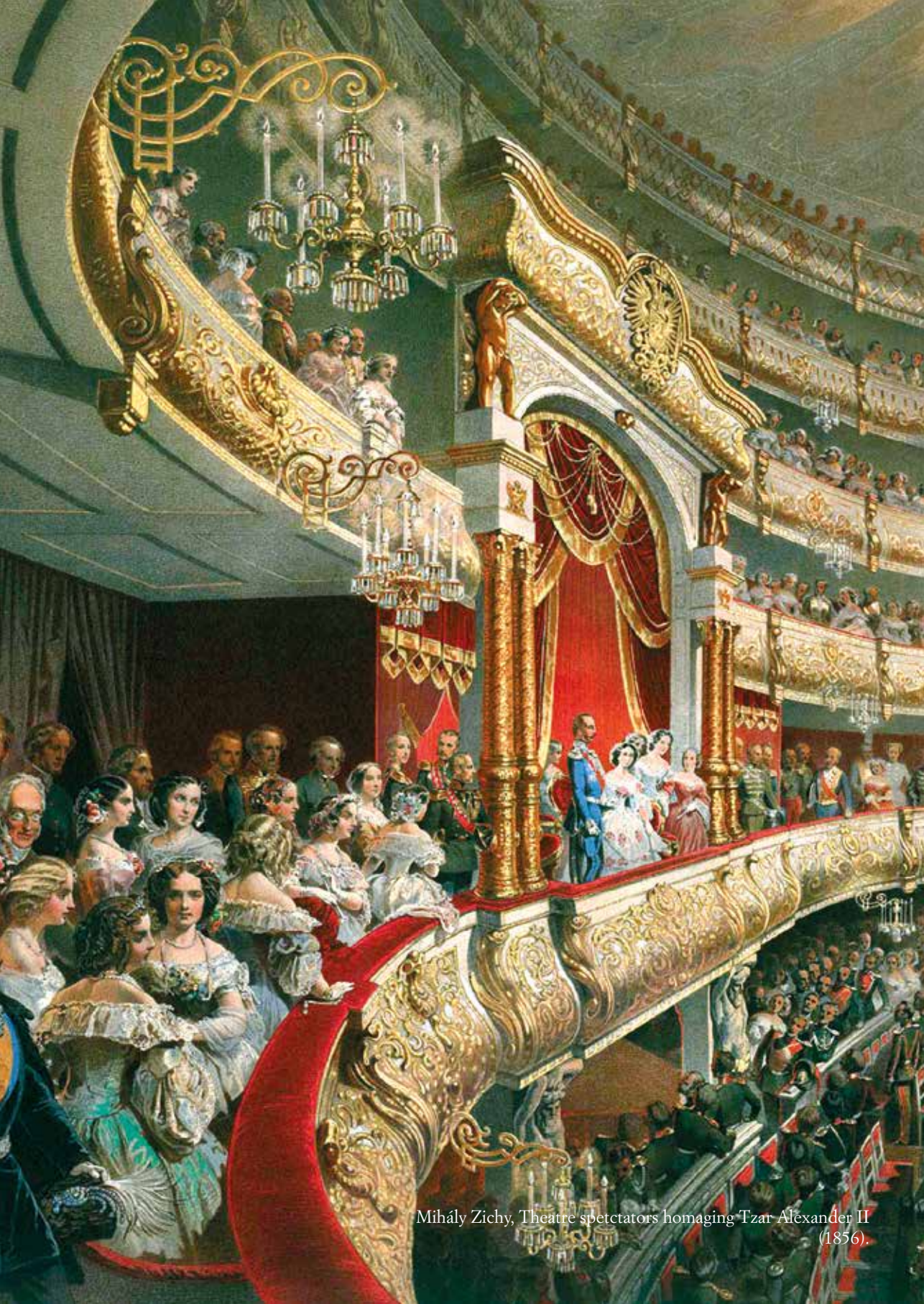

Mihály Zichy, Theatre spetctators homaging Tzar Alexander II (1856).

Nicola Savarese

# The Objectivity of Seeing

Abstract: *Nicola Savarese, Eugenio Barba's collaborator for many years, describes the partnership that left the most tangible sign in the elaboration of two books:* A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology *(1982) and* The Five Continents of Theatre. Facts and Legends of the Actor's Material Culture *(2018). In narrating the complex and long gestation of the two books, Savarese points out how the need to have richly illustrated books gradually emerged: a wide choice of images build a convincing visual discourse alongside the words. The effective examples given here underline how the power of images allow readers of theatre history books to see the objective aspect of the subjects dealt with.*

Keywords: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology; The Five Continents of Theatre*; Need for visual documentation in theatre essays; Illustrated theatre books; Barba-Savarese collaboration*

*An image has a life and energy of its own that only an observer can give to it.*
*It is the attentive observer who gives or takes away meaning from an image.*

Since 1974, the year in which our friendship began, Eugenio Barba and I have collaborated in many situations: in various international tours of Odin Teatret, in ISTA sessions from the beginnings, and in encounters of the University of Eurasian Theatre. But without doubt the most important occasions have been our joint creation of two books: *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* and *The Five Continents of Theatre. Facts and Legends about the Material Culture of the Actor*. During the creation and revision of these two volumes, which took years and years, we learned *how* to show readers the *objective aspect* of the topics covered, an aspect that does not depend on individual interpretation but is a fact. To achieve this result we used countless images, hunted down and found or expressly created, and in all cases indispensable.

To understand this essential aspect of the two books, we must tell the story of our collaboration, the result of determined research, but also of random discoveries, of calculation and of serendipity, the only method that cannot be decided in advance, but that ensures a spontaneous lightness in disseminating complex ideas.


## Breaking the rules

I shall begin with the first book: *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. In spring 1980, Eugenio Barba wrote to me to explain that he could

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not accede to my request to attend the first session of ISTA, the International School of Theatre Anthropology, in Bonn the following autumn, because as director of a young theatre group I did not have enough experience. Nor could I go there as a scholar, because I had just become a university researcher and my studies were not specialised enough to be part of the international scientific team of that school which was about to open.

However, added Barba, "since rules exist to be broken, you won't come as Eisenstein [I had made some videos for Odin Teatret in Sardinia in 1975], but you will be able to participate as Cartier-Bresson." I had to equip myself with a camera and a tape recorder and I would have to take pictures of what happened every day in the school and follow Eugenio, recording his discussions with teachers, directors, scholars and participants. Then record the work demonstrations, the collective sessions, and the master classes. In short, everything that took place in the form of images and words.

At the time, none of us anticipated that ISTA would have many further sessions in many other countries. I had no idea that I would not only follow all the subsequent sessions, but that I would also write a book together with Barba using many of the photos and texts collected. A successful book that, published several times in numerous languages (listed at the end of this article), is still in demand for translation and publication more than thirty years after the first edition. Are rules made to be broken? Let us follow the story of the many infringements.

What happened at the ISTA session in Bonn (1-31 October 1980), which lasted a month and then moved for four weeks to Holstebro (Denmark), Porsgrunn (Norway) and Stockholm (Sweden)? Barba laid the foundations of the discipline, coining the key terms of theatre anthropology such as pre-expressivity, daily and extra-daily techniques, and recurring principles. We were all amazed by the multiple intercultural links and convergences - never before noticed - between the body techniques of actors from differing geographical and historical origins.

Some behaviours common to theatre traditions very different in terms of history and geography left us literally speechless. The artists invited by Barba - Sanjukta Panigrahi (Indian odissi dancer), I Made Pasek Tempo (Balinese topeng actor), Katsuko Azuma (Japanese buyo dancer), Lin Chun-Hui (young Chinese Opera actress) and her teacher Tsao Chun-Lin - were patient masters, very generous with the school participants. Perhaps they were a little perplexed by the curiosity of Westerners, but they gave incisive explanations on preparation for their profession and on what steps they had taken since the "first day" of apprenticeship with their masters. Eugenio and his group of scholars - Fabrizio Cruciani, Ferdinando Taviani, Franco Ruffini, Ugo Volli, Jean-Marie Pradier and Moriaki Watanabe - all had the impression that these expert masters allowed themselves, for the first time, to reflect on body techniques based on very personal memories.

I collected numerous audiocassettes containing everything Barba said, beginning at six in the morning when he met with the directors, until the evening after dinner when he had the last meetings with the scientific team. I recorded everything he said, usually in English, French or Spanish, including the consecutive translation. I also recorded the lectures of the teachers and their work demonstrations, with Eugenio's questions and his final remarks. This was a thankless task because, as I was using a recorder with

built-in microphone, questions from afar and words spoken in totally foreign languages (including Japanese, Chinese and Balinese) were lost. There was often background noise and there was often an unbridgeable gap between the people conversing. I could not play back hours and hours of material immediately and so I formed the habit of writing a number on each tape and, in a notebook, beside the number, some personal notes. Needless to say, often these brief notes were not so much a guide to the content of the tape as the only available record of the unattainable material contained within. "A late evening in the future. Krapp's den […] on the table, a tape-recorder with microphone and a number of cardboard boxes containing reels of recorded tapes."

