



Sanjukta Panigrahi and Peter Burman, a student from the local music school, opening ceremony, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

Chris Torch

A Very Specific Time

Abstract: This article presents the preparation, intentions, realisation and effects of ISTA 9 and Festival Crossroad Umeå, Sweden, in dates 2-21 May 1995. Chris Torch, who organised the ISTA session with Sven Sablström, here discusses questions of multiculturalism and interculturalism in countries that have been radically changed by immigration; what is to be considered 'exotic' and 'original' in realities in continuous transformation.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, Shikasta, Theatrum Mundi, Riksteatern, Cultural policy

I. Timeline

The 9th ISTA gathering took place in Umeå, Sweden 30 years ago, in 1995. It was rooted in the curiosity of Odin Teatret and director Eugenio Barba, based then in Holstebro, Denmark, about the body and practice of the actor. The approach, coined theatre anthropology, had been tested both in their own work and in their travels. They added an academic level to the physical practice. Each movement was observed, shared and documented.

I personally came in contact with Eugenio and the Odin already twenty years before that, in 1975, when the Living Theater under the direction of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, was invited for a residency in Holstebro. I had joined the Living as an actor in the USA in 1973, travelled to Italy with the collective and found myself thrown into in a group theatre reality far different than the spirit of political resistance that fuelled the Living. There are many stories worth telling about this confrontation but in another essay. Significantly, the encounter, for me, was the first step in an ongoing process to find bridges between *theatre as resistance* and *theatre as a spiritual act*.

The next step was when I moved to Sweden and formed a theatre collective called Jordcirkus (Earthcirkus) in 1977. We lived and worked together for fourteen years. We visited Holstebro as a company – again at Eugenio's invitation – when Jordcirkus, together with 150 other citizens, had been forcibly removed from four houses we had occupied as a theatre/housing action for over a year. We had built a community based in culture: diverse, young, unafraid. This 'resistance scenario' ended with a three-day non-violent siege, gathering tens of thousands of supporters from all over the Nordic region. The occupants were thrown out, the occupation broken and Jordcirkus (fourteen artists and our children) were temporarily homeless.



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"I hear you have lost your home. You are welcome to share our home," Eugenio wrote in a telegram, in the days immediately following the police action, which was widely reported in the media throughout Europe. We later travelled to Holstebro in our busses. We rested, recovered and shared.

We returned the invitation and hosted Odin several times in Stockholm and on tour in Sweden. Odin became part of our 'nation of theatre makers', as Eugenio liked to call it. And they carved us windows to the world, challenged us, provoked us.

So, when the context changed, for us all as theatre makers and citizens, in the beginning of the 90s, there was already a personal and professional foundation to the ISTA 9 Umeå collaboration, built over twenty years.

ISTA 9 was conceived and implemented for a specific *Time* (culturally, artistically) and a specific *Place*: Umeå, in the far north of Sweden.



From left: Ingmari Frejd, Peter Bergared, Marika Lagercrantz, Chris Torch, Nina Lugn, Juan Rodriguez, Vivi Havia. Original members Jordcirkus/Earthcirkus 1977.

Every live artistic action (performance, event, festival parade) is necessarily framed by both a *genius loci* and a *genius temporis*. The spirit of a place and the spirit of the times define the actions of the actor, the eyes of the researcher and the emotions of the spectator.

I choose to approach this *memory research* by looking at the *conditions* which framed the initiative, a not-uncommon anthropological method. There was always the 'learning and distilling' motive, polished during long hours in the Odin studios, on and off the stage, in Holstebro, on the road. They had eight earlier ISTA gatherings under

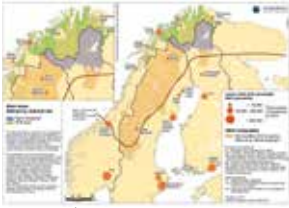
their belt. It had inspired the work of the Odin and the research team around them.

I leave it to others more competent than me to reflect on the theatrical practice, how it formed, how it changed, through the intercultural discoveries that had been and would be made.

