For drama and theatrical performance the connection of space and time is immediately evident. The action takes place on the stage, a spatial receptacle, and it is a process in time. These basic conditions exist independently of how a play is received, whether it is read or seen in a performance, or whether the author intended it for reading, recitation, or stage production. The reader (or audience of a recitation) imagines the space and time of the play, envisioning mentally either the stage action itself or the space and time signified by it. I believe the stage character of Seneca's dramas ought to be acknowledged in terms not only of their stageability but also of their intended mode of reception, with the playwright's intention being laid down in the text. However, the following discussion is meant as a help for any reader, regardless of his stance on the question of performance. The reading at the basis of the subsequent observations endeavors to be that of both an ideal stage director and of an ideal reader (or listener) with some theater experience.

After a preliminary section on implicit performance directions, the chapter has two parts devoted to space and time, respectively. The part on space first discusses some specific aspects and then analyzes the semantics of dramatic space; the part on time again deals first with technical aspects and then considers the character of dramatic time.

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1 Each “his” and “he” of this type should be understood as meaning “his or her,” “she or he”; the traditional forms are chosen to avoid the stylistic clumsiness and pedantry of the politically correct expression.
Ancient drama lacks explicit stage directions, the additional remarks we find in modern plays (and present-day translations of Seneca: cf., e.g., Häuptli 2003) as part of the side text (as opposed to the main text). Nevertheless, even an ancient dramatic text is a theater script, “eine [...] schriftlich fixierte Anweisung für das Aufführungsgeschehen” (Matzat 1982: 13), or the “libretto of a performance” (Taplin 1977: 25), regardless of whether an actual performance is intended or one that emerges in the imaginative mind of a reader. Where the dramatist wants to fix his stage intention he puts it into the main text, the speeches (or songs) and replies (German: Repliken) of the figures, or the chorus. (There may be cases where he leaves the specific form of realization to the stage director or where specification is unnecessary because of the contemporary theatrical practice.) It is these inserted instructions that I term “implicit performance directions” (hereafter without “implicit”) instead of the usual “stage directions” because I wish to make a terminological distinction between “stage direction” in a narrower sense and “figure direction.” “Stage directions” include instructions for the backdrop of the stage, the wings, stage machines, props, implements, costumes, and make-up. The term “figure direction” subsumes the entries and exits, movements, postures, gestures, and actions of the figures. This division corresponds to the difference between the factors that prepare the physical background of the play and those that are elements of the dramatic action. It corresponds also to a dichotomy of spatial and temporal phenomena. Thus,