

# Contents

Preface	9
1. B & Co.	13
2. William Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i>	25
3. August Strindberg, <i>Miss Julie</i>	39
4. August Strindberg, <i>A Dream Play</i>	55
5. William Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i>	69
6. Eugene O'Neill, <i>Long Day's Journey into Night</i>	87
7. Yukio Mishima, <i>Madame de Sade</i>	101
8. Henrik Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i>	115
9. Henrik Ibsen, <i>Peer Gynt</i>	129
10. William Shakespeare, <i>The Winter's Tale</i>	143
11. J.B.P. Molière, <i>The Misanthrope</i>	157
12. Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i>	171
13. August Strindberg, <i>The Ghost Sonata</i>	183
14. Friedrich von Schiller, <i>Mary Stuart</i>	195
15. Henrik Ibsen, <i>Ghosts</i>	209
16. The Serious Game	223

Production Data	237
Bibliography	253
DVD list	259
Index	263

## Preface

Film is an international medium, theatre a national one. As a film director, Ingmar Bergman (hereafter B) is world-famous; as a stage director he is little known outside his own country. Even if some of B's stage productions have been seen not only in Sweden but also abroad, the number of people attending them was very limited compared to the number that has attended his films. Moreover, before the invention of supertexts a non-Swedish theatre audience was forced either to listen to a language they did not understand or listen to an undramatic translation via earphones.

The media dichotomy is reflected in the disproportionate attention that has been devoted to B as a film and as a stage director. While there are by now some fifty books on B as a film director, only a handful concern themselves with his work in the theatre. And yet his 171 stage productions by far outnumber his 77 film and TV productions.

When Henrik Sjögren published his book *Ingmar Bergman på teatern* in 1968, it was the first time a survey was given of B's stage productions. This was followed in 2002 by his *Lek och raseri: Ingmar Bergman's teater 1938-2002*, covering B's total stage career. Himself a theatre critic, Sjögren's analyses are based partly on his own impressions of the performances and partly, and more extensively, on impressions by various, mostly Swedish, theatre critics. In addition, both books contain dialogues with B on the various productions. In 1982, Lise-Lone and Frederick J. Marker published their *Ingmar Bergman: Four Decades in the Theater*, which was then revised, expanded and published ten years later under the title *Ingmar Bergman: A Life in the Theater*. Both books focus on Molière, Ibsen, and Strindberg productions. And both contain conversations with B on theatre. Extremely useful is Birgitta Steene's well-documented survey "Ingmar Bergman in the Theatre" (455-762) in her extensive *Ingmar Bergman: A Reference Guide* (2005).

Unlike Sjögren and the Markers, my analyses are largely based on my own impressions both of the live and the video-recorded presentations. The analyses often relate the visual elements to the dialogue, frequently in the form of transcriptions of directorially rewarding passages. This I consider essential, since a description of merely the visual and acoustic aspects and not the connected verbal ones easily remains vague. Comments on B as a stage director in the introductory chapter "B & Co." rely to some extent on impressions during my attendance of B's rehearsals of his third production of Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata* in the fall of 1972.

Much could be said about the process leading to the finished play productions. In the present book, I limit myself to end results and let the proof be in the pudding.

Another limitation is the restriction to fourteen of B's late productions, all of them from 1984 to 2002, all of them based on classical dramas. The choice of late productions was natural for several reasons. Not only was B now an exceedingly experienced director, often referred to as *maestro*. He had also, after a less successful period at the Residenztheater in Munich, returned to what he called the paternal house, the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, commonly known as Dramaten, where all his subsequent stage performances took place in his own native tongue. He had stopped directing films. Last but not least, from this period several relatively good video recordings of the stage performances are available. The fact that all the productions discussed here are based on classical dramas has the advantage that the texts are easily available both in the original language and in translation.

The fourteen video recordings, by now transmitted to dvd, are all in colour. The oldest of them, *King Lear*, exists in two versions, one in black-and-white, with a fixed camera showing the whole stage, and another in colour with a movable camera showing the actors in medium shots and close-ups. The former version is unable to show mimicry, small gestures and objects. The latter does not inform us about what the rest of the stage looks like. The two versions are in other words complementary. This is an ideal situation and it is regrettable that it has not been followed up in later recordings. In the single versions bestowed on them we find variation between long shots, showing the whole stage, medium shots and, occasionally, close-ups. What we get is something between the objectivity of the theatre and the subjectivity of the film.

