

**ENCOUNTERS IN LANDSCAPES:
SCENOGRAPHY, LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY IN ESTONIAN
OPEN-AIR PERFORMANCES**

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Abstract. Landscape and human memory are in a reciprocal relationship – landscape sustains a certain kind of remembering while memories keep it from changing too much. Living in and looking at a landscape can be regarded as acts of remembrance, where the landscape is not scenery, but a stage of action. Theatrical performances given in landscape present a special case, since they use the existing landscape for a fictional one. Regardless of the scope of scenographic intervention, landscape is experienced as an immediately present multisensory totality that the audience and actors share. This transdisciplinary study shows that theatre employs landscape memory on multiple levels (actual site of events, connotations of the landscape, the relationship between fictional history and visible markers). Scenography has the capability to reflect, express and change the relationship between landscape and memory. Productions staged in Estonian landscapes in 2000-2006 exemplify the extent that theatrical representation rests on (and benefits from) landscape memory.

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1. Introduction

In open-air theatre, the site of performance can be regarded as instrumental to the performance. Theatre is a synthesizing form of art, where different art forms complement one another and contribute to the process of meaning-making. Performing in ‘found space’¹, which is the case in open-air theatre, makes the

¹ ‘Found space’ marks the practice of performing in sites that are not built for theatre. It means that the location that is discovered for a particular performance is used in intact and unaltered way (see Aronson 1981).

question even more acute. While the stage in a conventional theatre building is usually designed to act as a relatively neutral ground to enable and foster the creation of different stage worlds, found space is embedded with meanings of its own. In this paper, open-air theatre is discussed solely within the limits of found space, where the landscape is used as a fictional setting for the performance.

During the last decade, open-air performances in actual landscapes have become increasingly popular in Estonia. A brief survey of professional open-air productions that have premiered in Estonia during the past five years (nearly 60 in total), shows that slightly over 60% were given in found spaces. Depending on the scenographic strategies, the actual landscape can be used as a stage to act on, or it can be reduced to scenery, a backdrop to perform against. Regardless of the scope of new meanings assigned to the visible elements, the production does not erase or replace the existent memory entirely even for the time of the performance.

This phenomenological study maps the problems related to the use of landscape related memory regarding the creation of a scenographic setting. In the first part I will take a look at the structure of landscape and its relationship to memory, the second chapter concentrates on the strategies used in employing landscape-related memory in theatre. Examples in the choice of location and scenographic solutions that address the problems of landscape perception will be addressed in the third part.

2. Landscape, memory, theatre

Both living in and looking at a landscape can be regarded as acts of remembering, which, however, provide different tools and different strategies for approaching memory related to the particular landscape. In the holistic view (as also used in this paper) landscape includes different interfaces that involve time, space, mental and material modes as well as several agents (see Palang et al. 2004). Landscape is regarded as a totality that comprises the natural environment and human agency, physical landscape and meanings and values attached to it. Composed of simultaneously existing elements from various periods landscapes have a layered structure, where some layers can be more sustainable than others. The different periods hardly ever erase all elements of past formations in their physical or mental modes. Metaphorically speaking, landscape is a palimpsest, “a pattern of historic memory that consists of visible and invisible traces” (Palang et al 2004:163). The invisible parts, whether personal memories, family stories, legends, historic events, are partly connected to the existence of physical landscape elements. Landscape-related memory (both personal and collective) depends on the physical site, as well as on people who reciprocally support each other.

In the following, I will take a look at some of the specific characteristics of the physical landscape that contribute to its functioning as a memory device. The philosopher Edward Casey (1987:189) suggests that the structure of landscape itself contributes to its capability to store memories and open them up for

recollection. A horizon that constitutes its defining border serves as an enclosing function; it provides focus and guarantees the integrity of the inside. It acts like a girdle that keeps the contents together. By enclosing the landscape elements, as well as the perceiver, it offers a direct contact with landscape-related memory. Casey's thinking is closely linked to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which is instrumental regarding the connection between body and space. A live body orients and responds to the sensory world in the constant communication between itself and the landscape it inhabits (Merleau-Ponty 1964). By placing the viewer in the landscape, it can be regarded as the perceiver's stage of action rather than scenery. The enclosing function is not limited to the visible horizon, as it equally applies to the perceiver's horizon of knowledge (see Palang et al., 2004, Carlson 2000). Landscape is accessible through active involvement; knowledge, emotions and experiences unite the discrete elements into the perceiver's personal landscape.

