

# SVOBODA on Sets

by Sue Monaghan

Friday, October 4th marked the opening of the North American exhibition of scenography by the world acclaimed Josef Svoboda from Czechoslovakia.

"Scenographer" is the title preferred by Svoboda rather than the archaic "stage designer". As he stated in his lecture last Saturday in the Dunn theatre, stage designers or painters have been in the habit of choosing the most dramatic part of a play to convey in the stage setting. In doing so, they would often set the dramatic atmosphere for the end of a play rather than allowing for moods to develop in the context of the play itself.

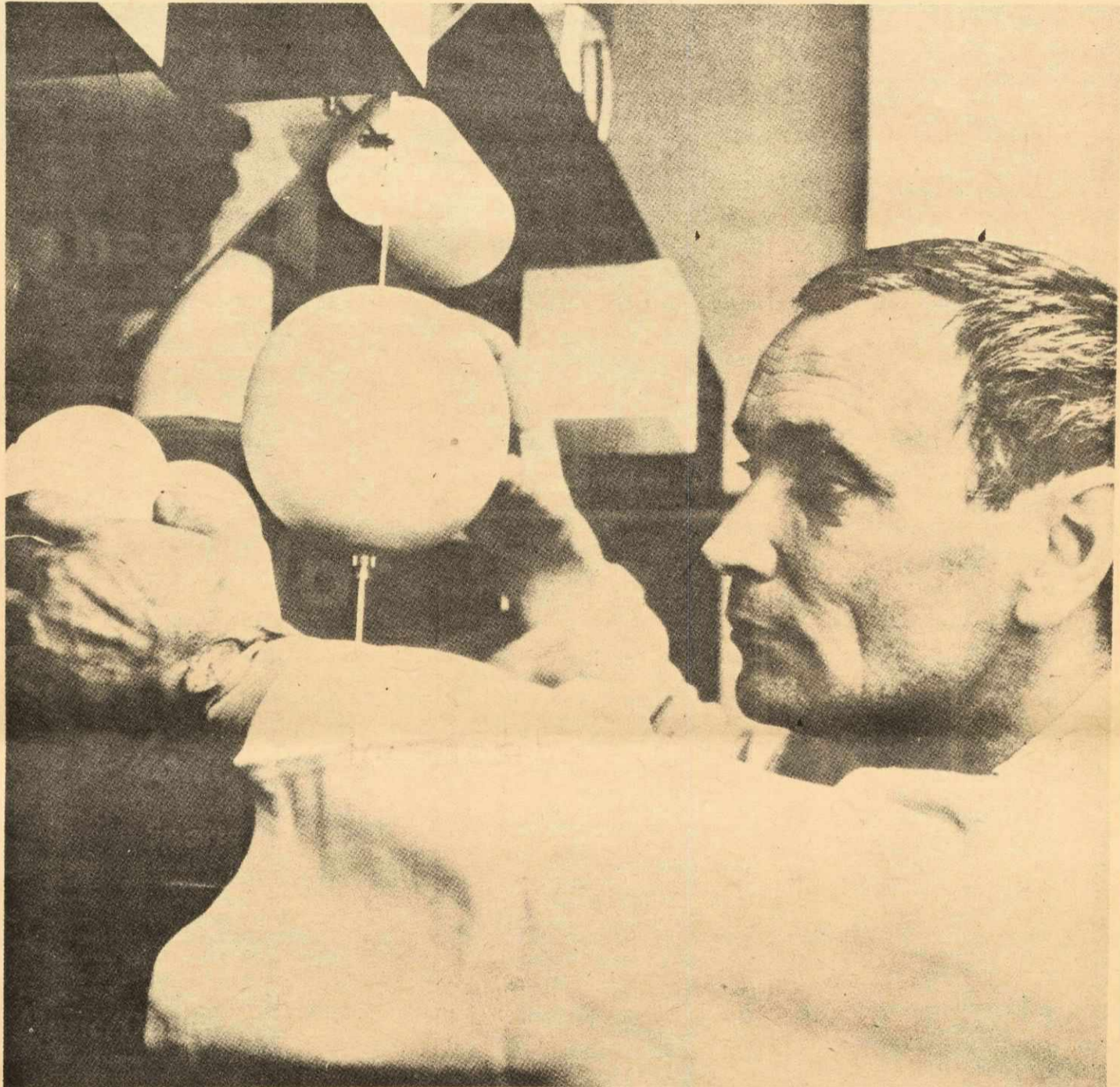
Josef Svoboda's concept of scenography is a stage setting which will "accent itself" and also assist rather than hinder the development of a plot.

To do this, Svoboda claims a scenographer must be familiar with all new forms of technology, using materials and techniques from sciences including Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics. In his own experience Svoboda has used anything from "multi-panel slide and film projection to aerosol techniques," to achieve desired stage effects.

So striking are his achievements that some performers have complained that Svoboda's scenography overshadows their acting efforts. Svoboda dispelled this claim relating an incident in which Lawrence Olivier asked Svoboda to work with him claiming confidently that "...we are as good actors as you are a scenographer."

Svoboda's works will be on display in the Dalhousie Art Gallery for the next three weeks. Naturally for the Canadian public, the greatest appreciation of Svoboda's genius will come from observing scenography photographs of plays most familiar to the West. The "Romeo and Juliet" setting shows columns floating dreamlike over a dark stage. "Macbeth" was backed by harsh blocks of (what appears to be) stone with undistinguishable shapes goused from them. Becket's "waiting for Godot" had a ghastly small tree flanked by two rows of gaudy empty theatre balconys. Brecht's "Mother Courage" was played on a sea of rough torn paper.

There is little doubt that Svoboda's genius has provided a depth and richness to the world of theatre and hence has given it a greater status among the other art and entertainment forms.



## Godspell

### Cont'd from T-3

collaboration with Leonard Bernstein for the notable oratorio-opera "MASS", heard at the opening of the Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. in 1972. Schwartz has also received many awards for his work on "GODSPELL".

Neptuen Theatre's Artistic Director, John Wood, first saw "GODSPELL" during its Toronto production in 1972. He recently saw it again in New York and is enthusiastic about bringing this jubilant, unusually thought-provoking musical to the Maritimes. He is equally enthused about his cast, then ambitious, young talents recruited from his own wide theatrical experience from coast to coast, though many of the ten players were chosen at auditions held in Nova Scotia earlier this year.

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