But it feels justified to map the circumstances which generated ISTA 9 Umeå, the resources – both human and economic – that were released and that made it all possible. And to use the complex system of *project design and implementation* to understand better the political and artistic impact that occurred – or not – through ISTA 9 in Umeå.

II. Context: Political

In 1992, war broke out again in Europe. Yugoslavia imploded and ethnic conflict escalated, most of all in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One consequence was a large-scale



Sapmi. The sami territory crossing Sweden, Norway, Finland. and Russia.

refugee crisis. 80.000 displaced people were welcomed in Sweden, more than any time in the country's history. Denmark opened its doors to more than 20.000 ex-Yugoslavs. The changing demographics – sudden and demanding – created massive challenges.

Above all, it ignited a cultural test of the strength of our society.

The model of 'multiculturalism' was questioned. The demographic shifts taking place in Europe through migration required a more complex social/cultural strategy. The term 'intercultural' emerged as part of cultural policy in the 1980s and spread into the 1990s, both as a political orientation and as inspiration for cultural action.

Finally, the boundaries between urban and rural, centre and periphery, industry and provinces were blurring. Umeå had become a significant university town. And as a city, there was an increased awareness of the region's indigenous culture: *Sapmi*.

We were all working to find an appropriate cultural response.

Suddenly there was a window of opportunity, resources became available for this *designed* task for the cultural sector. After years of advocacy and faced with urgent political factors, public financing began to prioritise intercultural initiatives, especially in the Nordic region.

Already in 1994, I wrote an article in the Swedish theatre magazine RAJDEN with the title "Låt världen komma till Umeå" (Let the world come to Umeå):



There is much talk about the relationship between 'centre' and 'periphery', between 'metropolitan' and 'provincial'. These concepts are patronising and hierarchical. The subtext is that the centre always stands for power, for knowledge and for the future, while the periphery stands for cultural poverty, for narrowness...

In Sweden, Norrland is seen as out and Stockholm as in. Of course, that is a Stockholm perspective. For someone who lives in Umeå, it would seem a ridiculous idea – if it had not been underpinned by the slow economic impoverishment of the whole of Norrland. But the people of Norrland, especially the people of Umeå, fought for their centre. A cultural life has been created that

makes Umeå a rich cultural city and a worthy partner in dialogue with any other centre. [...]

[...] Between the local and the international, a force field is created in which we grow. We can experience being both *at home* and *in the world* at the same time, when we invite the Other to visit us.

Umeå in the North provided a perfect laboratory. Sweden with its growing multi-ethnic population demanded a fresh perspective. And the World was waiting in the wings to make its entrance.

Seven months later it happened. Conditions were right.

III. Context: Artistic

Sven Sahlström was a theatre consultant, producer and curator. He led the Umeå Teaterförening, responsible for programming, and sometimes even co-production, of the performing arts in the city. The association was linked to Riksteatern (The Swedish National Touring Theatre) but under Sahlström's guidance had become increasingly autonomous, defending an own identity and willing to take risks.

Riksteatern, a major and well-funded national institution tasked with spreading theatre throughout the land, had recently challenged itself and tradition by empowering a new initiative: Shikasta. I had proposed the idea of a 'truly Swedish ensemble', composed finally of ten actors with nine different cultural backgrounds, all living in Sweden. An immigrant's platform that reflected idealistically the contemporary identity of Sweden as a multi-ethnic nation. I became the unit's first artistic director.

Shikasta had also been forcefully behind several important intercultural threads in the years leading up to ISTA 9 Umeå.

The Re:Orient Festival, bringing for the first time a large-scale programme of Arab and Muslim culture to Sweden, occurred in 1993, organised by Intercult and Riksteatern. It was repeated in 1994 and became a regular event until 2008, led by the autonomous association Re:Orient. It opened gates for greater understanding of the shifting demographics in Europe. It also engaged a growing number of immigrant communities, with roots in the Middle East and North Africa. A bridge between two worlds.

