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in an exhibition catalogue — “I regard cloth as closest to man... the intermediary between the human body and the external world. It’s pliable but it can also be stiff, transparent, or opaque; it can merge things or be wrinkled, be beautiful, or repellent. And it’s actually relatively inexpensive and storable.”

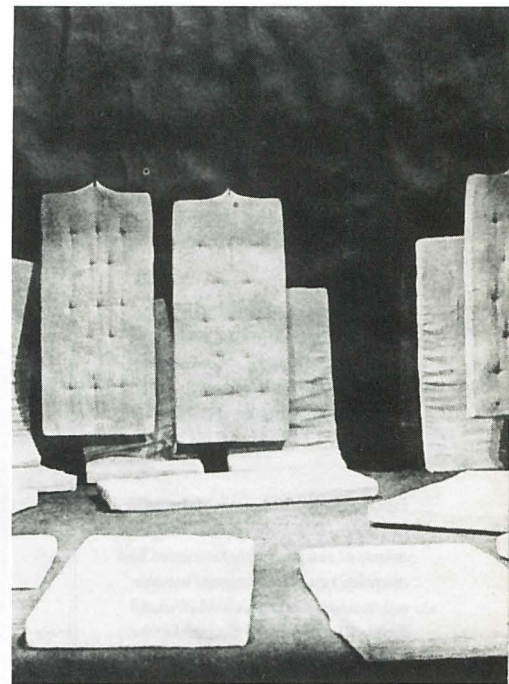
Not that Malina is addicted to novel applications of cloth. In two productions at Prague’s National Theatre, Malina used very traditional stage flats and drew on his painter’s love of colour in striking ways. For *Love’s Labour Lost* (1987), he assembled as a background a series of tall, mobile flats with irregular shapes suggesting the crowns of trees. The tops of the flats, however, were of plain translucent canvas to suggest something like clouds, while obviously remaining flats; the lower sections were covered with vividly painted papier mache in the form of floral reliefs. In *Miss Julie* (1988), similar but lower and even more vividly painted flats formed the encompassing background to a wall-less kitchen. According to Malina, the background created the floral atmosphere of midsummer eve in the manner of the youthful work of Edvard Munch.

In these and other works, Malina makes no effort to hide the necessary technical components. These are usually rather simple — almost as if deliberately homemade — in contrast to the usually elaborate, sophisticated equipment of

many theatres, which he finds too standardized. Ideally, he says, he would like to design settings that could exist anywhere, independent of stage technology.

As if to demonstrate that he cannot be pigeonholed, he took a new turn in one of his more recent productions. *Merlin* is a metaphysical fantasy by the East German writer Tancred Dorst. For the 1988 production, cloth gave way to oxydized metallic walls and a very large, kinetic metal ring with lighting units (à la Steven Spielberg’s film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*), which also served as King Arthur’s roundtable. Talking about the production, he says, “The tendency for years has been to do simplified theatre in reaction against grandiose theatricalism and imitative decorativeness. By now it has perhaps become too simplified, even boring. Here in this production we could again attempt a great theatricality, theatre of greater effect, greater show.”

If Malina incorporates both traditionally expressive and more recent minimalist tendencies, Jan Dusek, born in Prague in 1942, leans more consistently toward the latter. Dusek came to formal scenographic study after five years of very practical experience as a scene builder and painter for Prague’s famed Barandov film studios and also for one of Prague’s municipal theatres. At DAMU he was one of the last to complete his studies under Tröster, in



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■ Dusek’s minimalist environments stress function over decor. His stages are designed to work with the dramatic context of the work, rather than to stand alone. (3, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, 1983; 4, *MacBeth*, 1981)

● *Les environnements minimalistes de Dusek sont plus fonctionnels que décoratifs. Ses décors sont d’avantage construits dans l’esprit dramatique du texte que pour eux-mêmes.* (3, *Long’s Day Journey Into Night*, 1983; 4, *MacBeth*, 1981).

▼ Duseks minimalistische Bühnenbilder betonen das Funktionelle gegenüber der Ausstattung. Seine Bühnendesigns sollen weniger für sich allein stehen, als im dramatischen Kontext des Werks wirken. (3, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, 1983; 4, *MacBeth*, 1981).