The two-dimensionality of the video may make it difficult to assess actors' movements in relation to the stage depth (Heed, 1989: 99). Projections and dark areas may be difficult to discern. But the possibility of stopping, rewinding, and repeating images and sequences in the recordings is an enormous asset, although this possibility violates "the dictate of the temporal uniqueness of the theatre event" (Pavis, 1982: 123).

As appears from the Production Data (p. 237), most of the recordings took place before opening night, but a few took place after it. In either case, the recorded version may differ from that of the opening night, witnessed by the reviewers. In the versions of *Peer Gynt* and *The Bacchae* the acting is here and there interrupted by instructions from B.

Apart from the recordings, I was able to study the production scripts, that is, the scripts of the version-to-be-played handled by the actors as

well as almost all of B's prompt scripts. In addition to this material, the reviews, usually appearing the day after the opening night (and therefore here undated), have provided helpful insights and corroborations.

Although stage productions are the result of team work where actors play a crucial part, I have refrained from mentioning actors' names – they can all be found in the section on Production Data at the end – in order not to encumber the reading and in the awareness that most of these names are unknown to a non-Swedish audience. This should not be seen as a sign of playing down the actors' contributions which, as already mentioned, were crucial. As the title of my introductory chapter, *B & Co.*, indicates the letter B should frequently be spelled out “B as leader of the production team.”

A theatre performance sooner or later belongs to the past. When theatre critics use present tense in their reviews, it is because the performance is still running, probably will stay on for some time, and consequently can be attended by the readers of the review in question. For the theatre historian it is more natural to use past tense – the tense used here – for performances that are passed and gone. The existence of recordings of performances on video/dvd cannot change the fact that these are based on live, that is, non-repeatable theatrical events.

For stage directions, I use italics throughout. Speaker labels and character designations are put in roman low-case capitals. References to reviews in the running text lack dates since it can be assumed that all reviews have appeared shortly after the premiere, the date of which is given in the list of production data.

In the productions examined here Euripides' Greek, Shakespeare's English, Molière's French, and Schiller's German were usually rather freely rendered into Swedish. As a result the Swedish target texts often deviate considerably from the source texts. All quotations from the productions are in my own English rendering of the Swedish texts.

A substantial part of this book has appeared earlier. Chapter 3 relies partly on pp. 163-85 in mine and Barry Jacobs' *Strindberg's Miss Julie: A Play and Its Transpositions*, (Norwich: Norvik Press, 1988). Chapter 6 was originally published as “Ingmar Bergman Directs *Long Day's Journey into Night*” in *New Theatre Quarterly*, V: 20, 1989, and as “Proxemics on Page and Stage: O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* – and Bergman's” in *North-West Passage* (Torino), 5, 2008. Short sections of Chapters 7 and 12 earlier appeared as “Mishima's *Madame de Sade* on Stage and on Television” and “Euripides' *The Bacchae* as Opera, Television Opera, and Stage Play” in *Bergman's Muses: Aesthetic Versatility in Film, Theatre, Television and Radio*, (Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2003). Chapter 8 is partly based on

“Ingmar Bergman’s *Doll’s Houses*,” *Scandinavica*, 30:1, May 1991. Chapter 10 owes much to “Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*” in my *Between Stage and Screen: Ingmar Bergman Directs*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995). Chapter 13 appeared as “Ingmar Bergman’s fjärde *Spöksonat*” in *Strindbergiana*, 16, ed. Birgitta Steene, (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2001). Chapter 15 was earlier published as “Ingmar Bergman’s *Gengångare*” in *Nordisk Tidskrift*, 82:4, 2006. All these publications have here been thoroughly revised.

For invaluable assistance I am much indebted to Dr. Dag Kronlund, librarian at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, and his assistant Christine Sundberg, as well as to Dr. Jan Holmberg, head of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation in Stockholm.

