IX. Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians' Theatre

W.M.H. Hummelen
Translated by H.S. Lake

In 1944 George Kernodle published in From Art to Theatre what he called, with fitting pride, 'the first account in English of the plays and stages of the Societies of Rhetoric and the first account in any language of how these stages were related to the tableau tradition and to the other theatres of the time.' I suppose that outside Holland, and especially in English-speaking countries, knowledge of the rhetoricians' theatre is founded chiefly on Kernodle's study of it, which has until now been the most recent and the most easily accessible. For this reason it would seem practical for me to start with this work. I shall have to be critical of it in parts, but it is not my intention thereby to detract from its great merits as a pioneering work. The basis of my reasoning is research that I have carried out over the past ten years, some of which I have already published, some of which I hope to publish in the foreseeable future. In order to provide the greatest amount of information there will often be a strong emphasis on the conclusions I have arrived at, but I hope all the same to be able to give a sufficiently clear picture of the manner in which I reached them.

For his analysis of the link between the staging of the rederijkers', or rhetoricians', plays, and the tableaux vivants as used for the joyous entries of royal personages, Kernodle had access to about one-third of the nearly six hundred surviving dramatic texts, because he drew exclusively on printed sources. These are for the greater part contemporary editions of the plays, as there is a regrettable lack of modern editions, especially of the many plays that survived only in manuscript form. One third of six hundred seems a considerable number, but, although Kernodle himself expressly pointed out that the major part of his material consisted of plays written for various dramatic contests in the northern and southern Netherlands, I do not believe he was aware that limiting himself to printed sources might affect the validity of his conclusions. On the contrary, in an article of slightly more recent date he tends to reduce all the rhetoricians' activities to what happened at contests.
The rhetoricians' plays were only printed if there was a special reason, the most common reason being that they had been performed at a contest that in some way or other had acquired a certain fame. Competition plays of this kind constitute a special category. They were all structured by the need to provide an answer to a question formulated by the organizers, such as *Welc den mensche stervende meesten troost es?* (‘What gives the greatest comfort to every dying man?’) The rules of the contest also lay down certain conditions with regard to the length of the plays.5

It was only because he was using this relatively homogeneous material that Kernodle was able to formulate his theory of the development of the rhetoricians' plays out of the *tableaux vivants* of the Joyous Entries. The same material also led him to conclude that the inner stage was used chiefly for displaying *tableaux vivants* and that its use for other purposes, in particular for interior scenes,6 was only a more or less sporadic occurrence. In reality, however, this kind of use of the inner stage was far more varied and common than appears from the limited number of instances adduced by Kernodle. This can be demonstrated - I shall do so shortly - by reference to biblical plays, of which many more have survived than Kernodle supposed.7 Most of them, unfortunately, are still only to be seen in manuscript form.

Kernodle's ideas on the use of the inner stage appear to be supported by the long-familiar pictures of stage performances by rhetoricians in that none of them shows the curtains of the stage façade drawn back. In the work of the engraver Crispijn de Passe, however, I have found two illustrations of a stage façade with the curtains open. The more important of the two appears in the Melpomene engraving (ca. 1605-10) (fig. IX-1). The scene is the tragic climax of a Pyramus and Thisbe play.8 The figure on the right, on the side stage, can be identified as a *sinneken*, a character comparable with Vice in English plays. The trumpeter up above the corner of the stage between two torches is presumably the watchman who, according to Ovid, saw Thisbe leaving the town and took her to be a goddess.9

The curtains next to the fountain would not have been open, at least not as far as they are, simply to allow the figures who are seen watching from the inner stage (the other actors? members of the chamber?) to look out onto the stage. Therefore, the opened curtains must surely have something to do with revealing the fountain. The fountain's position is shown rather ambiguously in this engraving, but we may hardly suppose that it stood in front of the curtains from the beginning of the play; that would be an extremely impractical arrangement, since it would mean that one of the stage entrances would be blocked throughout, while to judge from the engraving there are already only two or three entrances available in the stage façade. For this reason, we must surely interpret the engraving as showing a fountain placed directly behind the curtains. The opening of the curtains means that the nocturnal meeting place on the forestage is identified by means of a property on the inner stage.
It is not absolutely clear from this Melpomene engraving how broad the whole stage is. But a façade with three stage entrances, the middle one of which can function as an inner stage, is repeatedly referred to by Jacob Duym in the stage directions for his plays (published in 1600 and 1606) as ‘according to the old custom.’ Because, as in the Melpomene engraving, for example, the stage entrances on the extreme left and right are not so narrow that they cannot give access to an inner stage, we might here talk of a façade with three compartments. It is the basic stage façade, as used by Hodges for his ‘basic platform stage’ (fig. IX-2).  

For his drawing, Hodges was evidently inspired by an illustration of a façade with three compartments used at Louvain in 1594 for a performance of The Judgement of Solomon (fig. IX-3). By making the forestage so much larger, however, he departs from his model not merely in the matter of a subordinate detail; he is saying, in effect, that the space behind the façade does not count as part of the acting area. In my opinion, this is a mistaken view.
Fig. IX-2. Basic stage façade used for basic platform stage. (C. Walter Hodges, ‘Unworthy Scaffolds: A Theory for the Reconstruction of Elizabethan Playhouses,’ *Shakespeare Survey* 3 [1950]:86.)

Fig. IX-3. Performance of *The Judgement of Solomon* at Louvain, 1594. (From M.A.P.C. Poelhekke, C.G.N. De Vooys and G. Brom, *Platenatlas bij de Nederlandsche literatuurgechiedenis* [Groningen: Wolters, 1934], fig. 26.)
It is true that the performance of 1594 took place after a procession, but as we can see from the blazon on the frieze, it was organized by a chamber of rhetoric, probably the Daisy of Louvain. What we are looking at, therefore, is presumably not a stage specially built for this occasion, but staging owned by the chamber. In that case it is mere coincidence that on this occasion the space behind the curtains was left unused. The absence of partitions must not be interpreted as evidence that acting took place only on the forestage. As an indication of the compartments, the caryatids are paramount. Partitions can easily be erected if there is a real need for them.

