



Knud Erik Knudsen building Samarkand, Holstebro, July 2003 - Photo: Rina Skeel

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## Giving Life to the Past

### Theatre Anthropology at Odin Teatret Archives

*Abstract: OTA (Odin Teatret Archives) keeps many documents concerning theatre anthropology and ISTA. After a brief description of the catalogues, the article gives several examples of the varied perspectives of research that scholars, students and theatre practitioners interested in ISTA and theatre anthropology can undertake through the consultation of paper documents, photos and videos stored at OTA.*

*Keywords: Odin Teatret Archives, Photos, Videos, Theatre anthropology, ISTA*

At Odin Teatret's home in Holstebro there is a spacious room called Samarkand. It looks like an attic with a sloping roof into which the nordic light enters from many windows. All the time, from early morning to late evening, there are people bent over books and documents or watching videos. It is the heart of OTA, Odin Teatret Archives.

The project for the realisation of OTA took off in March 2008, led by Mirella Schino, professor at the University of Roma Tre, with Francesca Romana Rietti and Valentina Tibaldi. Assisted from time to time by students, scholars and researchers from different parts of Europe, they catalogued, archived and digitised all kinds of documents belonging to Odin Teatret.<sup>1</sup>

This part of the archive is called OTA 1 and contains materials relating to Odin Teatret's first 50 years of numerous and diverse activities as a laboratory (1964-2014). Mirella Schino and her team completed the work in February 2015 when:

[...] the vast majority of the physical documents and a digital copy of photographs and audio-visual documents were transferred to the Royal Library in Copenhagen. All the documents are now accessible from Copenhagen and Holstebro, the Odin home which stores a digital copy of everything that was sent to Copenhagen [...].<sup>2</sup>

The archiving and cataloguing of documents resulting from new productions, projects

1. Many young people and researchers worked for OTA: Kasia Chojecka, Paula Isiegas, Miguel Jerez López, Sabrina Martello, Sofia Monsalve, Pierangelo Pompa, Lucia Repašská, Gabriella Sacco, Rina Skeel, Ana Woolf, and Odin Teatret's filmmakers Chiara Crupi and Claudio Coloberti. Others should be mentioned: Nando Tavian who often helped for documents and photos descriptions; Lluís Masgrau who worked on Eugenio Barba's bibliography inventing a system to arrange its complex contents; Nicola Savarese who asked Francesco Petroni to give ideas for an archive database.



and tours still continues today. The current archive is called OTA 2 and it stores the material produced since January 2015 until today, both on paper and in digital format.

## The complexity of cataloguing and the series ISTA

OTA started in 2004 as a project linked to CTLS (Centre for Theatre Laboratory Studies) of the University of Aarhus, taking on an independent life and becoming an archive of relevant historical-theoretical interest for scholars and researchers interested in Odin Teatret and in the laboratory led by Eugenio Barba also beyond its performances. But OTA has also collected an impressive documentation on the culture of group theatre (Third Theatre) that developed after 1968, and on Asian theatres and the techniques of their actors which Odin Teatret divulged with the issues of its journal *Teatrets Teori og Teknikk* (TTT)<sup>3</sup> and with the remarkable seminars that began in Holstebro in 1972.<sup>4</sup>

The cataloguing and inventory of the material was not a simple operation for the team led by Mirella Schino. The reason for the cataloguing complexity lies in the fact that Odin Teatret is a theatre laboratory not limited to producing performances, but that has invented and produced other activities:

We have worked to identify and restate not only the existence but also the importance of so many other activities created by the Odin Teatret and of the documents left as their traces.

The range of activities produced or conceived by Odin Teatret [...] is astounding. The theatre pioneered in the elaboration of a form of alternative apprenticeship (the training), as well as in the study of the actor's knowledge of Asian theatres. They [...] facilitated studies and conferences on the actor's techniques - not only of the East and the West but "Eurasian" ones too.<sup>5</sup>

To cope with this complexity, the OTA team relied on the advice of Giulia Barrera from the General Archives Directorate of the Italian Ministry of Culture, who:

[...] taught [the team] the basics of the method for historical archiving, according to which ordering an archive first of all implies the reconstruction and preservation of the original order of papers, as arranged by the institution that produced them. This is not just extra information which should not be gathered or missing: it forms the backbone, the order around which other information should be gathered while revealing the link connecting all the material.