At first I was also unsuccessful with the photographs. ISTA's location in Bonn was a technical-scientific school, closed for the holidays. In the courtyard there were prefabricated buildings that had become the 'homes' of the ISTA teachers. The participants slept in classrooms on the second floor. The third floor accommodated the 'scientific staff', the scholars. The classrooms on the first floor were used by the teachers when working with participants. In the chemistry labs we had set up, for the Asian artists and the scientific staff, a do-it-yourself kitchen that worked well enough for daily meals. Everything was necessarily spartan: this was not a holiday and the climate of austerity desired by Eugenio was good for work and favoured concentration. But it was terrible for images! It was very difficult to position subjects. Every photo always included either a blackboard, or a stack of chairs and school desks, sometimes, metal lockers, other times, a long row of coat hooks, or a sink.

The large gym, intended for plenary training sessions and work demonstrations, was slightly better. But even there, the climbing frames, wall bars, poles and basketball hoops conveyed an idea of gymnastics quite foreign to artistic work, and to actors' training in particular. I was more fortunate during evening performances given to the Bonn public in a real theatre: not only did the masters shimmer in their elaborate traditional costumes, but also there was good lighting.

At the end of this first session of ISTA I found myself with many photographs, especially colour ones. There was a lot of material, but I was not (and am not) a professional photographer. I was therefore extremely doubtful about handing over to Eugenio those photographs, which were of little use for making information folders for journalists or visiting scholars. A selection of the photos taken in Bonn appeared as "notes from a diary" (*caméra crayon*) in a book about ISTA Bonn edited by Franco Ruffini.[1]

## The turning point

The breakthrough regarding the problem of photos took place at the next ISTA in Volterra in 1981, which lasted two months (5 August-7 October).[2] Here, I had more time to take the photos I wanted. Here too, the big problem was the backgrounds. We lived and worked in an old convent that had been a boarding school. There were large

1. Franco Ruffini (a cura di) *La scuola degli attori. Rapporti della prima sessione dell'ISTA*, La casa Usher, Firenze, 1981.

2. Organised by Roberto Bacci, Centro per la Ricerca e la Sperimentazione teatrale, Pontedera.

communal spaces, a small theatre even, but the classrooms had peeling walls, horrible concrete floors and, above all, were poorly lit, even under electrical lighting. Here too, old radiators and tall windows everywhere conferred a gloomy atmosphere, somewhat suggestive of confinement.

At the same time, large courtyards adjacent to the leafy garden provided a breathing space for the group of one hundred participants, who were obliged, in addition to shifts of physical work and practical learning, to take turns cleaning all personal and communal spaces (including toilets) and preparing meals for everyone in the kitchens. The sessions of ISTA were extremely proud of their total self-sufficiency and of the strict rules applied to communal life - a practice that reminded me of the discipline of Monte Verità in Ascona or of the Goetheanum of Dornach. However, in Volterra too, one detail often ruined the photos: the grey military blankets used to seat participants on the ground, or to hastily cover gratings, radiators and old doors. I remember the huge difficulty I had when Dario Fo came to talk about improvisation, soon slipping into extracts taken from his performances. The lights were low and the military blankets, clearly recognisable, always popped up in the foreground beside the animated actor.

But in this session of ISTA I also managed to take some decent photos, partly because many sessions took place outdoors in a garden, and also because I asked the teachers to devote some of their time for photography without spectators. Sanjukta Panigrahi put on a beautiful sari to show me the mudra and poses of odissi dance, while Kosuke Nomura, a kyogen actor, came in jeans and T-shirt, as did little Jas, a Balinese girl dancer. These demonstrations in contemporary clothes permitted a more immediate, less oppressive comprehension of their body technique. The "dance of opposites" and the tensions of their bodies were much more evident than with the traditional costume covering the secret of their bodies in action. The gliding walk of Kosuke, the walk of nô and kyogen, performed without kimono, clearly showed the slightly bent knees that favoured the readiness of the body. Jas's feet, not covered by a costume, showed the big toe very raised up with respect to the sole flat on the ground, testifying to the toe's function as tie rod for the tension of the whole body.

Ingemar Lindh, mime artist of the Decroux school, had been invited to ISTA and began to explain meticulously the exercises of *déséquilibre* invented by his teacher. He promised me photos (which he faithfully sent me) of Decroux himself when he had visited Sweden to teach Lindh's group. Ingemar was interested in my work and showed me art books whose illustrations of sculptures and paintings helped him to draw poses and movements of modern mime. I may say that I also learned from Ingemar to look at art history as a great repository of postures, compositions of gestures and attitudes of human bodies. So I was happy to give Frank Camilleri the excellent photos of Ingemar (Table 1) for his book on the deceased master of mime.[3]

In Volterra there were a very few sessions that I could film using a tripod and a small motor applied to the camera, which accentuated a "Muybridge effect" on the sequences. But these were always short sessions that the artists and I carved out from our brief afternoon rest. Overall, the images were austere, *artistically* not very striking,

3. Frank Camilleri, *Ingemar Lindh's Stepping Stones*, Holstebro-Malta-Wrocław, Icarus Publishing House, 2010.

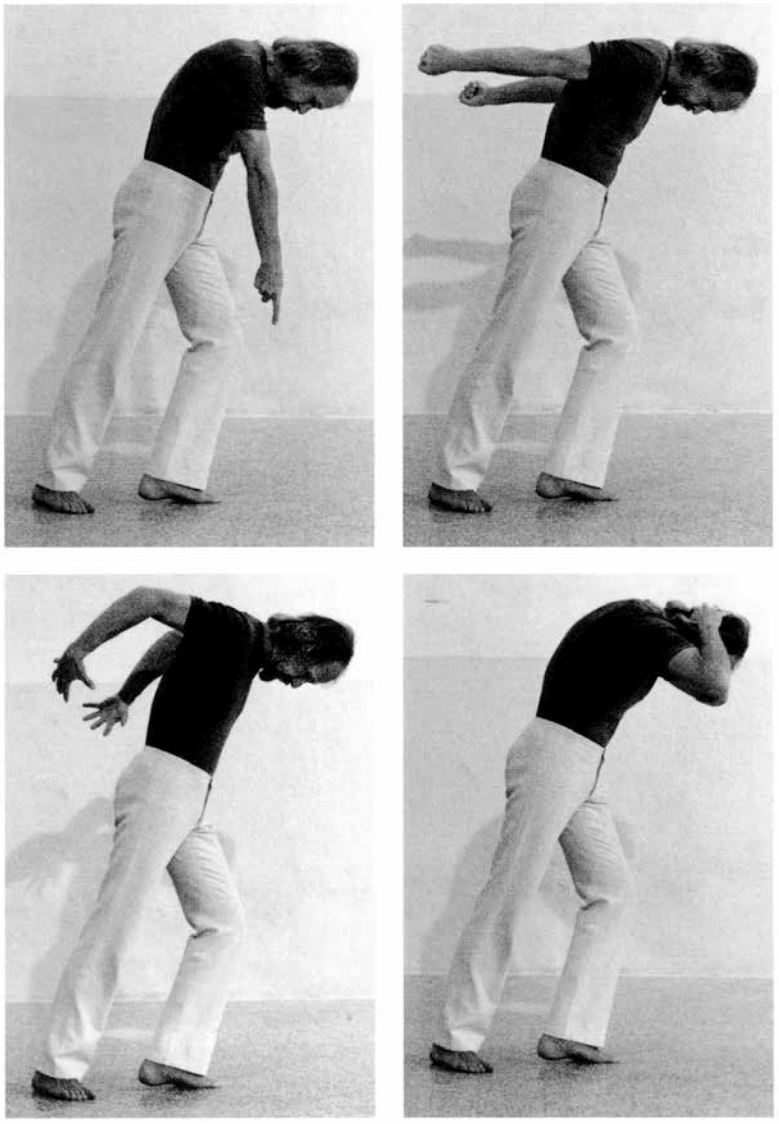


Table 1. Ingemar Lindh

so much so that Eugenio hired another professional photographer for the images to be distributed to journalists. However, it was during this session in Volterra that I realised how effectively my sequences illustrated the new and, basically, elementary principles of theatre anthropology. I did not have my archive of images with me (they were not yet digitised) but I was sure I could find many illustrations from other eras and other countries to juxtapose with my sequences, to show the great new discovery of ISTA: the transversality of body techniques.

I have always loved 'scraps' and am an inveterate collector of all kinds of images (postcards, stamps, labels, pages torn from books and newspapers, etc.). As an adult I continued to collect images relating exclusively to 'theatre', images from newspapers and magazines, obtained from my own photos, from press clippings, from stage photos, from film frames, from pages of antique books. I also enjoyed cataloguing images and making compositions in the style of *Mnemosyne*, without yet knowing anything about Warburg. Nothing equal to his pictures - just some good matches, suggested recurrences, simply ideas for some surprising comparisons.

I remind the reader that, in the early 1980s, computers were rare and Internet had yet to appear. Search engines (for texts and images) were very far off (they arrived from 1998 onwards). Nowadays we could not even imagine a world without these tools, but then, for visual documentation we used photocopies, microfilm or photos of other photos: physical material, which required folders and binders. It was the golden age of videotapes, of miles of tapes and piles of boxes. These were the legendary days of perfect recording of facts, and when moving an archive was a nightmare! So, this time, I would not have made the mistake of accumulating vast, but then unmanageable documentation. I had to restrict myself not only in *collecting* the documentation but also in immediately *selecting* the collected materials, to integrate with the world I already had in mind.