I can illustrate this observation with a picture of a street theatre erected for the entry of the duke of Anjou into Antwerp in 1582 (fig. IX-4). In the left compartment Samuel cuts off a piece of Saul's robe as a sign of his loss of sovereignty over Israel. In the middle, surrounded by the sons of Jesse, Samuel chooses David to be Saul's successor, and in the right-hand compartment we see David triumphant over Goliath. There are no partitions to separate these scenes from each other; the caryatids are both sufficient and at the same time indispensable.

Here again we are dealing with staging used for stage performances on other occasions by the Marigold chamber of rhetoric. This chamber and the other two had been engaged by the city authorities, because the authorities had insufficient time and money to see to all the decoration of the city themselves.\[11\] The employment perforce of (as the account of the entry words it) ‘whatever came to hand, whatever was ready and available’ also explains the presence of the cell door, behind which we see Discord, in the understructure of the stage.\[12\] Evidently the Marigold did not wish to miss this chance of brightening up its performance with this asset, even if it had to be positioned somewhat unusually and inappositely. To judge by the stages of the Gillyflowers and the Olive Branch, the two middle caryatids, or pillars, were not load-bearing and could therefore be removed for occasions such as this. The same applies to the forestage, indispensable for the performance of plays (figs. IX-5 and IX-6). These chambers, too, draw express attention to their identity by incorporating their blazon into the decorations of their theatres.

Twelve years later the Antwerp chambers of rhetoric, partly as a result of the emigration of many of their members to the Protestant North, were as good as defunct. But the example set by their scaffolds seem to have been so strong that when tableaux vivants had to be put on for the entry of Archduke Ernest of Austria, no better idea was forthcoming than that of simply imitating the rhetoricians' stages, outmoded caryatids and all. This is why it is important for us to know the dimensions of these scaffolds of 1594. In some cases, the contracts for their erection have been preserved. They were all between seven and nine feet
deep, and the stages (referred to in the Latin as *proscenium*) were seven feet high. This is slightly higher than Hodges' 'reasonable guess,' which 'would put the normal stage height for a street theatre playing to standing spectators as something between 5 feet 6 inches and 6 feet above the ground.' The stages on the Driehoek, in the Lange Nieuwstraat, and on the Grote Markt were 30, 25, and 40 feet wide, respectively. In the case of the last of these (fig. IX-7), however, it should be borne in mind that it was placed in front of the town hall and should therefore be *loco suo non indignum* ('not unworthy of its place'). The traditionalism with which the work was approached is evidenced by the presence of the two caryatids in the middle, which could easily have been left out, as far as the character of the *tableau vivant* behind them is concerned.

The stage directions for so many of the rhetoricians' plays take it for granted that it will be possible to show God on his throne 'above,' so the extension of a stage like those of Louvain or Antwerp, with a fourth compartment on top, must have been extremely common. An illustration of such a stage has been preserved in the printed version of the plays performed in a contest in Haarlem in 1606 (fig. IX-8). A similar construction was used in 1565 for the performance, in a small village on one of the islands of Zeeland, of a play of the Assumption of Our Lady.

The manuscript in which the play is preserved, and which also contains two other plays by the same author, Job Gommersz, is an autograph. This, together with the fact that Gommersz had no previous experience as a writer for the stage, may explain why there are so many stage directions in the text and why they are so detailed. The opening or closing of the curtains is expressly indicated no fewer than thirteen times, for example. An important aid to our interpretation of the mise en scène is the stage direction *pausa*, common in rhetoricians' plays (including this one), which indicates a break in the action during which music may be played, for example, but which also means that there is no one on stage. Many authors, furthermore, employ special meters and verse forms to indicate moments when the stage is empty (what I call metascene boundaries) and to differentiate them from scene boundaries. The mise en scène envisaged by the author of *Our Lady's Assumption* may be reconstructed as follows.

The central compartment acts as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where Mary is buried; Heaven is in the compartment above this. One of the side compartments - let us assume the right-hand one - is Mary's house at the foot of Mount Sion, and in the other stands the bed of a sixteenth-century character, who under the influence of Protestant heresy no longer knows what to believe about St. Mary and to whom the events of Mary's Assumption are revealed in a vision. The action around this person is, so to speak, the frame surrounding the play. The first scene of the action, which is performed on the forestage, ends with this person retiring to bed.
Fig. IX-4. Entry of François, duke of Anjou, into Antwerp, 1582. Stage of the Marigold. (From *La joyeuse et magnifique entrée de monseigneur François, fils de France*, etc. [Antwerp, 1582], fig. IV.)
Fig. IX-5. Entry of François, duke of Anjou, into Antwerp, 1582. Stage of the Gillyflowers. (From *La joyeuse et magnifique entrée*, fig. VII.)
Fig. IX-6. Entry of François, duke of Anjou, into Antwerp, 1582. Stage of the Olive Branch. (From *La joyeuse et magnifique entrée*, fig. IX.)
Fig. IX-7. Entry of Ernest, archduke of Austria, into Antwerp, 1594. Stage of the Grote Markt. (From Joannes Bochius, Descriptio publicae gratulationis, etc. [Antwerp, 1595], p. 111.)
This is followed in the right-hand compartment by a meeting between Mary and Jesus during which Mary is prepared for her death. The action then returns momentarily to the frame: two Vices on the left of the stage try to persuade the man in bed to ignore the vision, but in vain. There then follows a series of metascenes in the house of Mary, each of which is concluded by the closing of the curtains. First we see Mary alone, meditating on what Jesus has said to her. Next we see her with an angel bringing her a palm branch and a shroud as protection against the onslaughts by devils on her deathbed, a trial she fears greatly. Then St. John arrives on the forestage, and as the house of Mary opens to receive him we see that she is now in the company of Joseph of Arimathaea and the three maidens who are to lay out her corpse. This is followed directly by the arrival of the other apostles, for which the house of Mary is again opened, so that they can all stand round her while she intones the Magnificat. The hour of her death is now at hand. Behind the closed curtains of the façade we hear Jesus, singing and accompanied by angels, move across to the compartment representing Mary's house. The curtains open, and Mary dies in Jesus' arms. Jesus departs, again behind closed
curtains, and the prayer that John then intones by Mary's body is treated as a separate metascene. Behind the curtains Mary is now placed on a bier, and after her house has been opened again the assembled company moves off in procession, singing the funeral psalm, to the Valley of Jehoshaphat in the middle compartment.