## 1. B & Co.

Most directors have opted for one or a few artistic media: theatre, film, radio, television, opera. B opted for them all. But two of them took precedence: theatre and film. His comparison of the former to his wife, the latter to his mistress, has become legendary. There was always a close connection between the two, between his work for the stage and his work for the screen:

My films are only a distillation of what I do in the theatre. Theatre work is sixty percent.... Not even considering the connection between *The Seventh Seal* and my production of *Ur-Faust* (although they came about in the reverse order). Not even considering the connection between *The Face* [*The Magician* in the U.S.] and my production of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in Malmö. (B in Sjöman, 1963: 102)

Seven years later, he declared: “Between my job at the theater and my job in the film studio it has always been a very short step indeed. Sometimes it has paid off, and sometimes it has been a drawback. But it has always been a short step between” (B, 1973: 99).

As a stage director B was living with a particular play in heart and mind for long periods. Many of these plays left traces in the films. *The Seventh Seal* grew out of a play, *Wood Painting. Smiles of a Summer Night* “is constructed like a piece by Marivaux – in the classical 18<sup>th</sup> century manner” (B, 1973: 66f.). *Through a Glass Darkly* is “a surreptitious stage-play” (ib. 163). *Winter Light* took shape in his mind as “a medieval play” (B, 1994b: 258). B himself made a stage version of his TV series *Scenes from a Marriage* and many of his films have later been adapted into stage plays.

As a film maker, Marianne Höök claimed, B “is always primarily the man of the theater who distrusts technical shortcuts, relying solely on the human being and the spoken word” (Cowie, 1992: 300). There is much to be said for the view that “no other film director after the breakthrough of the sound film has been so influenced by the theatre” (Zern, 1993: 59). B’s theatrical orientation is further corroborated by his frequent use of stage or stage-like performances in his films (Koskinen, 1993: 155-262).

When we reverse the picture and look at cinematic qualities in B’s stage productions, we may think of such an obvious phenomenon as the use of projections in the productions of *A Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, and *The Ghost Sonata*. But we may also think of the tendency to replace a firm act structure with a looser scene structure. We may think of the added initial

action preceding the action proper; compare the use of pre-title sequences in screen drama. We may think of the focussing on the characters' faces through positioning and lighting. Or of the use of slow-motion or frozen movements on the stage. Last but not least, B's experience from film direction undoubtedly sharpened his awareness of how to direct "the audience's attention [...] to certain circumstances on the stage" (B in Sjögren, 1968: 293).

Lighting has, due to the fast technical development, become an exceedingly important element in stage performances. B's experience as a film director helped to make him aware of the potentials of light, also in the theatre. Referring to Sven Nykvist, he once told an interviewer: "Our common passion – and I feel this even on the stage – is to create light: light and faces surrounded by shadows. This is what fascinates me!" (Kaminsky, 1975: 129f.) In another interview, he gave an illuminating example: "The actors' relation to the stage is also a part of the rhythm of the performance, and if you change the angle at which the light strikes the stage, you achieve a completely new rhythm" (B in Marker/Marker, 1992: 17).

In B's work dream and reality were closely interwoven and the theatre – this home of dreams – frequently became a metaphor for this world of illusions. The theatre family in *Fanny and Alexander* is named Ekdahl in recognition of the fact that, like Ibsen's Ekdal family in *The Wild Duck*, they live by illusions. Emilie Ekdahl's exit from the theatre and return to it – she has a predecessor in Elisabet Vogler in *Persona* – is paradigmatic for her ambivalent attitude to the house of illusions and to the reality outside that is so characteristic of many of B's figures as well as of their creator.<sup>1</sup>

B was a director already in the nursery, where he staged plays in his puppet theatre. "I leant over my toy theatre," he once said, "my games making me ruler of the stage, my imagination populating it" (B, 1989: 20); the description is that of an omnipotent director. B's debut as a stage director in the proper sense took place in 1938 when he was 20. At about the same time he started writing fiction, mostly plays. In the 1940s a few of them were published and produced, some directed by B himself. One of them, *Jack Among the Actors*, deals with a troupe of actors who are treated like puppets by their autocratic director. "There was a frustrated dramatist in me," he confessed in the mid-1950s. "I wrote stage plays for the screen in those days, because the theatre seemed closed to me" (Steene, 1972: 43).

1 In his Erasmus speech (1965), B stated that "people today can reject the theater," since in the TV age they "live in the midst of a drama which is constantly exploding in local tragedy" (B, 1972: 14).