## Images that speak

Theatre anthropology, this new, multicultural discipline, seemed to lend itself well to the use of simple questions. It was clear, because stated by Barba from the start, that in theatre anthropology 'cultural' considerations about actors and dancers were to be excluded. He was only interested in the behaviour on stage of the actor's body, over and above historical studies on theatres, society and their organisation. For those like me who came directly from historical studies on the theatre and were used to contextualising everything, it was a real shock. But at the same time, I appreciated the 'postmodern' current that juxtaposed past and recent forms, such as those of centuries-old nô theatre with Chinese opera or classical ballet. The revelation that biomechanics showed surprising affinities with Indian classical dances or with kabuki was a discovery that provoked not embarrassment, but encouragement to continue.

Thus it was that, towards the end of the Volterra session, I came up with the idea of a book with my photographs. I did not yet know how to define its outcome, but I was clear on the direction to follow: a book, *highly illustrated*, on theatre anthropology. I began to make concepts. In Volterra in 1981 I did not have my books and, above all, I did not have my 'scraps', so I was working completely from memory regarding the illustrations in my collection. It is very important to understand this mental work because then there was no possibility of accessing Internet, clicking on a word and immediately seeing a list of texts and images from which to select what was of interest. This entire task was taking place in my mind, in my memories as an archivist and a collector of 'scraps'.

During the last period in Volterra I put forward the proposal of a book on theatre anthropology - essentially illustrated, in which all members of the scientific staff could

participate. The scholars of the scientific staff held a short daily meeting and a slightly more detailed weekly one in which we informed Eugenio about our feelings, our reflections on work carried out and proposed ideas for follow-up. There was no lack of suggestions for future studies and research projects, individual and collective. Theatre anthropology had opened up an unexplored vista, that of the "techniques of the actor", as secret as they were generally ignored by most theatre studies. Like laboratory scientists we spent entire days following the training sessions of teachers and participants, their classes and their demonstrations. We were often overcome by tiredness: the intense physical work of an actor induces a sort of 'mirror fatigue' in the spectator. But I was certain of being at the heart of theatre research and it was very encouraging.

So during one of the weekly meetings I came out with the idea of the illustrated book, which would put together the work of my photographs from Bonn and Volterra (the series dedicated to various techniques, images of performances and archive images to be sought out), some texts that Barba was gradually working on, and written analyses left by some guest scholars during their visits. The whole scientific staff could join in with further comments and reflections.

Faced with this project, however, my companions were perplexed. The discussion that came out of it led everyone to the same conclusions: it is very difficult to use images and certain things can only be told in words. Fabrizio Cruciani, expert in the field of studies on schools and laboratories, explained why images are difficult to manage in theatre pedagogy: books on theatre pedagogy had always 'narrated' events and used illustrations sparingly. Photographic images might look like 'recipes', being misinterpreted as not purely an example, but a practice to be followed and imitated. Perhaps I did not emphasise sufficiently that the images would themselves be 'text' and not simply embellishment of the book. In conclusion, for my own good, everyone wanted to dissuade me.

The only one who did not discourage me, because on principle he never has, was Eugenio, who said, "Nicola go ahead, since you feel like doing it. Do the work and then we'll see what comes of it." So I returned from Volterra very enthusiastic about the idea of working with all the photographs taken and with the images in my collection.

While I was preparing for this task in winter 1981 (I was then teaching at the University of Lecce), I received a phone call from Claudio Meldolesi, a professor at the University of Bologna, with a proposal. A friend of his, lecturer in Italian at the University of Kyoto, was looking for a replacement because he absolutely had to return to Italy. "I immediately thought of you," Claudio said. "Of course you go there as an Italian teacher, but in fact you will be in Japan and you will be able to see performances, meet actors and study your Orient as you desire." Within a few months I found myself catapulted to Kyoto, with a not too demanding university job (teaching Italian to a few people, art historians and students who wanted to become opera singers) and a few 'months off' in front of me.

I brought from Italy the ISTA material - photographs, a part of the archive, some books - but I certainly could not bring my entire library. Paradoxically, this lack of sources pushed me to go to Japanese libraries to look for books that I could not read but whose illustrations I could scroll through. Having limited material at my disposal

# FEET

## *Microcosm, macrocosm*

All the principles of extra-daily technique, as well as what we have defined as the actor's pre-expressivity (cf. *Pre-expressivity*), can be found in the Balinese and Kathakali performer's basic foot position (ill.1):

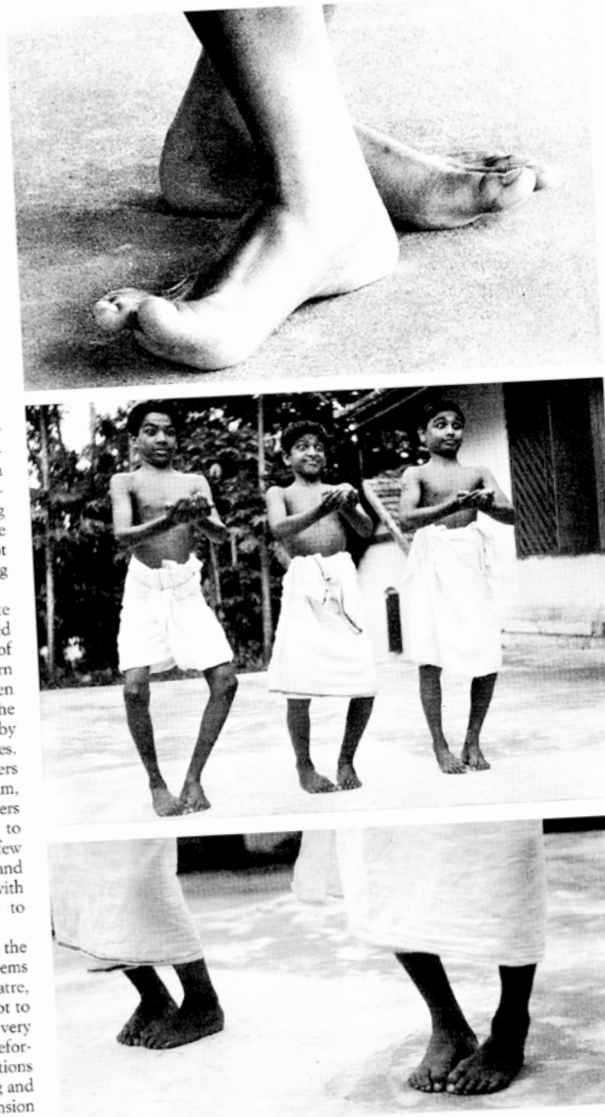
- the alteration of balance;
- the opposition of directions;
- the destruction of the weight and force of inertia by means of the play of *keras* and *manis* tensions (cf. *Energy*) which recreate an equivalent to the tensions of the big toe in daily life.

The foot exemplifies a particular type of life, as if in a microcosm. The life which is continuously flowing through the bodies of newborn babies is clearly seen mirrored in the constant movements of their toes. The foot position taken by the Balinese and Indian performer seems to suggest that he is trying to discover an equivalent to the life he had as a newborn child, when the foot was not accultured by a way of walking and by shoes.

It is, however, interesting to note how this life has been reconstructed by means of a new acculturation of the foot. It is said that the modern dance revolution was born when dancers began to dance barefoot. The foot's freedom was proclaimed by the abandonment of stiff satin shoes. And so it is: all Indian dancers and actors (kathakali, bharatanatyam, odissi) perform barefoot, as do dancers in south-east Asia from Cambodia to Indonesia. With the exception of a few specific rôles, the feet of Japanese and Chinese actors are covered only with special stockings that allow them to slide their feet.

But we should not be misled by the fact that the bare foot at first seems 'free': in all forms of codified theatre, the bare foot is constrained to adapt to deforming positions as if wearing very particular kinds of shoes. These deformations of the foot result in variations of balance, special ways of walking and the maintenance of a different tension in the entire body.

Whether deformed by special shoes or left free, the feet determine the body's tone and its dynamic in space.



1. (**top**) Basic foot position in Balinese dance: notice the tension in the big toe, tensed upwards. 2–3. (**centre** and **bottom**) Basic foot position in kathakali: notice how the toes are turned in and how the weight is supported on the outside edges of the foot.



Table 2. Feet section

helped me focus on the task and compose small units of topics. Slowly, some sections of the book took shape. My stay in Japan - as Georges Banu later wrote to me - had given the book "a refined quality". Perhaps. But at the time I was struggling with a task much more difficult than just graphics: that of organising the material in a coherent way. I still had to start from somewhere and reach a conclusion, as in all well conceived books. One usually starts by dividing the material into chapters, but when I did this, the real problem emerged.

If I was talking about one topic, for example *Balance*, this topic also featured in other chapters, for example, in ways of walking and so in the section that I had called *Feet* (Table 2).

How much space did I have to give to *Balance* as a separate subject, with respect to the rest of the topics where the problem of balance was also mentioned? And if most of the topics were connected to each other, that is, they were circular, what was the "first chapter"? Which subject should be preparatory to the others? I couldn't work it out, because every time I tried to put topics in order, something essential had either been previously mentioned or was strongly linked to something that came after. Moving it created further confusion. I had to find a way to show this circularity, while respecting what is inescapable in a book: a consecutive order. You cannot make a round book. I forged ahead with disparate parts, increasingly numerous, and postponed the thorny question of their final composition.