Secondly, the horizon establishes the common ground of action. The dissimilarities within the common ground – the varying character of landscape – literally 'give us pause'. Sundry landscape elements offer diverse experience that enables the creation and sustenance of various kinds of memories (Casey 1987: 199). On the one hand, landscape provides continuity within the shared borders of the landscape, on the other hand it offers landmarks. The outstanding landmarks both compensate for and contribute to the generalizing effect that David Lowenthal (1975:29) observes. The varying elements of landscape contribute to the recollection of the details and the variegation of the particular unit of memory. Dependence on clear and identifiable landmarks can reduce the vivid scene or complex story to an elaboration of the landmark, which can then stand out as a symbol.

To draw a parallel with theatre – perceiving a landscape suggests being in or identifying a unifying frame (landscape) that can, but not necessarily, contain other frames (places, landscape elements). The importance of landscape as a unifying frame becomes prominent in the case of environmental theatre and environmental scenography². Stage as such is a framed space which is set apart from everyday reality. The visual variations of the border range from a circle of spectators to the elaborate proscenium arch that accentuates the stage opening in classical theatres. Environmental scenography is the practice of incorporating the spectators (spatially, visually, auditively, gesturally etc) into the same frame with the performers to indicate that they share the same fictional environment of the production (Aronson 1981:1–5). Similar to Casey's observations in landscape, it places the viewer inside the frame constituting a shared stage of action. Frame guarantees the integrity of the inside and provides focus.

While recognizing the role of landscape as a social construct and the interpretation of layers of memory (Cosgrove 1988), the view of landscape as a stage of action supported by Casey suggests certain openness of the landscape regardless of specific knowledge about the landscape. Landscape is a vast source of

² Practices that aim at activating the audience by engaging it into the stage world.

cumulative memory stored in a layered structure that is available for ‘reading’ through multisensory involvement. The current study focuses on the scenographic use of landscape-related memory in Estonian open-air performances, the involvement model seems more appropriate since landscape is mostly presented as a fictional construct that demands little previous knowledge. It is rather shown in the performance as an unravelling process that is accessible through engagement with the fictional world of the production.

3. Landscape as a stage

From the point of view of landscape-related memory, two common strategies can be identified in the Estonian theatre: performing in the site of the historical or fictional events depicted in the play (alternatively the author’s birthplace) and constructing a fictional play to meet a particular location. A third common strategy, similarity in the type of location (e.g. Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in a convent, Bernard Shaw’s *Heartbreak House* in a naval captain’s village) is less relevant to the current topic. Nevertheless, it similarly relies on the connotations embedded in the landscape and can employ visible and invisible layers of memory. All cases suggest different approaches to problematics regarding the use and perception of landscape-related memory. In the analysis of a production, memory can be addressed at least on two general levels: theatre-makers’ and the audience’s. Working in the landscape, the production team establishes a more intimate relationship with the site. The audience is comprised of individuals, who can have very different connections to the landscape that will influence the perception of the performance. In this paper the question is addressed on the level of conscious integration of landscape-related memory into the performance, which concerns both parties. However, the production team works towards making the stage world understandable to the audience.

Performing in the alleged site of events suggests a return in time. An attempt is made to return the visual landscape to the time of events. On the minimal level it is the question of framing, i.e. placing the acting area in such a way that contemporary landscape elements would not disturb the audience from accepting the fiction of the play. The re-enactments of historical events or place-related legends benefit from the existence of identifiable symbols that date back to the (alleged) historical period. One of the recent examples, Andrus Kivirähk’s play *Kalevipoeg* (2003)³, based on the events of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*, was

³ Director Ain Prosa, set designer Toomas Hõrak, costume designer Kersti Varrak. Rakvere Theatre, 2003.

The verse epic *Kalevipoeg*, *vana eesti lugu* (*Kalevipoeg*, an old Estonian Tale), loosely based on Estonian folklore, was published 1857–61. Its author, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, is considered the true founder of Estonian literature. The epic that showed Estonia’s mythical past as an independent country and *Kalevipoeg* as its protector became a landmark for Estonian National Awakening (1850s–1918). Kivirähk’s play, rather than providing a faithful interpretation of the text, offers a contemporary

performed on Sadulamägi (Saddle Hill), which is known in local folklore as the saddle of Kalevipoeg's horse. Neeruti, the area around Sadulamägi, is particularly interesting because of the amount of legends, which associate the creation of various physical places (boulders, lakes) to the actions of Kalevipoeg. The local lore is often connected to specific landscape elements (saddle-shaped hill, kidney-shaped lakes etc).