The same organisations initiated the production *Sarajevo: Tales of a City*, in 1993, as part of a mobilisation campaign to support the Bosnian city under siege by Serbian nationalists. The play was written by the great ex-Yugo playwright Goran Stefanovski (Macedonia/UK 1952-2018), who together with political activist and dramaturgist Borka Pavicevic (Serbia 1947-2019), had been introduced to me by Dr. Dragan Klaic (Serbia/The Netherlands 1950-2011), then in exile in The Netherlands and director of the Dutch Theatre Institute. This link was essential for a changing sense of European cultural expansion, bringing the Balkan experience into the spotlight.

Another significant Nordic initiative highlighting *intercultural* exchange was the festival Images of Africa (Denmark 1991, 1993, 1996), under the leadership of Trevor Davies. His organisation was later responsible for ISTA 10 (1996) in Copenhagen.

Artistically, there was a whispering wave of cultural curiosity, audiences were searching for sounds and tastes from extra-European cultures. This was a diving board that made the leap into ISTA 9 Umeå.



In 1994, Shikasta and Umeå Teaterföreningen developed an axis of collaboration, local//national, providing conditions for unconventional projects. When I introduced Sven to Eugenio, to consider a future ISTA encounter, the stage was set. And an intense period of preparation began.

Shikasta/Riksteatern (Sweden) Bodil Malmberg, Fikret Cesmeli, Richard Sseruwagi, Kemal Görgü, Lamine Dieng, Mina Azarian, Ani Guínez, Vladimir Dikanski, Roberto Gonzales. Artistic Director: Chris Torch. 1993.

IV. Preparation

When Eugenio Barba proposed, in 1994, to bring an ISTA encounter to Sweden, it coincided with the changing political and artistic contexts. Shikasta, as an autonomous initiative within Riksteatern, had the mandate not only to create an intercultural ensemble but also to initiate other actions (guest performances, conferences etc), to cultivate increased sensitivity to the multiple interests of a changing population.

Umeå Teaterförening, part of the Riksteatern network, was powered by Sven Sahlström. He was a dynamic cultural leader and spokesperson for the performing arts. He dared to challenge conventions of theatre audiences and creators. He brought exceptional performances to Umeå and during his time as leader of the association, theatre audiences in his region grew tenfold. He accepted the challenge of hosting ISTA.

A partnership was then formed by Umeå Teaterförening, Shikasta/Riksteatern and Odin Teatret. In this way, local resources, national economic support and transnational expertise were accessed and fused.

Sven Sahlström, Chris Torch and Eugenio Barba, together with our teams, began the sometimes-conflictual preparation. Each had specific ambitions for the project. Sven represented the Umeå/northern Sweden perspective, intent on offering his growing audiences new theatre experiences and cultural perspectives. Eugenio was focused on creating a context for ISTA, a magic place to share with his colleagues from five continents and observed by academics close to the Odin. As artistic director for Shikasta, my role was to cultivate a strategy for a shifting intercultural context, weaving together the vast experience of Odin Teatret with the local passion managed by Riksteatern's network (also co-owners!) of 230 theatre associations throughout Sweden.

These diverse needs were not always easy to balance. Many tough discussions followed. There was no doubt that the ISTA artists were at the core of the project. To frame their participation within the festival Crossroad was key to accessing the economic resources and guaranteeing local relevance. Since a central part of the ISTA approach were *closed sessions*, involving a chosen group of participants and intense exchange between the invited 'world' artists, we had to find ways to both welcome ISTA as a learning experience and at the same time provide multiple experiences that were open to a wide and unsophisticated audience.

Another challenge in the preparation was therefore audience development. We needed to find ways to encourage the local public to risk engaging with 'exotic' performances, unlike any repertory ever before offered in northern Sweden. How to communicate new forms of artistic expression, to prepare the intended spectators for these experiences?

Possibly the greatest logistic challenge was hospitality. Scheduling travel was complicated by limited accessibility to Umeå, with artists coming from all over the world. The professional experience of the Odin Teatret team was essential. Providing adequate housing for the more than seventy guest artists, the teams around them, the academics that were essential to the ISTA concept and the large group of participants in the ISTA workshops: all this demanded special attention. Creating unique conditions for the closed sessions that reflected the *genius loci* of Umeå was an essential task. Mapping and securing the many unconventional spaces necessary to realise the programme made huge demands on the Umeå Teaterförening staff.