## The inspiration of Voltaire

Back in Italy, putting my library in order, Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*[4] came to hand. When I feel like clearing my head, I usually take up some weighty tome. It absorbs me and in the meantime my mind is cleared and refreshed. Reading the *Philosophical Dictionary* I realised that I had found the solution to my problem. As in the *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire had put together a few essential entries, some written by him, others by friends. He had also used pages taken from works already in print. This was not a treatise on philosophy but a practical ideological dictionary with a few essential entries, a hymn to Enlightenment. The entries are in alphabetical order. You can read the book from beginning to end or vice versa, and nothing prevents you from starting wherever you want.

So I came up with the idea of "a dictionary of theatre anthropology" that had a few entries, with no priority topic. Eugenio's essay *Antropologia Teatrale* (Theatre Anthropology in Italian), the only one that really had to come first, by virtue of its "A" came to be placed naturally at the beginning of the Italian version. The decision was made! At this point the dictionary entries slid magically into alphabetical order - *Apprenticeship*, *Balance, Dilation*, *Drama*, *Energy*... - with numerous internal cross references. The book, if not round, was at least circular.

With these materials I went to Eugenio, to Holstebro in Denmark. Eugenio was instantly struck by the lay-out and we decided to go over all the materials, integrating

4. Voltaire, *Dizionario filosofico*, edited by M. Bonfantini, Milan, Mondadori, 1968.

them with his additions and observations. After all, theatre anthropology was his idea and it was right that the materials should be finally reviewed from his point of view. I lived at Eugenio's house. In the morning he went to the theatre for his work as stage and managing director. In the evening he came home and before dinner we spent a couple of hours together in his study, working on the typed notes of the various entries of the dictionary. He had also already prepared a folder with illustrations that he wanted to include, and he looked for others right away on his bookshelves. Sometimes he dictated to me some text or caption, which I then reworked for the following day.

Working with Eugenio was great fun for various reasons. First, he had immediately understood that it was a question of making a 'scrap album'. Starting from the 'scraps', beside the text that I had already written or that we were rewriting, a parallel, visual discourse developed. Those images coming from different cultures, geographies, eras and stories, showed that actors have always worked on the techniques of the body, that they have always been inspired by a few "recurring principles", the same ones that Eugenio had identified as the foundations of theatre anthropology. It was clear that ISTA was primarily intended as a "school of the gaze", that is, a way of seeing, a new way of seeing the actor's work. Secondly, Eugenio began to work exactly as in his role as director-composer: that is, he took the 'materials' (text and images), dismembered them, reduced them, refined them, multiplied them, cut them out and added new ones, until we obtained the best. Unless we changed our mind. This collaboration with Eugenio was therefore fundamental for the outcome of the book, which came out at the end of 1983 titled *Anatomia del teatro. Un dizionario di antropologia teatrale*, with an exemplary lay-out done by young graphic designer, Andrea Rauch.

In December 1983 in Montepulciano, at the home of Claudio Meldolesi, I met up with Eugenio, and my companions from ISTA Volterra - Fabrizio Cruciani, Franco Ruffini, Nando Taviani and Ugo Volli. This became a regular encounter to understand where Eugenio - and we with him - was going with theatre anthropology. I brought along the book fresh off the press, which naturally attracted attention, and Ugo Volli immediately said that it clearly demonstrated an 'international profile'. This and other compliments from colleagues on the success of the text-illustration ratio were the reward for our vast and hard work. But this was just the beginning. Almost immediately a French edition was proposed[5] and I had to return to work to change the order of the entries according to the new language and to rearrange the multiple references within the illustrations. I met with Eugenio and Nando Taviani in Rome to make some additions and an overhaul. I remember Nando was strongly opposed to the alphabetical order: a false and artificial order, he said, that did not do justice to the whole. We set to work on inventing a new order but retained the word "dictionary" in the title.

The first thing French readers said was: "Why did you abandon the dictionary format and this French edition has a weird index?" The architecture of the alphabetical order, although artificial, had not been a random choice. It had significance for the circularity of the contents. We agreed with Eugenio that we had made a mistake and went back to

5. Eugenio Barba - Nicola Savarese: *Anatomie de l'acteur*, Bouffonneries Contrastes, Cazilhac et Zeami Libri, Rome, 1985. The initiative had come from Patrick Pezin in collaboration with Luca Ruzza.

the alphabetical dictionary. Meanwhile, the book was getting requests for translations. So another problem arose. Organising translations into the various languages (Spanish, English and Japanese to begin with) meant changing the order of the dictionary entries. It was also necessary to change the numbering of the 800 illustrations that, by moving page, took on a new numbering. For this reason, the criterion of progressive numbers for images was soon abandoned. Instead of "See figure no. 45" we chose the more flexible "See figure on p. 30, top right". This job took time. Every publisher wanted to get into print fast and this meant, without digital layout software, which did not exist at the time, committing to a gruelling manual task.

## A book-telescope

With Eugenio we found an unspoken pact: he would deal with the complex contractual agreements, and I would deal with the technical aspects, how to put together the translated texts for sending to the new publisher on floppy disks, and above all how to collect the 'transparencies' of the illustrations. The 'transparencies', i.e., the transparent films printed with the illustrations, after being used for the book, were disassembled and preserved for re-use in subsequent printing. But it was not an easy operation - irritating traces of glue often remained on transparencies, making them stick to each other, with the risk of them becoming useless. In a normal process, these graphic tasks would be done by a publisher's technical staff. Eugenio and I had decided to favour new publishing firms or small university publishers, often linked to theatre groups, in order to offer them an opportunity and also to maintain affordable prices for the volume. Providing the publisher with good material favoured the success of a good edition.

Given all the above (never again, a book in alphabetical order!), it should be remembered that the title *The Secret Art of the Performer*, inaugurated with the Mexican edition of 1990, slowly retreated to second place on the cover of the book, while its subtitle *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* came to the fore. Publishers and commentators, in fact, continued to point out that it was precisely the dictionary formula that gave the book objectivity and ease of reading. The concept of a 'circular book' remained advantageous, too, when translating into other languages. The curse of redoing the layout every time, however, remained.

We were struck by the comments. The book presented readers with an unusual aspect: it brought together texts and images as two independent collaborating factors. The illustrations were not simply decorative but an authentic visual text, in parallel with the words. In heterogeneous material such as the subjects of theatre anthropology, words and images interacted creating effective short circuits. This ranging across history and geography was one of the qualities of the book most appreciated by students and theatre scholars. They could look for analogies and convergences in the horizon of their experiences to be used in their practical work, as needed. American writer Howard Rheingold wrote in his blog:

> This book is a treasure house of astonishing and useful lore about how performers perform, everywhere in the world, illustrated by a profusion of equally astonishing and useful photographs and drawings. Mudras, minuets, masks, ritual, biomechanics, dramaturgy, rhythm, staging, improv, semiotics, footwork, make-up, choreography, mythology and other phenomena that reflect different aspects of the full spectrum of human performance are examined with attention to spiritual, communicative, social, and aesthetic meanings of each variety of performative behavior. This book is a vibrant example of what anthropologist Clifford Geertz means by *thick description*.[6]

Of course the dictionary also met with contrasting opinions: because it strove for universality, it appeared as an attempt to hegemonise theatre culture. I beg to differ. Theatre anthropology is not a discipline that Barba invented from scratch but a *way of seeing*, and yes, an unprecedented school of the gaze. Barba *observes* that all theatre cultures have similar behaviours when they must interest the spectator and hold his attention. When, that is, they carry out that fundamental task of theatre, which is: do not bore the public. The great theatre traditions, in the West as in the East, have over time compiled a series of behaviours for actors to make their stage presence more interesting and more alive. The solutions are similar in *all* cultures. These are not 'inventions' by Barba to hegemonise theatre culture. They are observations coming from his long 'activity' of careful onlooker and which, through ISTA, he wants to transmit to new actors, to give them a point of origin.

The dictionary of theatre anthropology, with its collection of evidence from different eras and geographies, functions as a telescope to bring distant actors closer to their common problems. Subsequent editions of the dictionary in the 1990s contained new entries, and a further overhaul of existing ones, with new images and new texts. So much so, that no edition is the same as another. The book was a living, moving affair, just as the ISTA community continued to meet, addressing new topics in further sessions.

Over time we heard that the dictionary had been adopted in theatre schools and universities, that it had been taken up by individual students and theatre groups, by scholars of theatre and even of art history. The effects are still being felt. Even today, forty years after its first edition, there are requests for translation and publication of the dictionary. An affordable edition in Cuba, an edition in Taiwan, two in Turkey; we have reached the fourth edition in English, translated into Portuguese two editions for Brazil, and six in Spanish (three in Mexico, one in Peru, one in Spain and one in Argentina). In European languages, translations in Polish, Czech, Serbian, Greek, Russian, Romanian and Hungarian (full list below). Even the Sultan of Bahrain asked to have it translated into Arabic, which he did (Miracle Publishing) to create a collection of ten books dedicated to ten fields of knowledge.

Although it is widely disseminated, I have only a vague idea of how the book is materially circulated. I remember one episode that perturbed me. I was in the Casa del Teatro in Cuba, where I had given a lecture. I was approached by a small girl, skinny, in a very cheap dress. She had a bundle of worn sheets under her arm and put them in

6. http://www.rheingold.com/texts/reviews/perform.html

front of me. They were photocopies of the dictionary in Spanish, practically illegible, faded and worn. The girl asked me if I could sign them. My reaction was one of emotion and sadness. I said I would send her a copy of the book, but she said, "No, you can't send it. They block these shipments and steal them. It will never reach me." She was an actress in a small theatre group in a village to the east of the island, and she had got these photocopies from people who had spent their time making photocopies of photocopies.