Directors like Torsten Hammarén, Olof Molander, and Alf Sjöberg were important mentors. Hammarén “taught me the methodological rudiments of stagecraft. In a ruthless way he took me out of the notion of emotional wallowing, i.e., of feeling your way [into a production] and of talking about things” (B in Steene, 2005: 460). Molander was the leading Swedish stage director in the thirties and forties, especially renowned for his Strindberg productions. In the theatre program for his 1945 performance of Strindberg’s *The Pelican*, B stated his indebtedness to Molander who:

has made us see the magic in Strindberg’s dramaturgy. [...] [He] gives us Strindberg without embellishments or directional visions, tunes in to the text, and leaves it at that. He makes us hear the poet’s anxiety-driven fever pulse. [...] We listen to a strange, muted chamber music. [...]

First it was *A Dream Play*. Night after night I stood in the wings and sobbed and never really knew why. After that came *To Damascus*, *Saga of the Folkungs*, and *The Ghost Sonata*. It is the sort of thing you never forget and never leave behind, especially if you happen to be a director [...].

Alf Sjöberg was for a long time the chief director at Dramaten, responsible for many successful productions. Although different in other respects, the three directors shared a rather authoritarian attitude to the actors, typical for the period. This attitude suited B well. Early described as a demonic director, B has been characterised as a representative of “the despotic type of direction” in the tradition of Olof Molander and Torsten Hammarén by Keve Hjelm (2004: 130), himself an outstanding actor and director.<sup>2</sup>

...As head of Dramaten he reformed the theatre in several respects. He increased the influence of the actors on decision-making. He improved possibilities for a children’s theatre. And he organized public rehearsals.

At the end of the 1960s, under influence of the Vietnam War, the cultural climate in Sweden changed. In addition to the traditional, institutionalised theatres, free theatre groups arose. Politically left-wing, they regarded theatre as a weapon in the struggle for a less elitist, more equal society and applied strictly democratic principles to their work. Plays were written by the groups themselves and were thoroughly debated by the cast during

<sup>2</sup> Bengt Forslund (2003: 248, 264) has pointed to several professional similarities between Olof Molander and B.

rehearsals. Rather than being the supreme leader, the director was one of the group. And the group was expected to embrace a left-wing standpoint that agreed with ideas behind the productions. B soon came into conflict with this politicised form of theatre which he experienced as intolerant and neurotically topical. The free theatre groups, on their part, regarded B's work as elitist and his direction as authoritarian.

B's "paternal home," The Royal Dramatic Theatre, founded in 1788, is Sweden's national theatre. Its present edifice, centrally located in Stockholm, was erected in 1908 and is considered one of the capital's most beautiful Jugend buildings. In the period we are here concerned with some 370 people were employed at the theatre, about 80 of whom were actors. Nearly 1400 performances were given every season on six stages. Three of these were used by B: the Big Stage, a traditional proscenium stage with a horse-shoe-formed auditorium seating 805; the Small Stage, a rebuilt cinema, this too a proscenium stage seating 345; and the (former) Paint Room, a flexible stage seating 200. While the Big Stage is hierarchic, some seats being better and more expensive than others, the Small Stage and the Paint Room are democratic in their arrangement of seats. The Paint Room was B's favourite stage. Thinking perhaps of Strindberg's *Intimate Theatre* which contained about as many equal seats, B's plan was to make this stage his own once he had stopped filming (Sjögren, 2002: 111). "The Paint Room is a wonderful locality," he found, "with perfect contact with the audience. We have found the right sightlines, everyone sees well" (ib.: 342). The Big Stage, on the other hand, was acoustically somewhat problematic. "The second and third balconies are excellent. But if you wish to be heard, for instance, between rows 6 and 12 in the stalls, you need to have a good diction" (ib.: 245). In 1993 the machinery of the Big Stage was digitalised.

Like most theatres in Sweden, Dramaten had in B's time, and still has, a primarily middle-class audience. In 1983, one year before B's production of *King Lear*, an investigation of Dramaten's audience showed that 68% of the theatre-goers were well-educated, 65% were women, 53% were politically liberal or conservative, 38% had seen 3-5 productions in that same year, four out of five were Stockholmers; classical plays and comedies were favoured (Nowak in Näslund/Sörenson, 1988: 200). The reasons for a visit to a Dramaten production would vary from confidence in the quality of the productions at the theatre to confidence in the director (very relevant in B's case), interest in particular actors, or in the play that was being performed. Of great importance was the difference between spectators with and without a theatre program; unlike the latter, the former received

additional information about the play to be performed, information that would often influence their reception of the performance.

