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PERFORMING DIRTY HANDS AT THE FINNISH NATIONAL THEATRE IN 1948

In my presentation I will discuss debated boundaries and strategies of transgression in performing arts. I am looking at a production of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands* at the Finnish National Theatre and discussing the political context of transgression. What were the boundaries the production broke and the strategies the theatre negotiated with the transgression.

The Finnish premiere of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mains Sales* or *Dirty Hands* took place on 8 October 1948 at the Finnish National Theatre. The production was directed by the director of the theatre Eino Kalima and the part of Hoederer was played by Aku Korhonen, a well-known actor and a board member of the Finnish National Theatre. It also included two very prominent young actors Kyllikki Forssell as Jessica and Rauli Tuomi as Hugo.

The play received considerable attention from the critics as well as from the audience. Especially the performance of Hoederer cut a dash. As a member of the audience recalled later concerning the moment at the end of act II (the third episode) when Hoederer entered: [there] was a total silence and then everybody was thinking how did the ensemble dare? The reason for the shock was that the character Hoederer was masked to look like Joseph V. Stalin, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union. The production run for less than two months before the Finnish National Theatre was forced to close it.

Performing *Dirty Hands* the way the Finnish National Theatre did in 1948 was a courageous act. After the WWII the political situation in Finland remained critical for years. For example, the Control Commission, with mainly Soviet members, stayed in Helsinki until 1947 when the final peace treaty was signed in Paris. The years the Control Commission stayed in Helsinki, have often been characterized as an extremely hard time for Finland. Even after the ratification of the Paris peace treaty and when the control commission had left Finland in the autumn of 1947 the conditions in the country did not return to their pre-war conditions. There were constant negotiations about what was allowed and what was forbidden in relation to the Soviet Union to keep independence and avoid a Soviet military

takeover. Simply by performing *Dirty Hands* the Finnish National Theatre became part in these negotiations.

Biography

Hanna Korsberg has been Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki since 2008. Her research interests include the relationship between theatre and politics in Finland, a topic which she has studied in two monographs. She is also the author of several articles discussing theatre history, historiography and performance. She has been an active member of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) Historiography Working Group since 2001, an executive committee member in 2007–2015 and Vice President during 2015–2019. She has served as a member of the advisory boards for Contemporary Theatre Review and Nordic Theatre Studies. She is also a member of the Teachers' Academy at the University of Helsinki.