This encounter made me realise that around the popularity of the dictionary existed a legend that did not depend on the authors. It was a force that surrounds talismanic books. But the actors' attention to the dictionary was not exaggerated. One of the secrets of the dictionary is the fact that it can be given into the hands of a single individual, self-taught (for lack of schooling, more often by choice) who can delve into it, extracting the content that is most useful for him, that can help his apprenticeship. Eugenio has paid particular care to this aspect and has always chosen plain language, unlikely to be misinterpreted. As might be expected of a self-taught teacher for the self-taught.

Perhaps this is also why the American *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* wrote: "This book on acting techniques is the most important after the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski." This statement made me smile, because, as is well known, *Towards a Poor Theatre* is a work of which Barba was not only the first publisher, but also a very attentive and appreciated editor.[7] And this reveals an aspect that is perhaps little known but certainly of interest. Barba is not only a writer capable of gripping his readers, who has used this ability in his life as another branch of his theatrical activity, but he is also a formidable editor, at one and the same time 'unforgiving scissors' and accomplished visualiser. As soon as Odin settled in Holstebro, Barba founded a journal, published from 1965 to 1974, in the Inter-Scandinavian area: *TTT - Teatrets Teori og Teknikk*. This publication had great influence in theatrical circles, already in turmoil in the '60s, and Barba was its attentive translator and editor. He has never stopped practicing this editorial skill on his own writing, as on those of others who submit their works to him. Still today - and the publication of *JTA-Journal of Theatre Anthropology* proves it - this is an aspect of Eugenio's teaching activity that is part of his professionalism, his attention to the footprints to be left *sub specie aeternitatis*.

The work we did together for the dictionary was therefore a real experience of learning, inventions and fun: the pleasure of letting oneself go to "the illusions that awaken".

From this account we can derive the following:

- illustrated theatre books are much more effective;
- in illustrated, effective theatre books, text and images are conceived as complementary;
- the images in theatre books must be *modelled* in various ways (enlargements, colouring, conversion to line drawings, overprinting, etc.) to obtain even greater clarity and incisiveness.

In conclusion, it is not a question of creating "books with illustrated texts" but "books with texts and images on an equal footing".

7. See the fundamental essay by Franco Ruffini, *La stanza vuota. Uno studio sul libro di Jerzy Grotowski*, in *Teatro e Storia*, no. 20-21, 1999, pp. 455-485.

The strength of objective evidence. A doubtful Oedipus crosses his legs before the sphinx (kylix by the "Painter of Oedipus", about 470 BC, Gregorian Etruscan Museum of the Vatican) and a Japanese student does the same before a computer. Body language repeats itself beyond history and geography.

## History books that deny the polychromatic reality

The idea that histories of the theatre should be illustrated books is difficult to assert as a necessity. But as Aristotle said from the beginning, *opsis*, the visual apparatus of performance, is a constitutive element of theatre. It must also, therefore, be a requirement of the history of theatre. Yet the histories of theatre in circulation respond mostly to the logic of university or popular manuals, rarely combining scientific interest with visual apparatus.

Histories of theatre might take as examples histories of art, but despite the affinities, the former appear much less attractive because they have few illustrations. On the other hand, histories of art, even when abundantly illustrated, lack adequate didactic content, such as, for example, the dimensions of the artwork depicted, with the result that Antonello da Messina's *Annunziata*, almost a miniature, seems to be the same size as the Sistine Chapel *Judgement*. The book's author certainly knows the difference, but his work is intended, *nota bene*, for those ignorant on the subject.

More serious is the case of scientific deficiencies that require correction. I am thinking, for example, of a clamorous omission regarding ancient Western art: the fact that, in classical times, statues were painted in bright colours, which over time faded or disappeared, due to weather or to the radical cleaning practiced in many museums. Most art histories still ignore this now irrefutable truth. The Parthenon, the Ara Pacis, Trajan's Column - just to mention some well-known monuments - were all brightly painted. As for classical statues, as Paolo Liverani, curator of an exhibition in the Vatican Museums, says, colour was actually essential: "Sculpture [...] was not just painted, but was conceived in such a way that the entirety of the plastic effects, the expressive vividness,

its very meaning and its 'hold' on the spectator were achieved precisely thanks to the collaboration between form and colour."[8]

In short, walking through the streets of Athens or Rome, one did not walk through a world of "snowy marble", as we are accustomed to believe, according to now out-dated traditions of study. It meant wandering through a colourful universe, not unlike the polychrome of Asian cities. There was a difference in building materials - the culture of wood in Asia and that of stone in the West. But both were colourful: a fact of enormous importance, which greatly attenuates that cultural distance proclaimed between East and West. In its use of colour in architecture and sculpture, the Greco-Roman world was not dissimilar to those of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Manuals of theatre history sometimes have numerous illustrations but these dialogue little with the written text, and do not interact and collaborate with it through captions, indications or other instructions necessary for mutual understanding. I remember with distress my discussions with the editorial staff of the publishing house Il Mulino in Bologna, which entrusted me with editing the excellent *Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, with contributions by numerous scholars. Despite my protests and my desire to expand the figurative content, in the Italian edition the illustrations were reduced from five hundred to fifty, and all in black and white.[9]

Then there is the underlying structure of existing theatre histories, which is based on developments in dramatic literature and theatre buildings, the most obvious remains of the theatre of the past. And yet historic theatre cultures - in Europe as in Asia - have left abundant figurative traces that would serve to show the different stages of their material history, the details in which the deep understanding of human and technical phenomena is hidden. I am thinking of Greek vases, of those of Magna Graecia, of the hundreds of terracotta figurines of theatrical characters found in Italic tombs, or of the countless Japanese prints whose most admired subject was kabuki theatre. So when I saw the title *Painting and Performance. Chinese Picture Recitation and its Indian Genesis,* I did not hesitate to order the book.[10] The author Victor H. Mair is an established Sinologist who addresses phenomena and aspects of multiculturalism. In this book he starts from China to follow the secular development of a genre of Buddhist literature popular in China, known as *pie-wen*, tracing its origins to India. These are the origins of the storytellers who hold up to their audience cards with figures painted on them, to accompany their oral narration.

8. From the Introduction to *I colori del bianco. Mille anni di colore nella scultura antica*, edited by Paolo Liverani, Vatican Museums, Vatican City-Rome, De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2004. The abstract dimension of "snowy marble" was established when 18th-century art scholars and artists rediscovered in the Neoclassical age the masterpieces of antiquity, favouring their imitation - think of Winckelmann, Canova or the Danish Thorvaldsen. But this "white and abstract" vision of classical Greco-Roman art was mainly favoured by the German philological school, and therefore by the Italian school, which considered the white of the statues a capacity of abstraction corresponding to that of Greek philosophical thought, indicator of the Aryan cultural domain.

9. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, ed. by John Russell Brown, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1995 (translated in *Storia del Teatro*, ed. by J. Russell Brown, Italian edition edited by N. Savarese, Bologna, il Mulino, 1998).

10. Victor H. Mair, *Painting and Performance. Chinese Picture Recitation and its Indian Genesis*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

With impeccable philological analysis and Eurasian perspective, Mair shows how this literary form, based on strips of images, illustrated boards and scrolls, has influenced performance and popular traditions in India, Indonesia, Japan, Central Asia, the Near East, and as far as Italy, France, Germany and the rest of Europe. I remembered Mair's book when preparing, with Eugenio Barba, the material for our latest book, *I cinque continenti del teatro. Fatti e leggende della cultura materiale dell'attore*[11], first drafts of which date from the mid-1990s.

## Auxiliary techniques

After the success of the *Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, heartened by my growing archive of images, I came up with the idea of organising a book reflecting on the "history of theatres", a collective book, which would not be a chronological history arranged by literary genres or geographical-linguistic areas. I put forward this project to fellow ISTA scholars and this time they listened. We began irregular meetings, discussions, initial projects, possible indexes and even some titles were mooted. It is said that art or archaeology exhibitions are successful if there is the word "gold" in the title - *The Gold of Mexico*, *The Gold of Taranto*, *The Barbarians and the Gold of the Steppes*... I therefore came up with a provisional title: *The Golden Age of Theatre*. After a couple of years, however, out of the twenty initial scholars, Barba and I found ourselves alone. We did not, though, lose heart.

We began to work experimentally on macro-topics, to answer some questions that we considered essential: "When was theatre performed? (celebrations, seasons, special occasions, etc.)" or "How did spectators attend the performance? (standing, sitting, on benches, on masonry structures, in seats, etc.)" How the consistency of the material culture of the actors we sought to *visualise* should be came as we worked around these topics. This new book, too, would be about *techniques*, not those of the body-mind already covered in the *Dictionary*, but all the other techniques that help actors to realise and affirm their work. We defined these other types of techniques "auxiliary". If, on the one hand, theatre becomes reality through the body-mind technique of the actor who establishes a relationship with the spectator, its complementary aspect is the material context and the ways in which this relationship is intertwined.

