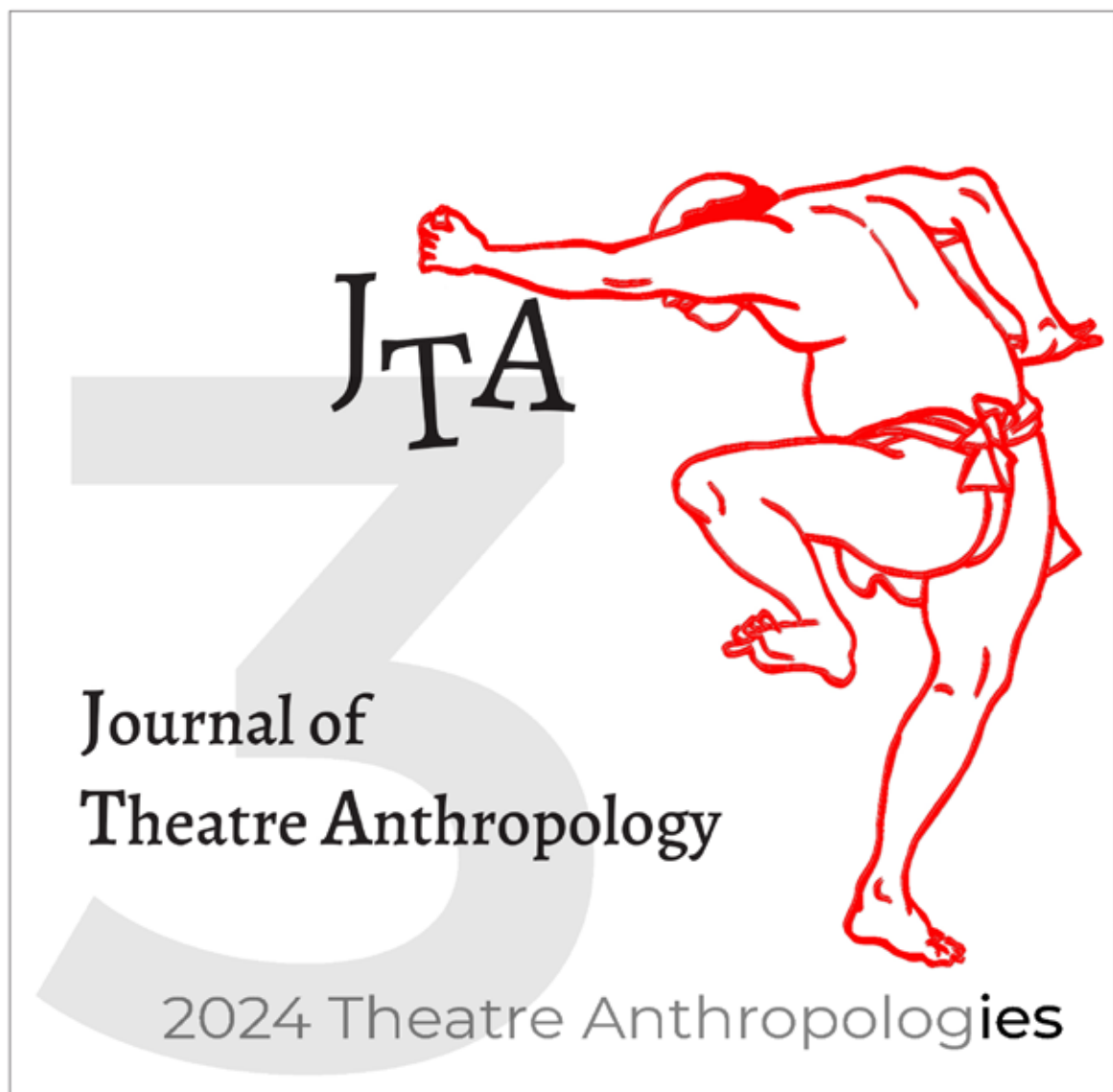


Editorial



Julia Varley

Beyond the Words

Often on receiving submissions for *JTA-Journal of Theatre Anthropology* authors need to be reminded that *JTA* deals with theatre anthropology, and not with theatre and/or anthropology in general. Although the intention with this third and fourth issue of *JTA* was to underline the identity of the field of research which has been defined by Eugenio Barba as the study of the principles of stage technique from a multicultural perspective, the plural in the title - "Theatre anthropologies" - implies that there is more than one interpretation of what theatre anthropology may be. Reading the articles in *JTA* 3-4 has given me a clear image of how the two realities of theatre and anthropology have multiplied in innumerable combinations over the years.

The main division that guided the selection and order of the contributions in this issue of *JTA* was to look at theatre anthropology from Eugenio Barba's perspective, and then from Jerzy Grotowski's and Richard Schechner's. Leszek Kolankiewicz, with the help of Monika Blige of the Grotowski Institute (Wrocław, Poland), assumed the editorial task to work with articles from Jerzy Grotowski's and Richard Schechner's bibliography. The division is marked clearly in the **Contents**, but the separation is not so evident when reading the texts.

