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한국연극 한국적 형태와 감수성 빌려야

인터뷰

「4·3」 「무속」 조사·연구차 제주에 온 美극작가 토마스 리치오

『서구연극의 언어와 형식을 빌려 자신들의 문제를 해결하려는 것은 식민주의적 방법이 아닙니까?』 「韓國의 연극은 가장 현대적인 주제를 다룰 때조차도 韓國적 형태와 감수성을 빌려야 합니다。」

이처럼 가장 韓國적 주장을 하는 사람은 아이러니컬하게도 이 나라의 극작가가 아니라 우리 젊은이들로부터 「제국주의적」이라는 비판을 면치 못하는 美國의 젊은 극작·연출가 토마스 리치오 교수(Thomas Ricci, 41)이다.

그는 「韓國의 전통극은 현대적 맥락을 제대로 반영하지 못하고 있으며 현대극은 우리의 문제를 해결하는데 적절치 못한 도구」라고 비판한다.

극작가라기보다 오히려 퍼포먼스작가라는 명칭이 절묘한 토마스교수의 이러한 비판을 전세계 곳곳을 누비며 연구·극작·연출을 해온 그의 경력에 비추어 결렬히 받아들일 수밖에 없을 것 같다.

전위로 연극의 연출자였던 그가 주목을 받기 시작한 것은 올비스트레스타·마릴린던트·야케네디를 韓國 대중문화의 영웅들 중 비문 연극 「고부도시」를 발표하면서부터.

그의 고향인 오하이오주인 스토시를 배경으로 하는 이 연극은



피어오르는 고부공의 탄력성에 빚어 극에서 극으로 치달는 대중문화의 허구성과 이중성을 비판. 호응을 받으며 시카고의 獨逸의 프랑크푸르트에서 1년여간 장기공연했다.

연출가로서 세계적인 명성을 얻게 된 것은 지난 93년 핀란드에서 열린 세계연극회의에서였다. 복구의 신화를 토대로 연극형식을 개발한 이 워크숍은 각국 관객자들의 관심을 모아 자국의 연극을 만드는에 초빙되곤 했다.

러시아 아부리아공화국에서는 아부트루의 신화에서 모티브를 차 공산치하의 식민화, 전공의 상심문제를 다룬 연극을 만들어 호응을 받음으로써 1년여간 전국의 순회공연했다.

아프리카 칼라하리사막남부에서는 무시로, 남아프리카에서는 줄루족의 민속을 연구, 백인에 대한 저항의지를 표출한 일련의 작품을 만들었으며 호루·타키에서는 원주민들의 민속을 실험극으로 표현, 스웨덴에서는 이주민문제를 다뤘고 짐바브웨에서는 분쟁을 겪고 있는 이민국들을 한데 모아 공동체외식을 가질 수 있는 연대감을 모색했다.

그의 실험극의 전제는 「그 나라의 내용물을 그 나라의 양식에 담는 것」. 이렇게 만든 연극으로 사회문제를 실질적으로 해결할 수 있다고 믿는다. 그래서 그는 美國의 극작·연출가이면서도 「제3세계」연극인으로 통한다.

알래스카 피어빙크스대학교수인 토마스는 韓國예술종합학교 연극원의 초빙교수로 1년간 재직하고 있다. 그가 濟州에 온 것은 「4·3」을 濟州의 역사적 상흔과 고유의 민속을 연극형식으로 개발하기 위한 것. 「4·3」의 무속적 허원을 주제로 한 논문으로 박사 학위를 받은 서강대 김성래교수, 작가 한림호씨등과 공동작업을 할 계획이다.

토마스씨는 지난 3-4일 당근 신화를 우리나라가 연극의 형식으로 지구성, 출세지향적·향락적인 현대의 세태를 풍자하는 연극 「얼루개의 달」을 서울에서 공연해 호평을 받기도 했다.

(高大成기자)

KOREAN THEATRE MUST APPLY KOREAN FORMS AND SENSIBILITY

Playwright Thomas Riccio visited Cheju recently researching the April 3rd massacre and shamanism.

"Is it some sort of self-inflicted neo-colonialism for a people to deal with their issues by adopting a Western theatre language and form? The Korean Theatre is rich and Koreans must have the confidence to use their own form and sensibility to express and reflect their own contemporary predicament."

The man who is insisting that Koreans embrace their own ways is ironically an American--a person we might usually consider an imperialist. Regrettably Thomas Riccio, a young director and playwright, is not Korean.

"Korean theatre does not reflect its unique contemporary predicament well and because of that it is losing its connection and relevance." He observes, "Modern, Western theatre, is not the proper tool by which to examine current Korean issues. It is the tool of another culture. Korean theatre has its own tools. Use them."

Professor Thomas, who considers himself a performance writer rather than a playwright, is direct and firm in his beliefs. His strong, precise opinions and criticism struck a nerve and his words must be accepted modestly. His observations are drawn from his recent work in Korean and his wide ranging work as a playwright, director and scholar with a variety of cultures from all over the world.

As a playwright he was recently recognized for his avant garde play Rubber City--a satire of American pop icons Elvis, Marilyn Monroe and John F. Kennedy. The setting of the play is a small town in Ohio and deals with how pop culture fiction, falsehoods and contradictions become reality. This play, like all of his theatre is always inventing itself and goes to the extreme. The play premiered in Chicago and recently ran for a year in Frankfurt, Germany.

However, it was only after giving a workshop on indigenous performance at an international theatre festival in Finland in 1993, when he began to receive recognition as a director of culture based performance. The workshop was attended by theatre people from several nations and as a result Thomas was invited to develop a variety of indigenous performance projects around the world.

In Yakutia, in central Siberia of Russia, he made a performance which dealt with the loss of traditional culture because of communism. The mythology and traditional theatrical expression of the Yakuts was both the inspiration and resource for his work. That performance was for the National Theatre of Yakutia and also toured the republic.

He has subsequently worked with the Bushmen in the Kalahari desert of southern Africa. In South Africa his extensive research in Zulu folk traditions provided the basis for a series of performances that expressed the trauma of adjustment in the post-apartheid era. In Australia and Turkey he conducted workshops that applied traditional indigenous performance. In Sweden his workshops dealt with the subject of immigration and emerging multi-culturalism. In Zambia he developed a performance that dealt with inter-tribal conflict and the need for solidarity and consciousness between the many tribes that struggle with each other in that nation.

His prerequisite is "Each people must speak in their own terms and this means using their own forms. These forms come from the specific place they live on." In this way of doing theatre he thinks a community can effectively deal and solve its social problems. He sees performance is a practical technology. Though an American he has devoted his talents to champion the unique expressions of third world performance.

Thomas teaches at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and has recently completed a semester as a visiting professor at the Korean National University of the Arts. He came to Cheju Island recently to conduct research into the trauma of the April 3 massacre and its relationship to Shinbang (shaman) performance and healing methods. His investigations and interviews are in preparation for the development of a possible healing ceremony to take place in 1998.

Professor Kim Seong-Nae of Sogang University, who earned her doctorate on Cheju Island Shinbangs and their relationship to the April 3rd massacre, joined Thomas during his research. While on Cheju Thomas also met with novelist Han Rim Wha who is organizing the cultural committee for the fifty year commemoration of the April 3rd massacre.

Earlier this month Thomas developed and directed "Twelve Moons" which was presented at the National University of the Arts. His performance applied traditional mask dance expression to create new mask characters. A popular and artistic success, the performance re-imagined the ancient origin myth of Tangun, placing it in a contemporary context. In the tradition of mask dance the performance satirized contemporary Korean life. Reporter: Ko dae Kyong