Festival Crossroad and ISTA 9 was by far the largest and most complex cultural initiative ever before attempted in Umeå. In some ways, it was over-dimensioned for the context and the capacity of the staff. Logistics – especially before email and other digital communication – were sometimes a nightmare. This put pressure on the artistic work.

The economic situation, looking back from today's dismal reality, was good. But it proved insufficient for the collection of needs and interests that the three partners tabled.

Finally, engaging an *audience* for the multitude of Crossroad experiences (over seventy-five events during nineteen days) was a challenge. The ISTA artistic language was largely unknown, although it attracted wide interest from young theatre makers in the Nordic countries. Crossroad ("Korsväg"), birthed by ISTA, was a pioneer project in so many ways and its only weakness was a lack of experience.

V. Festival Crossroad - The Framework 2 - 21 May 1995

The Festival CROSSROAD was created in order to host and inform the ISTA 9 programme. The intention was to expand on the 'world cultural' offer that was made possible through the collaboration with ISTA/Odin Teatret and at the same time present some nationally-produced works to reveal a changing theatre landscape in Sweden.

1. First week - The world heads north

2-8 May 1995

Three Swedish productions were presented during the first week of the festival, each reflecting changing intercultural aesthetics: Shikasta with *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorky; Orionteatern with *The Horse and the Crane* by Sara Lidman; Västana Teatern with *Everything Between Heaven and Earth*, a series of folk tales. Also, during the first week, Odin Teatret presented *Kaosmos*.

This Nordic section of the festival presented new forms of physical and intercultural theatre. It helped to sensitise the audience before the arrival of the ISTA artists.

2. Västerbotten welcomes the world

9 May 1995

The festival exploded at the beginning of the second week, with the Västerbotten Welcomes the World, a gala performance that bridged the local cultural identity with



the arrival of the ISTA 9 artists. It took place in the main theatre of the People's House, Idun Teater.

On the large stage, bleachers were constructed where the 'guests' were seated: the artists from Odin, Bali, Brazil, India, USA and Japan, in their stage clothes, with musical instruments, in expectation. The entire performance that evening had two distinct audiences: two angles – the guests to be welcomed, on stage, and the people of Umeå, in the hall.

In the darkness, a procession was heard arriving from outside the theatre. A large group of young volunteers blew welcoming calls through orange plastic tubes, well-known for being used along the sides of highways, in the northern winter, to mark the where the road ends and nature takes over. Safety tools became musical instruments and invaded the space. They entered the darkened hall, sounding their way along the aisles to the stage.

The voice of the Master of Ceremonies, David Lenneman, was heard as the tube trumpets grew silent. He read a text of the major writer Sara Lidman (1923-2004), born in Västerbotten (Sweden). It was written and spoken in dialect, well-known by all. Her words reflected on why salmon swim upstream, to reach again their home, to give birth. She gave us keywords: survival, belonging and cultural identity. As the Master of Ceremonies stepped into the light, it became clear that he was Black, of African origin, although obviously deeply rooted in northern Sweden. His entrance set the tone for the rest of the performance.

The first act was curated and directed by me, with support from Sven Sahlström. It included a gymnastic routine by two young champions, brothers, accompanied by a small chamber orchestra. In another scene, a young boy played the fiddle, while behind him Sanjukta Panigrahi danced to his melancholic Nordic tones. These unexpected connections, between the popular and the poetic, melted. A kind of offer to meet, to cross over, to share was made. A large Umeå choir, another strong local tradition, welcomed the ISTA 9 artists and the audience.

The second act was directed by Eugenio Barba, involving all of the newly-arrived ISTA colleagues. They performed a table of contents for what was to come later in the festival. Each group/tradition presented itself, always in contrast with another of the ISTA artists, from another place. The second act continued the narrative of the clash of cultures and the surprises that result.

Cultures do not dialogue with each other. They compete, clash, fight, interact and mutually influence each other.