3. *Teatrets Teori og Teknikk* (TTT) was the theatre journal founded by Eugenio Barba and edited by Odin Teatrets Forlag from 1965 to 1974. It was published three times a year, and since 1968, one of the issues was a book. In total, the journal published 23 issues. Three of them were dedicated to Asian theatre: TTT 15 entitled *Skuespillerkunst i Kina og Japan* (The art of the actor in China and Japan) (1971), TTT 16 which was Motokiyo Zeami's book *Den Hemmelige tradition i nô* (The secret tradition of noh) (1971), and TTT 21 entitled *Barong og Kathakali. Om skuespilleren på Bali og Indien* (Barong and kathakali. About the actor in Bali and India) (1974). For more information about TTT, see Rietti 2004.

4. During the 1970s, Odin Teatret organised three seminars dedicated to Asian theatre: *Japansk teater, klassisk og moderne* (Japanese theatre, classic and modern) (1972), *Javanesisk og Balinesisk teater og skuespillerteknik* (Javanese and Balinese theatre and acting techniques) (1974), and *Indisk seminar* (Indian seminar) (1977) concerning several forms of Indian performing traditions. The duration of these seminars was of about one week.

[...] Stories are essential, Giulia told us, “so write down anything that is informative, or interesting. It does not matter if you produce an anomalous inventory, all inventories are anomalous”.<sup>6</sup>

Because of this, the Fonds Odin Teatret includes a series called “Activities”, which collects the documents of all Odin Teatret’s activities not related to performances. In this sense, the challenge was to convey that “... the activities are not important in themselves, but they are important for the way in which they were organised and the ensuing relationships”.<sup>7</sup> ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) is one of these activities, but only a part of the material related to ISTA is found in the Activities series. Two independent series were created for ISTA, one in the Fonds Odin Teatret and one in the Fonds Eugenio Barba. The team led by Mirella Schino made a choice that the scholar herself defines as “discretionary”, but correct, since the ISTA sessions “were, beside the performances, one of the most important activities organised by Odin Teatret”.<sup>8</sup>

## Paper documents and writings about ISTA

The Series ISTA of the Fonds Odin Teatret is divided into two subseries: ISTA and ISTA-A.

The subseries ISTA consists in 29 folders and mainly collects programmes, press reviews, final reports and in some cases the list of participants of the various ISTA sessions. From a bibliographic point of view, the material collected in binder 15 of this subseries is interesting and significant: here, further subdivided into fifteen folders in alphabetical order, we can find, in addition to Barba’s writings, articles and essays by scholars from all over the world.

But the most relevant material is to be found in the subseries ISTA-A, which preserves organisational documents, budgets and an intense correspondence between Barba and the Asian teachers. Precisely this correspondence is useful to understand the reaction of the Asians when Barba - already since the end of 1979 - tells them about the creation of an international school of theatre anthropology and asks them if they want to be involved as teachers. Sanjukta Panigrahi enthusiastically grants her availability:

[...] Your enthusiasm and the seriousness for the venture is very much evident from the letter and I am not very surprised to know the positive response that you are getting from other countries for the coming years: as you are behind the project no one can have any doubt about the success and purposefulness of the SCHOOL. As far as I am concerned I assure you once again that I shall be most willing to collaborate with you in my own humble way and within my limits.<sup>9</sup>

Although Barba met Sanjukta Panigrahi a few years earlier - for the *Indisk seminar* (Indian seminar) organised by Odin Teatret in 1977 - this letter is testimony to the con-

6. Schino 2018, 10.

7. Schino 2018, 6.

8. Schino 2018, 20.

9. Panigrahi 1979.

tinuation of a professional relationship destined to last for twenty years.<sup>10</sup>

Sanjukta participated as a teacher representing odissi dance in all ISTA sessions until her death in June 1997. Today, among the trees around Odin Teatret's entrance stands a *varde*, a heap of stones that indicates a path in the Scandinavian mountains. For Sanjukta's death, Odin Teatret asked all those who worked with her at ISTA to send a stone: about six hundred stones arrived from all over the world.<sup>11</sup> In addition, in the same year, the Odin actors built a tower dedicated to her, which now hosts visitors, meetings, rehearsals and other activities.<sup>12</sup>

