The on-stage audience appears in plays that have embedded performances. In considering the embedded performance, one must distinguish between the on-stage performance and the theater performance, as well as the on-stage audience and the theater audience. In this perception the performer, the performed text and the audience of the embedded performance are the components of the basic communication triad, homologous to the performed dramatic text in the theater.

Further, the embedded performance, or the performance-within-the-performance, is differentiated from the play-within-the-play by being a dramaturgical trope that includes more than a dramatic presentation. (The play-within-the-play is only one type of embedded performance.) Each performance component is determinable by its function, and as a result embedded performances involve portions of the text other than those clearly identified as performances, for example, those in which the performed text is artistic. In consequence, the functional determining of components uncovers unexpected variants such as inanimate performers, non-artistic performance texts, and nonhuman audiences. In addition, the embedded performance is not limited to a visible, on-stage enactment. While the dramatist may articulate the embedded performance through enactment, he may also do so through the narration of a past or imaginary event or by an indexical sign.

It is the presence of the on-stage audience that signals the embedded performance to the theater audience/reader.
And since the on-stage audience is ascertained solely by its function, it, and, hence, the embedded performance, may be formally exposed, as for example, in the enactment of *The Murder of Gonzago* in *Hamlet*, or it may be covered. This is especially the case when a nonartistic, performed text is presented in the format of a performance; the articulation of the embedded performance is a narrated past or imaginary event (also nonartistic), or an indexed event; or a character expresses himself to another character through an enactment of sorts, e.g. by reciting or singing a few lines from a poem or song.

If one singles out an example of a well known play-within-the-play, as in *Hamlet* (III,ii), one may consider it even from the vantage point of the script a performance-within-a-performance that would portray visibly on the stage an audience reacting to a performed text. Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, et al., while characters in the play *Hamlet* are, at the time of the embedded performance, members of an audience. Their audience function is a sign that is at once *meta-discursive phatic*, establishing *contact* with the theater audience/readers who recognize in it their own function in the communicative process and are reminded of the medium of the performance. Yet, simultaneously, Hamlet, et al., remain characters in the play being read or viewed, whose reactions are also signs that bear relation to the literary text - the play *Hamlet*. The on-stage audience sign in the embedded performance is inherently doubled in function, being *poetic* as well as *phatic*.

The embedded performance of *The Murder of Gonzago* is, moreover, an instance of parallelism in the drama that repeats the features of the medium of the performance present in the drama itself, as well as reiterating on the level of content the murder of Hamlet's father. In plays such as *Hamlet* or Pushkin's "Little Tragedies"\(^1\) one may observe "the principle of equivalence projected from the axis of selection in to that of combination" (Jakobson, 1971, 358) when con-

\(^1\) Pushkin wrote four miniature plays in Boldino, 1830, known as the "Little Tragedies" that also bear the title Dramatic Scenes. The cycle includes: The Covetous Knight, Mozart and Salieri, The Stone Guest and The Feast During the Plague.