Dr. Dragan Klaic (1951-2011)



This first major Crossroad event packed the theatre and opened a flood of curiosity that ran throughout the entire festival. We began by rooting ourselves in the specific cultural context, Västerbotten, and then welcoming new impulses, the Others, with their presentations. This is typical for the Odin Teatret's strategy of 'barter', developed for encountering unknown places and people.

3. Other worlds 1

Then, Korsvåg entered the new phase for Umeå audiences. During the second week, a series of 'international' guest performances were offered: The Market Theatre (South Africa), singer Ida Kellarova (Roma/Czechoslovakia) and KGPT (Yugoslavia). Each with a different perspective, politically and artistically.

Surrounding the guest productions was a series of public discussions, with the title "Can they meet ...?", focusing on intercultural themes: East/West, Art/Science etc.

Strategically, these activities were programmed to sustain the energy, while the ISTA 9 team entered a period of *closed session* (see below). While the performances were high quality and politically relevant, they were unconnected to the promise inspired by the Västerbotten Welcomes the World gala. The transfer of the team and ISTA activities to Lövånger was necessary, considering research and learning objectives. But the move isolated the artists from the local context, creating confusion, logistical challenges and a temporary invisibility.

Maybe more importantly, it was a kind of self-imposed isolation. The ambition to facilitate exchange between ISTA artists and other invited theatre makers (in Umeå) was not fully realised. The 'secret garden', as essential element in the ISTA concept, caused temporary marginalisation. ISTA was hidden from the local sensibility for a time.



Ida Kellarova and Market Theatre at Festival Korsvåg, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Archive Chris Torch

4. Learning and practice

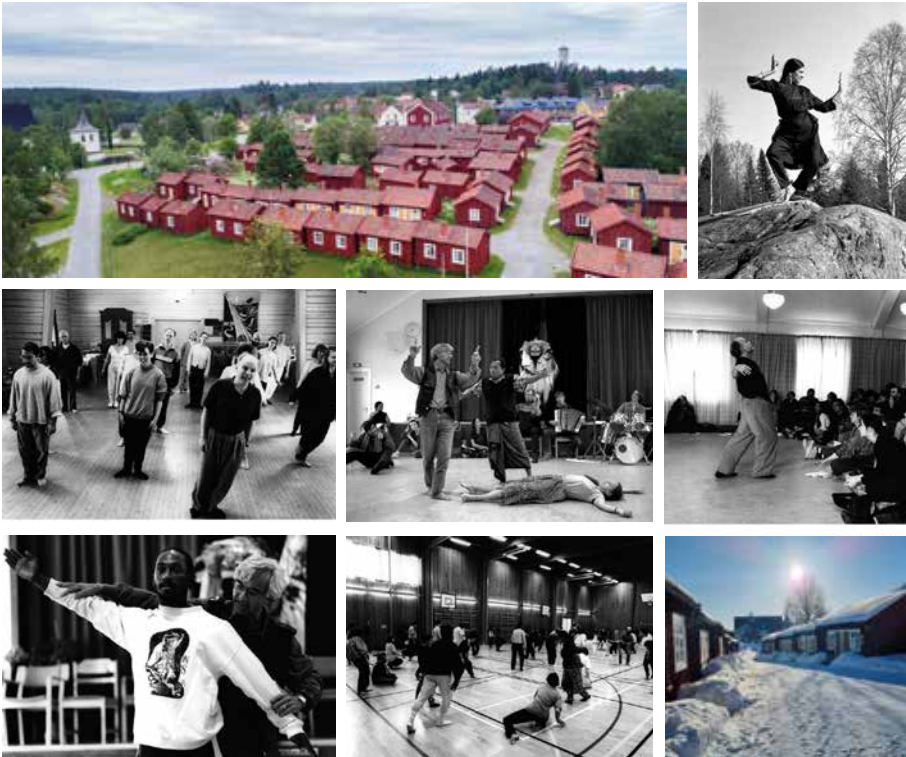
The ISTA 9 *closed session* were centred in and around the Lövånger Church Village, about 100 km from Umeå. This created logistic issues, with transport, housing, work spaces. Any shared activities between the city and the village proved difficult. But it also provided an amazing environment for the ISTA guests. The village is made up of many small houses, sleeping cabins for families in the past who travelled in from the countryside to the local Lövånger Church, for festivities and ceremonies. The majority of ISTA artists and participants lived and worked during five days in the church village.