From an academic point of view, the subseries ISTA-A is important as it collects interesting material written by the scientific staff present at the sessions. The scientific staff often was made up of significant theatre historians like the Italians Fabrizio Cruciani, Nando Tavian, Nicola Savarese, Franco Ruffini and Ugo Volli, the French Jean-Marie Pradier, as well as Peter Elsass, professor of psychology at the University of Copenhagen. The scientific staff changed over the years and other researchers and scholars in the field of theatre and human sciences joined it.

In the binder 2 of the subseries ISTA-A, entirely dedicated to the ISTA held in Volterra (1981), we find the minutes of the meetings that Barba held at the end of each day with the scientific staff. Problems of a practical nature concerning the work in progress were faced during those meetings, but the talks also addressed issues related to methods, pedagogy, and *how* to make participants understand certain concepts. In one of the minutes, Barba highlights a problem: "In my work now, I am also interested in the problem of how one talks to the actor: that is, to make the directors understand that their language must be extremely practical and at the same time extremely poetic."<sup>13</sup>

This material highlights the importance of the scientific staff and the collective orientation towards a common research that went beyond practical difficulties.

During the 1981 ISTA of Volterra:

the living condition for the participants and the staff were very hard. We could consider this as the most extreme moment for ISTA, for the material living conditions (especially for the duration of the session) and for the scholarly research.<sup>14</sup>

This rigour highlighted by Mirella Schino can be found in some anonymous impressions left by the participants:

The first six days were exhausting both mentally and physically. Now I am starting to

10. In 1978, Per Moth left Odin Teatret of which he was administrative director for almost ten years, and founded a theatre production agency, Scandinavian Theatre Traffic. It organised important events including a tour of Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* in Copenhagen (1987). However, the first event organised by Moth's agency was a seminar conducted by Eugenio Barba and Sanjukta Panigrahi (March 1979). It was a week-long seminar in Herning (Denmark), financed by DATS, the association of Danish amateur theatres. This occasion allowed the two artists to discover how stimulating it was to work together.

11. Barba, Galli and Varley 2020, 30.

12. Barba, Galli and Varley 2020, 35.

13. In OTA, Fonds Odin Teatret, Series ISTA, Subseries ISTA-A, b.2\_4.4A.

14. Schino 2018, 116.

feel at ease. I have the impression that I had to destroy my identity. Now I am rebuilding it adapting it to the needs of the place. I think it is a normal adaptation process.<sup>15</sup>

Binder 2 of the subseries ISTA-A is significant not only because it is richer than the others, but also exactly because it allows us to contextualise the ISTA phenomenon from several points of view. During the session in Volterra “[...] the depth of the comparative research [...] led to the definition of the concept of pre-expressivity and of the principles of theatre anthropology.”<sup>16</sup> To understand the intentions of the research and how the scientific hypotheses were verified practically, it is interesting to read a paper by Nando Taviani, written shortly before the session in Volterra. The Italian scholar emphasises that much of ISTA’s research is not limited to the artistic field, but seeks to identify the technical principles of the actors/dancers’ presence:

The forms of theatre and codified performance appear, thus, in another light [...] they are also the ways in which a particular way of using the energy of the actor/dancer has crystallised. On one hand, they can be reproduced as works of art, but on the other hand, they can be experimented and studied as living spies that guide us to discover the biological, physical energy of the actor.<sup>17</sup>

Taviani’s writing is an organisational document<sup>18</sup> by the Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale di Pontedera directed by Roberto Bacci - organiser of ISTA in Volterra - written for Pontedera Provincial Administration. The document highlights ISTA’s characteristics: it is not a school in the sense of an academy or building, but a ‘philosophy’ in which the combination of practical aspects and theoretical research aims at training actors and directors-teachers; it is a place where there is no specific homogeneous teaching imparted to participants in the time frame of a session, but a “search, instead, of the best conditions for the autonomous creative development of each of its participants”.<sup>19</sup>

An interesting testimony, concerning the search for the best conditions for individual creative development, can be found in the Fonds Carreri, the section of the archive that conserves the diaries of Roberta Carreri, Odin Teatret actress since 1974.

ISTA was Eugenio Barba’s project and initially - except for Toni Cots - not all Odin Teatret’s actors were involved in it, then “[...] over the years its history has been increasingly intertwined with that of Odin Teatret and, [...], since 1987 the whole group has been involved”.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Odin ensemble was partially involved at ISTA in Salento (1987), and as a whole at ISTA in Bologna (1990). At the Bonn session, in 1980, Roberta Carreri followed the lessons of Katsuko Azuma as a participant. The

15. *Impressioni e riflessioni dei partecipanti raccolte entro i primi dieci giorni di attività* (Participants’ impressions and reflections collected during the first ten days of activity), in OTA, Fonds Odin Teatret, Series ISTA, Subseries ISTA-A, b.2\_4.4A.

16. Schino 2018, 116.

17. Taviani 1980, 10.

18. See Schino 2018, 120.

19. Taviani 1980, 11.

20. Schino 2018, 114.

pages of Roberta Carreri's diary report in a technical and meticulous way the physical exercises and describe in detail the process of learning the dance of the lion, a sequence of movements belonging to the Japanese kabuki tradition. From the dance of the lion, Roberta Carreri developed a sequence that became part of Odin Teatret's performance *The Million*.<sup>21</sup>

Toni Cots, Odin Teatret actor since 1976, was Eugenio Barba's close collaborator in organising the first three ISTA sessions. In the series ISTA, subseries ISTA-A, binder 1, there are numerous letters with which Toni Cots replies to those who have asked to participate in ISTA. Reading this very intense correspondence is useful to understand the complexity of the organisational dynamics of the first sessions. In a letter, dated July 26, 1980, Toni Cots wrote to Gilla Cremer, a German actress who was studying for a period of time in Bali. In agreement with Eugenio Barba, Toni Cots offered Gilla Cremer to participate in ISTA, asking her in exchange to take care of the logistical and organisational aspects for I Made Pasek Tempo and the whole Balinese ensemble, who had to face a long journey from Denpasar to Bonn:

There are two things you should do for us concerning Tempo:

First, accompany Tempo and his group on their travel from Denpasar to Frankfurt, where Eugenio Barba will be waiting for them [...] what we need from Tempo and his group is again all their names and addresses so we can order the tickets [...].<sup>22</sup>

Gilla Cremer was a very useful contact; she knew the Bahasa Indonesian language and was a translator for the Balinese ensemble led by I Made Pasek Tempo. After the Bonn session, the German actress remained in close contact with ISTA: she participated in the Volterra session in 1981 leading a 'family'<sup>23</sup> together with the Swedish mime Ingemar Lindh and the Japanese singing teacher Michi Imafuji, and took part in the sessions of Holstebro (1986) and Bologna (1990).<sup>24</sup>

There is a Series ISTA also in the Fonds Eugenio Barba. The first folder is interesting as there are many scientific articles from different fields, collected by Barba himself "for the founding of ISTA and the first session in particular".<sup>25</sup> The underlining and annotations on the articles allow us to understand Eugenio Barba's interest in the biological aspect of the art of the actor/dancer. Barba wanted, and even managed this, to involve in a common research scholars, related to theatre history or performance theories on one side and experts in biology, physics and neurology on the other - people who would otherwise never have collaborated with each other.

Noteworthy in this folder is the programme of the *Colloque sur les aspects scientifiques du théâtre*, which took place in Jelenia Góra (Poland) in September 1979, organised by Jean-Marie Pradier, and which counted with the presence of important scientists,

21. In OTA, Fonds Roberta Carreri, b.16.

23. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ISTA Session, held in Volterra in 1981, was organised with a division of participants into three 'families'. Two or three teachers (both Asian and western) and two members of the scientific staff headed each 'family'. Cf. "Rapport sur la 2<sup>ème</sup> session de l'ISTA." Published in this issue (Elsass, Pradier, and Taviani (1981) 2021, 62)

24. Gilla Cremer is today a well-know actress and is director of Theater Unikate in Hamburg (Germany). See <<https://www.gillacremer.de/en>> and <<http://www.theater-unikate.de/>>.