In their wide variety, "auxiliary techniques" concern the entire universe of theatre: the different circumstances and times that generate theatre performances, the spaces of the actors and those of the spectators, the various relationships between actor and spectator in the stage space, set design, lighting, information to the public (announcements, parades, posters, publications), the financial and organisational aspects of the performances (contracts, salaries, tickets, subscriptions, tours), costumes, make-up, props, and how the actors - and spectators too - travel. All these elements are managed

11. Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese, *I cinque continenti del teatro. Fatti e leggende della cultura materiale dell'attore*, Bari, Pagina, 2018. Published in Romanian by Nemira and Teatrul National Radu Stanca, Sibiu (2018), in English by Brill/Sense (2019), in French by Deuxième Époque (2020), in Spanish by Artezblai (2021).

through techniques or are based on techniques that support the work and talent of the actor and promote the realisation of his profession. A perspective opened up on a "material history of theatre".

Encouraged by the experience of the *Dictionary*, our first concern as authors was to find images suitable for the texts that we were gradually writing or receiving from our group of scholars. In fact, we had decided not to ask for new texts but to select excerpts from their already published articles. The images[12] taken from my archive (by then ten thousand items) had to be complementary or even alternative to the texts, in a history that was not chronological - "from the origins to the present day" - but based on topics of the material culture of the actor, that is, on "auxiliary techniques".

We had to create a narrative in which text and images launched a double challenge, demonstrating that it is possible to make a history of theatre without following the traditional chronological sequence and that it is possible to do it *visually* with great wealth of images. It was a huge challenge and it took us years to get through it, partly because Eugenio and I were busy in our own jobs, as director of Odin Teatret and as university professor respectively. It was exactly the opposite of the previous situation of the *Dictionary*: now we had a method, but we had to establish clearly the "what". One day, at one of our regular meetings, Eugenio said that we had to start from something very concrete. He suggested as a structure the famous five Ws of the English: *Who? What? When? Where?* and *Why?* We immediately adapted them to theatre: *When*, *Where*, *How*, *For whom* and *Why* is theatre done?

Thanks to these questions, a way of putting the book together emerged which, Eugenio said, was very similar to preparation for one of his performances. We made improvisations on a technical term, on an aspect of the actor's daily routine, on a particular stage object; these improvisations led to ideas and juxtapositions that we fixed in pages of images or texts; gradually we refined them, some images were discarded, others reappeared in larger format, always in a sequence of constantly changing compositions. For several years we devoted ourselves to putting together a book on the history of theatre, seeking a way to tell it by *visualising* the actors' body-mind and auxiliary techniques.

When the book was finished, I collected the notes of our guiding ideas to select the images and work with them. As our work process gradually defined itself - creating the groups of images and texts for the various topics - I found that our behaviour as *visualisers*[13] was almost always repeated according to three modes, or rather levels, of images:

1 - *iconic images* with purely informative captions (this is a theatre, this is a stage accessory, this is a genre, etc.);
2 - *images with doors*, that is with explanatory captions that go into detail about the contents of the image;
3 - *images to be interpreted* that are then *rendered* graphically, using signs and text, or colour, in the body of the image.

12. I use the term "image" because I have always avoided the word "illustration" which, though used with the best of intentions - to give lustre and splendour to a book - shrinks to the role of marginal extra, almost of filler, before the force of the written word.

13. I borrow this role from the advertising sector: a visualiser is an artist with digital expertise who gives visual form to a starting idea with drawings, sketches, photomontages, rendering, etc.

After a trial period, I began to propose to Eugenio the images separated into groups, each of which had images from all three levels. Again, they were just "guiding ideas" to work on, but they gave good results. I remember a long struggle to create the folder on the use of benches and chairs: where do the spectators sit? And the actors on stage? Were benches, which arrive in theatres before chairs and armchairs, connected with the benches of street acrobats? If so, in which cultures? In China, in Japan, in India, in Africa? And then to find an image showing the Scala in Milan with wooden benches in the stalls, which were removed when the stalls were set up as a ballroom.

I was able to put forward an abundant first choice of images because I could draw on my personal archive. Eugenio supplied me continuously with the most diverse materials, because our images also had to meet other fundamental criteria: to contextualise the contents historically, to take into account an equitable geographical distribution of theatrical forms, to consider masters, artists and ensembles of various cultures, both famous and anonymous, arranging the images by affinity to the text or by affinity between themselves, by contrast or by counterpoint. To give an example of the images that appear in the book - no fewer than 1,400 - I have decided to show here some images that help to understand the logic of the three guiding levels.

I conclude, however, by recalling that during the twenty years it took us to finish *The Five Continents of Theatre*, we authors always measured ourselves against a very real person. He or she was an imaginary Bolivian actor, an ideal reader hungry for practical knowledge and historical truth about the country that is shared by all performers: their own body. Starting from different needs, Eugenio and I were able to tell the history of the techniques of this *body-in-life* from the point of view of the actors, their creative processes and the solutions they invented to overcome the limits imposed by society. A book that ought to become the bible of Third Theatre actors and a challenge to historians.

## Iconic images: the form of the evidence

Iconic images are the "level zero" of illustration. They are obvious images, portraying one or more characteristics of the reality they are describing. And at the same time they are an example and symbolic representation of it.

**1 and 2** - What to choose to show site-specific theatre, one of the latest frontiers of theatre performance? This practice indicates performances that are given in places that are not theatre buildings, but spaces that the authors explore as a "theatre site". Site-specific theatre has even become a genre in which the characteristics of the place chosen, and the ability to recontextualise performances in it, can reformulate the way we perceive, and experience, the performance and the "not-explicitly-theatrical place". This emerges clearly from the two photographs selected. The first is of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan and shows the performance *Rice* among the rice paddies of Chihshang, in a spectacular natural landscape (2013, photo Liu Chen-Hsiang). The second photo is Shakespeare's *Macbeth* presented by the We Players of San Francisco

1. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan

2. We Players of San Francisco

at the foot of the Golden Gate (2014) inside Fort Point, a historic monument dating back to the Civil War. This gloomy building visually expresses the universe of horrors that power produces in those who, ready for anything, pursue it. Performances of site-specific theatre deliberately embody ambiguities, contingencies and the desire to subvert the traditional actor-spectator relationship that must be privileged by choosing places, and therefore images, with immediate visual impact.

3. Bolshoi Theatre

**3** - The audience at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow on Coronation Day of Tsar Alexander II, 7 September 1856, clearly expresses the relationship between theatre and power (painting by the Hungarian Mihály Zichy). The spectators, standing in the stalls and in the boxes, turn their backs to the stage and face the ruler and his wife, Maria Alexandrovna, who receive the homage standing in the Imperial box. Theatre, in its many forms, since antiquity and in all cultures, is also a manifestation of power, whose representatives go to the theatre "to see" but also "to be seen". The lighting, the opulent evening wear and high-ranking uniforms at the Bolshoi show what is the real stage: the lofty royal box occupying the equivalent of three floors of the ordinary boxes.

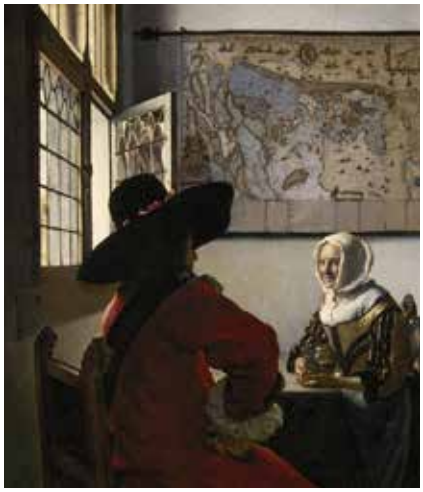
**4** - Icons *par excellence* are the stone carvings of the temple of Chidambaram (Tamil Nadu, India) in which the dancer exhibits three karanas, that is, three of the movements-transitions of Indian dance described in *Natyashastra*. The world's oldest treatise on drama and dance, *Natyashastra* was elaborated in India, a product of Sanskrit culture,

4. Stone carvings of Chidambaram

between 200 BC and 200 AD. In those days writing and reading were privileges of the few and the principles contained in the treatise had no way of spreading to those who wanted to study them to improve their profession as actor-dancers, but could not read. Teaching was only possible directly by masters (guru), strict guardians of the tradition. However, in temples, especially in those where the dancers were sacred prostitutes (devadasi), who attracted crowds of pilgrims thereby ensuring a good income, a way was found to record the poses of the dance, to inspire subsequent generations of pupils. These carvings with the bodies in karana poses can be seen in many temples in India. In the temple of Chidambaram Nataraja, dedicated to Shiva, Lord of Dance, all these poses appear, constituting the entire repertoire that a dancer must learn. What looks like a series of ornamental sculptures, is transformed into an everlasting testimony of teaching by which artists are still inspired today. Sanjukta Panigrahi (1944-1997), the great odissi dancer who taught at ISTA, remembered going from time to time to the temple of Jagannath (12th century), in Puri, Orissa, to 'refresh' the poses she had learned as a child during apprenticeship with her guru. For scholars, too, this is an extraordinary historical source on the continuity of the tradition of Indian dance.

## Images with doors

An image without its context is a half-told story. Sometimes images need explanatory captions, which derive from in-depth insights made regarding them. In his book with the enigmatic title *Vermeer's Hat*, Canadian Sinologist Timothy Brook analyses paintings by the Dutch artist Jan Vermeer, revealing some unexpected discoveries.