The weather was surprisingly winter-like with snow, improbably in the middle of May. This added an exotic touch to the pedagogic encounter but of course obstacles at times.

I was personally only partly present during the *closed sessions*, so I can't reflect on the research work was done there. I leave this task to others who were present. I was engaged primarily with sustaining the energy in Umeå and awaiting the return of ISTA IX.

This was an essential part of the project ethic that we managed only partly. We had created programming conditions not always appropriate to the project's core aim: to introduce intercultural curiosity to a local context. This required a certain cultural intimacy. Instead, we had included too much, creating an oversized repertory. Artists and personalities were separated from the Context. It took time to win back the trust.

But Eugenio Barba and the ISTA IX family returned from Löfvånger, starting with a series of work demonstrations (Julia Varley, Augusto Omolú, I Made Djimat, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Kanichi Hanayagi and others), sharing some of the insights that they had worked on in the *closed session*. The learning became praxis and revelation.



Images from ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995: Lovanger kyrkby (Vasterbotten), Sanjukta Panigrahi, workshops with Thomas Leabhart, Eugenio Barba, Augusto Omolú. Photos: Bernd Uhlig

5. Other worlds 2

And then the ISTA phase of the festival took off. Performances by all ISTA masters, some with their ensembles, were arranged 17-19 May, usually two shows each evening. A central audience grew together, consisting of participants, schools and regular theatre spectators, including guests from Stockholm and other cities in Sweden.

This part of Crossroad was like tasting the ingredients for a dinner that was about to be prepared. Some were finished performances, others more like work demonstrations. But these individual presentations proved ISTA to be the sum of its parts. It was building up to something, especially for those that had dared to follow the voyage

6. Theatrum Mundi

20 May 1995

The ISTA ensemble's final spectacle, Theatrum Mundi, was imagined in an abandoned paper factory, by the river at the edge of town. A great deal of preparation, dramaturgically and technically, had been invested in Sofiehem Pulp. Parts of the event were to take place outdoors and indoor the factory spaces needed to be equipped and secured.

And then it started snowing. And raining. It was cold and there were delays. Finally, it was decided to move Theatrum Mundi to Idun Teater, where the welcoming gala had taken place. This last-minute change, combined with the artistic requirements and the inexperienced host team, created some havoc. But finally, housed in the theatre, welcomed by a comfortable public, a worthy near-ending to ISTA 9 Umeå took place. Eugenio Barba directed his global colleagues in a moving farewell party.

But it wasn't over yet.



Theatrum Mundi
directed by Eugenio Barba,
Festival Korsvåg, Umeå,
Sweden, 1995.
Photos: Bernd Uhlig

7. Singing to Heaven

21 May 1995

The final encounter for ISTA and Crossroad was naturally spiritual. The Umeå Parish Council welcomed us in one of their newest churches, for a ceremony of singing to heaven. It was a controversial decision for the church but finally the idea of an ecumenical concert was agreed on, after careful negotiation. The local religious leaders were cooperative. Diverse religious expressions through song and prayer were woven together, including ISTA artists, a local choir, a rabbi and an imam. It was the divine finish to a long and winding adventure with Crossroad and ISTA. The church was filled; the priests were poets. A certain community had been built and of course it would now break up. But the tones remain, spiralling upwards.



Singing to Heaven with violinist Frans Winther of Odin Teatret, Umeå församling, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

VI. What Remains - Legacy

ISTA 9 was both a *consequence* of social/political tendencies and a *catalyst* for further change. The challenges with migration faced in the 1990s are ongoing. They are consistently cultural and therefore behavioural. Confronting the immense tasks of shifting demographics, globalisation and misinformation keep the cultural sector motivated, because it is fundamentally about how a society imagines and interacts with the Other. Artists continue to search for ways to match, melt and be transformed by impulses far from their original cultural origins.

This struggle has not been matched by political will or responsibility for some years now, throughout Europe. Seen from this perspective, the ambitions, and the resources they were able to attract in 1995, seem nearly impossible in 2025.