The understanding and interpretation of theatre anthropology, as of ritual, depends on the perspective, on who uses the words, on what the references are. In the articles, I notice how, even more than usual, the historical, geographical and cultural context determines a particular placing of the experiences and a different understanding of the terminology. I was not so struck by confrontations of Eurasian-centric or global, original populations or academic, exploited or empowered points of view, but more of a participation or distance to the social change introduced by the 1968 workers' and students' movements and the consequence this had on theatre. Theatre groups appeared all over the world in the 1960s and '70s and their way of combining life and stage practice changed the meaning of documentation and the writing of theatre history - also regarding the definition of theatre anthropology.



15

In the beginning of *JTA 3-4*, Eugenio Barba's foreword introduces LAFLIS - Living Archive Floating Islands as a laboratory for the transformation of the past into the present. LAFLIS opens a new field of research and Eugenio Barba questions how this relates to theatre anthropology, to practice and technique, but also to the values and meaning we give to the theatre craft. Jean-Marie Pradier joins this line of thought when he writes: "The spectacular return to the point of origin represented by LAFLIS's installation in Lecce is not the fruit of nostalgia in its original sense of 'homesickness', but of serendipity, as evoked at the 7th session of the ISTA, held in 1992 in Brecon and Cardiff, Wales."

The references and the meaning of words are changing. If Jerzy Grotowski used 'organic' to indicate a search for truth in opposition to actors pursuing success and therefore overplaying, in theatre groups 'organic' often refers to a social engagement in the community through a theatrical action of interference. At the ISTA - International School of Theatre Anthropology session in Portugal in 1998, entitled "The organic effect", the word 'organic' was equivalent to theatrically alive thus having an effect on the senses of the spectators.

In the 1960s and '70s the terminology used for stage technique started to mix with motivation, and political or personal commitment. Anthropological theatre, born in Latin America, is one consequence of this combination, that for years was considered confusing the levels of organisation. In the past we have tried to differentiate between theatre anthropology, anthropological theatre and Third Theatre. In this issue of *JTA* the differences are intersecting, showing their intrinsic connections. It is as if we no longer need to be clear but are ready to enjoy the adventure of the unexplainable. The



Yalan Lin and Lorenzo Gleijeses in Theatrum Mundi's *Anastasis*, Theatre Olympics, National Theatre Budapest, May 2023. Photo: Francesco Galli

connections emerge clearly in the articles by Marco De Marinis, Piergiorgio Giacchè, Leonardo Mancini and Richard Gough.

In his letter to *JTA* 3-4, Franco Ruffini writes: "... we can legitimately - or rather, dutifully - speak of many theatre anthropologies: one for each body on which the fight against generic pretention is focused, through the fight against the specific pretention of that body. There is a theatre anthropology of the physical body, in the name of Meyerhold and his biomechanics; just as there is a theatre anthropology of the psychic body, under the banner of Stanislavsky and his revival; just as the same could be said for the mental body and the volitional body, always in the spirit of Stanislavsky with his various exercises."

Franco Ruffini's vision of a theatre anthropology for each body in theatre history is completed by Aline Menassé's contribution in recognising theatre anthropology as a field of 'belonging' that brings together the differences and offers a shared language of exchange for practitioners from different parts of the world. Aline Menassé writes. "... in what does this belonging consist? In theatre anthropology. Because we speak a common artistic language, we understand each other, and this is an invaluable oasis. It is a language with an alphabet, a grammar and many syntaxes, a language that Barba named as that *of the body's stage principles*."

In this issue, many articles speak unwittingly to each other. Jean-Marie Pradier states how in *The Paper Canoe*, Eugenio Barba remembers John Blacking's talk at the colloquium "Points of contact: Theatre, Anthropology, and Theatre Anthropology" organised by Richard Gough at the Centre for Performance Research in Leicester in the autumn of 1988, in which he distinguishes between performative or sensory-motor thinking - thinking in motion - and conceptual thinking - thinking in concepts. While "Thinking in actions" is the title of masterclasses Eugenio Barba gives today all over the world, again in Pradier's article we read how years ago Eugenio Barba asked himself "whether *thinking in motion* might not be the best way to define the teaching of 'physical actions' which Stanislavski tried to pass on to the actor, the teaching of which Grotowski is now the true master." The names of Blacking, Turner, Stanislavski and Grotowski return many times throughout the issue.

Richard Gough, speaking of the 1992 ISTA session in Brecon and Cardiff, points out its two opposing souls - pedagogy and research, and throughout the report the opposition transforms into contiguity through the pursuit of alternative ways of teaching and the application of an extremely pragmatic approach to research. Jean-Marie Pradier adds: "Between ISTA and LAFLIS, a soft terrain is emerging that is all the more fertile for academic research and artistic creation as it navigates between complementary poles whose common trait is the ceaselessly renewed achievement of the impossible. [...] The floating islands of theatre must stubbornly renew themselves in order to exist. Consequently, they cannot ensure their survival by relying on dogmatic, fixed, petrified doctrines. They need to find the nutrients they need to procreate. The stirring of memories that gives rise to invention. The field is both a revelation of the self and a driving force for the discovery of otherness."

The word 'subscore' was discussed in both ISTA sessions described in *JTA* 3-4: the 6th in Bologna (Italy) in 1990, and the 7th in Brecon and Cardiff (Wales) in 1992.

The theme of the relationship between form and information in an action, or between the performer's inner energy and stage behaviour is present also in Jerzy Grotowski's texts published here. But whereas not to work for the spectators can be interpreted as not indulging in their expectations, at ISTA sessions the 'subscore' was examined to understand the possible strategies for the performer's presence to move the spectators, not oneself. Richard Schechner questions the limited data backing the recognition of universal pre-expressive behaviours in performers. It is a fact that most of the artists involved in ISTA sessions are from Asian, European and North and Latin American genres. This is because ISTA needs to work with performers who are able to repeat in order to identify transcultural principles. Augusto Omolu, of African roots, was an exception. He could apply his formation as a classical dancer to the Afro-Brazilian Orixá dance that he represented. While explaining and repeating the dances belonging originally to a religious ritual, Augusto Omolu discovered the principles behind the movements, something he was not aware of when he learnt them as a child.

The question of whether a pre-expressive level exists in vocal actions was confronted through work demonstrations in Bologna and is exposed here by Susanne Vill. It is interesting how her analysis recalls some of Richard Schechner's reflections: "Ordinary speech everywhere is immersed in a sea of exclamatory sounds, stutterings, repetitions, ohs, ahs, and uhs; as well as variations in rhythm, pitch, and volume - a whole language of metaverbal communication giving to each utterance its unique and unrepeatable shape and significance. In any situation of strong feeling this infrastructure erupts into dominance: the cognitive value of words is submerged in a rising tide of phatic expression. The center of speaking actually shifts downward to where diaphragmatic breathing controls how sound is released automatically as sheer breath. Not enough is known about this transformational process, about how cognitive speech becomes metaverbal sounding."

This issue of *JTA* is divided in sections: **Theatre Anthropologies**, **Facts and tales**, **Reflections and discussions**, **Recurring principles**, **News**, and **Letters**.

As already mentioned, the section called **Theatre Anthropologies** has a further subdivision into Eugenio Barba's Theatre Anthropology and Anthropological Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre Anthropology, Richard Schechner's Anthropology of Performance. **Facts and tales** includes articles concerning the 6th ISTA session in Bologna (Italy) in 1990, and the 7th ISTA session in Brecon and Cardiff (Wales) in 1992. In **Reflections and discussions** Fabrizio Cruciani - one of the founders of ISTA - is represented with an already published article translated to English for the first time in following with one of *JTA*'s aims, and Franca Rame's embodied technique is exemplified with her politically motivated words. Claire Heggen's experience born within Etienne Decroux's Corporeal Mime and developed in her personal technique of puppet manipulation is placed in **Recurring principles** with many photographs. The **News** section is particularly abundant, partly because this issue is being published with a year and a half delay, and much has happened: the opening of LAFLIS-Living Archive Floating Islands, the 17th session of ISTA in Hungary, the multicultural Theatrum Mundi production *Anastasis*, and in 2024 the occurrence of Odin Teatret's 60th anniversary.

In this busy time, we have also suffered the loss of two important people for Theatre Anthropology, Nitis Jacon and Nicola Savarese. Both are remembered in the News section. Franco Ruffini and Bianca Mastrominico look backwards and forwards in their **Letters**.

Some articles have been published before, but we have chosen to include them because re-reading them helps give a historical perspective to the field of research of Theatre Anthropology. Some articles are translated, others are in their original language. The languages used are English, French and Spanish. Language has changed since some of the articles were written. For example, women are now formally included with s/he and her/his and herself/himself forms, and a less euro-centred geographical vision mostly uses Asian instead of oriental when differentiating from the western (European and North American) world. We have changed "masters" when used to designate teachers and artists, a habit coming from Spanish and Italian, but otherwise the language of the old articles has been maintained as written at the time. Although *JTA* chooses to use UK English, the US English spelling for Richard Schechner's and Virginie Magnat's articles has been maintained. In the articles referring to Jerzy Grotowski, Leszek Kolankiewicz opted to use the translation 'theatrical anthropology' while Virginie Magnat uses 'theatre anthropology'.

We look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from the readers and contributors while working on the fifth issue of *JTA*, partly curated by Richard Gough, with the title "Breaking the Rules".