

## **WHEN THE REAL CONTEXTUAL WORLD PUSHES ITSELF INTO THE CENTRE OF FICTION**

I will examine the role that contemporary society plays in politicising theatrical events and themes. I have chosen to survey Hagar Olsson's 1939 play *Lumisota (Snowball Fight)* which tells about a fictional Finnish Prime Minister's family in that same year: negotiations with the Soviet Union and political tensions of the family. The play is intimately bound up with contemporary societal tensions, but its theme has also been activated in 2022.

Contextual reality was able to fully penetrate fiction (created during spring 1939) in *Lumisota* as societal events kept escalating to mirror the events in the play during autumn rehearsals. The (real) Ministry of Foreign Affairs prohibited the play from being performed before its opening night as the play was deemed detrimental to (real) ongoing fateful conversations with the Soviet Union that would determine Finland's future. Finland was attacked shortly after the performance embargo, and the Winter War began.

I will also shortly discuss few later productions of the play, as well as American Robert Sherwood's Winter War play *There Shall Be No Night* (1940), to give a broader view to the ways of politicising drama.

In my chosen examples, the focus is firmly on theatrical references to wider contemporary society, and I will be examining both the forms that the process of fictionalization (according to Dorrit Cohn) takes under such circumstances, as well as its inherent power. I will be referencing Jonathan Charteris-Black's *Politicians and Rhetoric* (2004) and the way in which political speech and its mechanisms are analyzed, such as listener persuasion through metaphor and the power of myth as a messenger for an idea.

### **Biography**

Pirkko Koski is Helsinki University's professor emerita of theatre research. She has specialized in theatre performance analysis and historiography, as well as historical analysis

of the Finnish theatre. She has written and edited several articles and books for the domestic and international market. Her most recent work includes 2019's monograph *Suomen Kansallisteatteri ristipaineissa* ("The National Theatre of Finland meeting pressure conflicts"), 2013's monograph *Näyttelijänä Suomessa* ("Being an actor in Finland"), and monograph *Finland's National Theatre 1974-1991. The Two Decades of Generational Contests, Cultural Upheavals, and International Cold War Politics* in 2022.