If memory acts as one of the framing devices for landscape, then landscape equally delimits memory. Landscape acts as the horizon or border that connects certain scenes, events or stories into a structured composition that is connected to the particular place (Casey 1989: 187). The relationship is dual: landscape sustains memory while memory keeps the landscape from altering too much. Theatre has the capability to express and activate the different layers of landscape-related memory. Productions that concentrate on events that took place in a particular location do not only provide a possibility to enact historical events, but also depending on the viewers' background to engage with the landscape-related memory to different degrees. As a collective form of art (albeit addressing individual spectators) theatre can to some extent be seen as a possibility to share the process of remembering.

Writing fiction to suit the landscape suggests a similar return in time. Triin Sinisaar's play *Soolaev* (Bogship, 2005)⁴, written for a particular site in Soontagana village⁵, was largely inspired by the history of the place, which is tightly connected to the Soontak family, who (according to the church records) had lived there for 22 generations. The author freely combined historical events with other local stories from the region, e.g. Hirmus Ants, a legendary forest brother (a post World War II partisan) and Järva Jaan, a 19th century prophet appear as characters in the play. The storyline itself is fictional, evolving around a curse that a 13th century ancestor put on all the men who join the family. The central artistic means is the co-existence of characters who date back to different periods, but who all lived in the same place. Although the 'ghosts of the forefathers' interacted with one another, as well as the living, and recognized the passing of time, they still seemed to be concerned with the events of their times. This solution accentuates and tightens the connection with the location that exhibits visible marks from different periods – a 10th century stronghold, remnants of old farmsteads (abandoned in 1966): the layout of the house and garden, the old well, village streets. The play, as well as the production, stresses the layered structure of landscape, and as such it illustrates the idea of landscape as a palimpsest that exposes marks from different periods, which hardly erase one another. (See Plate 7, Photo 1)

reading that rests on Estonians' common knowledge about *Kalevipoeg*. In a sense the understanding of the play depends on the shared cultural memory.

⁴ Director: Raivo Trass, Scenery: Kristiina Münd, SA Loomine 2005.

⁵ The village with its 10th century stronghold formed the centre of the ancient Soontagana county. The first written records from 13th century describe the area, called *Terra Maritima*, as the mightiest South-Eastern county. It also operated as a port and trading centre.

Hiding the scenographic interference by using patinated natural materials and skilful composition that integrates new elements into the original landscape, the ‘real’ landscape embedded with meanings of its own is presented as a true site of events that never took place. This is the perception of the Soontagana landscape. As Sooväli (2004:103–104, 110) has shown in her study of the imagery of Saaremaa, artistic representations can have direct and lasting impact on the perception of landscape. The repetition of a selection of visual or other images influences the creation of future representations, but also has a selectively erasing effect on memory, where a part is substituted with play-induced fiction. The effect can equally be contributive, landscape’s new function as a site of performance may influence further perception of the landscape.

Both cases, performing in the actual site of events depicted in the play and composing a play for a particular landscape, demonstrate physical landscape as a source of memory. Landscape provides places and situations – a stage – in which the remembered scenes unfold once again. This leads Casey (1987: 189) to call landscapes “*congealed* scenes for remembered contents”.⁶ In a certain sense it seems to suggest that landscape is a frozen scene, a set of bookmarks that waits for the rememberer. It points at the importance of previous knowledge, which makes the understanding of the landscape as important as the actual environment itself (see Palang et al. 2004). Personal associations can prove to be in conflict with the presented story, which can lead to a double perception of the landscape, via both personal knowledge and fiction. Productions like *Soolaev* demonstrate the current landscape as the outcome of the fictional events of the play. It calls for spatial logic since the physical traces of the past are provided with new associations that cannot be in conflict with their present state. Therefore it is crucial that the play establishes a coherent relationship with the landscape in addition to the expected coherence of plot and characters. Otherwise it can easily expose the limits of the fictional world and foster conflict with the perception of the contemporary landscape, which is available not only before and after, but also during the performance. In this view landscape cannot only be regarded as the provider of supplementary information that supports the events performed there. The performance of historical, mythical or purely fictional events also offers a (re)presentation of the landscape, where it is the landscape that is portrayed in relation to lives lived there. The two strategies of establishing the relationship between the location and the performance offer slightly different approaches. Compared to the reconstruction of historical or mythical event, the construction of a fictional story to fit a particular landscape presents the meaningful relationships only *in medias res*.

⁶ The words scene and scenery (as a synonym for landscape) have the same origin, Greek *skene*, which denotes the acting area.

4. Engagement with landscape-related memory

During recent years the Estonian theatre scene has expanded geographically. In addition to well-known sites, theatre has taken its audience to remote villages and islands, hilltops and bogs. A quick survey of open-air productions from the past five years shows a preference for sites that expose cultural memory related to manors (6 productions), old castles (5), followed by traditional villages (4) and then covering an entire spectrum ranging from nearly uninhabited islands to the ruins of a convent, from an uninhabited swamp to an abandoned military airfield. Studies on the understanding and appreciation of cultural and historical values of landscape in Estonia show a tendency to appreciate objects that date back to an earlier period in history (Palang et al. 2004: 164). Typically it rests on the presence of distinct visual elements – landmarks – rather than the totality of the landscape. The preferences in theatre are equally inclined towards these distinct landmarks, e.g. manors, ruins of castles or farmhouses that help to connect the place to a more or less fixed period of time.

Based on the idea that every socio-economic turn affects the functions, meanings and understanding of landscape, Palang et al. (Ibid: 160) divide the development of Estonian cultural landscape into five periods – ancient, estate, farm, Soviet and postmodern, which all can be further divided into different stages. Ancient landscapes (until the 13th century) can be characterized by a certain unity between people and nature that is projected on the period. During the estate period (13th-19th centuries) the land was owned by feudal landlords who consequently turned the field-surrounded manor into a central landmark. The peasant landowner became more prominent from the mid-19th century, but the turning-point of the farm period with small private farmer landscapes was the 1918 Land Reform. The nationalization of private lands, and the successive formation of collective farms after World War II, created a new centrally dominated landscape with large collective fields and farm buildings that now colour the postmodern landscapes with their forsaken presence. The postmodern landscape that has gradually developed since the regaining of independence in 1991 shows various types of land ownership and land practices with no ideological or economical continuity. All periods feature different identifiable landscapes which have been epitomized and reproduced by the arts⁷. A comparison of the sites where theatre takes us (irrelevant of the play performed) shows a similar liking for historical places, especially for sites the history of which can be traced back to earlier times.

The tendency to prefer locations that have evolved over a long period of time (also illustrated by the previous chapter) has left the sites from the farm, Soviet and postmodern periods without considerable attention. Examples from the farm period are scarce – Vaino Vahing's *Suvekool* (Summer School, 2004) at artist Richard Sagrits's homeplace in Karepa village, Kauksi Ülle's *Taarka* in Obinitsa

⁷ See also Sooväli (2004).

village⁸. The lack of interest in Soviet and postmodern landscapes deserves further investigation, which, however, remains outside the scope of this paper⁹. (See Plate 8, Photo 2)

A popular farm period venue that is actively used for performing is the birthplace of Estonian literature classic Anton Hansen Tammsaare in Vetepere village, in Northern Estonia. However, the farm became a museum in 1958 and the house as well as the surrounding landscape has been kept intact, i.e. the structure of pathways, meadows, auxiliary buildings and forest date from family ownership. During the past decade there have been several productions based on Tammsaare's work, most notably his five volume novel *Truth and Justice*¹⁰ (1926–33). The villagers are often regarded as the prototypes of *Truth and Justice*, and subsequently the homestead is identified with the original site of events insofar that the farm is now called Vargamäe after the novel. By taking the events to the author's home, the landscape serves an almost autobiographical function. It is hard to separate the life of the author from fictional events, knowledge about the popular author and information available on site make it virtually impossible to look at Vargamäe without recognizing its invisible, as well as visible, layers that are related to Tammsaare. It serves as a lens through which to interpret the play and the landscape, which can lead to double perception of the landscape in the performance. Previously gained information on Tammsaare, his relationship with the farm as well as the connections drawn between the farm and the autobiographical content may overshadow, complement or offer a parallel reading of the landscape as it is presented in the performance.

4.1. Landscape level

Most of the previous open-air productions in Vargamäe have used the surviving buildings and landscape as their acting area and thus been integrated into

⁸ *Summer School*, Rakvere Theatre 2004, Director: Mati Unt, Scenography: Kristi Leppik; *Taarka*, theatre Vanemuine 2005, dir. Ain Mäeots, scen. Iir Hermeliin

⁹ Soviet buildings in the countryside have been used, e.g. Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu* in the former Soviet hangars near Haapsalu, theatre NO99, 2006; Veljo Tormis's *Estonian Ballads* in an abandoned kolkhoz shed in Soorinna village, von Krahle Theatre, 2004

¹⁰ The quintology made the author a classic in his lifetime. The novel, deeply rooted in Estonian life, is said to reflect the Estonian character better than any previous work of literature. Despite its concrete local subject-matter, the novel also deals with many of the crucial issues of contemporary life and philosophical subject matters, e.g. man's struggle for existence, the impact of urbanization, religion, etc. The first three volumes of *Truth and Justice* contain much autobiographical material (early life on a farm, secondary school in Tartu, the years spent as a journalist in Tallinn), whereas the last two volumes are based on more general observations. Many of Tammsaare's works including selected volumes from *Truth and Justice* are a part of the compulsory literary program in secondary schools. His birthplace is a popular destination for school excursions.

the local landscape¹¹. They can be equally described as a return in time to the original landscape of the events performed. Urmas Lennuk's adaption of Tammsaare's national classic *Tõde ja õigus* (parts I and V) called *Vargamäe kuningriik* (Kingdom of Vargamäe, 2006)¹² provides an interesting exception, the scenographic solution depends less on the original landscape elements. At the same it does not ignore the landscape reality, but constructs an independent scenographic landscape that decreases the possibility of the double perception suggested above. The protagonist Indrek returns to his birthplace having spent most of his adult life away from home. The farm is run by his sister, and as the text suggests, the landscape has altered. The only landscape he can return to is that of his childhood memories. It is further emphasized by introducing scenes from his childhood. In a sense the same landscape is presented from two points of time, both fictional. In addition it is shown in the process of remembering, which draws attention to the process itself¹³. A remembered event is stored in the landscape, and it is easily recalled in the encounter with the landscape. Furthermore any remembered events tend to have spatial context. At the same time the landscape is recalled and re-lived as an event, i.e. in the temporal and often situation-related context (Casey 1989:187). The idea of re-living is of course interesting regarding the experience in theatre. For Casey (Ibid: 202) memory is comparable to a scene, which he calls the "spatio-temporal equivalent to landscape". Remembering thus has an active character, it is not the question of envisioning still images, but going through the process itself like it is done in a performance.

While most open-air productions dealing with landscape-related memory frame the audience's view to exclude all signs of contemporary life, *Vargamäe kuningriik* disregards all signs of the historic farm with equal care. The acting area, surrounded by two semi-circular seating areas, is placed in the middle of an empty meadow. Audience platforms cut off the views to the farm landscape, familiar to most Estonians. The two neighbouring farms are marked by gates situated to the audience's right and left and thus enclosing the circle. Rather than relying on the connotations that are already visually present (epitomized by numerous visual reproductions in the media), *Vargamäe kuningriik* constructs a neutral ground that does not repeat the farm landscape. (See Plate 9, Photo 3)

Scenographically the production relies on the memory of the viewers, much in line with the play, which deliberately expects the viewers to recall and reconstruct scenes from the novel that were left out of the play. Although *Vargamäe kuningriik* was performed in a specifically neutral ground in a well-known landscape, it was highly site-specific. While the term 'site-specific' is normally used to denote

¹¹ A. H. Tammsaare/Margus Kasterpalu *Tõde ja õigus I* (Truth and Justice I), theatre Ugala 1997, A. H. Tammsaare/R. Trass *Kõrboja peremees* (The Master of Kõrboja Farm), Rakvere Theatre 2001.

¹² Director: Jaanus Rohumaa, Scenography: Aime Unt, Rakvere Theatre and theatre Endla 2006.

¹³ The complexity of memory-related issues in Tammsaare's work and the particular production deserve more discussion than the current paper allows.

an artwork that is defined through its relationship with its location rather than its concrete physical properties, its original application in the 1960s stressed the change in the act of perception that redefines the object together with its site. In this “reversal of the gaze”, the viewer becomes involved with the work of art and it is experienced as a situation in a place (Kaye 2001:1–3, 12). It appeals at estranging the work of art as well as its surroundings, and thus activating and involving the perceiver. The scenographic solution operated on the principle of negative architecture and expected the audience to recognize the absence of the epitomized views. Instead of merely repeating it visually, landscape-related memory was activated on multiple levels, on the fictional as well as the present and real. By addressing the problem of double perception – the threat that personal previous knowledge of a well-known landscape will overshadow the connotations and meanings intended by the production team – a new interpretation of the Tammsaare’s landscapes was offered, as well as employing landscape related memory.

4.2. Compositional level

The scenography for *Vargamäe kuningriik* serves as a good example of environmental scenography that aims to incorporate the audience into the performance by uniting respective spaces. Furthermore, scenographic solutions in regard to audience space can affect the perception of landscape-related memory. To some extent open-air productions fulfil the ideals of environmental scenography without much physical effort, because the spectators share the same environment with actors, they are surrounded by the same horizon, and walk on the same ground in the same rain, wind and sunshine. Environmental scenography is the practice of integrating the space(s) of the audience and the performers by placing the audience in the same frame with the performers or using multiple frames (Aronson 1981:1–5). Proceeding from Casey’s (1987) argument, the recollection and storage of memories function on a similar frame-based principle.

Compositionally speaking, the seating arrangement of *Vargamäe kuningriik* is semi-circular, and the location of gates on both sides encloses it into a full circular arena. The rising platforms for the audience constitute a wall that does not only limit the view to the well-known farm buildings, but also articulates the border between performance space and the “outside”, while clearly incorporating the audience into the performance space. Thus the audience is integral to the scenography. The clear indication of the border (or the outline of frame) helps to focus the audience’s attention to the layers of landscape used in the performance. The environmental effect of the totality of the landscape is possible only on the largest scale. Viewers can acknowledge being in the same landscape and at the same time be fully aware of being located in different distinct places as they watch the events unfold. While sharing the same landscape, audience and performers can be located in smaller separate frames. As Aronson (1981) observes, one of the contributing factors to the existence of separate frames is a frontal seating

arrangement. It fosters perception of the landscape as the larger uniting frame which gives limited access to the smaller place. One of the problems with the use of landscape-related memory in *Kalevipoeg* discussed above could be rooted in the frontal relationship between audience and performers. While textual references to the local lore were present, the scenographic solution did not support the audience's direct engagement with it. In such cases, as Berleant (1991:6) suggested, space ceases to act as a unifier. Instead, it creates distance between the place of the perceiver and the place of the object.

Although both productions used fixed seating arrangements, which provide a single viewpoint access to the landscape that obviously differs from that of the performers' and emphasizes the problems of integration; multisensory engagement with the landscape was provided otherwise. The common practice of using long intermissions during which the audience is allowed to move around in the landscape could be seen as a compensating factor for the fixed seating arrangement. However, since it encourages multisensory engagement with the landscape outside the fictionality of the performance, it also draws attention to the potential conflict between the real and fictional landscape as well as possible clashes regarding the use of landscape-related memory.

5. Conclusion

Landscape and memory are in a reciprocally supportive relationship; landscape enables the attachment of memories to landscape elements and fosters its recollection. According to Casey (1987), the recollected landscape is experienced as a scene, which demands active engagement, while landscape is used to isolate and bind memories into scenes. As such theatre offers varied and productive means to engage with landscape related memory. Theatre can be regarded as one of the media that can express, activate, share or alter landscape related memory.

The practice of performing in the open air in the Estonian landscape indicates two primary ways of engaging with landscape-related memory. First, performing at the site of events depicted in the chosen play promises a return in time. The choice of location and scenographic composition is influenced by the availability of landmarks from the period in question. Generally, Estonian open-air productions tend to use places, the history of which can be traced back to earlier times. Alternatively a play can be composed for a particular landscape, where the current state of the landscape is exposed as the outcome of the fictional events shown in the performance. In terms of scenography, the actual landscape is accepted as a stage environment ready for acting, while the compositional relationship between the audience and performance area contributes to the perception of the original landscape, as well as the landscape used in the performance. Environmental scenography makes use of the frame-based structure of landscape that Casey (1987) observed. Similar to a theatrical stage, landscape is a framed space, which contributes to its capability to store memories and open them for recollection.

A horizon serves an enclosing function, which provides focus and guarantees the integrity of the inside. By enclosing the landscape elements, as well as the perceiver, it offers direct contact with landscape-related memory.

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Photo 1. Scene from Soolaev (Bog Boat) in Soontagana village, theatre group Loomine (2005). Photo by Liis Mäesalu.



Photo 2. Scene from Vargamäe Kingdom in A. H Tammsaare's birthplace, Rakvere and Endla theatres (2006). Photo by Vahur Puik.



*Photo 3. Scene from Vargamäe Kingdom in A. H Tammsaare's birthplace.
Rakvere and Endla theatres (2006). Photo by Vahur Puik.*