The local impact of ISTA 9 Umeå and the festival Korsvåg is decidedly strong. It planted seeds of experiment and it opened a whole new audience. The energy was sustained for some time with the great efforts of Umeå Teaterförening and Sven Sahlström.

Sven Sahlström passed away tragically young in 1997, leaving an unfillable gap in cultural courage. Shikasta carried on under my leadership until 1996 and was later disbanded by Riksteatern in 1998, with the argument that everything Riksteatern produces should have an 'intercultural perspective' and therefore the special focus of Shikasta as an autonomous unit was no longer necessary.

In Sweden, interculturalism was disarmed by declaring 2006 as the Multicultural Year. The European Union followed suit and declared 2008 the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. With these mainstreaming initiatives, a great deal of the passion, courage and conflict-resolution that defined the collaboration in Umeå disappeared. The naïve, partially-unstructured laboratory that Korsvåg/ISTA 9 became cannot be replicated under today's conditions. The intercultural question has become muddled, politicised and marginalised.

But for a short time, we were free to try new things in new places with new people. Such experiences leave emotional tattoos on artists, volunteers and spectators alike.

Umeå was later chosen as European Capital of Culture in 2014, the result of a process that began already with Sven Sahlström in 1995 and was carried on by Fredrik Lindegren, Director of Culture in Umeå, earlier a volunteer and active participant during ISTA 9 1995.

ISTA Umeå and Korsvåg were unique and important steps forward, both for myself as an actor/director and for the City of Umeå. The global melting pot made an impact that in many ways contributed to the successful European Capital of Culture year 2014.

Fredrik Lindegren
artistic director Umeå 2014/European Capital of Culture;
presently director of Culture/Swedish People's Culture Houses and Parks

The practice of the actor and the development of group theatre in the Nordic countries was measurably affected by the ISTA 9 experience. Young actors kept asking the questions raised during the Learning part of Korsvåg, both during the closed sessions of ISTA 9 and during public debates. Art critics and audiences were increasingly curious:

But if we are talking about theatre experiences, one cannot of course ignore Sven Sahlström's last major project in the spring of 1995, what was called Korsvåg and which immediately appeared as one of the strangest events in the city that now aspires to the title of European Capital of Culture 2014. In comparison, the theatre biennials of recent years, including the one in Umeå in 2005, appear to be rather pale events. Crossroad was based on the theatre principles developed by the Pole Jerzy Grotowski and further developed by the Italian Eugenio Barba, who with his Odin Teatret was one of the project's supporting beams. In short, Korsvåg can be described as a break from the psychological realism that has always been the organ tone in Swedish theatre life. Here, theatre was performed from completely different starting points and with artists from most continents: a piece of world culture before the word became a worn phrase. For many of the actors who travelled here, a revelation and for the audience a memory for life.

Leif Larsson
a local theatre critic, wrote in 2008 in the magazine of the Regional Museum.

Perhaps the deepest impact remains with the artists, both national and international, that made – and still carry – the memories. This underpins my experiences with other

large-scale transnational projects: the true value is in the change it infuses, however small, in the core participants.

Each ISTA session leaves its own memories. In Umeå, it was the snow. It was May 1995, and we were sleeping in a village of small huts built originally for Sami gatherings for church services and market days. We woke up with the whole village covered in snow. The Brazilians, Indians and Balinese had never seen snow before and were convinced that work would be cancelled. They could not imagine walking through the forest to reach the working space. We made them change their mind by organising a snowball fight. Snow was also used by Eugenio in his closing speech: he gave a fistful of snow to each participant as a token of the knowledge they had received and which would melt in their hands.

Julia Varley
actor, Odin Teatret

The framing for the collective actions which became ISTA 9 was to a large degree determined by the specific political and social conditions in 1993-1998. The Crossroad/Korsväg initiative was very much a child of the times. We were on a roll. The uncertainty and innocence of our efforts in Umeå were strengths. We took risks. *Intercultural competence*, as Dragan Klaic coined it, seemed to be our future.

Maybe it still could be.



Chris Torch and Eugenio Barba, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig