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NUMBER 5 - BREAKING THE RULES

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JTA

NUMBER 5

FOREWORD	
Eugenio Barba	7
EDITORIAL	
Julia Varley	11
BREAKING THE RULES	
Diego Pellecchia	17
BEYOND THEATRE ANTHROPOLOGY	
Alice Guimarães	22
	23
Ralph Räuker	35
Ricardo Gomes, Priscilla Duarte	53
THEATRUM MUNDI	
Julia Varley	82
	83
Géza Pintér-Németh	105
FACTS AND TALES	
	114
ISTA LONDRINA 1994	
	115
	117
	119
	124
	126
	128
	133
Julia Varley	141
ISTA UMEÅ 1995	
	161
	162
	165
Cristina Wistari	169
Enrico Masseroli	173
Chris Torch	177

REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Valentina Venturini	191
RECURRING PRINCIPLES	
Nourit Masson Sékiné	203
Eugenio Barba	208
Natsu Nakajima	210

ABOUT NICOLA SAVARESE

FOR NATSU NAKAJIMA

UN ÉTÉ - AU CŒUR DE L'ÎLE	
WORDS HIDING LOVE	
KOKORO: MIND-HEART-SPIRIT	

NEWS

213	Francesco Ceraolo, Sarimé Alvarez, Hafedh Khalifa, Susana Frank, Luca Ruzza, Julia Varley, Pino Di Buduo, Andrea Porcheddu, Giovanna Manola
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LETTERS TO JTA

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

228	Wei Arianne Wang
232	

Foreword

Eugenio Barba

Breaking the Rules

Research or revolt

I have never thought in categories of 'research'. I admire those who claim to do research, I appreciate their various developments and results, and I am aware of their importance for the ecology of our craft. But 'research' has never motivated my decisions. Perhaps a spectator or a scholar may consider my professional efforts as 'research'. I have always thought, and still do think, that theatre is the performance, the *corps-à-corps* between actors and spectators. *Theatre is the spectator*. This is our professional identity and specificity, from a historical and technical perspective.

The dimension of 'research' - breaking with habits, parameters and usual criteria - is for me organically inherent in the process of the actors' development while rehearsing a performance. Every director follows a different path. My approach is to twist the various improvisations of individual actors and weave them into dramatically zigzagging and ambiguous scenes. I see it as my task to stimulate the actors to respond in ways that physically and vocally intensify the story's details, affecting the spectator's nervous system and imagination. The results amaze even us who have triggered and shaped this process. This need to construct situations that cannot be rationally controlled stems from my inability to put together a performance in a few weeks. It was a form of insecurity; after more than sixty years of experience, it has become an 'active waiting', a process that allows the unexpected to happen. This is why I extend the rehearsal period for months and months, sometimes years.

The examples often cited today as 'research' - Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov or Meyerhold's Studios - were theatre schools, the first to emerge in the 20th century to prepare actors for the challenges from innovative playwrights like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, and later the symbolists Maeterlinck, Hamsun and Andreyev. These schools were often within a theatre, at other times outside, and trained actors who would later enter the 'Market' of entertaining or subsidised show-business. The Actors' Studio in New York or Etienne Decroux's house-school in Paris are well-known examples. However, there was a world of difference between these two places: the first prepared for the 'Market', the second refused to consider it and Decroux sent away those students who attempted to approach it during their studies.

The 'Market' is not a negative entity. It is the context of traditional, geographical, cultural, social, political and technological reality. It is the arena of our economic survival. The Market is the place of encounters, negotiations, agreements, constraints, confrontations and disagreements that determine the value of the essential relationship to which Jerzy Grotowski reduced theatre: actor and spectator. Such a relationship can

Else Marie Laukvik in *The Deaf Man's House - A Capriccio on Goya*, 2019. Photo: Francesco Galli



only exist thanks to the endeavours and solutions with which each of us opposes the Market in order to protect one's own autonomy.

If we want to create a performance, we must take into account politicians and patrons, theatre laws and fashions, available spaces and architectural models, modes of information, production/distribution systems, and individual artistic, educational, political, therapeutic and spiritual aspirations. The construction of the actor-spectator relationship is a struggle between pragmatism and idealism, refusal and consensus, resistance and acquiescence.

The Market is the spirit of the times, the specific historical setting in which we resist, but it is also the fluid mass of an ocean in which, like fish, we artisans of the stage swim. We can follow the currents, swim against them, try to avoid them by flattening ourselves against the bottom or attempt to become a flying fish to escape the flows and pressures of this imprisoning liquid world. Each of us chooses how to face the Market.

The Market is a fundamental dimension of the live performance profession, along with its complementary aspect: ideality, the value each of us attributes to our craft, the intimate meaning that drives us to persevere. In this polarity, theatre - as an encounter with the spectator - becomes a particular system of production and specific creativity with a network of relationships that sometimes produce a parallel, outsider environment, yet strongly connected to its epoch: a theatre group.

The Italian historian Nando Tavanini called these parallel environments 'enclave'. I am interested in maintaining the diversity and incommunicability of the individuals who constitute my enclave, my theatre group, my floating island. I am passionate about intertwining this difference with the difference of other theatre enclaves that seek to resist the pressure of the water above. 'Research' is not a force that drives me; I am interested in politics by other means - those of theatre - a 'politicality' which offers the possibility of keeping alive an environment with a focus on building other types of relations.

Politics is a longing for change, a rejection of the limits of what is considered possible, a need to create impossible situations. This is my profession - my revolt and solitude - with my daily tasks at Odin Teatret. It is not 'research', it is politics. This is why I speak of a 'tradition of the impossible' that runs through the professions of dance and theatre and reveals the ability of certain figures to achieve what their contemporaries considered impossible.

Here I must remember Isadora Duncan and Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel, Judith Malina and Julian Beck with their Living Theater, Joan Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop, Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil, Santiago Garcia's and Patricia Ariza's La Candelaria, and the countless group theatres across the planet - those I call Third Theatre - who have invented production systems, techniques and creative modalities to reach spectators in the wounded and neglected areas of our society. Were they driven by a desire for aesthetic and artistic research, or by a spirit of revolt against the stagnant, complacent and unjust conditions of our craft and of the society of our time?

One step at a time towards technical coexistence

However far we wish to go, however high we feel the need to continue climbing, we must always begin with a small step.

The International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) was not born out of a need for original research. In 1980, Hans Jürgen Nagel, director of the Kulturstadt in Bonn, Germany, proposed to me to organise an encounter/festival of theatre groups. I made him a counterproposal: the rather indefinable project of a 'non-school'. I envisioned it as a 'technical coexistence' based on the exchange of practices between actors and dancers from different cultures and traditions, as well as reflections on the present and past by scholars, choreographers, anthropologists, group theatre directors and recognised performers of Asian traditions. Was it possible to define the factors that determine the effectiveness of the actors' and dancers' different techniques around the world?

I established ISTA, this 'non-school', with university scholars to whom I was bound by deep friendship and constant exchanges. They were joined by Asian performers I had invited to Odin Teatret and with whom I had often collaborated. But what should the first step be? I had no doubt: *the first day of their apprenticeship*. Hence my unreasonable and unwavering obsession with demanding that these outstanding artists and scholars reconstruct in detail what had happened during their first encounter with the person who had taught them the rudiments of their craft.

For every artist and craftsman, in a creative process, the determining factor is not rational. It is spontaneous, uncontrollable and intuitive. It is through the wounds of a biography that a vocation for the theatre becomes art and transcends it. Vocation is an escape. It arises from disagreement with family, from conflict with the world, from a permanent intolerance or insurrection, from an inability to adapt and a feeling that we are not taken into consideration. Vocation can be realised by throwing oneself into the fray of politics, activism, dissent and conflict. Or, on a smaller scale, more modest but no less effective, it takes shape in a church, a school classroom, a cultural association or a theatre group.

Theatre, or rather the actor's technique, is not just a means, it is also an end, and in order to 'be' it must 'exist'. Being a good actor doesn't mean being a good activist but rather being able to manipulate and intensify the 'life' of stage fiction to reveal its inner reality. Stage 'life' precedes narration, anecdote and what is evident. Dance is proof of this. This material and concrete 'life' follows a force: the intuition of beauty that moves us as vulnerability, transcendence, refusal, impulse to resist, nostalgia and obsession.

Stage fiction reveals not only reality, but also its opposite: what is unseen, what cannot normally be perceived. Just as in literature characters are made of words and the way these are intertwined, so in theatre, characters are made of tensions, of changes and leaps of energy. A smile is the consequence of two hundred and fifty tensions in the body. Tensions are partitions, the dividing walls on which the narrative and evocative structure (dramaturgy) is built. These dividing walls can be built without considering the rules that seem to dominate our profession and the Market. We could say that the alchemy of theatre, with its multiplicity of approaches, consists in transforming misfortunes into painful beauty, challenging the certainties of common sense and defending a personal freedom that we feel as a moral duty and a physical necessity. All this can only happen through a physical and vocal artificiality that paradoxically becomes more intense than real life.

Bringing heaven down from the sky and planting it in the earth, in the actor's living body. Theatre anthropology helps make this possible.

Julia Varley

The Country of Our Craft

‘Breaking the rules’ is the overall theme for this 5th issue of *JTA*. The theme was chosen before presidents of powerful countries started blatantly breaking international laws without any attempt to justify their actions beyond economic gain and power conservation. In our world of theatre, art, culture and education, ‘breaking the rules’ is understood as a way to focus on intellectual habits, artistic criteria and professional limits as well as on relationships of empathy, humanity and justice. Transformation is to keep tradition and experience alive through development and change. We would never have expected to have to clarify the meaning the theme has for *JTA*, taking distance from unthinkable behaviour of those responsible for the future of human society.

In 1979, the generalised idea of what theatre was still mostly referred to written texts and buildings in which plays were interpreted. Thinking back to the same year when the first definitions of theatre anthropology were made, I would say that this comparative research was born out of a need to consider theatre from a different point of view, breaking the habitual way of thinking. From the start, theatre anthropology put the body-mind of the performer at the centre; ‘bringing heaven down from the sky and planting it in the earth, in the actor’s living body’, as Eugenio Barba writes in his **Foreword**, *Breaking the Rules*. The anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup writes the same in her article included in **Facts and Tales**, when she says “Whether a fisherman hunting his prey on the North Atlantic, an anthropologist doing fieldwork, or an actor staging a particular character, I would contend that in the beginning was the body. Not the biological body - but the body-in-life.”

The first hypothesis of theatre anthropology did not focus on finding a method or on choosing a particular aesthetic, but it tried to indicate underlying principles for the stage presence of actors and dancers. These principles could be recognised across different forms, countries, cultures, genres and styles. Denying fixed rules came from concentrating on the process that is always subject to change. The curiosity of understanding the motives that guided the individual masters of classical and recent experimental traditions led to a territory that broke the habits of common conceptions of theatre. The ‘pre-expressive level’, a term now generally accepted by theatre historians, had to confront many criticisms before being acknowledged.

This issue of *JTA* has fewer academic contributions. Most of the articles, even if written by university lecturers, refer to concrete practical experiences, to the long journeys from apprenticeship to teaching, to the contradictory attempts to explain emotional, complementary and complex processes that defy classification. *JTA* is proud



to be a stimulus for practitioners to leave behind traces of their work, with the resonance of international diversity.

In this 5th issue, the section called **Beyond Theatre Anthropology** includes some of these articles. 'Beyond' is an indication of experiences that set out from theatre anthropology as a reference and example to discover local original festive manifestations and dances. Theatre anthropology introduces a terminology that allows theatre groups to be considered as a contemporary tradition with a particular technique and form of apprenticeship. Theatre anthropology builds a bridge between political and social positioning and the demands of the craft. Alice Guimarães, Ralf Räuker, and Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte present their personal expeditions from the first years in search of a technique until taking responsibility for passing on their discoveries to younger generations.

The geographical territory they move in has no borders: one Brazilian sets roots in Bolivia, other Brazilians discover their origins by learning Indian Odissi dance or Italian Commedia dell'Arte, a Peruvian theatre director finds confirmation of his ambitions through the research of an Afro-Brazilian dancer, a German emigrated to Australia seeks help from Russian biomechanics during a meeting in Sweden and from Balinese dance-drama taught by an Italian. In this issue it is evident that the rules of national geography have no place in theatre anthropology.

As with the last issue, where the division between theatre anthropology, anthropological theatre, Third Theatre, social community theatre and artistic theatre was not so clear, also *JTA 5* is breaking its own rule of only presenting direct experiences of theatre anthropology. Once again, connections are made to contemporary theatre experiences and descriptions of specific theatre productions, which result from a movement of social change as well as from specific technical references. Alice Guimarães had been invited to write about the ISTA session in Londrina, and Ralf Räuker about the ISTA session in Umeå, but both broke out of the original task to leave a testimony of their experience that touches on theatre anthropology but moves beyond.

When I saw a training session by Alice Guimarães' group, the Bolivian Teatro de Los Andes, inspired by a ritual of a village up the valley from their theatre, I understood how theatre groups can keep alive old rituals by transforming them. The same could be said of another theatre group, Yuyachkani, from Peru, and it is what is happening with various groups in Brazil. Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte refer various times to an article by Yuyachkani's director Miguel Rubio Zapata when taking up the question of decolonisation and how to deal with roots coming from indigenous populations and the African people who arrived to Latin America as slaves.

Mundu Rodá is a Brazilian theatre group teaching at ISTA sessions since 2021. Also quoted by Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte, it is one of the groups that has been learning local dance forms to then transform the steps and movements for their contemporary productions. Theatre anthropology has supported them in understanding which were the underlying essential principles to keep without having to maintain the complete forms.

We are happy to have included an example of how one of the oldest forms of theatre breaks the rules. Diego Pellecchia writes about Ran noh, performances in which the most traditional performers do all what is not permitted, when actors play music and musicians

perform the intricate scores of century old scenes. When I heard his lecture at Roma 3 University in December 2025, I broke all editorial rules as well just to include this example in this issue. The example could only be in its own section of **Breaking the Rules**.

Valentina Venturini writes about Nicola Savarese for **Reflections and Discussions**. For all of us who have met and worked with Nicola it is evident that his way forwards was that of breaking all expectations. He seemed to move in the direction of making a university career but started a theatre group and invented performative lectures accompanied by a sophisticated montage of photographs and videos. When working on a book, he searched for images to convey what words left hidden. When contacting a publisher, he would propose a series of books, on the most diverse themes from his grandfather's biography to dwarf throwing. Valentina Venturini writes: "The path is always that of going beyond... Nicola called it 'plausible fantasy', and it was the very essence of his approach to theatre history: always *imagining* the material side of phenomena."

In this issue **Recurring Principles** is dedicated to the Japanese butoh performer Natsu Nakajima who died on March 3, 2024, in Mexico City. Nourit Masson Sékiné and Eugenio Barba bring her back to life through their memories together with her own words taken from an interview. Natsu worked with both Hijikata Tatsumi and Kazuo Ohno, the two founders of butoh, a dance born from the attempt to reject formalism. At the ISTA session in Bologna in 1990, Natsu Nakajima gave a demonstration of the different energies by imagining she moved in stone, water or air. The resistance provoked by the different matter still inspires some of my own exercises today.

The **News** section of the 5th issue of *JTA* reports on activities and publications that happened in 2025, and announcements of plans for 2026 that also mark Eugenio Barba's 90th birthday.



Natsu Nakajima, ISTA 10, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1996. Photo: Fiora Bemporad



Matheus De Aquino and Alessandro Rigoletti in Theatrum Mundi's *Anástasis*, Theatre Olympics, National Theatre Budapest, Hungary, 2023. Photo: Francesco Galli

Since 2004, the participants of different ISTA sessions have been introduced to Eugenio Barba's way of directing and creating a dramaturgical structure on the base of the actors' stage presence. The passage from the principles of theatre anthropology, from what is called the pre-expressive level, to the creation of theatre scenes is the theme of the two articles in the **Theatrum Mundi** section. One article looks at the multiple elements of the process which lead to the result through a comparison of the rehearsals of different Theatrum Mundi productions. The other article concentrates specifically on *Anástasis*, the Theatrum Mundi performance presented at the end of the ISTA session in Budapest in 2023. Theatrum Mundi is a fascinating unique situation because performers coming from all corners of the world are on stage together. Communication and collaboration are possible despite language, genre, tradition, habits, stories. It seems like a miracle each time, thanks to one rule that is not broken, that of building a dialogue of physical and vocal impulses, without giving priority to meaning.

Reading again the lecture *Incorporated Knowledge* that Kirsten Hastrup gave at the ISTA session in Londrina in 1994, I am struck by all the similarities between the examples she makes as an anthropologist and the experience of Theatrum Mundi: "to establish a true relationship the parties must be present in the same space." "Meaning emerges in the process." "There is no knowledge without a knower, an incarnate subject." "The tenacity of the Cartesian dualism is owed to the fact that it echoes important aspects of human experience. While it is true that human experience is incorporated, it is also true the body tends to disappear."

Reaching the 5th issue, the necessity of leaving a mark concerning the different sessions of ISTA has become a professed obligation. In the section **Facts and Tales**, this issue remembers the 8th ISTA session in Londrina, Brazil, in 1994, and the 9th ISTA session in Lövanger and Umeå, Sweden, in 1995. Reaching the mid-nineties, history does not seem so far away as when presenting the documentation of the origins in 1980, but looking at the photographs and films today, I realise how young we still were during all those adventures. This time **Facts and Tales** includes documents that present the process of preparation and organisation of an ISTA, not just the results. From these examples the essential elements in the preparation are not given by theories, but by the contact between Eugenio Barba and the scholars, the distribution of the participants in working groups and dormitories, the meetings with the organisers, the choice of places where all artists and participants share the same conditions of lodging, meals and work.

The article by Chris Torch brings to life all the thoughts and visions that were shared before, then all the contradictions and difficulties that arose during, and finally all the questions that remain after an ISTA session has finished. Chris Torch is writing about the ISTA in Lövanger and Umeå, but he could be writing of all other sessions if one just changes the names. His questions on multiculturalism, interculturalism and enculturation are shared by various other authors in this issue, from Kirsten Hastrup to Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte, but not only. If we belong to the country of our craft, what does interculturalism mean for theatre anthropology? This could be a theme for a next issue of *JTA*.

Breaking the Rules



Diego Pellecchia Ludic Inversion in Ran Noh

Abstract: Japanese noh is conventionally understood as a solemn, highly formalised art grounded in religious sacrality, aesthetic austerity, and strict role specialisation. This article examines ran noh (chaos noh), an unusual yet culturally significant performance practice in which performers deliberately transgress these norms by acting outside their customary roles and introducing parody and humour. Focusing on the case study in Kyoto, the paper argues that ran noh functions as a form of ritualised, conservative transgression. Rather than undermining noh's authority, such performances depend on deep communal knowledge, reinforcing social bonds and reaffirming the technical, spiritual, and hierarchical foundations of nōgaku through moments of carefully circumscribed play.

Keywords: Noh theatre, Carnavalesque, Anti-structure, Parody

Noh, Japan's traditional masked dance-drama, is famously characterised by a pervasive sense of sacrality and an aesthetic of austerity.¹ In its plays, deities, spirits, or ghosts, populate narratives that are deeply influenced by the Shintō and Buddhist religious traditions. Noh is generally understood as a 'serious' art, one that excludes laughter and play, elements that are instead present in its comic counterpart, kyōgen. This seriousness is further emphasised by noh's highly formalised performance. The bare wooden stage, the otherworldly sounds of flute and drums, and the ritualised movements of performers wearing hieratic masks contribute to the creation of a contemplative, ritualistic atmosphere.

Noh emerged in the 14th century and has been transmitted until today without interruption. Training is rigorous and lifelong: it typically begins in early childhood and continues for as long as performers remain physically capable. Since the 17th century, noh practitioners have been organised into highly specialised professional lineages, with each performer devoting themselves exclusively to a particular role category. *Shite-kata* perform the *shite* (pronounced 'sh'tay', the main character) and *tsure* (accompanying roles) and also participate in the *jiutai* (chorus); *waki-kata* specialise in the *waki* (secondary character) and *waki-tsure*; *hayashi-kata* focus on a single instrument - flute, shoulder drum, hip drum, or stick drum; and *kyōgen-kata* perform only kyōgen roles. Operating within a largely esoteric, lineage-based system, noh performers are not just

¹ This paper was completed with the support of the Kyoto Sangyo University Research Grant System. A longer version of this paper is included in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Religion in Japan*.



artists but also custodians of a living tradition, entrusted with the preservation and transmission of techniques, repertoires, and embodied knowledge.²

Among Japanese traditional performing arts, *noh* also carries distinct social and political significance. When Japan opened to the Western world in the late 19th century, *noh* was among the forms of entertainment presented to foreign diplomats and distinguished visitors. *Nōgaku* - the collective term for *noh* and *kyōgen* - was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government in 1957 and later received international recognition when *Nōgaku* Theatre was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008, following its initial proclamation in 2001.

Perhaps it is because of its inherent *gravitas* that *noh* developed a 'release valve': a space where rules and boundaries are temporarily overturned, allowing the community not just to revere, but also to 'play' with their shared culture. This function is fulfilled by a distinctive performance practice known as *ran noh* (literally, 'chaos *noh*'). In *ran noh* events, cast members perform outside their usual areas of specialisation, for example musicians may enact *shite* roles, while *shite* actors take on comic *kyōgen* roles. Within this framework, spontaneous humour and deliberate ruptures of the established order temporarily destabilise the seriousness that ordinarily governs *noh*. *Ran noh* performances are well documented from the early 20th century onward and appear to have enjoyed considerable popularity, although their frequency has declined in recent decades.

Originally, *ran noh* likely served an important pedagogical function. Because performers traditionally train in isolation and there is no collective rehearsal period, *ran noh* functioned as a venue in which cross-disciplinary knowledge, including music, dance, and chant, could be exercised and tested. Such knowledge is essential for maintaining the mutual awareness and cohesion required in a performance that unfolds without a director or conductor.

Toward the beginning of the 20th century, however, as the relationship between professional performers and the amateur practitioners who became their main patrons deepened, and opportunities increased for the audience to observe professionals in a wider range of performance formats, *ran noh* began to be appreciated for various reasons.³ On the one hand, professionals could use such events to publicly demonstrate their breadth of knowledge and technical competence, even in roles outside their area of specialisation. On the other hand, performing off role also introduced the possibility of accidental failure or moments of awkwardness on stage, resulting in a comical effect that was greatly appreciated by both cast and audience.

Regular theatre-goers and amateur students who maintained close relationships with professional performers particularly enjoyed this effect when established and highly respected actors faltered on stage as a result of performing outside their traditional roles. Actors might have forgotten lines, moved awkwardly, or displayed visible hesitation, types of behaviour normally associated with amateur performance, and at times even laughed in response to their own mistakes. Building on this reception, performers

gradually began to introduce jokes deliberately, thereby modifying the original plays in order to heighten their comic effect. Contemporary *ran noh* is the product of the evolution of such events and incorporates all of these elements.

The Shukuga *Ran Noh* performance staged in Kyoto in 2009 serves as a fitting example. The event was organised to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Kyoto Takigi (torchlit) *Noh*. Held at the Kongō *Noh* Theatre, it drew a large audience of supporters and aficionados and played to a full house. Among the various 'subverted' versions staged, the adaptation of *Ema* (The Votive Tablets) was especially striking.

Originally, the play is set at the end of the year and opens with a group of imperial envoys travelling to the Ise Grand Shrine with offerings from the emperor. They learn of a New Year's Eve ritual in which votive tablets (*ema*) are hung on the shrine doors. An elderly couple appears and quarrels over which *ema* should be displayed, one depicting a white horse that predicts fair weather and the other a black horse that predicts rain. They ultimately decide to hang both in the hope of a balanced climate for the coming year. Before departing, they reveal themselves to be deities of the Ise Grand Shrine and promise to return at dawn. In the interlude, *oni* (demons) from Mount Hōrai appear to offer New Year blessings and present treasures for the emperor. In the second act, narratively detached from the first act, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu appears together with Ame no Uzume and Tajikaraō, and the play concludes with a reenactment of the myth of the Heavenly Rock Cave, in which Amaterasu is drawn out of hiding and light is restored to the world.

However, in the 2009 *ran noh* performance the stage property representing the shrine was transformed into a public bathhouse, and the shrine's votive tablets - originally symbols of divine weather prophecy - were repurposed as 'men's' and 'women's' curtains. This conversion of a sacred site associated with the imperial lineage into a space of physical, and potentially promiscuous, communal bathing constituted a striking ludic inversion. Another gag, in which the imperial envoys peer into the 'women's bath', further collapsed the distance between 'high' and 'low'. While the envoys (originally hip-drum performers) could scarcely restrain their laughter, the audience responded with open amusement.

Soon after, the interlude section, usually performed by a *kyōgen* actor specialising in comic roles and featuring *oni* from Mount Hōrai, introduced additional layers of humour. Most of the *oni* were portrayed by unmasked senior *shite* actors wearing large, fuzzy red wigs. One gag centred on one of the *oni* 'forgetting' his line and being prompted by another, who produced a visible 'cheat sheet', an allusion to poor, or amateurish performance in which stage assistants need to intervene to cover such mishap. In the final act, the drum players portraying the three deities stood on the *hashigakari* bridgeway and unrolled name scrolls bearing their own names. The joke, of course, was that because the deities perform in masks, it would otherwise be impossible to tell who was who (unless one read the programme). Additional gags followed, many of them playful parodies of the choreography, others exploiting the difficulty of performing in a mask and the exaggerated care required in walking on stage.

The play was very well received and concluded with warm applause. It should be apparent, however, that this form of humour is intelligible, and therefore enjoyable,

² For *noh* theatre training, see Pellecchia and Yamanaka 2024.

³ For more information on the relationship between patrons and performers at the beginning of the 20th century, see Grossman and Miyamoto 2024.

only to spectators who are familiar both with the original plays and with the performers themselves. Such familiarity allows audiences to recognise the sacrality of noh performance while also appreciating the deliberate misplacements on which *ran noh* depends. This was not a problem in the present case, since many noh theatre-goers in general, and those attending events of this kind in particular, possess a deep knowledge of the art.

By stepping outside their usual specialisation and employing gags that momentarily blur the boundary between stage and audience, actors in *ran noh* suspend another layer: their public persona as venerable noh masters. In doing so, they expose themselves to public laughter within a carefully controlled space. Indeed, much of the pleasure derived from such performances lies in seeing one's own teacher, or another well-known performer, appear in such highly unusual context. Yet, because the audience consists largely of knowledgeable aficionados, performers are not ridiculed for moments of apparent awkwardness; spectators understand and accept the conventions governing this carnivalesque experience.

It may be said that *ran noh* functions as a kind of 'anti-structure' (Turner 2017), that is, an inversion of the rigid hierarchies that define its world. However, this subversion is ultimately conservative. The ability to parody the ritual requires a profound, shared mastery of the underlying 'structure', and thus serves not as a critique of the tradition, but as an affirmation of the interconnected nature of nōgaku's various disciplines, as well as of the two main social groups of which it is constituted: professionals (producers) and audience members (consumers).

By mocking the ritual, performers demonstrate that their authority is so secure it can withstand, and even be revitalised by, a moment of 'disorder'. Rather than undermining authority, *ran noh* ultimately reinforces it. By demonstrating that their mastery extends beyond strict specialisation, actors assert an ownership of the form that allows them to play with it.

As Johan Huizinga famously posited in *Homo Ludens* (1998), play serves a purpose beyond mere recreation, often reinforcing the very structures it appears to subvert. In the context of *ran noh*, this 'serious play' fulfils a vital sociological function by fostering communal bonds and mutual awareness. By stepping outside their rigid specialisations, performers gain a holistic understanding of the troupe's collective mechanics, while the resulting laughter generates a unique empathy between the stage and the audience.

It is interesting to note that, given the uniqueness of its staging, *ran noh* is typically performed on festive occasions such as that of the Kyoto Takigi Noh 60th anniversary. In these occasions even the most formal pieces of the repertory, infused with religious meaning, are subjected to subversion. Because these plays center on divine blessings and protection, their integration into a festive, 'disordered' context highlights the intersection of the sacred with the ludic. In the case of *Ema*, where a sacred shrine is turned into a public bath and imperial envoys are transformed into peeping toms, the play illustrates the Bakhtinian concept of 'profanation', whereby sacred symbols are debased through proximity to the mundane (Bakhtin 2013).

Therefore, *ran noh* may be better understood not as an eccentric or peripheral performance practice, but as a constitutive mechanism through which noh periodically

reaffirms its sacral authority. By staging a controlled inversion of role specialisation, hierarchy, and technical mastery, it produces a form of ritualised transgression that strengthens rather than undermines the tradition's spiritual and social foundations.

Despite its popularity, after the Second World War, *ran noh* performances became less frequent. This may be attributed to several institutional and economic factors. After enduring the hardships of the war, noh underwent a process of institutional and ideological redefinition of its public image. Stabilised under new professional and state frameworks, such as the constitution of the Nōgaku Performers' Association in 1945 and its designation as an Important Intangible Cultural Property in 1957, the art was reframed in terms of cultural value. New trends of professionals and scholars sought not to insulate noh within a narrow preservationist logic, but to reposition it as a form of world theatre, open to dialogue with other practitioners, aesthetics, and critical frameworks. This outward-looking reorientation expanded noh's cultural horizon and reinforced its intellectual and artistic seriousness but also heightened its gravity and formality.

The establishment of formal cross-art training systems in which noh trainees can study the various noh arts has largely subsumed the pedagogical function of cross-role training into a structured curriculum. The economic contraction following the 1990s asset-price bubble may also have reduced the financial incentive for such elaborate, non-commercial commemorative events. Perhaps most significantly, the 'informal' facet of noh once offered by *ran noh* has been replaced by numerous attempts to popularise noh through introductory workshops and lectures, but also by creating content now streamed through social media. Online social platforms like Instagram and YouTube now allow performers to show private aspects of their lives and also interact directly with audiences.

While the frequency of live *ran noh* performances may have diminished, the underlying 'chaotic principle', that is, the impulse to disrupt and play with established norms, remains a fundamental component of the art's resilience. As younger generations of performers navigate a changing cultural landscape, this ludic spirit is likely to find new avenues for expression, whether through digital reinterpretations or cross-media collaborations. The survival of the *ran nō* spirit ensures that noh remains a living tradition, capable of reaffirming its sacred foundations through the very act of momentary, ritualised subversion.

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Alice Guimarães

El tejido invisible del teatro Hilos que unen memoria y oficio

Abstract: This text is a personal testimony in which Theatre Anthropology emerges not only as a theory of the actor, but as a way of being in the world. Through the account of a journey - from the first steps in the profession to the transformative experience of the ISTA in 1994 in Londrina, Brazil - it weaves a path of discovery that finds in Teatro de Los Andes in Bolivia a fertile ground for dialogue between technique and culture, body and landscape, memory and creation.

Keywords: Andean philosophy, Interculturalism, Teatro de Los Andes, Group theatre, Latin American theatre

Tejer

En Bolivia, el arte de tejer no es solo oficio: es una lengua viva que guarda la memoria y la identidad de los pueblos indígenas. El telar es concebido como un espacio simbólico donde se representa el universo. Cada hilo y cada tejido recrean las conexiones entre lo humano, lo natural y lo divino. Allí, las manos —sobre todo las de las mujeres que sostienen y renuevan esta tradición— trazan un mapa de resistencia frente al colonialismo y, al mismo tiempo, un territorio de creación y empoderamiento.

Creo que los caminos del teatro son como hilos que se entrelazan en un gran telar en movimiento. En este tejido vivo se guardan memoria y oficio. Entiendo mi propio camino teatral como un tejido que se construye con mis propias manos que intervienen en el *pallay*. Cada encuentro, cada experiencia, es un hilo que se enlaza a otros. Este tejido en eterna construcción se expande, se reacomoda, a veces se deshace para volver a empezar. Lo llevo puesto como una segunda piel: me nombra, me abriga y me recuerda de dónde vengo y hacia dónde sigo tejiendo.

Los primeros hilos

Nitis Jacon fue una de las personas que tendió los primeros hilos con los que comencé “mi tejido”. Tenía quince años, recién empezaba a hacer teatro en el colegio, y vi dos obras dirigidas por Nitis con el grupo Proteu de la Universidad Estadual de Londrina en un festival de teatro en mi ciudad: *Bodas de Café* y *Transgreunte, Ascendente Aquarius*. Esas obras “me volaron la cabeza”. Fueron experiencias en las que comprendí, aún sin racionalizarlo, pero sí desde los sentidos. Entendí hasta dónde una obra teatral podía llegar y lo que podía provocar en el espectador. Al año siguiente, el grupo regresó con la obra *A Peste* (basada en el texto de Camus). Otra experiencia que se quedó grabada en mi cuerpo y en mi mente adolescente, y que ahora, cuarenta años después, reconozco

Gonzalo Callejas, director del Teatro de Los Andes, Sucre, Bolivia. Foto: Archivo Teatro de Los Andes



como determinante en mi viaje dentro de este gran tejido que se llama teatro. También lo significativo que mi camino se cruzara con la figura de Nitis Jacon: lo que representó como artista, como gestora del FILO (Festival Internacional de Teatro de Londrina), y lo que significó para jóvenes como yo, la posibilidad de encontrarnos con grandes obras, maestros, artistas y personas.

Mi primer contacto con el universo asombroso de la Antropología Teatral fue en un seminario donde conocí al grupo LUME (Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisas de la Universidad de Campinas - Unicamp), de la mano de los maestros Luís Otávio Burnier y Carlos Simioni, en 1990. Luego, en 1991, Nitis, a través del FILO, trajo al Odin Teatret con tres espectáculos, demostraciones de trabajo, seminarios y conferencias. Se organizó un viaje desde Porto Alegre (ciudad del extremo sur de Brasil donde yo vivía) con muchos artistas y estudiantes para estar presentes en ese evento único para todos nosotros. Hay que recordar que en aquella época no existían todavía las facilidades de la Internet y en Brasil aún no se habían traducido ni editado *Más Allá de las Islas Flotantes* ni el *Diccionario de Antropología Teatral*. Conseguíamos esos textos gracias a algún amigo que viajaba a Argentina o Uruguay y nos traía las ediciones en español.

Por entonces, mi amiga Claudia Machado y yo, estudiantes de Artes Escénicas en la Universidad Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, escribimos una carta a Eugenio Barba contando (de manera muy ingenua, lo confieso con vergüenza hoy) cuánto nos emocionaba conocerlo y descubrir el trabajo del Odin Teatret, y lo que eso significaba para nosotras. Cuál fue nuestra sorpresa al recibir un telegrama del FILO informándonos que, por solicitud del Odin Teatret, se nos había concedido una plaza para el seminario que impartirían Eugenio Barba y Julia Varley en Londrina. Éramos dos estudiantes desconocidas en un seminario exclusivo al que asistían nombres importantes del teatro brasileiro, como João das Neves, Celso Nunes, Luís Otávio Burnier entre otros. Vimos *Judith*, *El Castillo de Holstebro* e *Itsi Bitsi* entre lágrimas de alegría y emoción. También nos emocionamos en las demostraciones de trabajo y en las conferencias. En aquella oportunidad, nuestra relación con el teatro, que ya se había transformado profundamente con la experiencia previa junto al LUME, cambió irremediablemente.

Más adelante, Nitis continuó generando hilos para mí. En el FILO de 1992 vi a Kazuo Ohno, Yuyachkani, el Teatro de Arte de Moscú, entre otros grupos y artistas maravillosos. En 1993 participé en el seminario de Iben Nagel Rasmussen y en el montaje de *Ponte dos Ventos*. Esta experiencia significó no solamente un desarrollo potente y profundización de mi forma de entrenamiento físico y vocal, que ya venía trabajando con la Usina do Trabalho do Ator, sino la oportunidad de estar en presencia de Iben. Su calidad humana, su entrega y su modo de habitar el espacio de trabajo, trascendió el aprendizaje técnico. Con ella, el entrenamiento se volvió una experiencia de encuentro —con el otro, con uno mismo y con algo más vasto—, una vivencia profundamente inspiradora. En su presencia, el grupo respiraba al unísono, y cada jornada de entrenamiento se transformaba en un acto de comunión: cuerpos distintos movidos por un mismo pulso, una misma necesidad de búsqueda. Iben lograba tejer entre nosotros un sentido de pertenencia y de entrega. Fue una vivencia donde el entrenamiento se reveló como un espacio de encuentro y de transformación compartida.

En 1994, otra vez de la mano de Nitis Jacon, participé en la VIII sesión de la ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology), realizada en Londrina. Fue, una vez más, una experiencia profundamente transformadora y tengo una gratitud inmensa por haber tenido la oportunidad de participar tanto en la sesión cerrada como en la abierta. Haber formado parte de ese encuentro significó un privilegio raro: estar en contacto directo con maestras y maestros provenientes de distintas latitudes, portadores de tradiciones, saberes y sensibilidades diversas, reunidos en un mismo espacio de búsqueda. Cada demostración, cada diálogo, cada momento de trabajo compartido abría un horizonte nuevo de comprensión sobre el arte del actor y su dimensión humana y universal. La atmósfera de la ISTA era la de una celebración del conocimiento vivo, del intercambio genuino entre culturas, un territorio de comunión, donde el aprendizaje no pasaba solo por la técnica, sino por la vibración del encuentro y la escucha.

ISTA 1994

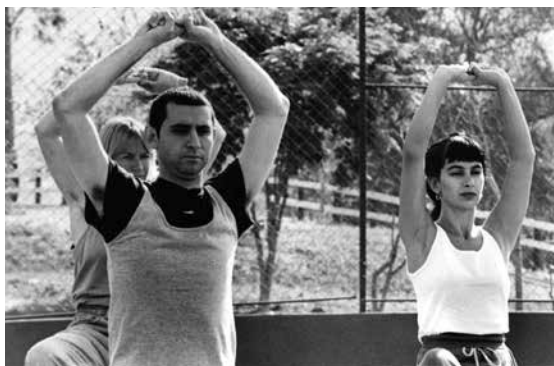
La VIII sesión de la ISTA, que ocurrió en Londrina del 11 al 21 de agosto de 1994 fue especialmente significativa por ser la primera fuera de Europa en la historia de la ISTA. El hecho de haber ocurrido en Brasil, en su momento, no tuvo para mí grande relevancia, además del hecho de estar en un lugar accesible para posibilitar la participación de artistas brasileiros como yo. Hoy puedo entender la importancia y lo significativo de este hecho para el teatro latinoamericano y las reflexiones y repercusiones que ha provocado.

Según Beatriz Seibel, en la VIII ISTA —“Tradición y Fundadores de la Tradición”— Barba propuso un análisis de la transmisión técnica en las artes escénicas, enfocándose en cómo los “fundadores” reinterpretan tradiciones desde una visión moderna sin perder su rigor estructural. Concluye que la sesión ISTA de Londrina no solo fue un acontecimiento formativo para quienes asistieron, sino también un gesto político y cultural: acercar el conocimiento escénico transnacional al sur global, cuestionando las jerarquías de centro y periferia en las artes teatrales.

La ISTA representa un espacio único de encuentro entre culturas, un espacio donde artistas, maestros y practicantes de distintos rincones del mundo se reúnen no para imponer sus estilos, sino para descubrir ese algo común que habita bajo la piel de cada tradición escénica. Para Eugenio Barba, este proceso de integración intercultural permite que la confrontación y el intercambio con “el Otro” no solo enriquezcan la práctica artística, sino que también transformen profundamente la percepción de lo propio. En este contexto, el teatro deja de estar limitado por formas o estilos locales y se proyecta como una comunidad artística global y transcultural.

Para mí que apenas había salido de la universidad, aunque ya pertenecía a un grupo que investigaba el trabajo pre-expresivo del actor/actriz, más que un aprendizaje de “contenidos” o “formas”, participar en la ISTA fue una gran experiencia inmersiva de *sentipensar* nuevas posibilidades para la creación de una verdadera dramaturgia escénica que pertenece al universo del actor/actriz.

La posibilidad única de compartir workshops y espectáculos de tradiciones de todo el mundo; ver bailar a Sanjukta Panigrahi, Augusto Omolú, el teatro kabuki, el ensemble



Paulo Braz y Alice Guimarães durante una clase de Sanjukta Panigrahi, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brasil, 1994.

Eugenio Barba y participantes, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brasil.

Fotos: Emidio Luisi

de Bali; la presencia de los actores y actrices del Odin Teatret; las conferencias de Nando Táviani, Franco Ruffini, Jean-Marie Pradier, Nicola Savarese; los ensayos y creación del Theatrum Mundi en un ambiente verdaderamente mágico donde los espacios tenían nombres poéticos, donde se empezaba en silencio y luego, antes de hablar, el canto. Luego la sesión abierta con la presentación de ese espectáculo hermoso en el lago de Londrina.

En mi propia experiencia dentro de la ISTA, esta apertura intercultural despertó cuestionamientos profundos sobre mi identidad. Comencé a preguntarme a qué “cultura” pertenecía realmente. ¿Dónde estaban enterradas mis raíces? ¿Cuál era la tradición que daba sentido a mi estar en el mundo y a mi hacer artístico? Veía bailar a Augusto Omolú, quien, más allá de su extraordinaria técnica como bailarín, encarnaba el universo del candomblé a través

de las danzas afro-brasileras y comprendí que en su actuación había algo más que pura destreza. En su cuerpo habitaba una presencia ancestral, una manifestación viva de su herencia cultural. Su cuerpo era más que técnica: era rito, era memoria. En él danzaba un Brasil profundo, místico, vibrante. Sentí que su presencia traía consigo algo que me conmovía, pero también me dejaba al margen. Porque él era Brasil... y yo también, pero de un Brasil distinto.

Esa misma fuerza se percibía también en los artistas provenientes del teatro asiático, pero en el caso de Augusto Omolú, su cercanía me interpelaba con más intensidad. Yo nací en el sur, en una región que no suele aparecer cuando se imagina “lo brasileiro”. En aquellos tiempos, nuestro paisaje, nuestro clima y nuestras costumbres parecían mirar más hacia Europa que hacia las raíces indígenas y africanas tan vivas en el Norte y Nordeste, que, aunque también habitaban el sur de Brasil, permanecían poco conocidas y casi invisibilizadas. Entonces me pregunté: ¿Cuál es mi raíz? ¿Debo buscar mi identidad cultural fuera de mí, o acaso está latente en algún lugar profundo de mi interior? ¿Qué revela de mí misma esta confrontación con otras tradiciones durante las sesiones de la ISTA?

Cada cultura ofrece algo, y según Barba, ese intercambio construye una red de aprendizaje mutuo, donde cada tradición aporta a la construcción de un conocimiento escénico más amplio y profundo. Lo vi con mis propios ojos. En ese cruce de lenguas, gestos y miradas que es la ISTA, entendí que cada tradición, cada maestro, cada gesto era una pieza de algo más grande. No se trataba de copiar estilos ni de apropiarse de lo ajeno, sino de escuchar, de respetar, de dejarse tocar. Reconocer este entrelazado de hilos diferentes que tienen puntos de encuentro y, efectivamente, forman un tejido multicultural que se puede apreciar y leer.

Desde la experiencia de la ISTA pude intuir que la identidad no se trata de fijarse en un origen estático, sino de participar activamente en una comunidad artística en constante transformación, donde lo propio se redefine en el encuentro con lo diverso. Y esa comunidad artística la encontré algunos años después.

Teatro de Los Andes

Llegué a Bolivia, al pueblo de Yotala, por primera vez en 1997, para participar en un taller residencia de quince días con el Teatro de Los Andes. Venía con la referencia de César Brie, uno de sus fundadores y entonces director, pero del trabajo del grupo no sabía nada. Tampoco conocía mucho sobre Bolivia. En aquellos tiempos no existían sitios de búsqueda en línea y acceder a información era más complicado. Sabía apenas que era un país de cultura andina, que allí estaba el lago Titicaca y algunas escenas de Potosí que había imaginado a partir de los libros de Eduardo Galeano.

Fue entonces cuando conocí al Teatro de Los Andes. En esa época, el grupo estaba formado por César Brie, Giampaolo Nalli, Lucas Achirico, Gonzalo Callejas y María Teresa Dal Pero. Con ella compartía un hilo que nos unía a miles de kilómetros: ambas habíamos pasado por el seminario de Iben, yo en Brasil, ella en Dinamarca.

Me enamoré del grupo de inmediato. Vivir y hacer teatro en comunidad, con un vínculo tan fuerte con el entorno cultural que lo sostenía, un entrenamiento físico y vocal riguroso y una conexión tan delicada y profunda con la escena... Era algo que me atrapó sin remedio. Al año siguiente, decidieron abrir sus puertas a un grupo de alumnos para una residencia artística de un año. Éramos dieciocho personas de distintos rincones: Bolivia, Brasil, Argentina, Uruguay, Italia y Dinamarca.

Yo no era una recién llegada al oficio, como la mayoría de mis compañeros. Llevaba ya una década como actriz profesional. Había cursado artes escénicas en la universidad, participado en obras como actriz, había trabajado estrechamente con el grupo LUME y participaba de un núcleo de investigación. Había pasado una temporada en Europa. En 1995 estuve en Dinamarca para la sesión de la EITALC (Escuela Internacional de Teatro de América Latina y el Caribe) en el Odin Teatret. Después me uní al taller del Teatro tascabile di Bergamo por seis meses en Italia, y estudié bharata natyam con una maestra alemana en Berlín. De regreso a Brasil, continué entrenando con mi grupo, Usina do Trabalho do Ator, con quienes continuamos investigando y montamos un par de obras.

Pero en el Teatro de Los Andes encontré algo que resonaba de forma distinta. Hacer parte de la construcción de un tejido colectivo. Era como si los hilos que ya traía en las

manos se enlazaran con otros nuevos que sólo aquí podía encontrar. Y un día comprendí que no había venido únicamente a participar de un seminario: había venido a echar raíces.

Ser ayllu

En el Teatro de Los Andes, el colectivo trascendía lo individual: ser “nosotros” antes que “yo”. Aceptar y convivir con las diferencias entendiendo que las oposiciones y los desequilibrios no constituían obstáculos, sino la posibilidad de crear vida en escena. El conflicto, lejos de ser evitado, era reconocido como el motor del drama y, por tanto, del acontecimiento teatral. Esta práctica implicaba una disposición constante a dar y recibir, en un pacto tácito de reciprocidad y entrega. Las dificultades, más que entorpecer el camino, se convertían en un estímulo para profundizar el compromiso con el proceso creativo, con la convicción de que lo que hacíamos debía ser más grande que nosotros mismos.

Después de aquella residencia de un año, cuatro participantes y yo permanecemos trabajando con el grupo. Al principio lo hicimos como alumnos, pero, tras seis meses de entrenamiento y convivencia, iniciamos el proceso de creación del espectáculo *La Ilíada*, una experiencia intensa y profunda que se extendió durante un año, hasta su estreno en Italia, en septiembre del 2000. Éramos nueve actores y actrices provenientes de diversas tradiciones —no solo en el sentido geográfico o nacional, sino en la pluralidad de nuestras formaciones y prácticas artísticas—. Cada uno aportaba su propio hacer y pensar, técnico y cultural, generando un diálogo entre lenguajes y saberes escénicos.

En el montaje coexistían danzas folklóricas bolivianas y argentinas, bharatha natyam, danza contemporánea, artes marciales, huayños, canciones de cuna en quechua, sirtaki griego, timbres vocales del este europeo, acordeón, violín, flauta traversa, charango, bombo legüero, sikuris y didgeridoo. En ese entramado, creo haber aportado algunos hilos que se habían tendido mucho antes, fragmentos de un tejido teatral que ya habitaba en mí, aunque entonces sin plena conciencia de su alcance.

Reconozco en *La Ilíada* la presencia de muchos de los principios que había observado en la sesión de la ISTA en Londrina y en los espectáculos del Odin Teatret: el diálogo intercultural como territorio de creación y la importancia de una práctica pre-expresiva anclada en el cuerpo. Esa experiencia confirmó para mí que la antropología teatral no era una teoría distante, sino una práctica concreta que atraviesa y sostiene el acto mismo de la presencia escénica.

Así continué mi camino en el Teatro de Los Andes, ese espacio de encuentro y de aprendizaje colectivo, donde la creación era también una forma de conocimiento compartido. En ese recorrido, mis caminos volvieron a cruzarse con Nitis Jacon: coincidimos en algunos festivales internacionales y, tiempo después, gracias a su invitación, llevamos la obra *En un sol amarillo, memorias de un temblor* a Curitiba y a Londrina, prolongando así un diálogo artístico y humano que seguía tejiéndose más allá de las fronteras.

A lo largo de los años, el grupo atravesó numerosos cambios y transformaciones. Las más profundas —verdaderas sacudidas en nuestra historia— fueron la partida de dos de sus pilares fundamentales de este sueño colectivo: en 2010, el alejamiento de César Brie,

creador y guía del proyecto, y en 2017, la irreparable pérdida de Giampaolo Nalli, cuya presencia continúa siendo un faro en nuestra memoria colectiva.

Sin embargo, incluso frente a los duelos y la incertidumbre, la vida teatral siguió su curso. Los últimos quince años estuvieron marcados por una actividad intensa, por la investigación constante y por el encuentro con otros artistas. Una vez más, las dificultades y los obstáculos no hicieron sino reafirmar nuestro compromiso con el oficio teatral. Ni siquiera las crisis económicas, que amenazan de forma concreta nuestra continuidad, lograron detener el torbellino creativo ni frenar nuestra reflexión sobre el hacer teatral y el territorio cultural que habitamos.

Durante este tiempo, creamos espectáculos propios fruto de procesos colectivos junto a dramaturgos y directores invitados; dirigimos y actuamos en producciones de grupos hermanos; y desarrollamos nuestra propuesta pedagógica, intensificando las Residencias Artísticas en nuestro espacio. Del mismo modo, profundizamos en el teatro como herramienta de inclusión y espacio de diálogo social, realizando diversos proyectos comunitarios con temas de derechos humanos. Un teatro que no solo representa a sí mismo, pero se convierte en acto de resistencia poética.

Yawar K'ancha

En el Teatro de Los Andes, desde siempre se estableció un diálogo con el entorno y desarrolló una metodología de creación que busca unir la técnica teatral con las fuentes culturales andinas, explorando su música, danzas, idiomas, máscaras, mitos y leyendas como territorios vivos de sentido. Desde 2016, esta investigación tomó un giro más profundo, incorporando una dimensión filosófica y ontológica que aborda el comportamiento pre-expresivo del actor desde un enfoque transcultural y pragmático, desarrollando principios y técnicas para la creación y la práctica actoral, y para encontrar un teatro que conecte de manera auténtica con la cultura y la existencia humana.

Este camino comenzó hace nueve años de la mano de Gonzalo Callejas, actualmente director artístico del Teatro de Los Andes, a partir de su experiencia teatral, sus vivencias personales y el vínculo con sus raíces —su lengua materna es el quechua y proviene del norte de Potosí, región donde aún se practica el ritual del *Tinku*—. De allí nace *Yawar K'ancha*, una práctica psicofísica-vocal-musical concebida para desarrollar el comportamiento pre-expresivo del actor, evocando los principios de la antropología teatral desde raíces andinas. Este entrenamiento permite que el actor “se conecte con la tierra y sea un puente hasta el cielo”, abriéndose como un tejido de respiraciones, tensiones y silencios, donde la energía interna despierta y la externa se ordena en diálogo con el espacio y los otros cuerpos.

El *Tinku* es un ritual preincaico que posteriormente fue sincretizado con la religión católica. Ocurre anualmente en las comunidades de la región del norte del departamento de Potosí, en Bolivia. *Tinku*, que significa encuentro en idioma quechua, es una fiesta ritual compuesta por una serie de momentos o ritos, cuyo clímax consiste en enfrentamientos rituales entre los participantes, con el sentido de “ofrecerse en sacrificio” a la *Pachamama* (Madre Tierra).

En el pensamiento andino, el universo es concebido como una totalidad, donde todo y todos están incluidos en constante movimiento. En los idiomas originarios precolombinos quechua y aymara, *pacha* es un vocablo que tiene muchos significados, entre ellos, el espacio, el tiempo, el movimiento y el ser. *Pacha* implica la manifestación de la existencia, el mundo de lo visible y de lo invisible en un tiempo que fluye desde adentro hacia afuera y regresa de afuera hacia adentro, en ciclos permanentes. La complementariedad, la comunidad (*ayllu*) y la reciprocidad (*ayni*) son conceptos fundamentales que rigen la vida, el actuar y el saber. La relación es lo que nos constituye. Sin ella nada existe. La primera persona no es *yo* sino *nosotros* (*ñukanchiq*) y “nosotros” es la montaña, las plantas, los insectos, las piedras, los ríos, todo es *nosotros*. Así la muerte y el sacrificio en el *Tinku*, en un significado más profundo, sería: “muero yo para unificarme con el entorno, para volverme *pacha*”.

Además de elementos del ritual del *Tinku*, incluimos una dinámica inspirada en el ritual de los ayarichi, de la cultura yampara, de la región de Tarabuco, Bolivia. Con ese elemento empezamos y terminamos nuestra práctica. El *Ayarichi* es un desplazamiento-ritual que tiene un acompañamiento musical con *wancara* (tambor) y *sikus* (instrumentos de viento andinos) dónde se evocan las “almas olvidadas”, haciéndolas despertar y luego despidiéndolas para que vuelvan al más allá. Utilizando esos elementos, elaboramos nuestro propio ritual-entrenamiento-encuentro.

Inspirada en la antropología teatral y en el pensamiento decolonial, *Yawar K'ancha* no busca reproducir ritos de manera folclórica ni enseñar una técnica cerrada, sino propiciar una experiencia física y psíquica de comunión. Se trata de un hacer individual dentro de un hacer colectivo. Un territorio de encuentro donde el cuerpo se convierte en un hilo que conecta pasado y presente.

Yawar K'ancha se manifiesta como un encuentro con uno mismo y con el otro, donde los gestos y los ritmos se entrelazan como hilos invisibles en un telar. La práctica se revela como un tejido vivo donde convergen memoria, cuerpo y presencia, resonando con la visión de Eugenio Barba sobre el teatro como experiencia universal. En la edición de la ISTA de Londrina en 1994, Barba nos recordaba que, más allá de los idiomas, los estilos o las tradiciones locales, existe una pre-expresividad compartida: principios fundamentales que anteceden al lenguaje y sustentan la acción escénica en cualquier cultura.

En este proceso, la confrontación con “el Otro” no es un choque, sino un espejo que refleja lo propio y abre la posibilidad de expansión. Los participantes descubren otra manera de conectarse con la escena, un espacio donde los cuerpos dialogan con lo propio y con lo ajeno en un mismo tejido de presencia, ritmo y atención. Así, me atrevo a decir *Yawar K'ancha* se convierte en un ejemplo tangible de la antropología teatral en acción: un espacio de aprendizaje, integración y descubrimiento, donde el teatro se reconoce en su dimensión humana y transcultural, más allá de cualquier frontera o estilo.

Pallay

Pallay es nuestra creación escénica más reciente en el Teatro de Los Andes. Nació del deseo de seguir explorando la relación entre el teatro y el pensamiento andino, iniciada

en el ámbito de la pre-expresividad con *Yawar K'ancha*, y esta vez, a través del lenguaje de la performance. Nos inspiramos en la riqueza simbólica de los tejidos producidos por las tejedoras *Jalq'a* (cultura de comunidades indígenas del departamento de Chuquisaca, Bolivia), que desde siempre nos han fascinado por su complejidad. En esta obra, los tejidos *Jalq'a* se transforman en territorio escénico. Su caos ordenado y las figuras fantásticas que lo habitan, fueron el punto de partida para adentrarnos en un universo simbólico donde lo ancestral y lo contemporáneo dialogan, se contraponen y a veces se confunden.

La palabra *pallay* en quechua tiene muchos significados: tejer, el espacio donde se teje, escoger, cosechar. En ella reconocemos una poética del hacer, un gesto que une cuerpo, materia y pensamiento. En nuestro proceso, *pallay* se convirtió también en verbo del teatro: tejer el tiempo, escoger el gesto, cosechar la memoria. Así se fue configurando un camino que es, al mismo tiempo, tejido y tejedor, un entramado donde los hilos de la tradición cultural originaria se enlazan con las preguntas y fracturas del presente.

El formato de performance nos ofreció la libertad de combinar distintas disciplinas sin depender de una narrativa lineal. A partir de imágenes, sonoridades y acciones físicas, fuimos componiendo una partitura sensorial donde los tejidos *Jalq'a* no solo inspiran la estética, sino también la estructura interna del trabajo: un tejido escénico que respira, que se expande y se repliega, evocando los paisajes interiores del inconsciente. Incorporamos textos en quechua, instrumentos autóctonos y recursos multimedia para dar cuerpo a esa dimensión simbólica, generando un diálogo constante entre lo material y lo onírico, lo visible y lo invisible.

Nuestro objetivo ha sido realizar un proceso de *transcreación*: partir de una comprensión estética y filosófica de la manifestación originaria para reinterpretarla, encontrar su poética y proyectarla en una nueva representación. Queríamos alejarnos de las miradas superficiales y del folklorismo, y acercarnos a un territorio de autenticidad y sentido.

El punto de partida fue la experiencia personal de Gonzalo Callejas y las indagaciones que nos rodeaban con *Yawar K'ancha*. La obra se construye como un viaje íntimo hacia las raíces. Todo comienza con el reencuentro con la abuela —figura esencial de la memoria—, aquella que enseñó el idioma y los primeros gestos, y que ahora habita el *Ukhu Pacha*, el mundo de abajo, donde están los muertos, los sueños y las semillas. Ese retorno al *Ukhu Pacha* se convierte en metáfora de un viaje interior: volver al origen para reencontrarnos con lo que somos, con lo que aún late debajo de la superficie.

Desde el inicio supimos que *Pallay* debía incorporar el quechua no solo como un elemento lingüístico, sino como una presencia viva que estructura el pensamiento y la respiración escénica. De este modo, el idioma se volvió una forma de resistencia, un ejercicio de descolonización del lenguaje, una manera de restituir su fuerza poética y su lugar en el teatro contemporáneo.

Por primera vez decidimos abrir al público una etapa temprana del proceso. Tradicionalmente mostrábamos solo el resultado final, pero sentimos la necesidad de compartir también la investigación en curso, ese espacio frágil donde la creación no ha tomado su forma definitiva. Lo que presentamos no fue una obra “acabada”, sino un cuerpo en transformación.

Dividimos la experiencia en *movimientos*, como si cada presentación fuera una nueva capa del tejido. En cada uno de ellos profundizamos aspectos estéticos y narrativos, añadimos matices, y dejamos que la obra respire junto al público. Desde los primeros encuentros sentimos una conexión inmediata: *Pallay* generaba algo que iba más allá de la comprensión racional, una experiencia compartida en la que el tiempo y el espacio se volvían comunes, tejidos entre todos.

La confrontación de *Pallay* con distintos públicos y contextos socioculturales confirmó su naturaleza dialógica y su capacidad de generar experiencias de percepción y sentido en múltiples niveles. Presentar la obra ante jóvenes quechua-hablantes, investigadores de los campos de la sociología y la antropología, estudiantes universitarios de la carrera de idiomas y públicos urbanos diversificados permitió reconocer su potencia como espacio de encuentro intercultural.

No obstante, la experiencia más significativa tuvo lugar en la localidad de Potolo, entre las tejedoras *Jalq'a*, portadoras de la tradición que dio origen a nuestra investigación. Allí, al llevar la estructura técnica y escénica necesaria para la performance, la obra retornó simbólicamente a su fuente, completando un ciclo de creación y devolución. El diálogo con las productoras de los tejidos fue revelador: sus miradas, comentarios y gestos reorientaron nuestro trabajo, ofreciendo nuevas claves para comprender el vínculo entre arte, territorio y conocimiento ancestral. En ese intercambio comprendimos que *Pallay* no se limita a representar una cosmovisión, sino que se constituye en *ayni*, un acto de reciprocidad, un espacio de reflexión compartida donde el teatro se vuelve un medio para reactivar memorias, resignificar prácticas y continuar tejiendo los hilos que enlazan la tradición y la contemporaneidad.



Gonzalo Callejas en *Pallay*, Teatro de Los Andes. Foto: Archivo Teatro de Los Andes

Retomar hilos

En 2022, en el Festival Internacional de La Paz, volví a encontrar a Eugenio Barba y Julia Varley después de treinta y un años de haberlos conocido en Londrina, al inicio de mi camino en el teatro. Desde entonces los había seguido en Córdoba con *Kaosmos*, en la ISTA en Londrina, en Holstebro, en el Odin, en sesión de la EITALEC, en 1995.

Eugenio Barba, en su clase magistral, cuenta que ha leído el libro que escribió Giulia D'Amico sobre nuestro trabajo, que yo le había regalado en la tarde anterior. Dice que todavía existía un tal Teatro de Los Andes porque hubo una brasilera, de Porto Alegre, que un día llegó y se quedó, y con su compañero, de vida y de trabajo, siguen llevando adelante el proyecto de este teatro. Verlos nuevamente, y recibir su atención plena y generosa, nos dejó sin palabras: se interesaron por nuestro trabajo, valoraron nuestra investigación, y pasaron una tarde entera compartiendo nuestro taller. Como dice Simone Weil, la "atención" es la forma más pura de generosidad: una mirada que reconoce al otro en toda su verdad. Un simple "gracias" se queda corto frente a quienes, con su presencia, reafirman nuestra existencia y la relevancia del trabajo que hacemos.

Somos nuestra memoria y existimos a través de nuestra historia. La lección más grande de Eugenio Barba ha sido la necesidad de un teatro comprometido con una identidad propia. La identidad no es un concepto estático: se construye desde la acción, y toda acción teatral es un movimiento que transforma. Como Euricléa reconoce a Ulises por su cicatriz después de veinte años, nosotros nos reconocemos por las cicatrices que llevamos; para encontrarse, es necesario perderse, emprender búsquedas y aceptar que un proceso de formación es infinito. No somos productos, somos procesos. Sostener nuestras cicatrices nos permite emprender nuevos viajes y regresar, y en el Teatro de Los Andes, esa cicatriz nos identifica: somos, y seguimos siendo, un proceso en movimiento.

Yawar K'Ancha y *Pallay* son formas de seguir tejiendo nuestra historia, vinculando el pensamiento andino con las formas contemporáneas del arte, y preguntándonos quiénes somos cuando miramos y creamos desde nuestros propios orígenes. Así continuamos: entre la memoria y el presente, abiertos al devenir. El teatro, para nosotros, no es un refugio: es una forma de contemplar el mundo y de permanecer en él, un acto de resistencia frente al tiempo, sosteniendo en la incertidumbre aquello que nos recuerda desde dónde venimos y por qué seguimos creando. La antropología teatral es la brújula que nos ayuda en el camino.

Hoy entiendo que quizás mis raíces no estén en un solo lugar. Tal vez estén en movimiento, como el teatro mismo. Y en ese movimiento, me voy encontrando.



Ralf Räuker

Ways of Transmission

ISTA experiences and their impact on my artistic work and teaching

Abstract: Ralf Räuker shares his apprenticeship journey from meeting Jerzy Grotowski's collaborator and actor Zygmunt Molik, participating in ISTA sessions in 1986 and 1995 and 1996, studying Meyerhold's biomechanics with Gennadi Bogdanov, getting to know Odin Teatret's actor training, and visiting Cristina Wistari in Bali. He shares the consequences of this journey in his work as a director in Berlin and a lecturer in Australia dealing with questions of multicultural societies.

Keywords: Biomechanics, Multicultural societies, Balinese dance theatre, Female impersonators

Northern Sweden, May 1995: after a heavy snowfall overnight, we're walking through a fluffy, Nordic landscape that feels like a childhood dream. People from the northern and southern hemispheres, wearing all kinds of shoes, are gathering for an ISTA session. Some have bare feet in slippers, while others wear closed shoes, hiding and protecting what's inside. When we arrive at our meeting place, a warm wooden floor welcomes the bare feet from around the world.

During my first ISTA experience in Holstebro in 1986, I was impressed that Eugenio Barba often appeared barefoot during work demonstrations. It looked natural when he moved in the same space as Indian and Balinese dancers who didn't train or perform with shoes. His groundedness allowed him to explore 'pre-expressivity' with performers, no matter their footwear, cultural backgrounds, or beliefs. Some of his questions and research ideas sounded strange at first and could make a performer feel momentarily uncomfortable on stage. But he never lost connection, and challenging our comfort zones would ultimately lead to new discoveries.

Barba's centre of gravity danced with his thoughts and vice versa. His mental and physical presence mesmerised me. After four years of eclectic acting studies at the University of Arts in Berlin, I appreciated his clear methodology and never-ending curiosity, always focused on his research questions. As I tended to overthink things, Barba's balance between being pragmatic and poetic helped me to ground myself as a young actor and theatre artist.

Although my performing arts academy's curriculum included various physical trainings, aikido, acrobatics, Feldenkrais, fencing, stick-fighting, tai-chi, and ballroom

Gennadi Bogdanov and Ralf Räuker, ISTA 10, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1996. Photo: Fiora Bemporad

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dance, most of the acting work was text-based, and character development began with a psychological character analysis.

The first time my class practised a holistic psycho-physical approach was with Zygmunt Molik in 1982. He had worked with Jerzy Grotowski from the beginning in Opole and later at the Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław. Training and rehearsing with Molik, we experienced a whole new way of creating theatre. I felt inspired, but it also scared me to enter this unknown space of possibilities. My confusion only disappeared once I had found the movement score for my role in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Clearly, I needed some structure to free myself from overthinking and become fully present.

In 1985, I travelled to the Sierra Tarahumara in the north of Mexico following Antonin Artaud's footsteps in 1936, when he searched for the Tarahumaras, an indigenous tribe. The diary of my 'field trip' became my thesis and the material for creating a solo performance for my acting degree. I knew that Grotowski was in Irvine, California, busy with his latest research project, Theatre of Sources. In Mexico City, I found out that he was giving a speech at Museo de Bellas Artes and went there with a letter, asking for the possibility to take part in his research. A few months later, I participated in Grotowski's work in Botinaccio, Italy. This was a time of transition for him, as he moved from California back to Europe and from Theatre of Sources to Art as Vehicle. Although I had no clear concept of the connection between theatre, performance, and anthropology, I was involved in this profound research by a groundbreaking master. Back in Berlin, I tried to incorporate my learnings into my work but felt very lost trying to follow Grotowski without Grotowski.

Meeting Eugenio Barba and taking part in the 1986 ISTA gave me new energy and brought back my fascination with theatre and dance. The incredible playfulness and skill presented made Barba's research question plausible: what are the unifying principles in this captivating diversity?

Transmission impossible

In 1987, Barba had an even stronger impact on my professional development when he suggested research on Meyerhold's biomechanics actor's training. I was part of a group of young theatre makers visiting Odin Teatret when Barba handed out photocopies from a 1970s *TDR* journal showing photos of a man demonstrating a biomechanics etude.¹ 'Take a close look at this,' Barba said and left the room.

Now, as I write my contribution for a *JTA* chapter on the ISTA in Umeå in 1995, I won't go too deeply into the details of this *transmission impossible*² that Barba had sent me on in '87. However, because my ISTA experience in Umeå is directly connected to this journey, it's worth providing some background.

At one of the sessions in Umeå, we were discussing the Western history of acting methodology/training, and Stanislavski was the key focus. When Meyerhold's name

1. Gordon, M. (1995) 'Meyerhold's Biomechanics', in *Acting (Re)Considered*, Zarrilli, P. (ed.), London: Routledge.

2. Räuker, R. (2024) 'Transmission Impossible', in *The Routledge Companion to Vsevolod Meyerhold*, Jonathan Pitches, Stefan Aquilina (ed.), London: Routledge.



Participants and staff, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

came up, there was an acknowledgment of his groundbreaking artistic work, but his psycho-physical acting method, biomechanics, wasn't well known. In this situation, Barba asked me to demonstrate the biomechanical etude, *Throwing the stone*. He knew I had taken his advice and had a 'closer look' at those photocopies he handed out seven years earlier in Holstebro. Since then, I had received a two-year scholarship to research biomechanics, and in 1991, I met my teacher, Gennadi Bogdanov, from Moscow. He had been a student of Nikolai Kustov, an actor and instructor of biomechanics at the Meyerhold Theatre in the 1930s. Kustov was the man in the *TDR* photos I got from Barba and had used to start my research.

Those pictures gave the impression that an étude is a step-by-step change from one posture to another. But what about the flow and the movement principles that energise the form? I could only incorporate and understand these once I trained with Bogdanov. After Meyerhold's brutal murder by the Stalinist terror regime in 1940, his name and work were suppressed. It took decades until the transmission of biomechanics became possible. During the Cold War era of the 1970s and '80s, it was difficult to reconnect with the practical side of Meyerhold's biomechanics. There was no one in the West who was teaching first-hand experience how to execute an étude. When the USSR fell apart in the early 1990s, it became easier to travel, do research, and exchange ideas with theatre colleagues in Moscow, allowing to piece the puzzle together. It was a time of hope. Meeting Bogdanov in 1991 closed the gap. The lineage Meyerhold-Kustov-Bogdanov made biomechanics a living thing again. I doubt that Barba had thought for a second about this possibility in 1987. However, his way of inspiring people and sending them on a mission is like throwing out the seeds, and he knows not all seeds will grow to the point that they can be harvested - but some will.

My ISTA experience in 1995 was about inclusion. I could contribute to the process of building knowledge and making connections between cultures. It seemed that Meyerhold's biomechanics had not been considered as a method, simply because there was no line of transmission that could have been looked at. For me, it was very touching to hear Barba's words of appreciation for the 'lifeline' I could provide. Time was allocated in which I introduced some of the basic principles and how they are incorporated in the etudes. This task came as a surprise, as well as people's interest in practising. Another surprise was the suggestion to demonstrate the partner etude *Slap in the face* together with Chris Torch who had been a member of the Living Theater. The group worked on a reconstruction/reinvention of Meyerhold's biomechanics in the 1970s, based on the same publication by Mel Gordon which Barba had given to me. When I met Gordon in 1989 in New York, he told me that after *Meyerhold's Biomechanics* appeared in *The Drama Review* in 1974, he heard about a public presentation of the same subject. Soon after, he witnessed the Living Theater presenting 'a chain of misunderstandings' following his publication. They met and Gordon could clarify a few things, but in fact, both sides were lacking the physical transmission process with someone who knew biomechanics firsthand. They only had those photos and some text material to work with. Consequently, both sides came up with different interpretations, also because



Ralf Räuker and Chris Torch demonstrating biomechanical exercises, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995.
Photo: Bernd Uhlig

they had different goals. The Living Theater used biomechanics in two productions to visualise their political message against oppression, underlining the mechanical aspect of the stage movements. For Gordon, reconstructing the actor's training went together with the aim to reconstruct one of Meyerhold's constructivist productions, where the human body in biomechanics was described as a machine and the actor as the machinist.

My study grant with which I started researching biomechanics in the late 1980s had the title 'Myth of the Machine'. The Machine- or Industrial age was already over, and the Information Age had kicked in. However, we still lived in a machine-based society and had already seen its catastrophic effects on our environment, our mind, soul and body. Nevertheless using the machine image in popular artistic expression was still happening. The robotic element in breakdance had a parallel with Charlie Chaplin's mastery in *Modern Times*. Like the tramp, the poor and oppressed youth from the Bronx trained their bodies as their only triumph and ownership. In their dance, they struggled with a money-driven and robotic economic system, but their vital rebellious energy shined through. This was surely true in the 1970s but like many rebellious movements, the original gist gets watered down with time.

In the 1980s, I was confronted with the Iron Curtain that was separating Europe for decades. 1989 the Berlin Wall fell, and the Cold War ended. I lived in West-Berlin and had all my life experienced the freedom to travel. In West-Germany, the freedom of speech was guaranteed, and a feeling of oppression was a complex mix of inner and outer pressure - collective guilt, personal trauma, and the fight for survival in a money-driven society. As a young actor and theatre artist, I was keen to learn some skills to manage my professional and personal life. When I studied biomechanics with Bogdanov he was the perfect actor-dancer-acrobat, and he said it in simple words: "It's biomechanics not car mechanics." The machine image was not dominating his teaching at all. But it clearly was something that still echoed from the past. Meyerhold saw biomechanics as a tool for becoming a New Man in a society that had overcome the oppressive capitalist class system. Taking over the machines, the means of production, was an act of liberation. But Socialist Realism and Stalinist ideology had no time for utopian fantasies. 'The revolution eats its children'. Meyerhold was executed by oppressors who called themselves liberators. It took more than thirty years until Bogdanov, and other young acting colleagues got the chance to learn biomechanics, in secret, behind closed doors. Only when the USSR collapsed, the doors started to open again.

For Grotowski the machine-image in a machine-based society was obsolete. He valued Meyerhold's work as a director but saw Stanislavski and the method of Physical Actions, which he further developed, as his path in working with actors. I experienced his training for the stage with Zygmunt Molik and briefly took part in Art as Vehicle, Grotowski's last research project in search for organicity. I was strongly drawn to this monastery withdrawal from the world of theatre production and felt alienated at the same time. It took me a long time to accept that this was not my way. The ISTA, Barba and the Odin Teatret actors, showed me the path back to the actor's stage, allowing me to ask questions about the craft, and experience my body as this fictional instrument making first steps again.

My first steps

Before meeting Gennadi Bogdanov, my biomechanics teacher, I had workshop experiences with Odin Teatret actors and Barba. Here I was introduced to the idea that the body can be described as an instrument or vehicle. Barba called this a productive fiction which allows an actor to train the body with greater efficiency. How do I know it's fictional? I can step in and out of my car, but my body doesn't allow that. Or like the image of a musical instrument, from which you can step away after rehearsing or performing, while the body can only be ignored. Another term that helped me to define myself as a performer, was 'extra-daily balance' or 'equilibrium deluxe'. But before these headlines could be written, there was a visceral experience which I would call truly foundational.

It was during a workshop in Holstebro. Barba and Odin Teatret actress Roberta Carreri made us conscious of the first drama that our body and in a way our whole existence is involved in. What are the two opposite forces that we must balance from the first time we stand up and with every step we take? I'm shifting my weight slowly from one foot to the other - to the point when all my body weight is resting on one foot. I realise in that moment that the heel of the other foot that does not carry any weight wants to lift from the floor. I let it happen and get ready for the wonder of moving into space. All my weight is on one foot. A balancing act that challenges my core and of course the one leg that supports me, together with the one foot on which I stand. The imagery and the sensory experience of this 'first step' and the landing on a new standpoint were a wonder to me. When I was standing on two feet before, it felt 'as if' I was a tree. I could imagine that from the soles of my feet roots were growing down and all branches and leaves stretching upwards. From here to my first step, it was not far. No reason to rush. The centre of gravity holds everything in balance while transiting the weight to a new standpoint. And then something groundbreaking happens. Do it again, 'as if' it was the first step. Keeping the sensation of wonder and letting yourself go - standing-stepping-walking-running-jumping-standing, and again and again, but never the same. Engaging in a constant balancing act. Always aware of the two opposite forces. For me this was the beginning - my first steps in theatre and dance.

First steps at ISTA

At the ISTA, the first lesson and the initial steps of your training are of great importance. How did your teacher, or guru, introduce you to the work? Was it by showing, explaining, or both? This is what all the artists and pedagogues at ISTA had to demonstrate and if they couldn't remember exactly, a fictional scenario of their first day would be fine. It is not always enjoyable for the performers to be the focus of attention in such an unusual situation. They have to leave their professional comfort zone and become a beginner again. This might also be a new way of thinking for artists from traditions where asking questions in the training is uncommon.

In Umeå, I had my first experience learning the foundational steps from all the pedagogues who were invited. Those from India, Bali and Japan used a codified form of communication with the audience, which most ISTA participants do not understand. It

was like learning new languages and the time limit made it feel like the first lesson might also be the last. Fortunately, I was able to organise a longer Odissi dance workshop and performances by Sanjukta Panigrahi in Berlin during the 1990s. This gave me the chance to go deeper into exploring a dance form that was very different from my cultural background. Her traditional teaching method was through demonstration and correction, but her ISTA experiences also allowed her to communicate with students from other traditions in a very helpful way.

At the ISTA session in 1986 at Odin Teatret in Holstebro, I had the fascinating experience of seeing Sanjukta Panigrahi with her guru, Kelucharan Mohapatra, which was both touching and beautiful. The balance of 'vigour and sweetness' in their physical and facial expression was something I had never seen before. It was my first ISTA, and I naively remarked in the post-performance talk that I was missing this delicious sweetness in Western theatre, while our addiction to sugar and chocolate was constantly growing. The audience laughed, but Eugenio Barba looked very serious and called for more focus. Perhaps I was not yet familiar with the academic rigour that sometimes took over at ISTA. Having just graduated from acting school, I felt like I was in a wonderland. When the Chinese Pei Yan-Ling performed a male warrior role during her demonstration, her enormous energy leaped into the audience, and we were blown away by this actress in a male role. It was wonderful to experience these moments of pure joy and excitement at the ISTA session titled, *The female role as represented on the stage in various cultures*.

Also at the same ISTA session in 1986, I saw Mei Lan-Fang's son, Mei Bao-Jiu, perform female roles like his father. I already knew about the great impression Mei Lan-Fang had made on Bertolt Brecht fifty years earlier and discovered that this had happened to several other theatre artists in Europe around the same time. For my directorial debut, just a few months after the 1995 ISTA, I had chosen a reflection on this early example of theatre anthropology.

Consequences of ISTA: directorial debuts and theatrical explorations

The Sorcerer's Apprentices, by Swedish writer Lars Kleberg, premiered at the festival Berliner Festspiele - Berlin-Moscow 1995. Originally a radio play, I adapted it for the stage with an ensemble of three Russian and four German actors. The plot was inspired by a pivotal 1935 Moscow performance by the legendary Chinese opera actor Mei Lan-Fang, who impersonated female roles. The play imagined a debate among some of the most influential figures in early 20th-century theatre: Sergei Eisenstein, Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexander Tairov, Erwin Piscator, and Konstantin Stanislavski. Although a work of fiction, one could easily imagine this situation becoming a battle of words. These famous artists, each claiming to best understand the highly stylised traditions of Peking opera and how to apply them to their own theories and practices. In my production, all the apprentices to Mei Lan-Fang's profound and ancient art were seated at a long classroom table. Kleberg had written monologues based on what the different characters had said or written at the time, with only a few lines of dialogue.



Two scenes from *The Sorcerer's Apprentices*. Left: Stanislavski has a coughing fit and Meyerhold, Piscator, Tairov and others try to assist. Right: Eisenstein performing surgery on the old 'system'. *The Sorcerer's Apprentices* imagined a debate among some of the most influential figures in early 20th century avant-garde theatre: Sergei Eisenstein, Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexander Tairov, Erwin Piscator, and Konstantin Stanislavski. The plot was inspired by a pivotal 1935 performance in Moscow by the legendary Chinese opera actor Mei Lan-Fang.
Photo: Archive Ralf Räuher

To bring action to the stage, I involved the entire ensemble in each monologue, and they moved 'over tables and benches,' which in German means 'causing chaos and trouble'. Three of the actors had been trained in biomechanics by Bogdanov, and the whole ensemble did physical training together throughout the production process.

J.W. Goethe's poem *Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice), tells the story of a single apprentice. While his master is away, the apprentice, tired of fetching water by hand, uses magic to order a broom to do the work. Because he is inexperienced, he loses control, and an army of brooms creates an unstoppable flood. One of Goethe's lines, *Die ich rief, die Geister, / Werd' ich nun nicht los* (The spirits that I summoned / I now cannot rid myself of again), is often used to describe someone who summons help or allies they cannot control, especially in politics. *The Sorcerer's Apprentices*, is about theatre magic and also politics under Stalin. People had hoped for change and called for help, but instead, a Stalinist army of 'iron brooms' began a ruthless cleanup. Anything and anyone Stalin disliked was no longer safe. When the play ends, Mei Lan-Fang had already left the conference, and the embarrassed apprentices wish him well in his absence. The final speech is delivered by a Stalinist official, bringing a cold shiver into the room, and some of the apprentices receive a clear warning. For all of them, it is a time of darkness because the 'great teacher Stalin' had no mercy.

The performance began with a recording of Max Reinhardt's voice, an original recording about theatre's magic and our playfulness on stage, like children. The stage at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin had an unusual design and could be opened on two sides. There was a large audience space and a smaller studio on the other side, where our performance took place. People were seated, listening to Max Reinhardt's voice, as the curtain at the back of the stage opened, revealing the large audience space with the actors sitting in different rows, in dimmed light. At the end of the recording, they came onto the stage and dressed as fairytale magicians with large, cone-shaped hats. It could have been a children's dress-up party, but there were red stars on the hats, and all the tablecloths were fiery red. Then, the music from Walt Disney's *The*

Sorcerer's Apprentice played, and a wild dance with brooms and red tablecloths began, ending with a big crescendo and all the apprentices sitting down at the long school table with embarrassed red faces. The curtain at the back then closed, and after this prologue, the play began.

Aquarians and Female Impersonators was presented at the Workshop of Cultures in Berlin in 1998. It featured a Chinese Peking opera actress performing a man who impersonates female roles on stage. This production was inspired by a mix of two plays by Lars Kleberg, *The Sorcerer's Apprentices* and *The Aquarians*, where Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein argues with Bertolt Brecht about art. Both plays are from Kleberg's *Starfall: A Triptych*. However, this time I used his texts only as inspiration and developed all scenes through a devising process with designer Merit Fakler, Peking opera actress Shi Hong Mei, and my friend Fang Yu. Fang Yu had helped me with my research on biomechanics, with a parallel tai-chi class, and he also brought Shi Hong Mei to Germany, which was a complicated bureaucratic process at the time.

After my 1995 ISTA experience and my directorial debut with *The Sorcerer's Apprentices*, the production *Aquarians and Female Impersonators*, went to a new level of challenge because I directed it and was working with a Peking opera actress on stage. I played Eisenstein and Brecht, and briefly, the writer Sergej Tretjakov as he commented on a demonstration by Mei Lan-Fang, who was wearing a men's suit instead of a Peking opera costume. The project revisited the fascination that Eisenstein and Brecht had with Chinese theatre. It also wove in the theme of their heart problems and their deaths from heart attacks in their fifties. The fact that they were both aquarians played an undercurrent role in their disputes about rationality and the subconscious. Mei Lan-Fang, a man and female impersonator fascinated Eisenstein and Brecht, not only as a research subject. The Peking opera actress, Shi Hong Mei, performing a man who impersonates female roles on stage was a double travesty, a playful way of deliberately creating confusion about sexual identity. The interest that Mei Lan-Fang had sparked in Western theatre came from men who dominated the art form. We explored how



Aquarians and Female Impersonators, Workshop of Cultures, Berlin, 1998. A woman performing a man who impersonates female roles on stage. The project revisited the ideas of Sergei Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht, particularly their fascination with Chinese acting and Mei Lan-Fang. Left: Eisenstein taking notes. Right: Tretjakov observing and explaining Mei Lan-Fang's art.
Photo: Archive Ralf Räuher

Western artists viewed Eastern traditions with an outside eye and what happens when this look turns inward.

Shi Hong Mei did neither speak German nor English and was outside of China for the first time. I had never been there and did not speak Chinese. Sometimes Fang Yu would help with translating, but often she did her work, and I did mine. We could not engage in long discussions, which also had advantages. However, there was a tension between my fascination for Peking opera tradition and the lack of personal contact with the Chinese actress Shi Hong Mei in 1998. Our last musical piece on stage was a contemporary Chinese pop song, and we reenacted our first encounter at the airport in Berlin. The pop song helped us to relax and look at each other with fresh eyes. We both welcomed that moment.

Destination Paradise premiered at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in November 2001. The title came from a quote by Heinrich von Kleist in his essay *On the Marionet Theatre* published in 1810. A classical dancer and a storyteller have a conversation about marionet theatre, how the human body deals with gravity on stage and the loss of innocence or natural grace. Kleist makes clear that the lost paradise can't be reached by going backwards. 'We have to make the journey around the world and see if there is perhaps an opening again somewhere at the rear.' The other text that inspired the production was by Antonin Artaud *On the Balinese Theatre*. In 1931 Artaud saw a



Cristina Wistari helping during a rehearsal of *Destination Paradise*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2001.
Photo: Archive Ralf Räuker

Balinese dance troupe performance at the Paris Colonial Exhibition and saw in it all he was missing in the theatre of the time and in Western culture in general. Like Kleist he was searching for ways of heightening awareness to expanded consciousness. Both their essays closely look at the human body on stage. While Kleist sees dancers and marionettes meeting at a spiritual crossroad, Artaud describes the Balinese theatre as a cosmic marionet dance. For both authors their essays become screens for their metaphysical projections.

The idea for the Kleist-Artaud project was already on my mind at the ISTA in Umeå and I began talking to Cristina Wistari, a member of the Balinese dance ensemble from Ubud, about my ideas. These conversations led to me visiting Bali in 1998 and 1999 and collaborating with her on the 2001 production in Berlin. It was the most ambitious project I had done so far. On stage with Cristina were Tony de Maeyer, who had a background in biomechanics, and Steffen Findeisen, who had learned corporeal mime in Paris/Berlin and was studying Balinese dance at the time. In Berlin, three live musicians joined us on stage, with percussion and a grand piano on which transposed Gamelan and European classical music were played. A grand piano in German is also called a *Flügel*, which means 'wing' and music was an important element for our 'take off' *Destination Paradise*. Set designer, Merit Fakler, also an excellent video artist, used very sparse moments of projected light reflections from water surfaces as part of her design, a subtle hint that Kleist ended his life at a lake in Berlin in 1811, just a year after *On the Marionet Theatre* got published.

The play started with a waiting situation at an airport. A man and a woman were sitting on two separate benches when they heard the call for boarding. They both got up in the same moment but were stuck to the ground and could not move from the spot. They reached out for each other but could not get close enough to even touch. A cleaner who worked at the airport turned out to be their saviour. All three took off together on a journey to learn about gravity, one of the central themes in Kleist's essay.

Before we started rehearsals in October, terrorists had flown two planes into the World Trade Centre in New York. The whole world saw shocking images of death, destruction, and hatred. 9/11 challenged our production in a way we could never have imagined. Berlin was on alert, as the whole world was. Would there be any events, performances, any normality again, whatever that meant? Cristina arrived at the Berlin airport some weeks later. We devised, rehearsed, and finally performed at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. We had not found the back entrance to paradise, nor had we found an answer to 9/11. We took off and landed safely, but even that was somehow disturbing. The texts by Artaud and Kleist were a big challenge in their complexity. We were not an existing ensemble which clearly made the first phase of exploration more difficult. And we had limited time to create scenic material for the stage. The actors didn't speak a word of those famous essays on stage because I wanted us to find the physicality, musicality and the imagery that would connect an audience with the depth of the two essays by Kleist and Artaud. Maybe I should have worked more with the difficult situation we were in, instead of trying to create a homogeneous play.

But commenting directly on 9/11 so close to the tragedy, would have been a big risk. The title *Destination Paradise* could already be seen as a reference to the fact that Muslim terrorists fulfilled their murderous mission believing in the promise that they would go to paradise right away, surrounded by heavenly virgins. Starting a theatre play at an airport, at any other time would have not raised an eyebrow. But in October/November 2001 any step further into commenting on the huge conflict, the fear and anger that was in the air, could have caused a cancellation of the project. It was hard to forgive myself that we only could present moments of the performance I wanted to see.

However, working with *On the Marionet Theatre* brought me so much closer to a deeper understanding of Meyerhold's biomechanics. The marionet player must project him/herself into the centre of gravity of the mechanical puppet with heart and soul. The actors need to connect any movement on stage with their centre of gravity to become present and graceful. Consciousness should never be in the way of growth and creative expansion. Paradise now, means acting in the moment, without any judgement.

Artaud called out for a Theatre of Cruelty to liberate his inner scream. When I read his essay *On the Balinese Theatre* I felt as if I were hallucinating. But when we stage a piece we must rely on other skills, non-hallucinatory in nature. Artaud couldn't realise his Theatre of Cruelty and performed it on himself instead, becoming a martyr. Someone who burned and made signs like hieroglyphs on the pyre. When I'm a coward or just lazy, when I suppress my own scream and kill the fire, he reminds me of the sickness I ignore. And while there is not much assistance in a practical way from his side, he never stops to question me 'Why? Why, theatre?'

The path to teaching

Just a year after *Destination Paradise*, I signed my contract as a full-time lecturer in Theatre Arts at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Perth. I became a teacher, and instead of workshops, I had to develop a curriculum. Instead of independent performance-making, I devised with my students. Half around the world I found my second home Down Under. Since 2003 I make a yearly journey back, to where I come from in Germany/Europe. For several years I did stopovers and gave workshops in Nepal, India, China, Singapore. I had already been to Japan, working with Otha Shogo and his ensemble on the performance *Suna no Eki* and taught drama for a year as a senior lecturer in Malaysia in 2016. The region and its performance cultures that ISTA's research focuses on became my neighbourhood.

Teaching in Australia meant dealing with a multicultural society. Around forty percent of the population was not born on this continent, which meant that people experience a lack of common ground. The very old Australia of the indigenous people was invaded by colonisers. How can a modern Australian culture be built on this history? And what do all the different cultures have in common that live here together. First, they want to make a living and find their community and feel at home. They might hold on to traditions and values of the land or island they came from, but this is a simulation of being at home.

A minority really connects with the unique land they are walking on and being outdoor means mostly doing sports or having BBQs. Arriving in Perth, Western Australia in 2002 this was the status quo. Down Under, a continent far away from Europe, was only half-way round the world.

Biomechanics was my specialty in Australia but working with Grotowski and Barba came before I met Gennadi Bogdanov. Having these different influences is enriching, and I find it inspiring for myself and the students in my teaching. The question is not whether we should work from the 'outside in' or the 'inside out,' but how we can make the connection between 'the inner' and 'the outer' more fluent, as if they were never separate.

Biomechanics was never intended to establish a specific style, but to teach basic principles of acting. These were used in Meyerhold's stage productions with a specific terminology and got refined in his artistic work as a director. The biomechanical etudes are mini-dramas, short pieces to practise basic principles. Like a Chopin etude for piano, they should prepare the trainee for more complex tasks. The etude are physical actions with a simple plot: e.g., *Slap in the face*, *Stab with a dagger*, *Throwing the stone*. Although the etudes do not represent a specific style, the composer, choreographer, or director leaves a recognisable fingerprint on this form of exercise when developing it. The biomechanical etudes are included in this and there are no dogmas that forbid to develop contemporary etudes, with fresh fingerprints on them. In any case I would recommend exploring the movement principles first freely and allow emotional response but not push it. The etudes should not be at the very beginning of one's training. The focus could easily be on the precise execution of the complex physical form, while Meyerhold also intended to help his students stimulate their emotional response through physicality, because movement triggers emotion.

Working with my students was rewarding. They were thirsty for theatre and performance training that was different to what they had seen and experienced so far. I enjoyed teaching them through devising and the most rewarding was to see when they got out there and did it their way. They started their own companies and became the new generation of theatre and performance makers in Western Australia.

In 2019 I staged *The Himalayan Peer Gynt* with MA theatre students at the university of Hyderabad in India. The adaptation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* with Indian performers had been my dream for almost ten years. The young ensemble was very motivated to do physical training, and I was lucky that one of their lecturers had been at the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw, in Poland as part of his studies. Thirty-six years after my first Grotowski-acting-experience on *Peer Gynt* with Zygmunt Molik the collaboration with Riken Nagomle in India was another experience of coming full circle. I only got 'half-way round the world' on my geographical life-journey. However, these 'full circle inner experiences' were like coming back to the beginning without having gone backwards. *The Himalayan Peer Gynt* was my last university project.

Living near Fremantle, a small harbour city on the Indian Ocean, my chances to do public performances depend on yearly grant applications. Parallel to devising theatre I've developed Balancing Act Workshops. This is a psycho-physical performance

training I offer to different groups with different needs in the community. In my last stage production in May 2025, I collaborated with the Japanese Musician Sanshi commemorating the end of World War 2 in Europe 80 years ago. It was my first solo performance since 1999. Currently I'm involved in a project with the Japanese community and performers from different cultural background in researching and reinventing an event that happened in Western Australia 100 years ago. *A week in Tokyo* was an oriental carnival Western Australians celebrated in 1925. The event involved all the cultural clichés one could imagine. There is some theatre anthropological work to do, and I really enjoy that it is community driven and not academic research. I obviously haven't lost my enthusiasm for performance research, but my focus today is on personal growth and inner connections when it comes to meeting other people and cultures. And as every year, I do my journey half-way round the world to Germany and Europe, where I come from.

Personal reflections

At my first ISTA experience in 1986, I had an enjoyable, naive idea about theatre anthropology. For me, it meant bringing people from around the globe together and having a powerful and entertaining experience, meeting and exchanging with diversely trained artists on stage. However, the human thirst for knowledge drives us to analyse the entire experience. We want to understand the whole by sometimes obsessively analysing its smallest details. Barba brought the discipline and obsession needed to create an International School of Theatre Anthropology. More than once, I saw the Promethean drama unfolding on his face, while his feet always moved with the elegance of a great cat, keeping him balanced and close to the gods. He chose a close connection with a selected group of people, always looking for the right chemistry or 'elective affinity'. Trust is important.

The ISTA in Umeå 1995 gave me an experience of inclusion when I was asked to present Meyerhold's biomechanics and felt that there was serious interest and appreciation for my research. It was also the first ISTA for me where we worked practically with all the pedagogues and had a lively exchange with the academics. This could sometimes feel like a boot camp, with an almost military discipline and every minute of the day scheduled.

However, it was still a very enjoyable frenzy, with all our senses on high alert. It was fertile ground on which we walked, often with naked feet. And there was time for poetry and rituals of love and laughter. Barba moved through this density like a warrior who had changed his mission. He knew how to fight for his cause and that seeds do not grow on a battlefield. "Better to be a warrior in a garden, than a gardener in a war", as Bruce Lee said.

Theatre anthropology has an eclectic tradition, and Meyerhold was one of the first artists to begin methodically investigating the basic principles of stage performance, drawing inspiration from different cultures and traditions. In 1996 in Copenhagen, Barba invited my teacher Gennadi Bogdanov to present biomechanics. My *Mission Impossible* on biomechanics came full circle when I demonstrated a partner etude together with Bogdanov. And for the final session in Copenhagen Barba brought me to



Biomechanics demonstration with Gennadi Bogdanov and Ralf Räuker, ISTA 10, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1996. Photos: 1, 2 (on top) Torben Huss. 3, 4, 5 (below) Fiora Bemporad

my seat, which was next to Grotowski. For me it was a symbolic moment. Having met these two living legends had created a tension in me. I would always look up to them, while I had to find my own way.

Introducing biomechanics, a year earlier in Umeå and being on stage with my teacher Bogdanov in Copenhagen was like my tribute to ISTA. The boy in me felt proud of having made a step towards independence. Grotowski's project Art as Vehicle, which I had encountered ten years earlier, was on a totally different trajectory. It was unlikely that I could impress him with efforts reviving Meyerhold's biomechanics. But that didn't matter in that moment. There were the two men who had a huge influence on me. One had left theatre production behind and the other was working with an ensemble of actors, touring performances around the globe. I had chosen to become a theatre maker and the three productions described earlier are clearly connected to Barba and the ISTA, especially *Destination Paradise*. Bringing Balinese dance to the stage in November 2001, I tried to create my own Theatrum Mundi as a next step towards independence and learned a few hard lessons about directing and devising.

I've been to Bali only once since *Destination Paradise* to meet Barba when he did some preparations for *Ur-Hamlet*. I watched him rehearsing in a small village with a Balinese ensemble member. He wanted the dancer to bring up the energy level in a fighting scene and become like a predator. Barba provoked him physically, by showing him 'his teeth'. This didn't work straight away and became hard work, but there was no doubt that pleasure and excitement was driving the effort. Barba wants to feel the performer's teeth and claws. "Because if your performer doesn't hurt you as a director, then what you have been creating is without teeth - toothless," he said with a smile in a film-interview on *Ur-Hamlet* in 2006. In the same interview he talks about "how human animals had been inventing different ways of expressing themselves." Those two 'human animals' I saw rehearsing a fighting scene, had an impact on my nervous system, when they showed me their teeth. I remember it as a 'pas-de-deux' of a director and a dancer, on life and death in Bali.

Balinese dance may also be viewed as a montage of successive movements. I visualise a flip book, where the rapid changing of pages produces a short film clip in the eye of the beholder - an illusion of continuous flow. Grotowski discussed this very idea, which he related to the search for organicity, in his talk on Art as Vehicle at the ISTA in Copenhagen in 1996. I imagine the endless hours that he was watching and listening to the 'Performer with a capital P' in Pontedera/Italy. He was witnessing a transformation through song-dance, seeing and hearing in a state of total awareness. From my own limited experience, I imagine that he would interfere rarely and talking about the work would happen later in a different place.

Of course, there are other approaches to theatre anthropology than Grotowski's and Barba's. I've referred mostly to them, as they were my first and most important influences. Reading Richard Schechner's contribution to *JTA 3-4, Ethology and Theatre* where he examines 'the convergences between human and animal behaviours', opened another exciting perspective for me. I also got reminded about my early amateur study of animal behaviour, which was far from scientific research.

However, this naive way of connecting with nature was the foundation for accepting myself as a 'human animal'.

My grandson is four years old and he's expecting a little brother in a few months. We were looking at a book for kids that shows the different stages of development from conception to being born. He was totally alienated by the image of the embryo having a clearly visible tail. That was certainly not his brother! A tail? I did not tell him that the image before showed an embryo with gill slits, like a fish. Evolution takes time, but it is also already all there, in our DNA. I hope I'll get the chance to defamiliarise my grandsons from the idea that what we see in the mirror is all we are.

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Priscilla Duarte as the grand-father in *Pedro e o lobo*, 1996. Photo: Rogério Reis (Diadokai Archive)

Ricardo Gomes, Priscilla Duarte

Theatre Anthropology in Brazil

Building an Identity through the Conquest of Difference

Abstract: *This article traces the history of theatre anthropology in Brazil from the first meetings with Eugenio Barba to the most recent productions of theatre groups. It discusses questions of identity in the craft and how to deal with colonisation in the search of an autonomous theatrical expression. Examples of choices made by Brazilian artists include Cia. YinsPiração, Cia. Mundu Rodá, Grupo Piollin, Grupo Teatral Moitará, Lume Teatro and Teatro Diadokai.*

Keywords: *Eurasian theatre, Group theatre, Identity, Colonisation, Professional roots*

Traditions preserve and pass on a form, not the sense that animates it. Everyone must define and reinvent the sense for themselves. This reinvention expresses a personal, cultural and professional identity.

Eugenio Barba¹

In 1976, when Odin Teatret first visited Venezuela at the invitation of the Caracas Festival, a close and long-lasting relationship was established between Latin America and Eugenio Barba and the group's actors and actresses. Their first contact with Brazil took place in 1978, when Roberta Carreri and Francis Pardeilhan were in Salvador (Bahia) to study capoeira and the dance of the orixás, as part of the work process for Odin Teatret's performance *The Million*.

However, it was in 1987 that Eugenio Barba's tours profoundly marked young Brazilian theatre artists of the time. He came accompanied by two groups, Farfa and The Canada Project² in the same period as the Italian groups Teatro tascabile di Bergamo and Teatro Potlach visited the cities of São Paulo, Campinas, and Rio de Janeiro. The

¹ Barba 1996, 211.

² The groups Farfa (directed by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Odin Teatret actress) and The Canada Project (directed by Richard Fowler) at that time were part of Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium-Odin Teatret.



performances, lectures, film screenings, and workshops conducted by these artists in Brazil facilitated a direct contact with theatre anthropology and Third Theatre from multiple perspectives for the first time.³ The impact of these encounters was such that, based on this experience, many groups were formed or laid new foundations for their work.



Luigia Calcaterra, Alberto Gorla, Tiziana Barbiero and Caterina Scotti in the street performance *Albatri*, Teatro tascabile di Bergamo, Rio de Janeiro, 1987. Photo: TTB Archive

These tours were an initiative of Luís Otávio Burnier,⁴ founder and first director of Lume Teatro (Campinas, SP), who convinced the Brazilian Ministry of Culture (through FUNARTE) and the Italian Cultural Institutes of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to sponsor the events. In 1985, Burnier, a young Brazilian actor and director who had studied in Paris with Etienne Decroux, participated in the 3rd session of ISTA in Blois and Malakoff, France. His meeting with masters of Asian theatre traditions (Sanjukta Panigrahi, Odissi, from India; and Katsuko Azuma, Nihon Buyo, from Japan) reminded him of aspects of the theatricality of Brazilian popular traditions, in which

³ In 1988 and 1989, Tascabile, Potlach, and also the Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale di Pontedera, another Italian group belonging to the culture and production system of group theatre, visited Brazil in several places, not only Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, but other cities, such as Parana (Rio Grande do Sul), Salvador (Bahia), Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), and Belém (Pará).

⁴ Luís Otávio Burnier was born in Campinas in 1956 and, in 1975, at eighteen, he left for Paris to study mime. He studied at the school of Etienne Decroux, then 75 years old, and graduated with a bachelor's and master's degree in theatre from the Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III University. Returning to Brazil in 1984, he became a professor of Performing Arts at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) and, in 1985, founded Lume Teatro with actor Carlos Simioni and musician Denise Garcia, joined by actor Ricardo Puccetti in 1988. On February 13, 1995, Burnier died at the age of thirty-eight from a generalised infection. (Cafiero, Carla. *Who was Luís Otávio Burnier?* Lume Teatro website. Available at: <https://www.lumeteatro.com.br/o-nucleo/quem-foi-luis-otavio-burnier>. Accessed on: 06/12/2025). Burnier was the translator of the first Brazilian edition of *The Secret Art of the Actor - a Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, published in 1995 by Hucitec. This edition is out of print. In 2012, a new edition was published by É Realizações, translated by Patrícia Furtado de Mendonça, who is the translator of several of Barba's books published in Brazil (*Burning the House*, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, *Theatre: Solitude, Craft, Revolt*, etc.).



Luís Otávio Burnier, 1978.
Photo: Lume Archive

music, theatre, and dance are not separated. Burnier invited Eugenio Barba to visit his country and learn about these traditions, which could constitute a field of study for theatre anthropology, equivalent to Asian and European traditions. Thus, after Odin Teatret's tour in 1987, Barba and Burnier visited Uberlândia (Minas Gerais), and participated in the Congado festival, passed through Brasília, and continued to Petrolina (Pernambuco), and from there to a pilgrimage to Canudos (Bahia). The trip ended in Salvador (Bahia), where they met the young director and academic Paulo Dourado, who invited Barba to give a lecture at the Theatre School. During their week-long stay in Salvador, they visited different Candomblé *terreiros* (religious houses), along with Paulo Dourado. This trip with Barba strengthened Luís Otávio Burnier's conviction in the richness of Brazilian traditions for research on the principles of the actor-dancer's presence, which are the field of study of theatre anthropology.⁵

The historical moment of these first encounters was marked by the 'political opening' of the military dictatorship that governed Brazil from 1964 to 1985. This "slow, gradual and safe" opening, as determined by the generals, without *Diretas Já* (direct elections for president, governors, mayors, and senators by direct popular vote), as demanded by the population, was preceded by the regime's most cruel period of the 1970s, with the violent repression of the 1968 student movement.⁶ As is customary in dictatorships, artists were censored, silenced, persecuted, expelled from the country, self-exiled, and even murdered; many theatre groups were destroyed. In this devastated land, Brazilian

⁵ The authors of this article are grateful to Eugenio Barba, Julia Varley, Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos, Venício Fonseca, Luciana Martuchelli, Juliana Pardo and Alício Amaral, for the direct information, which could not be found in written records, and which was fundamental in filling the gaps in our account.

⁶ In the late 1960s, the darkest period of the military dictatorship that governed Brazil from 1964 to 1985 began, known as the 'years of lead'. On December 13, 1968, General Costa and Silva decreed Institutional Act No. 5, the most draconian of the 17 acts instituted during the military dictatorship in Brazil, which granted full powers to the ruling general to close Congress, revoke mandates, suspend political rights, confiscate property, suspend *habeas corpus*, and prohibit judicial trials of presidential acts. During the governments of General Médici (1969-1974) and General Geisel (1974-1979), many people were kidnapped, tortured, and executed. At the end of the Médici government in Brazil, the military began a controlled transition of power to a civilian president. The objective was to appease popular pressure, reducing repression and restoring some civil liberties, with measures such as the end of Institutional Act No. 5 in 1978 and the 'broad, general and unrestricted' amnesty - that is, for those imprisoned and exiled by the regime, but also for military personnel who committed crimes - in 1979. General Figueiredo decreed, in 1979, the end of the two-party system. Despite the mobilisation of society in large rallies in the capitals for direct elections of the president, with the participation of millions of people and the public demonstrations of artists and politicians on the platforms, the election was held only with the votes of deputies and senators, in a National Congress controlled by the military, which elected, in 1985, Senator Tancredo Neves as president of Brazil.

theatre was rising from the ashes. While the groups that made history in the 1960s no longer existed or were weakened, the new groups that would make history in the following years were taking their first steps. Many of these new groups were deeply marked by the experiences of 1987 mentioned above.

For us,⁷ young theatre students in Rio de Janeiro,⁸ contact with the ideas and practices of Odin Teatret and of those Italian groups provided us, and many young people of our generation, with the first connection with Group Theatre. This particularity marked the history of Brazilian theatre, introducing new theatre practices and conceptions, such as actor training and actor dramaturgy, as well as a new point of view on our own culture's body techniques, from the perspective of theatre anthropology. The relationship between Brazil and Barba and Odin Teatret, as well as theatre anthropology and Third Theatre, has developed immensely since then. This happened both through Brazilian artists travelling to meet teachers in their countries of origin and through the numerous tours that Odin Teatret and other European Third Theatre groups realised in Brazil. Thinking back to that significant experience and how it spread, allows us today to reassess the echoes that still resonate in Brazilian theatre practice and, *mutatis mutandis*, in Latin America.

In the text *The House with Two Doors*,⁹ first published in 1989 in the journal *La Escena Latinoamericana*, Barba reflects upon his relationship with Latin America, and to illuminate its importance, he begins with the following sentence: "I have the impression that the whole of my theatre apprenticeship has been a preparation for Latin America."¹⁰ Indeed, as previously mentioned here in relation to Brazil, from the 1970s to the present, a solid and very well-articulated network of relationships, alliances, friendships, and mutual influences was woven by Barba in Latin America. An example of mutual influence is the central role of Latin American theatre groups in the genesis of Third Theatre:

[...] From the first encounters with Latin American colleagues in Caracas, I realised that the phenomenon I considered typically European – that myriad of groups scattered everywhere, stubborn, ignored by critics, who ended up inventing their own theatre driven by their personal and social needs – was also a diffuse phenomenon in Latin America. There was a surprising and subterranean theatrical density. The equivalent European theatrical reality of group theatre was also invisible to the eyes of two-dimensional theatre. It was then that I realised that there was a third dimension of theatre, a Third Theatre.¹¹

7 Since this article is written by two people who shared many, but not all, experiences, the memories will sometimes include the account of a shared experience and sometimes the experience of one of its authors. For shared experiences, we will use the first person plural; for cases of individual testimony, we will name Ricardo or Priscilla and use the third person singular.

8 Priscilla Duarte and Ricardo Gomes joined the course of Performance Arts of Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro in March 1984, concluding it at the end of 1987.

9 Barba 2009, 183-196.

10 Barba 2009, 183.

11 Barba 2009, 186.

Less obvious is the role of Latin American theatre in the formulation of the concept of theatre anthropology. In September 2021, during his opening speech at the *Encounters on Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology*,¹² Eugenio Barba stated that the creation of theatre anthropology in the 1970s was linked to his desire to find a common ground for discussion with Latin American theatre artists, beyond the political-ideological frameworks that dominated the theatre landscape at the time.

This centrality of dialogue with Latin America in the formulation of theatre anthropology, however, seems to relate to his motivations, not to his references, since, as is known, those are based on a 'Eurasian vision of theatre'.¹³ According to Barba, Eurasian Theatre "encompasses those theatres that have become research 'classics' for those who have focused on the actors' practice [...]. This 'encyclopaedia' was formed by drawing on the repertoire of European and Asian theatre traditions. Like it or not, right or wrong, this is what happened."¹⁴

For a Latin American artist, however, this *happened* sticks its finger into the open wound of our colonial past, which imposes the need to seek references in our own territories in order to create a theatre that is not a mere repetition of European theatre of other latitudes. Miguel Rubio Zapata, director of the Yuyachkani Cultural Group of Peru, in the article *Retejiendo la raíz rota por las rutas de la antropología teatral* (Reweaving the broken root through the routes of theatre anthropology),¹⁵ published in *JTA*, reflects on this question:

Since the middle of the past century, I have a living memory of a sustained practice born from the need to assert a new, insurgent theatre, which demands invention and rejects colonial heritage. [...] When I approach the theatricalities of distant cultures, in which I can nevertheless recognise similarities, I think that our Latin American theatre groups have not yet reached the splendour they deserve. There is a broken root, which perhaps we must weave again to reconcile ourselves with the origin, to overcome the negating

12 The event *Encounters on Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology - a Tribute to Eugenio Barba: 85 Years of Life, 60 Years of Theatre, 34 Years of Encounters in Brazil* was organised by the Postgraduate Programme in Performing Arts at the Federal University of Ouro Preto, with general coordination by Ricardo Gomes (Federal University of Ouro Preto and Teatro Diadokai); curated by Ricardo Gomes, Gilberto Icicle (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, National University of Brasília and Usina do Trabalho do Ator) and Fernando Mencarelli (Federal University of Minas Gerais); coordination assistance by Priscilla Duarte (Teatro Diadokai). Held virtually from September 27, 2021, to November 26, 2021, it brought together 97 participants, including artists and researchers, from 29 Brazilian theatre groups, 4 foreign theatre groups, 1 local network and 3 international networks of artists, 12 Brazilian universities, 8 foreign universities, 17 cities from 4 regions of Brazil, and 13 cities from Italy, Denmark, Peru, Argentina, Belgium, UK, and Scotland. The activities (available at: <http://www.youtube.com/@TerceiroTeatroBrasil>. Accessed on May 14, 2024) took place in three five-day stages, in the last weeks of September, October, and November 2021, with two to three activities per day, divided into the categories: conferences, roundtables, work demonstrations, and commented films. Each stage developed from a different theme: Third Theatre (September 27th to October 1st), Theatre Anthropology and Identity (October 25th to 29th), and Cultural Action and Artist Networks (November 22nd to 26th).

13 Barba 1993, 73.

14 Barba 1993, 74.

15 Zapata 2022, 247.

leap imposed on us that prevents us seeing where we come from. We should recognise ourselves in an integral way and create with freedom, without prejudice, fully assuming our teachers' mandate to invent our own theatre. From this perspective, it is necessary to revise the colonial legacy that has shaped what we understand as theatre.

Barba's first major encounter with Peruvian groups (and many other Latin American groups) took place in 1978 in Ayacucho, in the Peruvian Andes.¹⁶ In 1988, Cuatrotablas organised the second meeting Reencuentro Ayacucho 88 in Lima and the Chosica district, in the province of Lima, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the meeting in 1978. It was not possible to hold it in Ayacucho due to conflicts in the area between the government and the Shining Path guerrilla. Dozens of groups from Latin America were present at this meeting, as well as European groups, mainly Italian. There were young groups like ours, Teatro Kairós, with Helena Varvaki's solo performance directed by Manoel Prazeres, *Via Crucis do Corpo*, based on a short story by Clarice Lispector (for which Ricardo Gomes was the lighting designer and technician). There were more experienced groups, like Odin Teatret, Teatro Tascabile, Teatro Potlach, Yuyachkani, Cuatrotablas, etc. We all stayed at the Huampaní Vacation Centre where we performed for each other until the early hours of the morning. Every morning, divided into ensembles with people from various groups, we also rehearsed scenes for a performance dedicated to Jerzy Grotowski that we presented for ourselves in the ruins of the Cajamarquilla Archaeological Complex. In the afternoon, there was



Meeting to organise the final performance dedicated to Jerzy Grotowski with Eugenio Barba, Miguel Rubio Zapata, Beatriz Camargo, Edgar Ceballos, Luís Otávio Burnier, César Brie, Ricardo Gomes, Renzo Vescovi, Mario Delgado, Julia Varley and others, Reencuentro Ayacucho 88, Complejo Arqueológico de Cajamarquilla, Peru, 1988. Photo: Paolo Fattore (Teatro tascabile di Bergamo Archive)

16 The 1978 film *On the Two Banks of the River*, directed by Torgeir Wethal and produced by Odin Teatret Film, tells the story of this encounter. In 1987, this film was screened in Rio de Janeiro, along with other Odin Teatret Film productions directed by Ripa di Meana and Wethal: *In Search of Theatre* (1974, about Odin's experience in the Salento region of Italy), *Physical Training at Odin Teatret* (1972), and *Vocal Training at Odin Teatret* (1972).

El Puente: meetings with Barba, the scholars Nando Tavian (Italy), Patricia Cardona (Mexico) and Ian Watson (USA), with lectures, discussions, and work demonstrations. In one of these meetings, Barba led a work demonstration on corporeal mime with Burnier.

Nitis Jacon (1935-2023), theatre director, creator and coordinator of the Londrina Festival, participated in Reencuentro Ayacucho 88 and in the 6th ISTA session in Bologna, Italy, in 1990. She developed an interest in theatre anthropology that motivated her to organise, in 1991, a week-long participation of Odin Teatret in the Londrina Festival and to realise, in 1994, the 8th ISTA session, in Londrina, Brazil (to this day the only of the seventeen ISTA sessions held outside of Europe). Perhaps it was the desire to contribute to re-weaving the 'broken root' that Zapata refers to, which led Nitis Jacon to emphatically suggest the active participation of a Brazilian artist in the meeting. After accepting the challenge, Barba undertook a series of trips and interviews to find the right person. This is how, thanks to Paulo Dourado's mediation, the collaboration with Augusto Omolú (1963-2013), the Bahian dancer and choreographer, exponent of the Dance of the Orixás¹⁷ and Ogã¹⁸ of the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion, began. Omolú participated in the artistic staff of the ISTA sessions in Umeå, Sweden, in 1995; in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1996; in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal, in 1998; in Bielefeld, Germany, in 2000; in Seville, Spain, in 2004; and in Wrocław-Krzyżowa, Poland, in 2005, as a representative of the Candomblé tradition, along with musicians Ory Sacramento (1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000), Jorge "Funk" Paim (1994, 1995, 1996, 2000), Bira Monteiro (1994, 1996), Antonio Carlos dos Santos Araújo (1995) and Cleber Conceição da Paixão (2000, 2004, 2005).¹⁹

17 The Dance of the Orixás, better known as 'Afro Dance', is a multifaceted branch of Brazilian dance based on the corporality and musicality of Afro-Brazilian religions that developed during the African diaspora caused by the enslavement of men and women from diverse regions and cultural and religious traditions of that continent. Its main reference comes from the dances of the Orixás, the deities of the Yoruba religious tradition, who represent the forces of nature and are associated with human archetypes. In Candomblé, the most widespread Yoruba religion in Brazil, each Orixá possesses a particular *axé* (power or energy) that manifests in the bodies of the faithful in a state of trance through a specific rhythm and dance. Afro Dance uses these ritual references to create Afro-referenced artistic works in dialogue with Western dance, mainly classical ballet and modern dance. (Itaú Cultural Encyclopaedia of Brazilian Art and Culture. Itaú Cultural, 2025. Available at <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/termos/80242-danca-afro>. Accessed 30 November 2025).

18 Ogã (from Yoruba-Ga: 'respected person', 'chief', 'influential') is the general term for various male roles in Candomblé rituals. They are the direct assistants of the Babalorixá/Iyalorixá responsible for the *terreiro* (the sacred space where the rituals take place), the fathers/mothers of the saints. These men, along with their female counterparts, called Equeles, do not enter into trance, fulfilling essential functions in the *terreiro* (sacred space where the rituals take place), maintaining supervision and leadership during the mediums' trance. Their best-known and most visible manifestation is that of the *atabaques* (drums). Only the Ogã Alagbê (Ketu), Kambondo (Angola and Congo), and Runtó (Jeje) can play the drums. The Alagbê leads the three *atabaques* called Rum (the largest drum), Rumpi (the middle drum), and Lê (the smallest drum on the side). He plays the Rum and directs the other Ogãs on the smaller *atabaques*. It is the Alagbê who starts playing, initiating the choreography of the Orixá, whether it is related to hunting, war, or any other aspect, always following the rhythm of the drums (Åjägünnà 2023).

19 Information from ISTA-NG website. Available at: <https://ista-online.org/category/past-sessions/>. Accessed 8 December 2025.

Omolú's participation as 'the first Latin American member of ISTA's pedagogical staff'²⁰ was celebrated by Zapata in an article originally published in the Mexican magazine *Máscara* in 1995, in which he assumes that

the kind of work Omolú and others have also begun to investigate, that is, performance forms shaped by our Latin American traditions, could be strengthened if we had a greater opportunity of comparing our traditions with those of the pedagogical staff at ISTA. One such comparison could be with the latest research we have begun at Yuyachkani. In the past, we have explored highly codified Eastern movement forms like t'ai chi as starting points for our work. In more recent times, we have invited our own masters of popular culture to incorporate traditional dances into our training. In doing this, we have been looking for the principles embedded in the dances that are equivalent to those that Eugenio has identified in his theatre anthropology research. This type of comparison enables an intercultural dialogue to generate from the technical norms of one's own culture.²¹



Sanjukta Panigrahi and Augusto Omolú.
ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995.
Photo: Bernd Uhlig

This desire or need of artists and cultural operators like Burnier, Zapata and Jacon to compare the principles of theatre anthropology with the theatricality of Latin American traditions seems to align with the criticisms and controversies that Barba's proposals and the practices of ISTA aroused in academia. As pointed out by Barba himself²² and Franc Chamberlain,²³ the discussions regarded the supposed exclusion of artistic forms from diverse cultures, such as African and Latin American, its focus of research and the predominance of Asian and European artists in ISTA sessions.²⁴ It is necessary, however, to distinguish the questions of Latin American artists from the perplexities of academics. We do not intend to delve into the merits of these criticisms here, as that is not the scope of this article; we limit ourselves to point out how some artists, moved by personal questions, found fecund ways of using theatre anthropology to create relevant research and artistic work.

The postulate of a Eurasian Theatre introduced us to 'theatricalities of distant cultures' and helped us interpret them, turning theatre anthropology into a powerful instrument for understanding and incorporating the technical information underlying the spectacular forms of our indigenous and African rooted culture into our artistic

practices. Barba, however, states that theatre anthropology should not be confused with cultural anthropology,²⁵ as it is not interested in investigating the various spectacular manifestations in their original cultural contexts.²⁶ One of its main assumptions is that "the profession is also a country to which we belong, an elective homeland, without geographical borders."²⁷

It is necessary to rigorously observe this demarcation of territory, which determines the assumptions of Eurasian Theatre and the objectives of theatre anthropology. If we observe the data relating to the working ensembles of the various ISTA sessions from this perspective, we will realise that, although these people are representatives of specific and precisely geographically located theatre cultures – a fundamental element for the comparative research undertaken at ISTA – what determined the choice of the artists was not their cultural background, but their particular predisposition and affinity for the artistic research proposed. It is important to emphasise that they are a group of researchers. The people in question are active co-authors of the theatre anthropology investigations; they are not the object of research. If we think of ISTA's artistic staff only as a group of representatives of different theatre cultures, Barba's choices don't seem to make sense. To work in a team, it makes sense to continue collaborating with certain people (Sanjukta Panigrahi, eleven sessions; Raghunath Panigrahi, twelve sessions; Katsuko Azuma, seven sessions; I Made Pasek Tempo, three sessions, and I Made Djimat, three sessions; Augusto Omolú, six sessions) and certain countries (India and Japan in all sessions, Bali in fourteen sessions).²⁸

Omolú's account of his first meeting with Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley is revealing about this particular predisposition:

When he [Eugenio Barba] asked me to dance an orixá sitting on a chair... well, I dance orixá even lying in bed, that's not a problem [laughter]. It was a test. I didn't know that it was a test, but I did it. When I started reacting to Julia [Varley] it was also very interesting. It caught my attention because I already had experience in dance. I have had a background in classical ballet, for thirty years. I have also had experience in modern dance, having worked with several choreographers. I was the principal dancer at the Teatro Castro Alves Company (TCA) [Classical Ballet]. I was very committed to the Company. So, seeing Julia making those gestures, movements, actions, caught my attention; it was dance in a different form. And I started using the movements of the orixás, responding to what she proposed with a different energy. And we began to exchange.²⁹

Here we can see the willingness to modify the traditional matrix (dancing the orixás on a chair or lying in bed) and the transition between different languages (classical

20 Zapata 2009, 228.

21 Zapata 2009, 228.

22 Barba 1993, 72-74.

23 Chamberlain 2009, xvi.

24 Regarding the academics, there is an almost exclusive presence of European academics on the scientific staff of all ISTA sessions recorded on the website (<https://ista-online.org/category/past-sessions/>). The only exceptions are María Sten, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in the second session; and Moriaki Watanabe, from Tokai Tokyo University, Japan, in the first two sessions.

25 Barba 1993, 24.

26 Barba 1993, 72-74.

27 Barba 1993, 75.

28 Information from the website ISTA-NG, available on <https://ista-online.org/category/past-sessions/>. Accessed December 8, 2025.

29 Omolú 2015, 239.

ballet, modern dance, orixá dances), which allowed Omolú, among other things, to pass over a bridge between religion and art, because, as Grotowski³⁰ teaches us, ritual and performance use the same instruments for very different purposes:

Eugenio always asked for more and more, and I used to refuse. I would only go up until a certain limit. I held back a little, also because Candomblé was sacred to me, something religious. So, then, I still had the problem of not opening up too much, of not allowing myself to go further. He asked me for things that I couldn't give him, belonging to the 'foundation' of Candomblé. [...] But after you develop a language, passing over to another vision, as art, you begin to perceive other values, you begin to understand that you are not harming religiosity [...] Movement is also a universal language. It belongs to a religion, but it is also an art as movement. And this is also seen in India, in Bali. So why shouldn't the orixá also seek within its movements a quality, or even a style of its own, for what I was thinking at that time? Because [...] I had always worked with classical ballet, modern dance, but I felt a great need to have a technique that was specifically ours, Brazilian. [...] So, this contact with Barba offered a range of possibilities. For every movement of the orixá that I did, he asked me to stop dancing the orixá, and then, for that movement, he gave a thousand explanations. [...] I became more interested in this process, because I knew how to dance the orixás, but [...] I didn't have the knowledge and all this information. [...] Of course, Eugenio was also respectful; he never asked to work with the Candomblé religion. He wanted to learn about it, yes, to have information about it, to then work with the basis and principles of theatre anthropology. This was very powerful as a form of contribution. [...] Developing this partnership with Eugenio, was like he awakened a new life, a new condition for a survival in my art. Besides delving deeper into the research, into what I wanted as an identity. [...] It was stimulating, because I already had an idea of the research and when I met him I realised that this was exactly what I wanted.³¹

The apparent contradiction between cultural, ethnic, national identity, and professional, artistic identity is, in reality, what has made theatre anthropology so useful for Latin American artists in creating strategies that have allowed them to orient themselves between the legacies of European colonial culture and the ethnic roots of indigenous and African cultures silenced and subjugated by the hegemonic culture.

Barba states that:

It is possible to think of theatre in terms of ethnic, national, group, or even individual traditions. But if we are trying to understand our own identity in this way, it is also essential to have a contrary and complementary attitude: to think of theatre itself in a transcultural dimension, in the flow of a 'tradition of traditions'.³²

30 Grotowski 2007, 226-243.

31 Omolú *apud* Souza 2015, 240-41.

32 Barba 2010, 281 (author's emphasis).

In this way, theatre anthropology helped us realise that the roots of our Brazilian or South American theatricality could dialogue objectively with the notions of theatre that we learned in theatre schools and saw on stage, beyond abstract and idealised concepts such as 'character of the people' or 'national identity'. Through the lens of theatre anthropology, the desire to create art that responds to our personalities has taken on precise forms and rhythms, not limited to themes, stories, or characters.

However, there are other layers of meaning to be explored. Theatre anthropology serves not only to identify recurring transcultural principles in various acting techniques but also seeks to study how each artist forges his or her own professional identity within the common context of the theatre craft: the profession as a country. This study also results in a successive unfolding, which in reality seems to be its main objective: for artists it becomes an instrument for creating their own artistic identity, for the search for the meaning of theatre practice.

The search of a meaning for theatre is an Ariadne's thread that has guided research in the performing arts since the end of the 19th century. Theatre seemed to have lost its function in post-Industrial Revolution society and it was the search of its meaning that motivated the great reformers of European theatre in the early 20th century. The reformers were very different from each other but united in the same impulse to invent or reinvent, discover or rediscover, a new theatre, a new way of performing, a new human being. Similarly, also the artists of classical Asian theatres had to reinvent the meaning of their crafts in a new world built over the ruins of their cultures destroyed by European colonisers. In the beginning of the 20th century many dance forms were at risk of extinction. During the first half of the 20th century, in the wake of India's independence from British colonisation, a movement known as the Revival of Indian Classical Dance restored various styles of traditional Indian theatre-dance on new bases, redrawing the boundaries between the sacred and the profane.

For example, there is an evident connection between the creation of schools such as the Kalakshetra of Rukmini Devi Arundale and the Kalamandalam of Vallathol Narayana Menon and Pattikkamthodi Ravunni Menon and the French schools that sought to create new acting methods. The Indian schools sought to re-found their ancient traditional arts but they did so also under the influence of Western ideologies and methodologies. The French schools, such as Jacques Copeau's Vieux Colombier or Charles Dullin's Théâtre de l'Atelier, draw inspiration, among other sources, from elements of Asian acting techniques.

This same line that unites the Great Reform³³ of European theatre and the Revival of Indian dance, leads us to the group theatre movement of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe, the U.S. and Latin America. Groups like Odin Teatret from Denmark, the Living Theater from the United States, Teatro Oficina and Teatro de Arena from Brazil, La Candelaria

33 According to Mirella Schino (2012, VIII-IX, 169), the Great Reform, or *Wielka Reforma* as Polish scholars and theatre practitioners call it, is the term that seeks to 'express the radical changes that took place in theatre in the first three decades of the 20th century'. Some protagonists of the period are Stanislawski, Meyerhold, Craig, Appia, Copeau, Fuchs, and Reinhardt, also known as 'pedagogical directors', more interested in research, studios, schools, and workshops than in attracting audiences, and who 'established practices and poetics that cannot be confined to one or more performances'.

and Teatro Experimental de Cali from Colombia, Cuatrotablas and Yuyachkani from Peru, and so many others, despite having profoundly different histories and cultural backgrounds, identified with each other and established strong bonds of friendship and professional exchange.

These assumptions allow us to understand how – thinking of Ruffini's talk in 2021 for the *Encounters on the Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology*³⁴ – Third Theatre is the logical premise of theatre anthropology because, as Barba states, “with the exception of a small but essential part – our unique and unrepeatable identity, the obscure forces that move us – finding *our own meaning* for theatre means finding a personal invention of the craft”.³⁵

Eurasian Theatre in Brazil?

The deepening of one's own professional identity implies overcoming ethnocentrism until one discovers one's own centre within the ‘tradition of traditions’. Here the term ‘roots’ becomes paradoxical: it does not indicate a bond that ties us to a single place, but rather an ethos that allows us to change places.³⁶

Tradition can be understood as a concept restricted to a group or an artist, that is constructed in an isolation characteristic of theatre as a local art taking place within a certain community. Artists travel to survive, but also in search of dialogue, confrontation and meetings. Barba's metaphor of ‘floating islands’³⁷ speaks of this dual reality of artists: isolation and dialogue with other traditions, in the river³⁸ of the ‘tradition of traditions’.

As Barba states,³⁹ theatre anthropology constituted a radical transformation in the way of thinking about theatre and stage acting based on the actors' physical and mental presence and their kinaesthetic relationship with the spectator – and not on the written theatre text. For Barba, therefore, it is in the body-mind of the actor that this radical transformation takes place. The proposal of theatre anthropology is based on the idea that there would be an underlying ‘skeleton’ to scenic behaviour that would be common to all actors and prior (logically, not temporally) to any possibility of expressing something, therefore called ‘pre-expressivity’ or ‘pre-expressive level’.

Analysing theatre from a transcultural perspective, Barba states that the actor's work is the result of the fusion of three levels of organisation:

1. The actor's personality, their sensitivity, their artistic intelligence, their social individuality, which makes each actor unique and unrepeatable.
2. The particularity of the theatre tradition and the historical-cultural context through which the actor's unrepeatable personality manifests itself.
3. The use of the body-mind according to extra-daily techniques based on transcultural returning principles. These returning principles constitute what theatre anthropology defines as the field of pre-expressivity.⁴⁰

These three dimensions amalgamate and permeate each person and can only be distinguished in the context of analysis. They define the actor's identity, in particular and in general: the individual identity, the socio-cultural identity, and the identity of the craft. When Barba refers to these three levels that are amalgamated in stage work, he is making reference to Marcel Mauss's ‘body techniques’,⁴¹ which are influenced by three levels of interaction: the psychological (corresponding to the unrepeatable personality), the cultural (corresponding to the performance style), and the physiological (corresponding to the body-mind, the pre-expressive level).

How can we think about these three levels in relation to a Brazilian artist? Regarding the first level of unrepeatable personality, it does not seem useful to think of it in collective categories' terms. The ‘obscure forces’ that move each person are difficult to define, despite ultimately being the ones that lead the artist to seek a particular form of expression. Certainly, these ‘dark forces’ originate from the confrontation with the second level of cultural context, which determines the marks of identity: a person is born into a certain family, with a certain biological gender and skin colour, within a certain social class, city, region and country, etc. All this marks and ‘makes’ a person. Each person, based on the particularities of their identity, will shape their own history and process of subjectivation to create their own unique and unrepeatable personality. The same thing happens for actors and actresses, who also enter the theatre tradition in a certain place and within a certain context that will mark them. The context can be that of an extremely conventional art, like Asian theatre, or it can be a more fluid context like contemporary theatre, but each artist will respond differently to the tradition. So, we see how the two levels become confused and mixed. But it is the work on the third level, that of pre-expressivity, that provides the actor with the tools to create their professional identity, starting from the other two.

Each of us Latin American artists can perceive the diverse elements of European and Asian theatre traditions and the roots of our original cultures. We are able to confront them with our own personal history and individual personality, with the ‘dark forces’ that move us, and forge our own path towards our artistic identity. In this context, for our generation, Eurasian Theatre perspective also represented a broadening of our horizons. It was through theatre anthropology that we were able to familiarise with the various forms of Asian theatre, of which we had little or no information in the 1980s. We realised that drinking from the source of the Asian

³⁴ Ruffini 2025.

³⁵ Barba 1993, 77 (author's emphasis).

³⁶ Barba 2010, 283.

³⁷ The metaphor refers to ‘a not very important episode in the history of the New World told by men and women who abandoned the safety of the mainland to lead a precarious life on floating islands’ to think of the theatre as an archipelago of floating islands. “The floating island is the uncertain terrain that can get lost beneath one's feet, but which can allow for encounters, the overcoming of personal limits”. (Barba 2010, 14)

³⁸ Here, we consider the river, according to Heraclitus' teaching, as a metaphor that points to the constantly changing nature of traditions.

³⁹ Barba 2024, 124-25.

⁴⁰ Barba 1993, 24-25 (author's emphasis).

⁴¹ Mauss 2003, 404-05.

traditions did not necessarily mean uprooting ourselves but, on the contrary, could help us weave our own roots.

Are the roots of our theatricality shaped on European colonisers' tradition? Is it possible to accept this heritage as legitimate, forgetting the history of violence it contains? On the other hand, is it possible for us to feel as legitimate heirs to the indigenous traditions which, despite being silenced, violated, almost annihilated, are perhaps the deepest layer of our identity? What to do with the African heritage, which many of us carry marked on the skin, and which reached us through enslaved people stripped of their dignity? The answer to these questions is not to be found in theatre history books nor in formulas such as Brazilian Theatre, European Theatre, Popular Culture when considered in abstract concept terms. "Living memory is suffocated under those formulas and collective subjects."⁴²

When we think of theatre history as 'living memory', we realise that there is not an only answer to these questions, but perhaps a unique answer valid for each person. Based on these assumptions, we, Brazilian artists, can truly understand Eurasian Theatre as "a mental dimension, an active *idea* in modern theatre culture"⁴³ and use theatre anthropology as an instrument to shape our artistic identity.

As in all Latin America, also in Brazil, the history of European-based theatre is recent, and its roots are shallow. By studying our roots from the perspective of theatre anthropology, we notice a collection of traditions that could determine a Brazilian theatricality: in what Mário de Andrade (2002) defines as 'Brazilian performative dances',⁴⁴ in our indigenous traditions, in the African traditions that have become Afro-Brazilian. It is possible to look for inheritances of European popular culture in these traditions, and even traces of the culture of the Portuguese colonies in India and China. But this historical-factual perspective may not be the most fruitful for understanding the relationship of Brazilian theatre culture with Eurasian Theatre.

Despite the feeling of estrangement that the vision of 'exotic' forms of Asian performing arts may cause at first, we will find in them many common points with Brazilian and Latin American theatricality traditions. Characteristic of these manifestations and of the Brazilian Afro-Amerindian performative dances is the inseparable union of music, dance and acting, the use of music as an inducer of psychophysical states in performers and spectators, and the use of dance forms to recognise a character.

Eugenio Barba depicted the map of Eurasian Theatre and on it, using the instruments of theatre anthropology, he marked the cardinal points of Third Theatre, marking the directions of the winds and ocean currents of pre-expressivity. All theatre artists, with their own compass (their unique and unrepeatable identity, the 'obscure forces' that move them), in possession of this map that he offered us, can navigate on their small and precarious floating island.

42 Barba 1993, 63.

43 Barba 1993, 74 (author's emphasis).

44 Andrade 2002.

The routes of theatre anthropology in Brazil

According to Mauss, technique is "an effective traditional act (and note that as such it does not differ from the magical, religious, symbolic act). It needs to be *traditional* and *effective*. There is no technique and no transmission if there is no tradition." The art of the actor is a superior physical technique, because the body, "the first and most natural human instrument"⁴⁵ is a human technical means par excellence. Regarding the transmission of acting techniques, Meldolesi states that

[...] the actor's culture is first and foremost a culture of accumulation. The new actors are formed by imitating the old, and then offer themselves to their successors' imitation. For each passage, together with the variations of personal art, heritages accumulate in the bodies of the performers. It is the cultural element of the actor's condition as a species, in perennial contrast with the logic of the actor's ephemerality.⁴⁶

Based on these assumptions, it is easy to understand how the process of forming one's own tradition in the performing arts is a personal adventure, linked to the encounters with masters and partners that life has offered to us and to what we have done thanks to those encounters.

[...] However, we must decide upon the sense and direction to take. It is not the traditions that choose us, but we choose them. A Frenchman may convert to Islam and an Indian may become a fabulous orchestra conductor of European classical music. The fact that one is born in a particular land to specific parents does not mean that one's identity is reduced to that land and to those parents.⁴⁷

From the late 1980s onwards, some young Brazilian artists, like ourselves, spurred by the encounters described at the beginning of this article to explore the paths of theatre anthropology, went in search of European teachers. Some stayed there for short periods, others for many years, and still others settled abroad. Other Brazilian groups and artists explored their paths within our own territory. To understand how Brazilian artists have used theatre anthropology as an instrument to construct their professional identities is a topic that deserves a historical approach, tracing the development of this field of study in this country from the first contacts of Brazilian artists and researchers with the ideas of Eugenio Barba in the late 1980s to the present moment. We – the authors of this article – are not historians. We are Brazilians, performing artists and researchers of acting techniques, who are part of this history. We can give our testimony and reflect on it. We can talk about our history and that of our fellow adventurers: other Brazilian artists like us, old and new friends. It is a partial and personal point of view.

In this article, we recall the trajectories of some Brazilian groups, highlighting the relationships they established between theatre anthropology and Brazilian culture. The

45 Mauss 2003, 407 (author's emphasis).

46 Meldolesi 1989, 209.

47 Barba 2009, 191.

way in which each of the artists mentioned here elaborated the relationship between their personality and the encounters that determined the construction of their artistic and professional identities can reveal the weaving of web of relationships. This happened at a time when information circulated much more slowly than today and when it was clear that each encounter was a unique and unrepeatable opportunity to acquire knowledge and open doors.

Priscilla Duarte, Ricardo Gomes and Diadokai

Our encounter with Eugenio Barba's ideas began before we even knew of his existence, when Priscilla Duarte participated in an intensive acting workshop with Luís Otávio Burnier at the Casa de Artes de Laranjeiras (CAL) in Rio de Janeiro, in January 1984, shortly before entering the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), where she met Ricardo Gomes, her colleague in the Performing Arts Course. In that workshop, Priscilla learned and practised acting training for the first time and was deeply affected. In January 1985, at UNIRIO, we participated in a workshop led by Helena Varvaki,⁴⁸ who had worked as Burnier's assistant in the CAL workshop the previous year. In 1985, along with about ten young artists, under Helena's guidance, we started a working group where we met – for three years, three times a week – to practise and research actor training.⁴⁹ It wasn't our professors at UNIRIO, but Helena Varvaki, who first spoke to us about Eugenio Barba and introduced us to Barba's *Letter to Actor D* and Iben Nagel Rasmussen's *The Mute of the Past*, translated by Burnier in mimeographed copies.

We personally met Eugenio Barba and the Farfa group (César Brie and Iben Nagel Rasmussen) in 1986, at the 2nd International Theatre Festival of Montevideo, organised by the Uruguayan Association of Theatre Critics, where we attended performances, lectures, and work demonstrations. In 1987, when we had the opportunity to take part in workshops given by Odin Teatret, Tascabile and Potlach's artists in Rio de Janeiro, Priscilla and Aglaia Azevedo participated in an Odissi workshop given by Tascabile. During the whole of 1988, Priscilla and Aglaia continued to practise the few basic

48 Helena Varvaki was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1963. She studied Performing Arts at the P. Katsélis School of Dramatic Art in Athens, Greece. After graduating in 1983, she settled in Rio de Janeiro, where in the 1980s and 1990s she trained a generation of actors, working at the Casa de Artes de Laranjeiras and in two study groups on actor training. Together with Manoel Prazeres, she created the Teatro Kairós group (of which Ricardo Gomes, Priscilla Duarte, Aglaia Azevedo, and Arquimedes Bibiano were members for a short period), which performed in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s and 1990s. Today she works as an actress, teacher, and acting coach. Recently, she participated in the film *Ainda estou aqui* (I am still here) by Walter Salles Junior, as a coach for actress Fernanda Torres, and is currently touring with the play *Um lugar onde a vida acontece* (A place where life happens), directed by Miwa Yanagizawa, which premiered in 2024 in Rio de Janeiro and had a run in São Paulo.

49 Some of the people who worked with Helena on actor training and developed research related to theatre anthropology were Aglaia Azevedo and Almir Ribeiro (who worked in the 1990s with Teatro Mínimo, researching Indian theatre and staging kathakali performances with their master Kattakkal Nandakumaran); Julio Adrião (who worked as an actor in Italy in the 1980s and in 2002 created the performance *A descoberta das Américas*, a text by Dario Fo directed by Alessandra Vannucci and staged with a Brazilian accent, which premiered in 2005, had great critical and public success in Brazil and abroad, and will have its farewell season in 2025).

exercises and steps that they had learnt from Tiziana Barbiero and Luigia Calcaterra, actresses of the Teatro Tascabile. Priscilla wrote asking for more information about the dance and received a copy of the book *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance* by Mohan Khokar from Tiziana. Their correspondence helped to strengthen the relations with the Italian group.

In 1988, Ricardo participated in the Reencuentro Ayacucho 88 (Peru), and during this meeting he expressed to the director of Teatro Tascabile, Renzo Vescovi, the desire to go to Bergamo to learn more about the craft of acting with his group. Then, in 1989, we left Rio de Janeiro for Italy for an informal internship at the Teatro tascabile di Bergamo. It was the beginning of a relationship in which the teachers, over time, became friends and partners in the profession, during the years we worked with the Tascabile (1989-1994; 2003-2007). This relationship has continued with our group, Teatro Diadokai, founded in 1996 in Rio de Janeiro and now based in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, where Ricardo has been a senior lecturer at the Department of Performing Arts at the Federal University of Ouro Preto since 2008.

Since its founding, Diadokai has been producing diverse performances that reflect different phases of research. In *Pedro e o lobo* (Pedro and the wolf, 1996-2008), the performance that gave rise to the group – a solo for children performed by Priscilla and directed by Ricardo, based on Prokofiev's work of the same name – we were interested in researching the techniques of Indian dance-theatre learned at Tascabile and in India. In *Amantes do sereno* (Lovers of the serene, 2002) – a performance about the old carnivals of Rio de Janeiro, presented in the streets of the city centre, with Priscilla and a cast on stilts, live musicians and directed by Ricardo – we revisited the street theatre experience we had practised at Tascabile. In *A casa de lá* (2010) – a collaborative



Priscilla Duarte in *O amor possível*. 2023. Photo: Maria Duarte (Diadokai Archive)

project with actor Cristiano Peixoto and musician Amanda Prates, in which Priscilla also acted, directed by Ricardo – we created a dramaturgy inspired by the works of Guimarães Rosa and in direct contact with the reality of the *sertão*, through a field trip to the Jequitinhonha Valley (Minas Gerais). In *O amor possível* (2023 to the present) – solo performance with Priscilla, co-directed with Ricardo,

based on the novel *A caverna* by the Portuguese writer José Saramago – our main interest is the work on the word and musicality of the Portuguese language, in the transposition of literature to the stage. With our artistic and, since 2003, academic research, we have invented a tradition that today looks at Brazil from a somewhat foreign perspective, as the apprenticeship happened in Italy and India.

Luís Otávio Burnier and Lume

From 1981, Burnier began developing research that he later called *corporeal mimesis*. At that time, he travelled through streets, communities, and children's hospitals in Rio de Janeiro and Quito, in Ecuador, conducting field research for the creation of the solo performance *Macário* (1985), based on the short story by Mexican writer Juan Rulfo. In 1992, he directed actresses Valéria de Setta and Luciene Pascolat in the performance *Wolzen – um giro desordenado em torno de si mesmo* (A disordered spin around oneself), a free adaptation of Nelson Rodrigues' *Valsa n. 6*. In this performance, the actresses performed mimetic work based on physical and vocal actions observed in psychiatric hospitals and in photographs of debutante parties.

In 1993, Burnier directed the graduation performance of a class from the theatre course, entitled *Taucoauaa Panhé Mondo Pé* (Just like we picked it from the tree). Some excerpts from Burnier's diary portray his desire to reconnect with his Brazilian roots and, at the same time, the rigour of his work in acting technique.⁵⁰

January 18, 1993: we started earlier and with an increased workload than academically planned: eight hours a day, without free days. The first major phase of the work lasted until the end of July. During this period, we concentrated on various types of training, seeking to equip the students technically. Energy training, technical training, vocal training, Étienne Decroux's corporeal mime, Peking opera mime, everyday life mime, fixing patterns, and so many other elements aimed at the development and improvement of the physical and mechanical dimension and its necessary connection with the inner dimension. An exhausting period of immersion in the recesses of one's own body and being. [...]

End of July 1993: the students were tired. They needed a 'vacation', some free time and distance. Nothing like 'combining hunger with the desire to eat': not a vacation, but a distancing, yes. Field research. Travelling through Brazil, the Amazon, the *sertão*, seeking stories, legends, anecdotes, and corporality, how our people act, use their bodies, speak, think. [...]

September 1993: everyone returns from their trip. Their features are different. Brazil wasn't quite what they had imagined. The experience left its mark on the actors and the individuals. More than forty hours recorded on cassette tapes, more than three hundred photographs. All paid for by them. Many new friends and acquaintances, simple people, good people. A strange odour of Brazil, mixing everything from the smell of rotten oranges from the Amazon region to the strong smell of urine from wattle-and-daub houses, precarious latrines, and asylums. Now back to work: decoding, memorising, recording the people, their gestures, their actions, their voices and, what is most difficult, their presences. Passionate but arduous work.

November 1993: of the fifty-five scenes staged, seventeen made it into the final performance, still subject to change. This marked the beginning of a more refined

⁵⁰ Burnier systematised his research in his doctoral thesis, which resulted in a book, published posthumously in 2001, entitled *A Arte de Ator: da técnica à representação* (Burnier 2009).

acting process, as if viewed under a microscope. The cleaning and polishing of each action and micro-action, creating punctuations, oppositions, contradictions, anti-actions, counter-impulses. A work that must be invisible to the spectator, but which will undoubtedly be perceptible.⁵¹

Luís Otávio Burnier died suddenly in 1995 due to a generalised infection. In that same year, in mourning, but also fighting for survival, Lume created the performance *Contadores de Estórias* (Storytellers) using repertoire material from the performances *Taucoauaa Panhé Mondo Pé* and *Wolzen* in its staging.

Corporeal *mimesis* has been developed in various ways by Lume over its forty years of work. Its genesis, in Burnier's work, points to a peculiar way of using principles of theatre anthropology involving fragments of artistic or everyday performances and the recording of these performances, as material for the creation of theatrical scores,⁵² related to Richard Schechner's concept of 'restoration of behaviour'.⁵³ From 1997 to 1999, Ana Cristina Colla, Jessor de Souza, Raquel Scotti Hirson, and Renato Ferracini, who had participated in the Unicamp graduation performance in 1993 and are still actors and actresses at Lume, created the performance *Café com queijo* (Coffee with cheese), a more mature work from their research on the corporeal mimesis of people from the Brazilian interior, based on trips to the Amazon.



Left: Jessor de Souza and Ana Elvira Wu in *Contadores de Estórias*, Campinas, 1997. Photo: João Maria (Lume Archive)



Right: Raquel Scotti Hirson, Renato Ferracini, Jessor de Souza and Ana Cristina Colla in *Café com Queijo*, 2020. Photo: Artur Amaral (Lume Archive)

Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos and Piollin

Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos was born two years before Burnier, in 1954, in Umbuzeiro, in the interior of Paraíba, in the Brazilian Northeast: much closer to the 'odour of Brazil' that Burnier and his students, inhabitants of Campinas, a prosperous city in

⁵¹ The diary entry can be found in the book *Café com Queijo: corpos em criação*, by Renato Ferracini (2006, 215-17).

⁵² Teatro tascabile di Bergamo worked with similar techniques, imitating the voices of Mahatma Gandhi and of Winston Churchill, and using these fragments as material for the creation of the performance *Esperimenti con la verità* (Experiments with truth), based on Gandhi's homonymous biography.

⁵³ Schechner 2012, p. 244-51.

the wealthy state of São Paulo, sought. When in 1988 and 1989, he participated in two workshops, one month and three months long, with Roberta Carreri at Odin Teatret's venue in Denmark, he was already more than thirty years old and was the director of the Piollin theatre group, founded in 1976 in João Pessoa, the capital of Paraíba. Then, in 1992, he directed the performance *Vau da Sarapalha* with Piollin based on the short story *Sarapalha* by Guimarães Rosa, bringing theatre anthropology into dialogue with Brazilian culture references. We can consider this performance, which remained in repertory for twelve years and was performed more than a thousand times around the world, the first major critical and public success of a Brazilian performance based on theatre anthropology.⁵⁴



Left: Everaldo Pontes (cousin Ribeiro); Servílio Gomes (pointing dog Jiló); Soia Lira (Negra Ceição) and Nanego Lira (cousin Argemiro) in *Val da Sarapalha*. Photo: Adalberto Lima (Piollin Archive)
Right: Nanego Lira and Servílio Gomes in *Val da Sarapalha*. Photo: Adalberto Lima (Piollin Archive).

Érika Rettl, Venício Fonseca and Grupo Moitará

The alliance between Venício Fonseca from Piauí and Érika Rettl from São Paulo began during the meetings in Rio de Janeiro in 1987, and led to the creation of the Grupo Teatral Moitará in 1988. Moitará's trajectory is marked by an interest in the theatre masks, in the techniques for their creation and manufacturing, and for their expressivity on stage. The in-depth research into the language of the theatre mask brought the group closer to the tradition of Commedia dell'Arte. The practical knowledge of the masks' production and use techniques came from apprenticeship at the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali directed by Donato Sartori, son of the renowned Italian mask maker Amleto Sartori, who, in collaboration with Giorgio Strehler and Jacques Lecoq, reinvented the tradition of Commedia dell'Arte in the 20th century. At the Centro, they learned techniques from Lecoq and Sartori's schools, such as the neutral, larva and geometrical masks, from which they elaborated their own actor's training. Today, with almost forty years of experience,

⁵⁴ Now 71 years old, Vasconcelos has had a solid career as a film and television actor. He also became an important name in Brazilian clowning, with the clown Xuxu, which he created in the 1970s to connect with the community in the neighbourhood that still houses the headquarters of the Piollin group.

Moitará has become one of the leading authorities on theatre masks in Brazil.

In performances like *Acorda Zé! A cumadre tá de pé!* (2010) and *Quiprocó* (2007), the group primarily uses half-masks (which allow the use of voice) to create their characters, developed from a hybrid between the archetypes of Commedia dell'Arte and forms from Brazilian popular culture.

Thus, referencing the Zannis, specifically Harlequin and characters from Brazilian literature (Macunaíma, Malazarte, Mateus, João Grilo, among others), compared with the 'types' observed in everyday life, we created the mask Zé de Riba, a 'type' with a mixture of cleverness and naiveté, 'lazy' and hungry, a storyteller who invents stories full of advantages and pranks to achieve his goals and avoid hard work.⁵⁵

Despite quoting Brazilian references that formed the dramaturgy of the performance, Venício Fonseca, who is of Northeastern origin, does not refer to studies on the masks present in performative dances in Brazil, especially in the Northeast. As can be observed in the group's trajectory, Moitará's technique for making and performing masked characters follows the Italian tradition.



Left: Donato Sartori, Venício Fonseca and Enrico Bonavera at an exhibition of Sartori's masks, Rio de Janeiro, 2008.

Photo: Moitará Archive

Right: Érika Rettl training with a geometric mask, Mariana, 2014. Photo: Maria Dua



Fabiano Manhães and Érika Rettl in *Acorda zé! A Cumadre tá de pé!*, 2010.
Photo: Celso Pereira (Moitará Archive)

⁵⁵ Fonseca 2018, 249.

Luciana Martuchelli, Tao Filmes and Cia YinsPiração

Born in Belo Horizonte and living in Brasília since childhood, Luciana Martuchelli is the daughter of artists.⁵⁶ She defines herself as an 'expressive polyglot' who 'wandered for almost thirty years [...] in a constant anthropophagy⁵⁷ of techniques and principles',⁵⁸ working in film and theatre without feeling completely belonging to either. This eclectic identity is partly explained by her belonging to Brasília, a city planned to be the capital of Brazil and built from 1956 to 1960 in an uninhabited region in the centre of the country. Its population constitutes a Babel of people from different places, cultures and accents.

In November 2007, Luciana Martuchelli met Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley at the 1st Meeting of Theatre Directors, promoted by Leo Sykes of the Circo-Teatro Udi Grudi group. This meeting was the catalyst for her apprenticeship, helping her to give a precise direction to her previous experiences and refine her 'mestizo alphabet and collage of recurring principles'.⁵⁹ This distillation gave her research with the Cia YinsPiração Poéticas Contemporâneas in theatre, and with TAO Filmes in film, a focus for the exploration on the actor's presence based on the principles of theatre anthropology. The meeting with Julia Varley was particularly important as a female role model. The relationship gained a special dimension in 2010 after the translation into Portuguese of Varley's book *Pedras d'água - bloco de notas de uma atriz do Odin Teatret* (Stones of water – Notebook of an Odin actress).

With the intention of providing others with a close contact to these masters who had been so important to her, from 2008 Luciana conceived and realised the project *The Secret Art of the Actor*. This is a week-long artistic residency in a full immersion format led annually by Barba and Varley. Actors (as practitioners), and directors and scholars (as observers), work on actor training and the creation of scenic scores. At its 18th edition in 2025, the project has provided hundreds of artists and researchers from the Americas, Asia, and Europe, but mainly from Latin America, with a rare opportunity to engage with Barba's ideas in the very heart of his practice: in the work room. These encounters have been fundamental in adding new knots to the web of relationships between Third Theatre and theatre anthropology.

In her work as director, actress and acting coach for audiovisual media, Martuchelli found in theatre anthropology an alternative to the hegemony of techniques linked to American interpretations of Stanislavski's proposals, spearheaded by Lee Strasberg, which emphasise some aspects of the system proposed by the Russian master, such as emotional memory, and neglects others, such as the physical actions. The article

⁵⁶ Luciana Martuchelli is the daughter of actor and director Gê Martú and actress and writer Gisele Lemper, who passed away in 2020. Both worked in theatre and film in Brazil's capital since its founding. Gê Martú is still active.

⁵⁷ Martuchelli refers to the notion of anthropophagy proposed in 1928 by the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade, which consists of swallowing and digesting foreign references - mainly European and North American ones - to create a genuinely Brazilian art, without submitting to, but also without rejecting, what comes from abroad.

⁵⁸ Martuchelli 2022, 283. The author cites as references in her training: Antunes Filho, Aderbal Freire-Filho, Jean-Claude Carrière, Peter Brook, Tizuka Yamasaki and Liu Pai Lin.

⁵⁹ Martuchelli 2022, 292. In this text excerpt, Martuchelli refers to the aesthetic and pedagogical proposals of Barba and Brook.

*Poetics, Borderlessness, Frameworks: Principles of Theatre Anthropology in Film*⁶⁰ describes Martuchelli's approach in detail and provides examples of how she uses acting techniques learned from Varley and Barba to create psychophysical states and scores of physical actions with the control and precision that training provides to actors.



Julia Varley working with participants of the residence *The Secret Art of the Actor*, 2016. Photo: André Aires



Luciana Martuchelli in *Mare Serenitatis*, directed by Julia Varley, 2019. Photo: Luciano Sartoryi

⁶⁰ Martuchelli 2022.

Juliana Pardo, Alício Amaral and Mundu Rodá

We conclude this narration about some paths of theatre anthropology in Brazil with Cia. Mundu Rodá, a group we met in 2021, during the *Encounters on Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology*. The initial impulse that brought together Juliana Pardo, a young actress and dancer interested in Brazilian performative dances, and Alício Amaral, a student of classical viola who was researching the intonations of the *rabeca* (a kind of violin),⁶¹ was the desire to merge dance, theatre and music. In 1999, they founded Cia. Mundu Rodá, which develops research on physical and energetic principles, corporalities, and sonorities present in Brazilian performative dances. They seek to identify and utilise their ancestral knowledge in their work as artist-performers with contemporary forms and needs.

The group's founding in 1999 coincides with the residence of the two artists in the rural village of Chã do Esconso, Zona da Mata Norte, Pernambuco, home to the traditional cavalo marinho groups.⁶² They stayed there until 2004. During this period,



Juliana Pardo and Alício Amaral in *A donzela guerreira*. Photo: Roberta Guimarães (Mundu Rodá Archive)

61 The *rabeca* is a string instrument used with a bow, like a violin and used in popular cultural expressions in Brazil.

62 The cavalo marinho from Pernambuco is a cultural event originally performed in Zona da Mata Norte (North Woods Zone), where the monoculture of sugarcane is predominant, and it is 'officially' celebrated during the Santos Reis (Three Wise Men) festivities. In the *terreiro* (yard), dance, music and masked figures build narratives and echo stories and memories from this place. It is a manifestation of resistance and freedom, which denounces patriarchy and slavery in the sugar cane mills, and has different meanings in the processes of historical construction in the Mata Norte until nowadays.

the personality of Cia. Mundu Rodá was consolidated, which was strongly manifested in the group's first performance, *A donzela guerreira* (The warrior maiden), directed by Jessor de Sousa of Lume, in which Juliana Pardo plays the role that gives the work its title and Alício plays the Captain.