There, without further interruption, we see the episode of the abortive attempt by the Jews to take possession of the body. When the Jews have left the stage the curtains of the Valley of Jehoshaphat are closed, not to be opened again until we have heard the apostles answer Jesus' question of how they want him to pay tribute to his mother. As the curtains open, Jesus, who is standing by the grave, calls to Mary to ascend to Heaven. The actor playing Jesus must now run quickly round behind the group of apostles standing by the grave in order to go upstairs by steps at the back of the compartment. In the meantime Mary, kneeling, is lifted on a little platform straight up until she is in the upper compartment, which has opened to receive her, precisely between God the Father and God the Son, who, with their right and left hands, respectively, hold the crown that they then place on Mary's head. An uncertain number of small angels and numerous Old Testament prophets are also present in Heaven for Mary's arrival. After she has been welcomed, the curtains of the upper compartment are closed again, and the play is concluded downstairs with a scene centered on the man lying in bed in the left-hand compartment, who now reappears there.

Thus a large part of the action, and not just the occasional scene, as in Kernodle's examples, takes place in one of the compartments. Notwithstanding this, using the stage in this way is still entirely within the possibilities of the ‘first stage façade’ as Kernodle describes it. At the same time it is easy to see that the possibilities of such a stage are relatively limited. What is to be done, for example, when the action of a play demands far more than three separate compartments? New elements must then be added, either to the way in which the stage is used or to the staging itself. I will consider both solutions.

The first can be demonstrated by reference to a play in three parts based on chapters 16-28 of the Acts of the Apostles. The author is Willem van Haecht, the factor, or professional poet, to the Gillyflowers, the Antwerp chamber of rhetoric to which I have already referred. The first and second parts were performed in 1563 and 1564; the third was completed in 1564 and was doubtless intended for production in the following year. Not only these dates but also the many similarities between the three parts make it probable that they were all written for the same sort of stage. True, the manuscript is not an autograph, but it is nonetheless very close to the original. It contains numerous stage directions.

To stage the play, the chamber needed a stage façade with three compartments downstairs and at least one upstairs, or perhaps with three

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compartments upstairs, as in the contest organized by Willem van Haecht and his Gillyflowers at Antwerp in 1561 (fig. IX-9). The compartments in the middle, upstairs and downstairs are used as inner stages. The upstairs compartment, of course, is used chiefly for the appearances by Christ but also, as I shall explain in a moment, for other scenes.

St. Paul's life, as described in the part of the Acts of the Apostles with which we are concerned here, took him to scores of places. To show this on so small a stage as I have just outlined would be impossible without making the same stage entrances and inner stages represent different scenes of action during the course of the performance. Now the meaning of an inner stage can be changed by closing the curtains and replacing those properties whose chief function is to indicate the scene of action with new ones. A second and less common device used here is to invest a previously neutral entrance with a special meaning simply by showing a screen, placed behind the entrance curtains, painted to show castle gates or the door of a prison cell. Obviously the author attempts to keep the stage entrances as neutral as possible for as long as possible in each episode. Much less often than in the plays of Jacob Duym, for example, the characters exit into their own houses; here they simply leave the stage ‘to go home.’ In this way several people can use the same stage entrance to go to different houses.

The most radical change of meaning, of course, occurs when the action shifts over a greater distance. Traveling as such is not shown. When St. Paul's arrival in Rome following his departure from Malta has to be portrayed, the stage direction read: ‘Malta in. Rome out, with the three Taverns.’ Clearly the author regards Tres Tabernae as the place where Paul stayed in Rome. These stage directions indicate that - probably by removing one placard from the façade and replacing it with another - the meaning of the entire façade is changed. At such moments, too, the stage entrances with castle gates or cell door screens could be returned to their neutral state by closing the curtains.

Van Haecht's way of depicting the shipwreck on the coast of Malta is very revealing. The ship itself is placed in the compartment upstairs, otherwise used to represent Heaven. At the beginning of this metascene the angel who resides there by virtue of his office is employed by the author to push the curtains aside; understandably, it would have presented problems to have the castaways do it themselves. The events on board are dramatized faithfully according to the description in the Bible, except that they are punctuated by shouts from the lighthouse keepers (to left and right of the shipwreck compartment) and inhabitants of Malta (on the forestage) who witness the wreck from the shore. Finally those aboard leave the ship by the back of the façade and so return downstairs into the compartment below the ship. At the beginning of the Malta episode this is fitted out with trees (the leaves of which serve as food for the shipwrecked mariners), firewood
(concealing a snake that is later to bite Paul on the hand), fire to light the wood, and water to put the fire out at the end of the metascene that follows. The islanders leave the scene momentarily in order to fetch food. When they return they are accompanied by Publius, the Roman governor of the island, who invites Paul to go with him to his house. The stage is cleared, the fire extinguished, and the inner stage closed. When it opens again we see the interior of Publius' house with a bed on which lies Publius' sick father, who is later healed by Paul.

So much for the first solution. What the second solution, the addition of new elements to the basic stage façade, entailed is illustrated by W.M.H. Hummelen, ‘Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians’ Theatre’
a sketch of a stage façade used for a performance of *De Stathouwer* (fig. IX-10). The sketch is contained in a manuscript of 1709 that is a copy of a manuscript dating from 1619. At either side it shows a *sinnepoort* (gate for the Vices), and between them, from left to right, the *gevangenisen* (the prison), the *houdeensij camers* (the duke's presence chamber), the *stathouwers camers* (the stadtholder's chamber), a neutral stage entrance, and the *herberge* (inn) with its sign inscribed *trouwe* ('fidelity').

Since the frieze with its architectural decorations does not continue over the *sinnepoorten*, and since they are shown as narrower than the five stage entrances in the middle, I suspect that the artist was unfamiliar with the theory of perspective but wanted to indicate that these gates should be understood to be at the sides of the stage. From the text of the play it is clear that only the duke's presence chamber and the prison are used as inner stages. Strictly speaking, the neutral stage entrance is superfluous. The equal dimensions of the various different stage entrances suggest that they could all be used as inner stages if need be so we can speak of five compartments. It therefore appears as if the stage entrances and inner stages called for by *De Stathouwer* have been distributed over an existing façade. By the expansion of the number of compartments from the usual three to five, this façade was designed to obviate the need for compartments to double.

This is certainly precisely what Jacob Duym had in mind when for some of his plays he asked for a façade divided into five parts instead of three, even though he only used at the most two or three stage entrances as inner stages (he calls them *open camers*, 'open chambers'). He needed the other stage entrances because he was at pains to provide each group of characters with its own 'house' or 'chamber' or stage entrance.

This desire to provide each group with its own location is observable not only in the plays of Jacob Duym but also in the work of some other playwrights of the time. It is difficult to explain as a development from the use of the stage as we see it in Willem van Haecht's apostle play. Conceivably there is some influence here of school drama, which presupposes a *mise en scène* with stage entrances having fixed meanings. We need think only of the compartmented stage - house shown in the illustrations to the Lyons *Terence* of 1493, in which each stage entrance seems to be coupled to a particular character by means of a superscription. There are other aspects of the work of the last years of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, when Duym was writing his plays, that also show signs of the direct or indirect influence of Terence.

In this connection we may wonder how we should interpret the stage façade found by Kernodle among the illustrations of the show architecture used for the entry of Archduke Ernest of Austria into Brussels in 1594 (fig. IX-11). Ever since Kernodle first published this ‘combination of throne pavilion with an arcade and a forestage [that] provided an important
Fig. IX-10. Sketch of the stage of *De Stathouwer*, 1619. (From a 1709 manuscript copy of a 1619 manuscript, University Library, Nijmegen.)

Fig. IX-11. Entry of Ernest, archduke of Austria, into Brussels, 1594. Stage of St. Mary's Garland. (From *Descriprio et explicatio pegmatum*, etc. [Brussels, 1594].)
pattern for the Elizabethan stage. It has been reappearing in studies of the Elizabethan playhouse. But it is impossible to talk of an important pattern being provided by this façade without also referring to the way it was used.

Was it actually used for dramatic performances? Or was it merely a street theatre erected especially for this entrance and for this tableau vivant? If that be the case, then it is a more or less arbitrary choice to pick out this particular construction from the fifteen as being an important pattern.

In the end, however, it turns out that Kernodle has picked the right construction for precisely this stage - see the blazon at the top in the middle - proves to belong to the St. Mary's Garland, one of the three Brussels chambers of rhetoric to provide a stage. Both the discrepancy between tableau and stage (and the unusual form of the latter) and the financial arrangements agreed to with the city authorities concerning the chambers' contribution to joyous entries make it likely that in this case, too, we are dealing not with a piece of ephemeral show architecture but with the chamber's own stage, on which performances are also given on other occasions.

But how? Has the stage only two inner stages, one upstairs and one down? In the light of what we know about the use of inner stages in this period this seems unlikely. We may suppose that the two stage entrances to right and left of the throne pavilion can also be used as inner stages, albeit of secondary status. Such a difference in status is also found in earlier stage façades, such as those used for the contests in Antwerp (1561) and Haarlem (1606) (see figs. IX-9 and IX-8).

Inexplicable, at least in terms of surviving texts of the rhetoricians' plays, is the gallery in the upper storey. Its origins may lie in the architectural need to fill the space between the side walls on the upstairs floor as well as downstairs. But are they the side walls of the framework in which the stage façade was erected in 1594? I doubt it, since the framework looks as if it is more likely to be secondary to the façade. The poles or pillars that bear the roof at the front are not even decorated. Perhaps they were originally the side walls of the St. Mary's Garland's meeting-place - their chamber - which this façade was built to fit. However, we have no evidence as to how the chamber was arranged, or how performances in it were organized, to support this supposition.

For the sake of completeness I must also point out that there was a greatly different mise en scène in five of Jacob Duym's twelve plays. Briefly, this may be described as being à la Valenciennes, and it was largely dictated by the subject matter of the plays concerned. Three of them, for example, are about sieges. Duym served in the army of the Prince of Orange and was imprisoned by the Spaniards before he emigrated to the Protestant North, so he naturally was particularly interested in this subject. I do not think there is any need for me to go into further detail on this point here. The remarkable
thing is that this type of staging - and Kernodle has demonstrated precisely how it could be superseded by the stage façade - should at such a late period turn up almost literally alongside the stage façade.

As far as I know, Duym's plays saw the end of this kind of *mise en scène* in the Low Countries. The stage façade, on the other hand, survived for many more years, albeit with a mixture of multiple and sequential *mise en scènes*. Even in the sixteenth century this mixture would not have been unknown, however, and if it could have been avoided, it would only have been by the grace of the modest demands of the play to be performed. Even in those plays that are based on narrative material, after all, the localization (as Beckerman would term it) is only partially specific, the rest being general or neutral.

Both Van Haecht's *Dwerck der Apostelen* and Duym's plays with their strict coupling of particular compartments to particular characters are, in the end, rather special. Van Haecht's drastic changes in the meaning of the façade are closely tied in to the special nature of the content of his play. And in his stage directions Duym gives an unequivocal outline of what seems to him to be the ideal situation. This does not, however, mean that the work of Duym and Van Haecht is any the less representative of what can perhaps be described as two trends in *mise en scène* tradition. And that these trends can be discerned at all is due to a special characteristic that Duym and Van Haecht share: they are both exceptions to the rule that stage directions are given sparingly.

In Van Haecht's work, in particular, it is clear how much the façade actually *is* a façade. There is no fixed conception whatsoever of the space behind it. At one moment the upper and lower compartments are separated by a watertight floor, at the next they form a continuous whole.\(^{18}\) Here what Kernodle says of the 1561 Antwerp stage applies: it is ‘little more than a Renaissance frame for six tableau openings’\(^{19}\) - though in this case rather more is shown in them than tableaux. But to what extent can we apply Kernodle's words to this façade of the apostle play when he says of the one at Antwerp that it ‘kept in symbolic form the power to represent the scenic devices from which it was derived’?\(^{20}\) In the Van Haecht play the façade is no more a ship than the façade in the Melpomene engraving is actually a fountain. Yet it is conspicuous that it is precisely these two scenic devices that can be proved to have been capable of being enclosed by the façade. Moreover, the absence of any extensive aids to accentuate the meanings of the tower and city walls, both in Van Haecht and in the Melpomene engraving, points to those meanings indeed being kept in symbolic form in the façade.

Gommersz, Van Haecht, Duym: there is no difference, in principle, among the possibilities of the inner stage. I go no further into its use for interior scenes, any more than I need go into the use of the upper compartment for both heavenly scenes and scenes for which there is no

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room below. It is worth noting, however, that the stage directions for Mary's ascension into Heaven are unique in sixteenth-century theatrical literature in the Low Countries. But given the frequent use of the inner stage and the convention of placing Heaven in a compartment in an upper storey, the solution to the technical problem of such an ascension is actually fairly obvious. In the theatre that Jacob van Campen built in Amsterdam in 1637 (the Schouwburg) there was still a lift similar to the one that must have been used for *Our Lady's Assumption.*21 The placing of the Valley of Jehoshaphat in a compartment, and not on the forestage, was doubtless connected with the engineering of the lift. But that does not alter the fact that there was evidently no insuperable objection to placing an exterior scene on an inner stage.

It should also be noted that Gommersz uses the curtains to divide the action. He places the individual images next to each other, and if possible in opposition to each other, quite in line with rhetoricians' dramatic techniques. This is diametrically opposed to the emphasis on the use of exit lines that Beckerman observes in the Globe plays. As he says, exit lines 'clearly demonstrate that it was the physical departure of the actors which gave fluency to the action.'22

The separate presentation of each event, of course, reminds one of the *tableaux vivants,* and undoubtedly the example of the tableaux was of crucial significance for the use of the inner stage. The connection that Kernodle sees between the two may be debatable as far as English plays are concerned, but when it comes to the Low Countries there is no lack of evidence.31 At the same time it is possible to detect in the rhetoricians' plays the influence of quite a different tradition, in which all the action takes place on the forestage. Sometimes, indeed, it looks as if both traditions are at work side by side in one and the same play. The play *De Stathouwer,* to which I have referred, is an example of this, when the possibility of using the tavern and the stadtholder's chamber as inner stage is expressly rejected. The absence of an inner stage is a particular characteristic of what Southern has called the booth stage.23 This is the form of stage that is most often depicted in paintings of carnivals and fairs at which dramatic performances are being given, and it is evidently well suited for farces. As I said, the effects of this tradition are also felt in other types of play. But in plays requiring a more complicated stage than that for a farce, it is nonetheless fairly difficult to find clear-cut examples of, for instance, interior scenes being performed exclusively on the forestage, complete with all the usual props for an interior.

Although the differences between the situations on either side of the English Channel are relative rather than absolute, they are still marked. This will become apparent when I compare what we know about the Netherlandish theatre with the description that Beckerman gives of the use of props and of the ‘enclosure’ in the Globe. It is characteristic of the
rhetoricians' plays that no large properties are moved about; there is never any question of a bed being 'thrust out,' for example, or being carried off the stage. Even tables used in interior scenes on the forestage are present throughout, so that they have only to be laid for food and drink to be placed upon them. The other side of the coin, of course, is also the opposite of the situation in the Globe; the enclosure, by contrast, is used here precisely for the setting of furniture, or of properties such as the fountain in the Melpomene engraving.

It is not (as in the Globe) only sleeping, studying, or foregathering characters who may be revealed to the public by drawing the curtains of the discovery-space aside. In this respect the possibilities of the façade in Dutch plays appear to be endless. They range from a neighbor sitting at her spinning wheel in her room, giving advice, which she could just as well have given on the forestage, to Susanna bathing in her orchard (this, incidentally, is an example of a façade enclosing a garden). Undoubtedly the discovery-space may be termed an inner stage. Both in the case of Mary's house and in that of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the façade has room for Mary, Jesus and his accompanying angels, eleven apostles, Joseph of Arimathaea, and three virgins. Mary's singing of the Magnificat is expressly directed to take place inside, with Mary surrounded by all the other characters except Jesus and the angels.

The inner stage, then, is clearly also an area in which acting takes place. This is not to say, however, that at the same time the forestage cannot be used during scenes being played principally in the inner stage. The attack by the Jews on Mary's funeral cortège, which is planned on the forestage while the procession itself is already going on in the inner stage, is an example of this. I assume that all those who have to reach the compartments by way of the forestage enter through the side stage. Various illustrations of dramatic performances show this to be possible.

So far I have confined myself almost exclusively to performances in the open air. Apart from performances during meals (for which there is little need for much in the way of decoration), very little acting took place indoors during the sixteenth century, and that was the occasional performance in the rhetoricians' chamber. Nothing is known about the arrangement of the stage on such occasions.

In the second decade of the seventeenth century, however, at least in Amsterdam, the bulk of performances moved indoors. This goes hand in hand with the fact that by charging for admission the rhetoricians were able to provide considerable financial support for charitable institutions, such as the orphanage and homes for old men and women. At the same time this development was a stimulus for the writing and printing of plays.

In 1615 the art dealer Abraham de Koning became the first person to put an illustration on the title page of a play, Iephthah, which he had written himself and which was printed at his expense. From then on, such
engravings constituted an important new source of information about the arrangement of the stage.

The engraving on the title page of *Iephthah* (fig. IX-12) exhibits three peculiarities that give grounds for supposing that it is more than simply an illustration of the well-known biblical story. To start with there is a departure from the iconographic tradition of showing Jephthah's daughter emerging from his house. Jephthah, it will be recalled, had sworn an oath that he would sacrifice the first person he should meet coming out of his house on his return from his victory over the Ammonites. In the second place the floor of the gateway is raised in a way not seen in the actual gates of castles or cities. Third, between the tower on the left and the crenellated wall in the middle a piece of architectural decoration that could not have appeared on or between real defensive structures is just visible.

These peculiarities can be explained if we assume that the engraving is meant to reflect something of the arrangement of the stage used for the performance of de Koning’s play. Jephthah's daughter may be standing to one side in order that the engraving can provide a clear picture of the central element of the stage, the façade with an inner stage whose floor is raised to increase the visibility of the characters to the audience. Below the architectural decorations to the right of the round tower we can just see the top of an arch, possibly the upper part of an arch-shaped opening in a screen, which might be the entrance to an inner stage. This would mean a combination of utility and show architecture, which is also found in the work of Jacob Duym, who, in one of his plays, calls on the one hand for ‘the form of a city’ and on the other hand for ‘an open chamber.’

For the performance of de Koning's play a tower is completely superfluous, whereas the Arcadian surroundings in which the last act is supposed to take place are quite absent. This means that what we see in the engraving is certainly not a stage set designed especially for *Iephthah*; at best, it must be a stage intended for the performance of several different plays. And the angle formed by the back and side walls cannot be explained in terms of open-air structure, so that we have to regard this as some kind of indoor stage.

Abraham de Koning was a member of the chamber of rhetoric called the White Lavender, most of whose membership was drawn from immigrants from Brabant. According to the preface, *Iephthah* was performed by this chamber. If the engraving refers to performances indoors, they must have been in the White Lavender's chamber, which was on an attic floor of the Marienkerk, and later over the Regulierspoort, one of the gates of Amsterdam. From the texts of other plays that were performed there it may be deduced that there was certainly at least one upper compartment, above the most central and most easily seen compartment below. All the Brabant plays also allow for the possibility of playing...
scenes whose action takes place in the open. Perhaps the properties needed for this are hidden by Jephthah's army in the engraving.

Because I had absolutely nothing to go on when considering what this part of the stage may have looked like, I decided to omit it altogether from a reconstruction (fig. IX-13) that I drew ten years ago. I attribute the form of the central gateway in front of the inner stage, with a Tudor arch, unlikely in Holland, to the way in which the curtains in front of the opening hang. In my view there can be little doubt that the tower on the left had a gate, since otherwise it would be necessary to use the compartment next to it as the entrance to the tower. To be honest, however, I am rather less sure of the gate in the tower on the right, though given the width of this façade a third stage entrance would be perfectly possible.

The first building in Holland not merely to be adapted for stage performances but to be actually designed as a theatre was the Nederduytsche Academie. The Academie was founded in 1617 by Samuel Coster, who together with a number of others, including two of the most important playwrights of the period, left the Eglantine chamber of rhetoric for this purpose. This enterprise, one of whose aims was to provide higher education in the vernacular, foundered within five years, and in 1622 the theatre was sold to the Amsterdam city orphanage, the Burgerweeshuis, which thereafter loaned it to the White Lavender in return for part of their proceeds.37 Research into the stage of the Nederduytsche Academie (about which I hope soon to publish a more detailed account) has led to the following conclusions.

The dimensions of the floor of the hall were about twenty meters by sixteen. The stage was at one end, against the wall. An inventory drawn up for the sale in 1622 refers to the presence of omdraeyende doecken, or turning cloths. From those plays with stage directions that refer to turning and reversing it emerges that these ‘turning cloths’ were screens painted on both sides. When they all faced one way they represented a landscape, and when turned round they showed a building. The building side of these screens could be used either as a background for an exterior scene or as décor for an interior scene. Because of that, little more can have been shown of the building than a wall with architectural decorations, windows, and the like.

The space in front of the screens can be closed off with curtains, which are also mentioned in the inventory and in stage directions, forming an inner stage. This was used not only for exterior and interior scenes but also for tableaux vivants.

There are two illustrations of plays that are connected with the Academie through their authors and performers and whose curious features cannot be explained on pictorial grounds but point to the stage set in the Academie. From an illustration in Jacob Struys' Ontschakingh van Proserpina

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Fig. IX-12. Title page engraving of Abraham de Koning's *Iepthah*, 1615.

Fig. IX-13. Reconstruction of the stage of the White Lavender at Amsterdam.

W.M.H. Hummelen, ‘*Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians’ Theatre*’
(1634, fig. IX-14) and from the title page engraving for his *Romeo en Juliette* (1634, fig. IX-15) it can be deduced that the central inner stage is flanked by doors. The engravings show us a side compartment next to one of the doors just mentioned, at an angle to the rear wall.

This side compartment could also be used for a bed, as we see in the title page engraving for Jacob Jansz. Colevelt's *Hartogen van Savoyen* (1634, fig. IX-16). And in the title page engraving for Meindert Pietersz. Voskuyl's *Huijsche Roelandyne* (1636, fig. IX-17) and a painting by Jan Miense Molenaar executed in 1636, of a scene from Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero's *Lucelle* (probably performed at the Academic in 1632) (fig. IX-18), we see the inner stage being used respectively as a church and as the interior of a dwelling-house.

In 1618 Claes Jansz. de Visscher did an engraving (fig. IX-19) that depicts a scene from a short occasional play performed to mark the first anniversary of the Nederduytsche Academie. The two doors flanking the inner stage are masked here by a cabin (left) and a cave (right, a servant with food just emerging from it). Half of the space between the cabin and the cave is occupied by a row of seven Muses. If one assumes that they each need at least half a meter in this position, the inner stage must be about seven meters wide.

Analysis of Willem Dircksz. Hooft's play *Hedendaegsche Verlooren Soon* (1628, 1630) reveals that apart from the inner stage flanked by doorways and the side compartments to right and left of it, there were two other stage entrances, for which there can only be room at the extreme left and right. Figure IX-20 shows my reconstruction of the ground plan of the Academie. The heaven is not, as in the rhetoricians' plays of the preceding period, a compartment in which scenes can be played, but a vehicle with which a limited number of characters can descend or ascend. It is true that from some plays dealing with sieges it appears that it was possible to have characters acting ‘on the walls’ of a city, but how this worked in practice is not clear. What does seem certain is that in comparison with the stage of the White Lavender, various changes have taken place in the upper storey of the stage in the Academie that resulted on the one hand in more spectacular motion of the heaven as a vehicle, but on the other hand, and possibly as a consequence, did not make acting ‘upstairs’ any simpler. Clearly, acting on two levels was less popular in the Academie than in the White Lavender.

One of the consequences of erecting a stage in a hall is that the central compartment becomes the focus of attention, since the side compartments, if they are to be used as inner stages, are placed less advantageously from the audience's point of view. One might say that in the Nederduytsche Academie they drew their conclusions from this, in the sense that there is a greater disparity of dimensions between the central and side compartments there than in the White Lavender stage. The unique position

W.M.H. Hummelen, ‘Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians' Theatre’
Fig. IX-14. Illustration from Jacob Struys's *Ontschakingh van Proserpina*, 1631.

Fig. IX-15. Title page engraving of Jacob Struys's *Romeo en Juliette*, 1634.

W.M.H. Hummelen, ‘Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians’ Theatre’
Fig. IX-16. Title page engraving of Jacob Jansz. Coelevelt's *Hartoginne van Savoyen*, 1634.

Fig. IX-17. Title page engraving of Meindert Pietersz. Voskuyl's *Kuyssche Roelandyne*, 1636.
Fig. IX-18. Jan Miense Molenaar's painting of a scene from Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero's *Lucelle*, 1636. (Muiderslot, Muiden.)

Fig. IX-19. Engraving by Claes Jansz. de Visscher, *Ghezelschap der Goden op de Bruyloft van Apollo met de Academie*, 1618. (University Library, Leiden.)
of the central compartment then means that any need to change the meaning of a compartment will be concentrated on this one. In the Nederduytsche Academie this need is met by the reversible screens. On the other hand, the Academie appears to have had more stage entrances than the White Lavender. This might be seen as an accommodation of the trend toward creating the firmest possible mental connection between characters and stage entrances. The result is the mixed form of multiple and sequential *mise en scène* to which I have referred.28

In the context of the main theme of this symposium, however, what seems to me to be most important is that the tradition of the inner stage is maintained so strongly both in the Chamber of the White Lavender and in the Nederduytsche Academie. Any influence on the English theatre from that of the Low Countries ought to be apparent, if anywhere, in the use of the inner stage. Because in this respect, at least, the paths on either side of the Channel are so diverse, it is largely only in a differential diagnostic sense that what I have said can be regarded as a positive contribution to answering the questions we are asking here.
The Dutch *Rederijker* Theatre: Was There a Connection?

Q. *Bradbrook*: I'd like to ask you, sir, if there's any influence from the struggles in the Netherlands with the Spanish? Is there any connection between these religious plays and the Spanish religious plays? Or, on the other hand, taking the Reformed point of view, is there any connection between these and the small privileged religious morality plays that were

W.M.H. Hummelen, ‘Types and Methods of the Dutch Rhetoricians’ Theatre’
acted by students of the colleges in England, little groups that were rather like your Chambers of Rhetoric? Do you feel influence from outside, either from the Spanish side or from the English side, or is it just a native tradition?

A. W.M.H. Hummelen: I think it is a native tradition. I never found any influence from the Spanish, though on the other hand one could suppose that the Spanish moralities were influenced by the Dutch, because they appear about the middle of the sixteenth century and could have been brought to Spain from the part of Brussels where Charles V had his court. I think there is a great difference between the English and the Dutch morality tradition. There are far more similarities between the French morality plays and the Dutch than there are between the English and the Dutch.

Q. Marder: I would like either Dr. Hummelen or the scholars here today to discuss the implications of the architectural evidence presented here, especially in relation to the inner stage, as all of this would apply to the reconstruction of the Globe.

A. Hummelen: My line of thought is that when you are using an inner stage, as the Rhetoricians do, you get quite a different effect in the plays from what is shown, for example, in Beckerman's book *Shakespeare at the Globe*. If the English theatre really had inner stages, then they would have been something more like the Dutch than the evidence seems to show. You can see a difference between Holland and England - so much, I am afraid, that I don't *think* there was an inner stage in England. I think there was only a discovery-space - maybe behind the stage and maybe forward of the stage, but not an inner stage where you could have fifteen or twenty people, as could be done in Holland.

Q. Hodges: There was something that did strike me forcibly about these rather narrow discovery-spaces in doorways, Professor Hummelen, that you showed. Professor Hosley has often said that the discoveries on the Elizabethan stage could well have been displayed within doorways, such as either of those two doorways at the Swan Theatre.

A. Hummelen: Yes, I think that the stage of 1594 of the Brussels Chamber not only used the openings in the middle as inner stages but could also use the doorways, the two at the left and the two at the right; but I also think that they are larger than normal doorways would be because those *tableaux vivants* that are used in the *rederijker* plays are seldom very small. In many cases they use a lot of people, as many as four or five.

Q. Wickham: A question has been asked about collaboration, and a connection between the English and Dutch. I know of one, but only one, and on
that occasion the Italians also collaborated. The occasion in question was the reception of James I into London in 1603, when the entire Dutch community resident in England and the entire Italian community resident in London were invited, and each accepted the invitation, to provide a scenic tableau for the entry. So we have one instance. Moreover, we do have pictures of it, in the Stephen Harrison engraving, so perhaps it's worth looking at that a little more closely. In any case, the Harrison engravings are so important in terms of all decorative features of tableau stages, and so near to those of the first Globe, that we ought not to overlook them in this context.

Q. Bradbrook: I think Professor Hummelen did say that the stage was used in many different plays, that the Rhetoricians had a continuous use of their mostly decorative settings, and that this might be taken in connection with what Professor Wickham has said about the great splendor of the arches for greeting James I when he came to London. But I would have thought that the influence was much more through books - the very strong typographical links between printing in England and Holland. A great many books were illegitimately printed in Holland that pretended to be printed in England. The connections of the learned groups provided a great deal for the drama. We had one Dutch dramatist of Dutch descent, Thomas Dekker, who might be worth looking at, especially in this respect. We should see if Dekker has anything in particular to tell us. But in any case I think Professor Hummelen has given us a stage background that should be followed up (since these were theatres for rhetoricians) in terms of its literary connections.

A. Hummelen: ... In conclusion I should like to emphasize a point. I want to lay stress far more on the difference between the stages actually used and built by the Rhetoricians and those stages that were made by the city or by groups of foreign merchants. I think we have to start with those stages that can be attributed to the rederijkers chambers themselves. They are far simpler than the others - not nearly as elaborate as the ones that are erected by the city or by the merchants - simple stages, usually with three compartments on the stage level. I think there is no way to connect such a stage with the monumental arches of triumph you see in book title pages. If there was an influence from Holland on the English stage I think maybe it could have come from those people who went over with Leicester (there was a large group of English people who came to Holland with him) and saw the Rhetoricians play. They must have seen the plays; they were in places where there were Chambers of Rhetoric. I cannot but believe that, if they saw the use of the inner stage and how intensely it was used in Holland, and then didn't adopt it, it indicates that the two traditions kept themselves to themselves, and the Dutch tradition was not such an influence on the English as is sometimes supposed.

Eindnoten:


2 Cf. W.M.H. Hummelen, Repertorium ven het Riederijersdrama 1500-ca. 1620 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968). In his bibliography Kernodle names 136 plays in old editions (of which 121 are competition plays) and 41 recently published from manuscripts (of which, by chance, again at least 10 are competition plays).

3 Cf. W.M.H. Hummelen, Repertorium ven het Riederijersdrama 1500-ca. 1620 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968). In his bibliography Kernodle names 136 plays in old editions (of which 121 are competition plays) and 41 recently published from manuscripts (of which, by chance, again at least 10 are competition plays).


5 One of the most important contests, and also the earliest to have produced printed plays (Ghent, 1539), required the answers to be given not only schriftuerlijckst, i.e., with the aid of the Bible, but also figuerlijckst, i.e., using the tableaux vivant as a medium of explication and demonstration. The result is that among the nineteen plays performed at the contest there are as many containing four or more tableaux vivants as there are among all other surviving rhetoricians’ plays together.

6 From Art to Theatre, p. 122. The only example of an exterior scene (‘Bacchus sitting before his vineyard,’ etc.) is taken from a factie, viz, that of Zout Leeuw (not Louvain). Facties were performed achter straten, i.e., at the wayside, and not on the same staging as spelen van sinne. The conclusion that an inner stage was used here, too, is therefore not justified.

7 From Art to Theatre, p. 116.

8 Two Pyramus and Thisbe plays have survived; cf. my Repertorium, nos. 1 OB 11 and 4.05.

9 As regards the positioning and gestures of the main characters and the physical appearance of the fountain, de Passe has followed earlier models that essentially have nothing to do with the theatre. This does not apply, however, to the mise en scène: the position of Pyramus and Thisbe and of the fountain on the stage, and the open curtains.


11 I have disregarded the contribution made by the colonies of foreign merchants in the city (in 1582, in fact, there were none). The chambers were reimbursed the costs of decorating the façade with silk drapes and murals, most of which could naturally be used for only one occasion. They also received a subsidy of £150.

12 From a play by one of the Marigold’s sister chambers, which I shall discuss later, it is clear that the chamber producing it already had such a screen in 1563, so they could show prisoners in their cell and the guard asleep in front of the cell door at one and the same time. Perhaps this is the screen that was used for the theatre erected by the city next to the monastery of St. Michael.


14 It is probable that there are also three compartments on the upper level. The use of the spaces at either end of the top of the set for lighthouse keepers, and the fact that two years earlier the Gillyflowers had made use of a stage façade with three upper compartments, would seem to support this view.

15 It is impossible to date this play more exactly. It is part of a collection that was owned by the Gillyflowers, a chamber of rhetoric in ’s-Gravenpolder, a very small village in Zeeland. As late as the first decades of the eighteenth century, sixteenth-century plays were being copied, bought (from other chambers), and performed there.

16 Kernodle, From Art to Theatre, p. 86.

18 As when Eutychus, seated in one of the openings on the upper floor, falls behind the façade to the floor of the inner stage at ground level. At that moment, moreover, the forestage where Paul is giving his sermon is an interior and the space behind the façade an exterior.

19 ‘The Open Stage,’ p. 5. Kernodle contradicts himself, it seems to me, when he attributes the advancing simplification of the façade to the character of the plays performed before it; furthermore, he gives an extremely one-sided picture of their character in the first place.

20 Kernodle, From Art to Theatre, p. 103.


22 Beckerman (Shakespeare at the Globe, p. 88) theorizes that the use of the space behind the curtains as a ‘discovery-space’ is connected with the fact that the façade of the booth stage became a permanent fixture. It is not clear how this is to be understood.

23 Ibid., p. 108.


26 In de Koning's Simson (1618), for example, two inner stages, one above the other, act as the temple roof, where the Philistine princes were feasting, and as the interior of the temple, where Samson is displayed to visitors.

27 In 1632 the city authorities ordered the amalgamation of the White Lavender and the Eglantine, and the Academie Theatre was thereafter used by this new organization. In 1637 the wooden building was due for replacement, and the city orphanage and old people's home paid for the architect Jacob van Campen to build the Schouwburg.

28 This does not mean, any more than it did in the rhetoricians' plays of the sixteenth century, that all localization is specific or even general. Much of it stays neutral.