5. Jan Vermeer, *Officer with Laughing Girl*

**5 -** In the painting titled *Officer with Laughing Girl*, Brook talks about the good relationship between the man and the woman portrayed sitting at a table: a gallant scene, a courtship denoting a free and emancipated society, that of the Netherlands, recently regenerated after the Spanish occupation. What do we see? A soldier, dressed strikingly in a scarlet-red jacket, courting a beautiful girl. Although very specific, the content of the scene effectively represents the time at which Vermeer was painting, since it shows what were, in general, the rules that men had to follow in courting young women of good Dutch society around the middle of the 17th century. A few decades earlier, officers had no opportunity to linger and speak, in this confidential way, with women of good society. The customs of the time did not permit that the wooer and his beloved meet alone in a private setting such as a home. In Vermeer's time the rules of courtship changed, at least in Dutch cities. Good manners replaced soldierly audacity and determination in winning the girl. Gallantry was now the 'coin' with which a woman was conquered, and the domestic environment, the new 'theatre' in which tension and understanding between the sexes was staged. To confirm this historical and social context, Vermeer has placed on the wall behind the couple a map of Holland and Friesland, as if to suggest: "It is here, it is in this rich and beautiful country that this takes place."

But Brook sees in the painting something that particularly attracts his attention, something that goes beyond domestic intimacy, an element that perhaps Vermeer himself had no intention of underlining. The soldier is wearing an imposing beaver fur hat, an animal originating from distant Canada, whose skins the Dutch went as far as North America to buy from the French. Keen to find the mythical "North-West passage" in order to reach China by sailing westwards (I have personally seen evidence of this ambition in a suburb of Montreal called Lachine), the French traded with the Amerindians to cover the high costs of their maritime enterprises. The native Americans were perplexed and amused: "These foreigners are stupid - they said - they give us weapons and beautiful knives in exchange for worthless skins".

In this vein, Brook considers other Dutch commerce at that time, such as tobacco, silver, ceramics, tea and slaves from Africa, and argues that the phenomenon of globalisation appeared for the first time precisely then, in the 17th century. As topical as the subject of globalisation is, it was not the reason for our interest in the book. Timothy Brook offered us an aspect of his working method that can help in reading ancient images when they appear as documents of the history we are researching. Brook invites us to read Vermeer's works in a different way, not as a scholar of art, attentive to light and colours, but as a historian who draws our attention to details. According to Brook, Vermeer's paintings include 'doors' that we must open to reveal realities, details, which the painter had not expressly thought of.

All historical images are windows open on the past but Brook shows how pictorial sources can open doors and passages that lead far away and connect the various regions of the world and of history. Our Eurocentric horizon widens, what we know intersects with other knowledge, until we see not only globalisation, but also an encounter with a global vision. All this happens, it should be noted, not only through the images *tout court*, but through the subversive power of details brought to light out of the background that are able to open hidden roads. Old images of theatre (drawings, paintings, prints,

6. Nakamura Shikan

7. Geisha with violin

engravings) are documents to be seen as "photographs of the past", but they are above all stimuli and incentives. They are bait that leads us to fish in our own, and in the memory of others, for analogies of common practices generated by the material culture of actors.

**6 and 7** - We can find examples of these openings offered by images to the reader, in the print portrait of Japanese kabuki actor Nakamura Shikan (1873), interpreter of female characters (onnagata), and in a postcard from the Meiji era (1868-1912) showing a geisha playing the violin. From the print by Toyohara Kunichika (1835-1900) we can derive some details to understand the world of kabuki in the decisive transition towards the modern era, when it was feared that Japanese traditions could suffer a severe blow from the predominance of a Western lifestyle that spread across Japan in the second half of the 19th century. The female character played by the actor wears a gorgeous kimono decorated with a tiger. This animal is a sign of the Japanese zodiac but, since it does not live in Japan, the choice of this costume indicates an exotic taste and is at the same time a sign of the 'virile' courage of the wearer. In fact, the female character also carries a sword - we can see the hilt emerging from the belt - an unusual accessory for a woman. The actor is also seen in a typical facial pose (mie), in which the body is blocked, eyes squinting: the strabismus is clearly visible. We are therefore on stage. In this context the presence of the other accessory is surprising - an umbrella in Western style, with iron ribs, not bamboo.

The motif of the Western-style

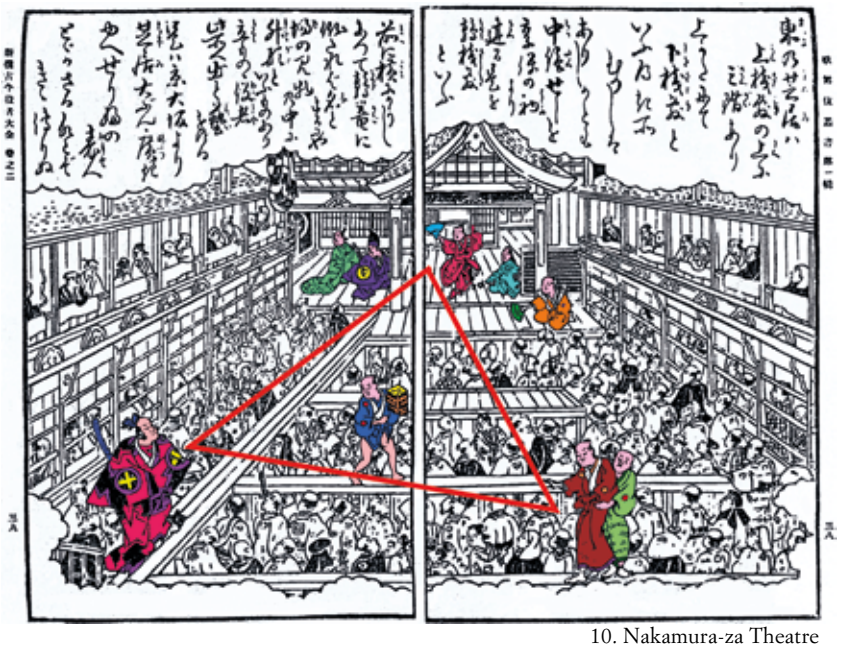
umbrella is repeated throughout Kunichika's entire series of six prints of kabuki actors, and although it is a veiled satire on Japan's rapid westernisation, the artist seems ready to accept the inevitable changes that lie ahead. The Western umbrella on stage is presented as a new fashion, but also as an element in contrast with previous cultural tradition, now declining. Certainly Toyohara Kunichika had not planned to include this 'door' in his portrait of the actor. It is up to us to discover it and open it. The European violin played by a geisha in the postcard of the same era is proof of this.

## Images to be interpreted: rendering

8 and 9. *Annunciation* by Beato Angelico and rendering by Bence Hajdu

**8 and 9 -** Digital elaboration by Hungarian artist Bence Hajdu, who has 'interpreted' many famous paintings in his operations of *abandoned paintings*, introduces us to the world of *rendering*, a term whose significance - digitally, of course - is halfway between adaptation and interpretation. By removing the figures from the *Annunciation* of Beato Angelico (fresco in the convent of San Marco, Florence), the artist leaves intact only the architectural scene of the fresco. A meticulous work of photo retouching, pixel by pixel. Emptying famous paintings of their characters, the empty spaces and perspectives are disturbing and the work is completely transformed. Faced with the absence of the characters who once animated the scene, one wonders: where did they go? When will they return? With the help of *rendering*, of 'interpretations', we have carried out numerous operations of discovery in our *Five Continents of Theatre*.

**10** - With lines superimposed on the original drawing and with colour, we have graphically reworked a scene from a kabuki performance at the Nakamura-za Theatre in Tokyo in 1727, highlighting the relationship between actor and spectator. In the centre, a servant, crossing an intermediate walkway, brings food to spectators sitting



10. Nakamura-za Theatre

in the boxes. The servant moves about during the show at the same time as the actors, who act walking along other elevated walkways in the hall (hanamichi) and they move towards the stage on which another actor dances with a fan. The whole scene is dynamic and a triangulation is formed by the actors located in different parts of the theatre, highlighted by a red line. According to Eisenstein "the first thing we think of by association when attending a kabuki performance is football, the most collective and collaborative of sports. The voices, the clapping of hands, the mime gestures, the shouts of the commentator, the screens opened up, are like so many full-backs, midfielders, goalkeepers and strikers who pass the dramatic ball to each other, pushing themselves towards the goal of the bewildered spectator."[14]

**11** - The re-elaboration used in the imaginary reconstruction of Roman theatre on the title page of Terence's *Comedies* (Lyon 1493) intervenes on the work of imagination practiced by the artists of the Renaissance, when archaeology had not yet brought to light the remains of the great ancient Roman theatres and there were no concrete references on what a theatre looked like. The anonymous engraver, basing himself on literary descriptions, draws a Roman theatre animated by spectators and visitors, and divides it into two parts. In the upper part are all the elements of a Roman theatre but in entirely unlikely perspectives and combinations, which the engraver had no way of verifying. So the stairs for access to the tiers (A), the audience on the tiers (B), the box of the *aediles*, the commissioning magistrates (C), the stage with the curtains, the *proscenium* (D), the flute player who marked the start

14. Sergej Ejzenštejn, "L'inatteso" in *Forma e tecnica del film e lezioni di regia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1964, p. 21.

of the performance (E) and the large columns supporting the roof, are elements placed side by side, but are unresolved. In the lower part, the engraver draws arches (*fornices*) that support the weight of the tiers. Overall, the building looks more like the Coliseum than a theatre.