“Masterpieces of the past are good for the past: they are not good for us.” Antonin Artaud’s (1958: 74) heretic standpoint clashed with B’s which on the contrary maintained that “the classics express the problems of our time better than the plays of our own time” (*Expressen* Feb. 13, 1973), a major reason, it seems, why most of the plays he directed at Dramaten between 1984-2002 were indeed classics. Peter Brook (1972: 38) expressed himself to the same effect: “all the theatres can do is make an unhappy choice between great traditional writing or far less good modern works.” Charles Marowitz (1986: 6), too, was in favour of the classics: “The special virtue of a classic is that it can mean again and again – above and beyond what it originally meant. It is a compliment to its endless resourcefulness, its ability constantly to recreate itself like the chameleon that it is.”

In the 1970’s, B said in an interview, the attitude to the classics was negative:

the classics weren’t to be played as classics. They had to be rewritten or butchered, reduced to public polemics or private confrontations. They were dismantled and disarmed. Instead of showing the unadulterated classics in all their explosive energy, an effort was made to reduce them to something cut and dried, clear and concise, easy to comprehend. (Bergström, 1995: 18).

This evaluation provokes the question: How “unadulterated” were the classics B himself produced in the following decades? In the subsequent chapters this question will be dealt with.

B was not interested in the absurdists and referred to them as “fast food for impatient people.” He never did Beckett or Pinter. He did not care for political theatre and he staged Brecht only once: *The Threepenny Opera*. He was indifferent to Lars Norén, since the mid-1980s Sweden’s most important and most successful dramatist.

The primary reason for his choice of a particular play, B often assessed, was that he had the right actors for it (Sjögren, 2002: 428). He would have liked to direct *Amorina* and *The Queen’s Jewel* by Carl Jonas Love Almqvist, both staged by Alf Sjöberg, but never felt that he had “the right cast” for these plays (ib.: 184). Mishima’s *Madame de Sade* with its all-woman cast was suitable because he could get precisely the actresses he wanted (ib.: 429). During rehearsals of *Miss Julie* he sensed that Peter Stormare would make a good Hamlet. Watching Pernilla Östergren rehearsing

in his fourth *Dream Play* he realised that “finally, after many years of waiting, the Royal Dramatic Theatre had a new Nora” (B, 1994b: 321); three years later she was to take up this part in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. A major reason for the choice of Schiller’s *Maria Stuart* was that Pernilla August and Lena Endre were both available for the main parts (*Dagens Nyheter* Feb. 19, 1999).

Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, Strindberg are dramatists B frequently returned to.<sup>3</sup> Of these, Strindberg held a special place. Strindberg, he early declared, “expressed things which I’d experienced and which I couldn’t find words for” (B, 1973: 24). A major reason why B turned to directing was no doubt that as a director he could express audiovisually what he was unable or less able to express verbally.<sup>4</sup>

Every theatre production, we now take for granted, has a director. But B distinguished between plays which need a director and plays which don’t. The plays by Marivaux, O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, he maintained, need no director (Marker/Marker, 1992: 15).<sup>5</sup>

Unlike a dramatist, a director is necessarily socially involved. “I have an enormous need of contact with other people,” B told Timm (1994: 153), adding that his profession highly fulfilled this need, especially in the theatre where he would be surrounded by much the same people for long periods.

Although the head of Dramaten was and is officially responsible for the repertoire each season and for the actors taking part in the productions, B always had a strong, usually decisive, voice in both matters with regard to his own productions (Löfgren, 2003: 401). As a master director he could “without much discussion stage whatever he wanted, with whom he wanted it and how he wanted it” (Kronlund, 2007: 254). “I have produced what I wished to do or what I was told to do or what I felt obliged to do.” he once told Sjögren (1968: 303).

About the road from first concept to production, B has said:

The fun part is the conception. The playfulness, the dreaming, the fun and games are in the notebooks – the wonderful feeling of total freedom, that you can do what you want. Then, when you have to codify this in

3 By a gentlemen’s agreement between them Alf Sjöberg had the rights to perform Shakespeare. When he died in 1980, B was free to take over this task.

4 Early in his career B was often abused by literary oriented critics for his defective dialogue. Gradually they changed their minds and instead began to praise it.

