Theatre of Chaillot, where he produced everything from Hugo to Shakespeare to a historic version of Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin*.

In keeping with his innovative scheduling at the Comédie Française, Vitez recently announced that the company's Salle Richelieu will reopen after the August holidays with Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio*; designed by Jean-Pierre Vergier, followed by *As You Like It*, Beaumarchais' *The Guilty Mother*, to be designed by Jean-Paul Chambas, Sartre's *No Exit*, a Molière double-bill of *The Forced Marriage* and *A Doctor In Spite of Himself*, both designed by Claude Lemaire, and Brecht's *Galileo*, directed by Vitez and designed by Kokkos.