11. Imaginary reconstruction of Roman Theare

Particular attention is paid to the scenes in front of the *fornices*, dark, windowless rooms where prostitutes offered themselves to spectators. At the entrance to the arch a sign announced the name of the woman who lived there, described her attributes and indicated the price of the various services. A tattered cloth concealed the brothel. From *fornices*, of course, derives the Italian verb *fornicare*, literally "to have sexual relations with a person other than one's spouse". Looking at the image's layout - the spectators in the theatre above and the richly dressed individuals in front of the *fornices* in the foreground - the engraver would seem to be much more interested in the licentious aspect of the image than in its main focus.

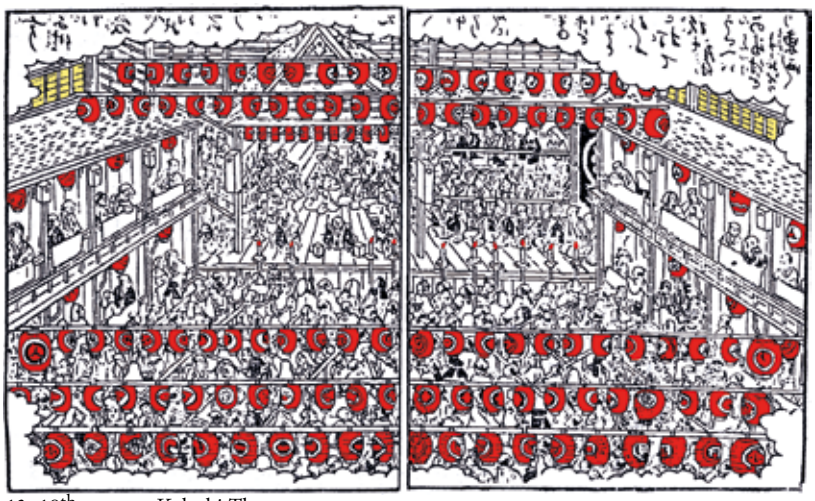
**12** - Representation of a mystery play in the central square of Coventry, in the heart of 14th-century England (drawing by D. Jee[15]). Actors and many spectators animate the square. We see the trial of Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate and the Jewish priests of the Sanhedrin (dressed, however, as Catholic bishops). For some time mystery plays had been taking place outside of churches and the stage of this representation is set on a mobile cart (pageant) surrounded by the populace. The non-professional actors were the inhabitants of Coventry themselves, financed by the rich corporations of arts and crafts, who provided the organisation, costumes and everything need to set the stage. The drama lasted several days, during which all work was suspended and everyone could attend the performance. The sacred story does not prevent spectators from chatting (groups on the right) or having work conversations (on the left, a friar talks to a carpenter), while children play with a dog under the eyes of the guards and musicians (centre), or play hide-and-seek under the stage. Many citizens watch from windows and one spectator arrives on horseback. The 19th-century artist has taken the liberty of imagining the scene, recreating it with "plausible fantasy", full of credible details derived from chronicles of the time. So much so that this image is still often used as if it were a real historical document and not a modern reconstruction. The colours added to the original black and white drawing rework the details, making them emerge, and the image becomes dynamic.[16]

15. Thomas Sharp, *A dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry*, Coventry, Merridew and Son, 1825.

16. On why the use of colours has a dimension of cultural significance see: Riccardo Falcinelli, *Cromorama. Come il colore ha cambiato il nostro sguardo*, Torino, Einaudi, 2017.

12. Mystery play in Coventry

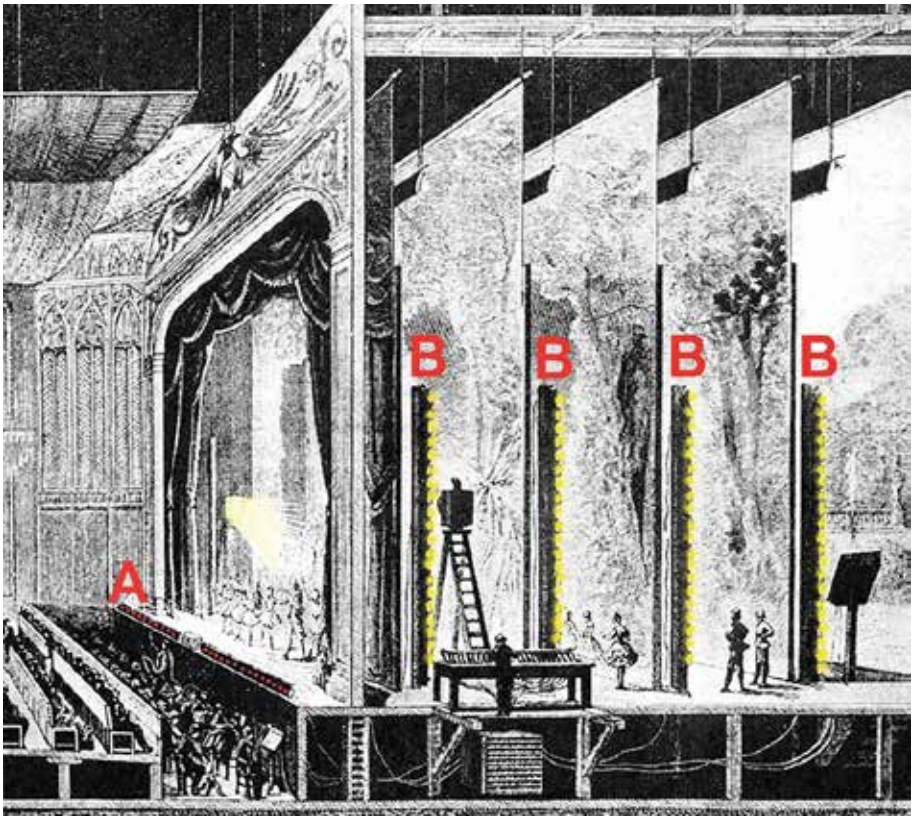
**13** - A sea of red lanterns dominates an 18th-century kabuki theatre (popular print). Despite being lit by high windows, the kabuki theatre hall is illuminated by paper



13. 18th-century Kabuki Theatre

lanterns and by a series of candles placed on the proscenium. These many sources of live flame in a building made entirely of wood were a continuous cause of devastating fires, similar to those that periodically also attacked European theatres. According to some scholars, the development of theatre architecture was precisely owing to these constant fires. Colouring all the lanterns and candles on the proscenium red has made the lighting apparatus visible.

**14** - Light sources, again, on a stage at the 1882 Munich Electrical Exhibition, one of the first theatre lighting systems using the recently invented incandescent light bulbs (A: proscenium lights; B: wings lighting). The electric light sources that replaced the gas lamps of the proscenium and wings occupied the same position and had the same size, so



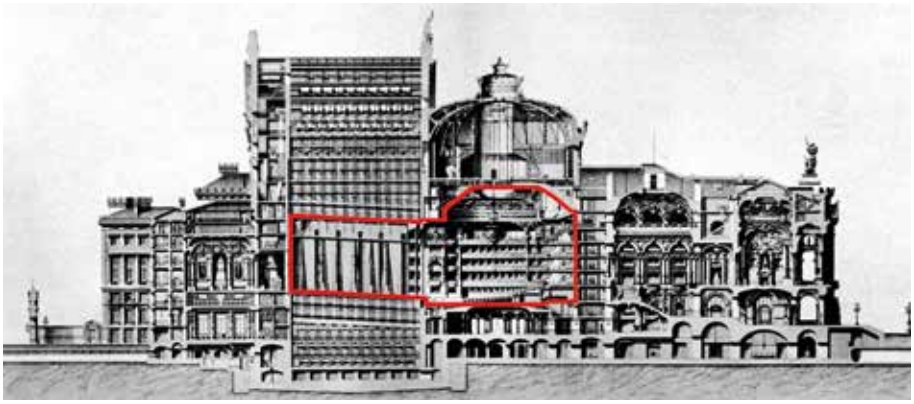

14. Stage at Munich Electrical Exhibition

the shift between the two systems was rapid. Electricity cables replaced gas pipes, which overheated, often making the air unbreathable.

**15** - We have kept for last the hyperbolic spaces of the great metropolitan theatres of the 19th century, exemplified by this cross section of the Opéra Garnier, Paris, inaugurated in 1875. A red line marks the boundaries of the stage (60 m. high, 27 m. deep and 48.5

m. wide) and of the hall for the public, so one can clearly see not only how oversized the theatre building was, but also how much 'superfluous' space there was, compared to the needs of actors and spectators alone. These 'extra spaces' - destined as refreshment halls, restaurants, rehearsal room and dressing rooms of singers and dancers, as *ateliers* for costume and set preparation, administrative offices, etc. - were very expensive in terms of management, security and staff costs necessary to keep them going. The costs of these 'superfluous spaces' would make the expenses of the great theatres, which have survived to the present only as metropolitan opera houses, more and more unsustainable. Nowadays, the great theatres are financed only minimally by ticket sales and could not do without the funding they receive from the state, sponsors and patrons.■

Translated by Julia Hamilton Campbell



15. Opéra Garnier

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