25. Schino 2018, 265.

including Henri Laborit. In that context, Laborit's talk, *Le théâtre vu dans l'optique de la biologie des comportements*,<sup>26</sup> impressed Barba who then invited the French biologist to the symposium held during the first ISTA session, in Bonn, on October 25, 1980. A transcription of Laborit's speech can be found in the Fonds Odin Teatret, Series Activities, binder 44.<sup>27</sup>

The Series Activities of the Fonds Odin Teatret contains useful material to underline the kind of relationship established between scholars and the most assiduous participants of ISTA. Here we find interesting articles or drafts of articles, talks held on various occasions and symposia, often commented and backed by a quite dense correspondence. These sources highlight above all a cohesion in defence of a common research, as in the case of some letters in response to "The Rites of Women", an article by Erika Munk which appeared in the *Performing Arts Journal*. The American scholar, who participated in the 1986 ISTA in Holstebro whose theme was "The female role as represented on the stage in various cultures", accused ISTA of sexism, criticising its research methodologies:

What lesson can be draw from all this? Many obvious ones. That when men are securely in power, they will play women's role, create the very idea of womanhood, and snugly tap into feminine energy while refusing to allow women to use it.<sup>28</sup>

The ISTA in Holstebro "irrespective of cultural and historical differences - gave way to numerous discussions, violent at times, and disputes".<sup>29</sup> Many participants, including Sanjukta Panigrahi, took sides through letters or publications against Erika Munk's article, in defence of the research they had conducted and the established evaluation.<sup>30</sup>

The 1986 Holstebro session generated many misunderstandings. In an article published in *The Drama Review* Phillip Zarrilli wrote:

Although it may occasionally be necessary to put aside the social and political debate regarding the representation of gender in order to examine a specific problem in performance, to summarily do so in an open international congress was, I think, a mistake...  
The conflict at the 1986 ISTA came from an exclusive focus on the practical to the exclusion of the historical and processual.<sup>31</sup>

In a later issue of the same journal, Barba replied to Zarrilli:

This is true. At ISTA the focus is on the "practical exploration" of theatrical work. But it is not done in an exclusive way. Above all, this does not imply any conflict with attention

26. Laborit 1980a.

27. Laborit 1980b. For more information about Laborit's influence on Barba, see the article by Leonardo Mancini "Reading for the "Flying House" (1979-80). Barba's early research towards theatre anthropology." Published in this issue (Mancini 2021).

28. Munk 1986, 42.

29. Schino 2018, 122.

30. The correspondence against Erika Munk's article is available for consultation in OTA, Fonds Odin Teatret, Series Activities, b.43.

31. Zarrilli 1988, 98.



to historical, sociocultural, political, and ideological problematics [...]

In reality there were several forums at the 1986 ISTA organised by one or another of the participants, in addition to those which had been provided for in the program [...] In spite of this, some continued to complain about the small amount of time provided for debate. They did not take into consideration what actually took place. Paradoxically, the activities which were freely organised appeared to them to be non-existent.<sup>32</sup>

In reference to actor's apprenticeship, Barba wrote in the programme of that ISTA, "The first days of work leave an indelible imprint". But the Italian director was not thinking of a psychological level of learning. Rather he was referring to the fact that the actor-apprentice should not fossilise on his gender to perform only male roles if he is an actor or female roles if she is an actress, because this "undermines the exploration of his or her own energies at the pre-expressive level". S/he has to have "an interaction between opposites which brings to mind the poles of a magnetic field, or the tension between body and shadow."<sup>33</sup>

The main concept is not the actor's gender but the energy that emerges from the actor at a pre-expressive level. This assumption was well understood by Peggy Phelan who, regarding the Holstebro ISTA in 1986, wrote:

The focus of the conference was on what Barba calls "the actor's energy". Barba believes that a study of the use of the actor's energy on a "biological' level [...] permits us to make an intercultural examination of the various theatrical traditions, not as historically determined systems but as [physiological] technique." Energy exists at a visible and invisible level; Barba is interested in the "invisible" energy which emerges on (and in) the "pre-expressive level".<sup>34</sup>

Analysing better, 1986 ISTA clearly did not want to put under the magnifying glass a study on gender, on the hegemony of men over women, on cultural, political and social aspects of the *way* in which the female role was represented on stage in various cultures. It was not even a psychological analysis of the actor/actress in relation to the interpretation of a female role. Barba wanted to emphasise practice and the possibility for a performer of any culture to use an "energetic polarity" already present at a "pre-expressive" level.

## ISTA through images: seeing the principles

OTA's Photographic Fonds collects more than 6,000 ISTA photographs. The folders are sorted by sessions, from Bonn in 1980 to Albino in 2016. Each binder is subdivided into photographers.

The photographs give a clear idea of the everyday life and of the activities happening during the different sessions. The peculiarity of the photographs lies in the camera itself being used as a means for research starting from the actor's body. Interesting is a series

32. Barba 1988, 9.

33. Barba wrote the article "Male Female Versus Animus Anima. The Actor's Energy" as a presentation of the 4<sup>th</sup> ISTA International Session held in Holstebro in 1986, in Fowler 1986, 3-9: 6. With the title inverted, the same article was published also in the journal *New Theatre Quarterly* (see Barba 1987).

34. Phelan 1988, 108.

of photographs by Nicola Savarese, depicting a sequence of movements by the Swedish mime Ingemar Lindh. Savarese took these photographs during the ISTA in Volterra, while Lindh was doing his work demonstration.

Savarese created a real visual memory of the first two ISTA sessions with his images. The hundreds of photos he took show the 'biological' sense of the research that required effort and organisation. In fact, during the session in Volterra, Savarese asked the teachers to repeat at least part of their work demonstrations dressed in contemporary clothes during the breaks to better catch their positions:

[...] I asked the teacher to dedicate some of their time to me without spectators. Sanjukta Panigrahi showed me the *mudras* and odissi dance poses wearing a beautiful sari, while Kosuke Nomura, a kyogen actor, and little Jas, the Balinese child dancer, came in jeans and a T-shirt, preferring contemporary clothes for their demonstrations, giving a more immediate and less solemn reception of their technique. The dance of oppositions and physical tensions was more apparent than in the traditional stage costume. Kosuke's gliding gait, without kimono, clearly showed the slightly bent knees which give alertness to the body. Not covered by the costume, Jas's feet showed the big toe lifted above the foot on the ground, indicating its function as a tension rod for the entire body.<sup>35</sup>

Although Savarese initially considered these photographs "unadorned, *artistically* not very incisive", he noted at the same time how "the sequences were effective in illustrating the new and, ultimately, elementary principles of theatre anthropology". Starting from the photographs taken in Volterra, Savarese came up with the idea of compiling a book in which these images, combined with illustrations from other eras and countries, would constitute the visual nerve of the "transversality of techniques".<sup>36</sup>

Published in Italian in 1983 with the title *Anatomia del Teatro*<sup>37</sup> (Anatomy of Theatre), Nicola Savarese partnered with Eugenio Barba for a deeply restructured second edition: *Anatomie de l'acteur*<sup>38</sup> which appeared in France and in Mexico in 1985.<sup>39</sup> The two authors further developed their book in 1991, giving it a new title *The Secret Art of the Performer. A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, published in 1991 by Richard Gough and his Centre for Performance Research in collaboration with Routledge.<sup>40</sup> In 2005, Barba and Savarese updated their work with three new chapters and agreed that the British publisher could turn around the title to *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology. The Secret Art of the Performer*.<sup>41</sup> One of the versions of the *Dictionary* has been published worldwide in more than 15 languages.

For a scholar or a practitioner interested in theatre anthropology, ISTA's photographs are extremely useful, since they visualise concepts that are difficult to seize just by reading.

35. Savarese 2014, 396-97.

36. Savarese 2014, 397.

37. Savarese 1983.

38. Barba and Savarese 1985.

39. Barba and Savarese 1987.

40. Barba and Savarese 1991.

41. Barba and Savarese 2005.

The same principle applies for the Audio-Visual Fonds, with more than 130 hours of films of symposia, interviews, work demonstrations and performances. The videos are organised chronologically, and their index consists of two numbers: the first is the year and the second is a serial number.

Four extensive video interviews with Nando Taviani, Nicola Savarese, Franco Ruffini and Jean-Marie Pradier made by Claudio Coloberti are of huge relevance to identify the origins of ISTA and capture its particularity, from both the pedagogical and the research point of view. The complexity of the school can be deduced from the interviews. The difficulties faced by scholars of different fields and performers of distant traditions in order to find a common language and interact with each other are apparent especially during the first sessions. Their descriptions enable us to imagine what ISTA was and the consequences for those who participated. A passage of the interview with Taviani gives us an idea of what Barba means by his pedagogical paradox *learning to learn*, arguing that ISTA is not based on the study of technique but intends to identify the *secrets of technique*:

[...] They [the Asian teachers] showed a detail of their dance. Barba stopped them and started inquiring. “Where do you place your balance?” Things they had never thought of, because they had learned them since childhood. It is like someone who speaks a language and knows it well, and then you stop this person and ask: “Here you use the subjunctive, why? Why do you use the conditional in your next sentence?” and they do not know what to answer because they have always used the language without thinking. They realised it was another way of seeing [...].<sup>42</sup>

Scholars have often defined the ISTA as a “school of the gaze”. A researcher who visits the archive is able *to see* the concepts and this makes it easier to understand what Barba and the scientific staff have written. For example, video 87-01b presents a workshop held by Barba during the ISTA in Salento in 1987. Barba asks Sanjukta Panigrahi to show the participants first her ordinary walk and then how she walks in performance. From a very simple assumption - the change in behaviour that emphasises the different ways in which Sanjukta places her weight on the floor - Barba outlines the two opposite and complementary concepts of technique: *acculturation* and *inculturation*.<sup>43</sup>

Other material in the Audio-visual Fonds is useful to understand the *Theatrum Mundi*, “[...] the mixed performance with Odin Teatret actors and Asian actors created by Barba for the closing of ISTA sessions, since ISTA Salento in 1987.”<sup>44</sup> In fact, the first *Theatrum Mundi* dates back to ISTA Volterra in 1981 and initially consisted of “[...] a succession of scenes by different artists”.<sup>45</sup> However, the *Theatrum Mundi* at the end of ISTA Salento represented a substantial turning point for this activity linked to ISTA:

The lines of the first scene of *Hamlet*, the songs and the presence of the Odin actors mixed with the Balinese Barong, the mythical Japanese lion Shishi and the theatrical

42. Taviani 2007.

43. Odin Teatret Archives 1987a.

44. Schino 2018, 394.

45. Taviani 1996, 71.

fragments of the other Asian artists. Barba merged these scenes into a unitary framework, infusing in them the rhythm and energy of a homogenous performance, something carnivalesque, hilarious and ritualistic.”<sup>46</sup>

The video *Theatrum Mundi in Copertino*<sup>47</sup> well reproduces the carnivalesque and ritualistic atmosphere mentioned by Taviani. It does not limit itself to bringing out the characteristics of the different Asian traditions but makes “the unitary tradition of ISTA”<sup>48</sup> recognisable.

## Conclusions

OTA contain essential material for the studies of theatre anthropology, enabling us to study the ISTA sessions from various perspectives. The themes of the sessions were always different. I have happened to welcome to the Archives researchers more interested in the network of relationships that ISTA generated than in the performers’ technical know-how. Other times I have dealt with scholars focussed on the organisational aspect, while others are concerned with the reaction towards Asian theatres in Europe or with their influence on individual western actors or theatre groups. It is even possible to trace a history of Barba’s interest in Asian theatres<sup>49</sup> and to look for the path leading him to found ISTA.

The perspectives regarding the sessions of ISTA are endless, and the documents stored at OTA often amaze and gratify the expectations of scholars, students and practitioners who arrive to Holstebro to carry out their research.

OTA are open all year round and are always accessible.■

Translation: Julia Varley

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46. Taviani 1996, 72.

47. Odin Teatret Archives 1987b.

48. Taviani 1996, 72.

49. In this regard, see Barba 2015a, published also in Spanish, Barba 2015b and Barba 2017.

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Omar Khayyam's tower leading to Odin Teatret Archives - Photo: Francesco Galli