5 In the case of O’Neill B would prove right. When he rehearsed it several years later he soon found himself reduced to “rehearsal custodian” (Löfgren, 1997: 141).

contact with the script and the actors, that's when it's important to keep the fun from turning to tedium. You have to re-create it with painstaking care and attention to detail. I have to sit at my desk at home and draw scenery [i.e. blocking] and try to transform what I thought was fun and fanciful into boring arrows and figures. Then this, in turn, has to be communicated to the actors and tap into their creativity, so that they, too, feel all the freedom, fun, and joy. For me, theatrical work has always broken down into a fun period, when time flies, and a dull, pedantic period.

[...]

There is a tremendous sense of satisfaction when I see that the actors are enjoying their work. When we get warm contact during the rehearsals, when they look eagerly at me because they sense we're on the same wavelength, on the same track. Then I feel that all the boring, hard work I've put into my prompt books has been worthwhile. (Bergström, 1995: 19f.)

B's prompt books bear witness of the director's careful planning. They are crammed with "arrows and figures" indicating the various blockings during the performances. On the pages opposite the ones containing the script B sometimes wrote down comments on the situation at hand; this was presumably done during rehearsals. During the rehearsal period B, unusually versatile in his profession, was thoroughly involved in all aspects of the performance: scenery, costumes, choreography, light, sound, music. Usually instructing the actors from a distance, he would occasionally get very close to them and be very concrete in his instructions (for an example see fragment 3 of *The Bacchae* on the dvd disc).

In interviews he was nevertheless often modest about his own role as director. "There is nothing but actors' theatre! The director is merely an appendage," he would claim (Timm, 1994: 148). He or she is simply "the ear and the eye, the safety factor, the stimulator, the coordinator, the leader and, to some extent, the teacher" (Sjögren, 1968: 300). Actors, he declared,

like working with me and it's easy to explain. As a professional I've devoted all my time to learning how an actor functions, how to get the best results out of him. Since the actor is my chief instrument I have to learn how to collaborate one hundred percent, and that's something I've gradually figured out. They know they'll get all the service, the stimulation, and technical assistance they need. (B, 1993: 251)

Actors, he maintained at another time,

are independent people, exceedingly creative, and they fare best and feel happiest if they get a chance to be creative themselves – get ideas, find out, formulate. [...] If the director who has spent several months on the play before the rehearsals start pours all his ideas about it over the actors, he paralyses their creative faculties. If he feels that the actors themselves are about to express what he himself has intended from the beginning, he only needs to grab hold of their ideas and perhaps develop them further. If he feels that his intentions are *not* expressed, he can inject them through a piece of stage business or some such thing. It is very important that the actors feel that they are independently creative, and that the director is there primarily to record, to create a sense of security, to stimulate and to guarantee a certain homogeneity. (Törnqvist, 2000: 179)

Director Vogler, B's alter ego in *After the Rehearsal* similarly observes: "Actors are creative artists, but not particularly verbal. You have [as a director] to listen, be patient, and wait. You can't talk the actor's often uncertain and unclear ideas into the ground" (B, 2001: 22). The most important task of an actor, B (1989: 41) once pointed out, "is to focus on and respond to his fellow player. With no *you*, no *I*, as a wise person once put it."

Many of B's actors were undoubtedly creative during rehearsals. As marionettes they could not have managed their parts the way they did. But to what extent and how they were creative is difficult to ascertain. Neither B nor any of the actors provide concrete examples.

In his autobiography, *The Magic Lantern*, B gives a succinct description of his directorial work:

As I harbour a constant tumult within me and have to keep watch over it, I also suffer agony when faced with the unforeseen, the unpredictable. The exercise of my profession thus becomes a pedantic administration of the unspeakable. I act as an intermediary, organizing, ritualizing. [...] I hate tumult, aggression or emotional outbursts. [...] A rehearsal is proper work, not private therapy for producer and actor. [...]

I am never my private self. I observe, register, establish and control. I am the actor's surrogate eye and ear. I suggest, entice, encourage or refuse. I am not spontaneous, impulsive or a fellow actor. It only looks as if I am. If I were to raise the mask for one moment and say what I really feel, my friends would turn on me and throw me out of the window.

