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**J. M. R. LENZ:
REMARKS CONCERNING THE THEATRE
ANMERKUNGEN ÜBERS THEATER**

German and English / Deutsch und Englisch
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Lenz made a significant contribution to the development of the modern theatre through his aesthetic and dramaturgical writings. These addressed such contentious issues as the relevance of Aristotelian poetics still rigidly observed by contemporary German as well as French dramatists. In broader terms he strove to redefine the relationship between the stage and society. Behind his grand iconoclastic vision – what he liked to call a “project” – for the theatre of the future stands the towering figure of William Shakespeare. Like the young Goethe, Lenz owed unabashed allegiance to his Elizabethan model. His *Remarks Concerning the Theatre* (*Anmerkungen übers Theater*, 1774), which he claimed were written as early as 1771, are his first and most important statement of this vision. As a manifesto for theatrical reform and as an expression of the remarkable Shakespeare enthusiasm which erupted in late eighteenth-century Germany, this document is worthy of inclusion with the writings of his better known contemporaries Goethe and Herder, notably in the latter’s *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (*On German Mind and Art*), which appeared in 1773.

Despite this growing recognition of its significance, Lenz’s text has so far not been accessible to English-speaking readers. A much abbreviated French version by René Girard, entitled *Observations sur le Théâtre*, appeared in *Théâtre populaire*, 25: 13–18 (Paris, July 1957). It consists of a few eclectically chosen extracts interspersed with passages from Lenz’s later theatrical commentaries and without source references. The present text offers the first complete English translation of this pivotal work. It is intended to fill a gap in existing scholarship for the benefit of both scholars and general readers interested in dramatic theory and history with particular reference to the German theatre.

A number of comments are in order with respect to the text and the challenges it presents to the translator. The translation is based upon the Weygand edition (Leipzig 1774). This is the published version of what began as a series of lectures delivered in 1772 to the Strasbourg Société de philosophie et de belles-lettres, where Lenz espoused the emergent nationalist pride in German language and letters in the face of the cultural dominance of French. His “Remarks” thus retain the characteristics of spoken rather than written discourse. Arguments are not fully developed, phrases are often left unfinished leaving the listener to complete the thought, and formal elements of punctuation and orthography are inconsistent or in violation of convention. Lenz uses the word “rhapsodic” to describe his rhetorical style, which expresses passionately held ideas with a breathless intensity and little room for their more coherent development. This translation tries to preserve the rhapsodic effect as long as it does not unduly affect comprehensibility. Condensed utterances must sometimes be expanded, but such editing is kept to a minimum.