Despite the mask, I am nevertheless not in disguise. My intuition speaks swiftly and clearly. I am totally present. The mask is a filter but nothing irrelevantly private is allowed to penetrate through. My own tumult must be kept in place. (B, 1989: 33ff.)<sup>6</sup>

Testimonies by four prominent actors – two male, two female – complement these self-descriptions of B as stage director:

Some directors have fantastic visions but cannot help the actor practically. This is where B is supreme. He can really help practically. With his blocking. With his enormously sensitive ear. He only needs to say “we’ll have a pause here,” and it solves something and creates completely new notes. He is unbeatable. (Anita Björk in Näslund/Sörenson, 1988: 227).

B is, artistically, a rather tender-hearted person and if you show will-power yourself he respects it – at the same time he has a method to get things *his* way, while at the same time you believe that it becomes the way you yourself want it. (Ulf Johanson in Näslund/Sörenson, 1988: 221)

He puts the stake [during rehearsals] as high as we actors. That’s why he is such a brilliant director. (Agneta Ekmanner in Wirmark, 1996: 29)

Ingmar’s disciplinary philosophy I experience as extremely rewarding. Actors are rarely disciplined. They need someone who takes hold of them and says “Will you please.” [...] His fits of rage [...] I often experience as [...] well calculated and having a certain effect. (Max von Sydow in Wirmark, 1996: 25, 29)

According to von Sydow, B often talked about the rhythm, pauses, and silences. He liked to use musical terms and preferred the term choreography to blocking when explaining how he positioned actors in relation to one another and to the audience and how he conceptualised their movements and gestures (Marker/Marker, 1992:12).

When asked whether he made use of any particular acting method, for example those of Stanislavsky or Strasberg, B simply answered “My own!” He added that the normal rehearsal period would be eight to ten weeks (B, 1993: 252), thereby indicating the thoroughness of the productions. Each

6 Virtually the same description is given by B’s alter ego, director Henrik Vogler, in the TV play *After the Rehearsal*.

play meant a new challenge, needed its own approach (Steene, 2005: 470). Disinterested in ideological theories about play production, B's 'method' was primarily intuitive, pragmatic, and highly individual.

Seeing the play text as a score, B frequently claimed that he made "no changes or additions that he did not extract from the notes" (Sjögren, 1968: 313). "I cannot and will not stage a play against the writer's intentions. And I never have deliberately. I have always regarded myself as an interpreter, a re-creator" (ib.: 293).

Thirty-four years later he said: "An author may not always be conscious of why he does something in a special way but if you interpret what he has unconsciously created, then it lives" (Sjögren, 2002: 358).

These are odd remarks from a director who actually made substantial cuts in the play texts to facilitate efficiency and intelligibility, and who sometimes did not hesitate to change play sequences and add bits of his own. As we shall see, B's assurance of fidelity to the text badly agrees with his practice.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, compared to the radical play adaptations applied today by many directors, B's departures from the play texts seem quite modest.

A primary concern for B was always how to stimulate the imagination of the audience and make them emotionally involved in the action. What mattered was the audience's ability to dispense with their disbelief and let the performance take place in their imagination. This did not mean that the audience accepted the action as real. The spectator, B found,

continually undergoes changes of mind, changes in his concentration. [...] From being completely involved at one instant the spectator is at the very next instant aware of being in the theatre. The next second he is involved again, completely involved; then after three seconds he is back again in the theatre" (Marker, 1983: 251).

The director could help in this back-and-forth movement: "I believe that if you pull the audience out of the action for a time and then lead them back into it, you will increase emotional sensibility and receptivity instead of diminishing it" (ib.: 252).

On the stage, Henrik Vogler, B's alter ego in *After the Rehearsal*, says, "everything represents, nothing is" (B, 2001: 24). B had earlier exemplified this with the parable of the magic chair:

7 For a criticism of B's claim to faithfulness to the source text, see Törnqvist, 2008: 276ff.



You put an ordinary simple chair on the stage. And then you ask the audience to take well care of it, for it is made of platin art glass and worth 19 million dollars. You exit and then two villains enter and begin to throw it between them. The audience becomes frightened out of their wits, for they have accepted that the chair is made of platin art glass and is worth 19 million dollars. This is the *whole* secret of theatre, you see. (Sjögren, 1968: 311)<sup>8</sup>

8 The situation described here was later dramatised in *Fanny and Alexander*, where little Fanny, representing the child as ideal spectator, interrupts the villain with her brusque “Don’t touch that chair!”