Juliana Pardo's interest in cavalo marinho raised a question: the fact that it is a Brazilian dance predominantly performed by men. How then to investigate this *brincadeira*, a form of game dance performance? How to be accepted as a woman by the performers of the Zona da Mata Norte region of Pernambuco and learn in practice, alongside the masters of this art? At the beginning of Mundu Rodá's journey, the path of discovery and development of this performative body was strongly marked by the issue of gender, which becomes evident in the theme of the performance *A donzela guerreira*. The actress narrates the strategies she sought to develop her research as follows:

As a woman, to be able to immerse myself in the universe of the *brincadeira*, I had to seek qualities of energy equivalent to those of the male 'players'. I needed to vibrate in harmony with the game, in which the qualities of energy, the actions and movements are intensely vigorous and precise. Being a woman in a practice dominated by men, where the dance is marked by strong and light footwork, was an arduous but pleasurable task.⁶³

The moment of 'putting on a figure', that is, representing a character and its mask alongside the local players, was even more challenging for Juliana Pardo. Although the initial invitation came from a master, the other performers had difficulty in accepting her status as a woman in the performance:

I did everything I was told: the arrival of the figure (the moment when the character enters the circle, announced by its song), I danced and improvised, but nobody answered me and there was no interaction between the figures. Afterwards, I asked the master why nobody interacted with me during the scene, and he told me that it was out of consideration and respect for my husband [Alício Amaral]. I understood. There was, in fact, a desire on the master's part to see me play a figure, but when the men were faced with a woman on stage, the local custom prevails.⁶⁴

Despite the initial resistance, Juliana gradually earned her place in the *brincadeira* tradition. From the late 1990s to the present day, the reality has changed, with Juliana's contribution to the process. Currently, the presence of women in cavalo marinho is accepted more naturally, although some resistance still exists.

Even without dealing with gender-related issues, Alício Amaral also faced difficulties in 'putting on a figure':

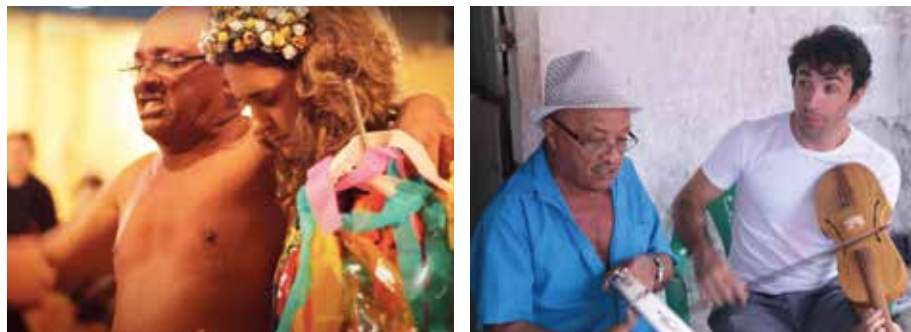
63 Mundu Rodá, n.d.

64 Mundu Rodá, n.d.

It is important to emphasise that this experience [of putting on a figure] occurred naturally and without haste, since I have been following the performances and performers since 1999. For me, as a performer who came from outside the Zona da Mata region, the greatest difficulty in 'putting on a figure' in a traditional cavalo marinho was not the dance, or memorising the songs, or their physicality; the greatest challenge was the interaction with the other performers within the context of cavalo marinho. The words used are very specific to that region, and the reasoning behind the role must be quick during the performance. It's quite an exercise for performers.⁶⁵

Unlike the members of Moitará, who found the base for their work in the teachings of Commedia dell'Arte, the artists of Cia. Mundu Rodá sought in Brazilian culture the fundamental technical elements for the development of their work. They were confronted with the *brincador* body, which at the same time is a worker's body, as Master Inácio Lucindo told them:

The physical characteristics of the worker's body are the same as in the *brincador's* body. Look, the physical characteristics of the *brincador's* body is what I told you: the fellow who's cutting sugarcane, his body goes here, he cuts here, goes down here and then there, suddenly he moves here to this side, he cuts everywhere, his body is soft, it's a gentle body, it's a loose body, a relaxed body. It's the same thing when one fellow is 'playing' with another, we 'play'. It's the physical characteristics of the body. The physical characteristics of the worker's body are the same as in the *brincador's* body. The worker's body has his physical characteristics in everything he does... when holding the hoe to cover the sugarcane, look, his body is ready for the maneuver, covering here and then there. Look, for the guy who 'plays', that's the trick. It's the same thing as dancing cavalo marinho.⁶⁶



Left: Master Inácio Lucindo and Juliana Pardo, cavalo marinho. Photo: Marcelo Eme (Mundu Rodá Archive)
Right: Master Inácio Lucindo and Alício Amaral. Photo Mundu Rodá Archive

⁶⁵ Mundu Rodá, n.d.

⁶⁶ Testimony of Master Inácio Lucindo, of the Cavalo Boi Brasileiro de Chã de Esconso, Aliança, Pernambuco, for Juliana Pardo and Alício Amaral (Mundu Rodá, n.d., 8).



Alício Amaral, I Wayan Bawa, Parvathy Baul, Keiin Yoshimura, Juliana Pardo and the chorus of participants at the 17th ISTA, during the rehearsals of the performance *Andstasis* (Resurrection), National Theatre of Budapest, Hungary, 2023. Photo: Ricardo Gomes.

The experience lived in the Zona da Mata Norte region of Pernambuco provided a deeper understanding of Cia. Mundu Rodá's research, creating their own stage language. Despite the sense of belonging that is the primary impulse of this research, Juliana and Alício encountered elements that sometimes made them feel almost like foreigners in their own country. The realities of cosmopolitan São Paulo, their city of origin, and the rural village of Chã do Esconso in Pernambuco, where they lived for four years, are quite different. These facts corroborate the idea that the place of origin of each artist has relative importance in their individual theatrical culture.

Since the 16th ISTA session in Favignana, Italy, in 2021, Juliana Pardo and Alício Amaral have been part of the ISTA artistic staff, now composed of a new generation of artists that Barba began to bring together at the 2016 ISTA in Albino, Italy, after an eleven-year period without holding ISTA sessions and the passing of many of his key collaborators. Life has presented Eugenio Barba, who will turn 90 on October 29, 2026, with the contingency, or the opportunity, to reinvent himself once again, to keep his legacy alive.

As we complete the first quarter of the 21st century, it is already possible to look with some distance at the legacy of theatre anthropology in Brazil. We can affirm its

importance in the process of creating a Brazilian theatricality, always evolving and always questioning, as could not be otherwise in a young country, when compared to Africa, Asia or Europe, and founded from a process of colonisation and spoliation. Barba argues that this need to seek and affirm a cultural identity based on a feeling of belonging to a culture understood within certain historical and geographical limits, which we conventionally call a 'nation', is an illusion that can, however, be fruitful and productive in some cases. Perhaps the lesson that theatre anthropology has brought specifically to Latin America, as the Brazilian examples reported here attest, is that, in order to forge one's own path in the labyrinth of arts and culture, differences are as important as identities.

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Julia Varley

Theatrum Mundi: Behind the Curtain

Abstract: This article goes into the details of the process of creation of Theatrum Mundi performances, making examples from the earliest production in 1987 to the most recent in 2016. Eugenio Barba's task as a director of performers coming from different traditions is to find a coherence in the music, costumes, text, physical scores and narrative through a complex montage. Only a very close collaboration over the years allows such a process to occur resulting in performances presented in open air spaces and on traditional indoor stages.

Keywords: Theatrum Mundi, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Kanichi Hanayagi, Augusto Omolú, I Made Djimat, I Wayan Bawa, Odin Teatret

On the lake

When I think back, the Theatrum Mundi performance that most sticks in my memory is the one that we presented at the end of the 8th ISTA session in Londrina, Brazil, in 1994. To honour that session - the first and only to happen in Latin America thanks to Nitis Jacon's extraordinary daring - I will write about the experience of Theatrum Mundi in general for this issue of *JTA*, which also presents the 8th ISTA. The Theatrum Mundi performance in Londrina was decided, rehearsed and performed on the last day of the closed and open ISTA session, at the end of which, exhausted, we celebrated with a final feast by a swimming pool.

We had chosen the lake of Londrina as a venue for the performance. The grass slopes overlooking the water were perfect to accommodate the thousands of spectators that were expected to attend. Fernando Jacon, the technical director and son of Nitis Jacon, took upon himself the challenge of building a stage on the lake; in fact, not one stage but three! The stages were connected with bridges and from the shore an underwater gangway allowed some actors to reach the main stage as if miraculously walking on water while others arrived by boat. With their voluminous costumes, the elegantly made-up performers did not look at ease when boarding the small motor canoes in order to reach the stage built over floating barrels tied together. The Brazilian musicians reassured the Asian dancers who could not swim. Indian Sanjukta Panigrahi and Balinese Swasthi Bandem and I were on a boat that broke down, and the local firemen had to tow us to the stage. At the end of the performance, while the final fireworks went off, the lighting

Torgeir Wethal and Kanichi Hanayagi in *For Poems for Sanjukta*, ISTA 11, Montemor-O-Novo and Lisbon, Portugal, 1998. Photo: Fiora Bemporad

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of the trees on the other side of the lake gave a magical effect to the last scene. The lights in different colours came from underneath, making the trees appear as if suspended, reaching for the stars shining in the dark sky above.

Ensemble and performance

In the context of ISTA, 'Theatrum Mundi' (Theatre of the World) is used both to connote an ensemble of actors, dancers and musicians belonging to different theatre traditions and genres coming from Asia, Europe, USA and Latin America, and to name the performances that bring together all these artists to present a complex montage of their scenes to the spectators.

Theatrum Mundi performances are sometimes presented as a conclusion of ISTA sessions, at other times they are autonomous productions that go on tour in different countries, or they take the form of intercultural barbers. The performers can be few or many. Sometimes they are all masters of their specific genres, or at other times the artists are joined by a chorus of younger performers who do not belong to a particular codified tradition. Everyone wants to learn and share. A lot has already been written describing the different examples of Theatrum Mundi productions. This time, I am interested in dissecting the creative process and montage practice which happens before and behind the final result, in order to understand the many procedures, events, interests, necessities, meetings, stories, challenges and fortuitous threads that are woven into the ultimate dramaturgy as if they had always belonged to each other, as if everything had been worked out beforehand. When the performance exists, it is easy to find a logic sustaining the whole, but I know that when we begin creating nothing seems clear and resolved. The support can come from a simple starting point which is then often forgotten during the rehearsals.

In the context of theatre anthropology, Theatrum Mundi performances are all directed by Eugenio Barba. I have participated in most of them as an actress and in some as a director's assistant. I am familiar with the processes of creation of Odin Teatret's performances and Eugenio's different ways of directing that have changed and developed throughout the years. Of course, this firsthand knowledge also helps me recognise the similarities and differences concerning the processes of a Theatrum Mundi creation.

To give a brief historical overview, Theatrum Mundi performances have been presented at the end of ISTA sessions in Salento (Italy) in 1987; in Bologna and Volterra (Italy) in 1990; in Londrina (Brazil) in 1994; in Umeå (Sweden) in 1995; in Lisbon (Portugal) with the title *Four Poems for Sanjukta* in 1998. Theatrum Mundi have taken the form of an intercultural barter or theatre anthologies in Bonn (Germany) in 1980; in Volterra (Italy) in 1981; in Brecon (Wales) in 1992; in Bielefeld (Germany) in 2000; in La Rinconada (Spain) in 2004; in Kryzowa (Poland) in 2005; in Albino (Italy) in 2016; and in Favignana (Italy) in 2021. Theatrum Mundi performances have been fashioned as autonomous productions with *Shakuntala* in Fara Sabina (Italy) and in Holstebro (Denmark) in 1993; with *The Jungle Book* in Holstebro (Denmark) in 1993; with *Orô de Otelô* which premiered in Londrina (Brazil) in 1994, and then was presented at all ISTA sessions until 2005, and in its own right in Holstebro (Denmark) and on tour worldwide

from 1994 until 2012; with *The Island of Labyrinths* in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 1996; with *Ego Faust* in Bologna (Italy) and Bielefeld (Germany) in 2001, and in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 2004; with *Ur-Hamlet* in Ravenna (Italy), Holstebro and at Kronborg Castle in Elsinore (Denmark) in 2006, and in Wrocław (Poland) in 2009; with *The Marriage of Medea* in Holstebro (Denmark) in 2008; and with *Anástasis* (Resurrection) in Pécsvárad and Budapest (Hungary) in 2023.



Torgeir Wethal and Kanichi Hanayagi.
Photo: Fiora Bemporad

Process and result

The process of creation of a Theatrum Mundi production includes working with already existing scenes, which include performers' scores as they belong to the codification of a tradition that has been passed down for centuries, or to a self-made codification belonging to the theatre culture of autodidactic groups that fix sequences to build performances. But the work does not only evolve from pre-existing physical or vocal scores;

it also includes working with improvisation aiming to create a completely new scene individually or collectively, or to make variations and adaptations by changing the order, volume, energy, or direction of the actions in already known sequences.

Like any theatre production, a Theatrum Mundi performance grows in collaboration with the development of the music, space, set design, lighting, costumes and props. To enhance the variation of rhythm and intensity, to give spectators time to rest after intense moments of emotional communication, to satisfy the need of references to a recognisable story, the final result usually includes battle scenes, archetypal love and death enactments, comic intermezzos, characters of different ages, theatrical effects of sudden changes, impressive surprises, exaggerations and delicate, vulnerable moments of a more human dimension.

The people involved in the process determine the future of the performance. In this sense Theatrum Mundi follows the tradition of group theatre in which the people involved suggest the stories to be told, the characters and the dramaturgical structure, rather than performers being chosen to play a piece that has already been decided upon earlier. Beside the performers and the spectators, the reality of the market in which the Theatrum Mundi is to be presented also has a huge influence on the process: requests, wishes or suggestions coming from the organisers or producers, the kind of venue that is proposed, whether performing indoors or outdoors, or if it is to be a unique event or to be repeatedly performed on tour - all of this gives guidelines to follow. The organisers guarantee the necessary financial support for such an expensive endeavour as a Theatrum Mundi to happen. Without people like Nitis Jacon in Brazil, Trevor Davies in Denmark, Jarek Fret in Poland, Siegmund Schröder in Germany, Attila Vidnyánszky in Hungary, no Theatrum Mundi would ever have taken place. If Theatrum Mundi has a

future, this depends also on other fearless dreamers appearing on the horizon ready to engage their energy in achieving what always seems like an impossible task.

Trying to give a name to the methodology and to differentiate *Theatrum Mundi* from other intercultural experiences, in the 9th film on theatre anthropology - part of Fondazione Barba Varley's Sharing Knowledge Project - Eugenio Barba says:

A performance which gathers artists from various traditions can come about in many ways. The artists can abandon the style of their own tradition and, together with the others, find a common style. Or else, they can assume the style of a foreign tradition in order to give new vigour to the work they are presenting. Greek texts can be interpreted by Japanese actors who draw on *noh*, and texts by Shakespeare can be played in French by actors who take their inspiration from the scenic skill of *kabuki*.

When working with the *Theatrum Mundi* I follow another principle: each artist faithfully preserves the characteristics specific to his/her own style, integrating them into the context of the story related by the performance.

We apply a dramaturgy that intertwines autonomous styles. The intertwining, as well as the development of the plot, are both my responsibility as director. What is created by the actors belongs to their cultural identity and is not encroached upon by the *mise en scène*. I have called this way of working, the 'romanesque method'.

Eurasian theatre does not indicate the theatres included in a geographical space. It suggests a mental reality, an active idea in modern theatre culture. By the term Eurasian Theatre, I mean the technical and theoretical dimension that enables us to consider as a unity those performances traditionally divided into the two cultural hemispheres called East and West. In reality these are connected not only by exchanges and intersections, but above all by a common professional identity.

Theatre can be thought of in terms of ethnic, national, group or even individual traditions. But if we try through this to understand our own identity, the opposite and complementary attitude is also essential: to think of our own theatre in a transcultural dimension, in the flow of a tradition of traditions. The profession is also a country to which we belong, an elective homeland, without geographical borders.

When creating a *Theatrum Mundi* performance, performers and director do not discuss the meanings to convey, but concentrate on the timing, meeting points, rhythm, actions and reactions. The collaboration is not based on what is expressed, but on the *pre-expressive* level - the effective level of stage presence - which allows a communication based on the somatic principles of the craft, transcending national and cultural boundaries.

Eugenio's motivation for the first experiences of *Theatrum Mundi* in 1980 in Bonn and in 1981 in Volterra was the pleasure of offering a vision of the multifarious, extraordinary richness of the actors' and dancers' skill, showing the best of what has been created in the many cultures of the world, the Everests of the acting craft. It was meant as an anthology of the most theatrical and impressive scenes and to celebrate the embodied technique of performers, some of whom had trained since they were children. The pleasure came from presenting *I Made Pasek Tempo*'s magic from Bali, Sanjukta

Panigrahi's sumptuousness of details, Katsuko Azuma's striking presence and steel spine, Ingemar Lindh's symphony of body positions that he had learned from Etienne Decroux, the personal scores of Odin Teatret's Iben Nagel Rasmussen and Toni Cots permeated with vitality and commitment. The different traditions showed an extraordinary scenic presence in different shapes, rhythms and aesthetics, giving space not only to Asian but also European forms, even though we had to wait until the ISTA session in Copenhagen in 1996 to include examples from classical ballet and modern dance with Steve Paxton and Stephen Pier.

From the ISTA session in Salento (South Italy) in 1987 the theatre anthology - an independent succession of scenes - was substituted through a montage into a *Theatrum Mundi* performance with an interaction between the performers, also adapted to venue of the castle of Copertino. The structure of the performance and its montage have since developed to reach a culmination in the productions of *Ur-Hamlet* (2006-2009) and *Anástasis* (2023). The *Theatrum Mundi* in Bologna in 1990 included a choir of ISTA participants for the first time, a procedure which has been often repeated since. From the balcony on the first floor of the courtyard, the chorus joined into the Balinese *kecak* rhythms and sang *Subo al triquete*, composed by the Danish Ivan Hansen, that had been shared by all nationalities present at ISTA.

Pre-existing scores

To make a montage of pre-existing scores, it was necessary that Eugenio was familiar with all the performance 'material' that each artist could contribute. For the first sessions of ISTA (Bonn 1980, Volterra 1981, Blois 1985, Holstebro 1986, Salento 1987), Eugenio visited the artists in their countries to prepare their participation, observing classes and rehearsals in their studios for long periods. In those years Eugenio focussed on the terminology, exercises and the first forms the artists had learned during their apprenticeship. Eugenio spent hours and days repeatedly observing the same postures and sequences to discover the principles underlying their technique. He also saw their performances with the stunning costumes and masks, accompanied by live music that underlined or dialogued with the performers' impulses on stage. He could remember the scenes and characters and refer to them when asking Sanjukta Panigrahi, Katsuko Azuma or I Made Pasek Tempo to show something with a particular quality to the ISTA participants. Eugenio also had in mind the most theatrically effective sequences which could be placed one after the other for sudden changes of energy, rhythm, music, or extrovert or introvert qualities. The choice of what he included in the programmes was based on very concrete and material theatrical actions, not on their meaning, and for a sensorial communication that any spectator could appreciate despite not being familiar with the language, stories and aesthetics. Associations subsequently came, a consequence of seeing the scenes in a new context.

An important body of the scenes that composed a *Theatrum Mundi* performance came from the Asian traditions. Eugenio felt confident that their material already had a scenic life and did not need any justification or adjustment to function in his eyes and in those of the spectators.



P. 88 and 89 on top, Theatrum Mundi rehearsals, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil. Photo: Emidio Luisi
 P. 89 (bottom) Augusto Omolú and I Wayan Bawa in *Ur-Hamlet*, Wroclaw, Poland, 2009. Photo: Francesco Galli



For example, when working on *Ur-Hamlet*, the main scenes performed by the Gambuh Pura Desa Ensemble in Bali, which Eugenio and I had been seen time and time again, were a starting point for the new structure: amongst them the fight between the delicate prince Panji and his enemy the *keras* (strong) prince Prabangsa, the feast, the stabbing of the horse, the clowns, the storyteller, the female dances presented by the princess, and the *condong* and other ladies in waiting. The fight between the two princes and their warriors in the Gambuh was the foundation on which to build the scene of the killing of Horvendil (Hamlet's father) by Fengo (Hamlet's uncle) in *Ur-Hamlet* by Saxo Gramaticus, while the feast was the basis for the presentation of Hamlet's return to Denmark from England. The Balinese women danced, carrying torches to illuminate the other main characters. The Baris, the warrior dance, was performed in a shorter version by the twelve-year-old Ni Wayan Pia Widari Eka Tana on the uneven surface of the covered well in the courtyard of Kronborg Castle in Elsinore. Even when only short extracts were used, dialogues and music accompanied the scenes as in the original versions.

Pre-existing scenes were taken also from Odin Teatret's productions. For example, in *The Island of Labyrinths*, in the Faust episode, my score in 'the scene that went mad', which visualised Gretchen's madness, was extrapolated from my solo *The Castle of Holstebro*. Eugenio only asked me to add a moment pulling up my dress over my knees before falling to the ground. Roberta Carreri's costume and movements in her dialogue with I Made Paek Tempo during the Theatrum Mundi in Bologna in 1990 came from her solo *Judith*. Iben Nagel Rasmussen's Trickster character from Odin Teatret's performance *Talabot* together with Kai Bredholt's Polar Bear Otto from *Ode to Progress* and Tina Nielsen's White Angel from *Anabasis* were transformed into the players performing for the god-couple Sanjukta Panigrahi and Augusto Omolú in the Londrina Theatrum Mundi and in *The Island of Labyrinths*.

The Japanese Buyo Kabuki ensemble with Kanichi Hanayagi, Sae Nanaogi and Shogo Fujima had brought an elaborate performance with very rich costumes to the ISTA session in Londrina. One of the scenes presented a woman with her face covered in the traditional white make-up, wearing a long black and white wig and a kimono with drawings of a spiderweb on her shoulders. After a battle the woman threw a paper spiderweb that exploded from her hands over two warriors imprisoning them. From 1994 until 2000, this scene became a central part of the Theatrum Mundi performances. For example, in *Ego Faust*, the woman in white appears like a ghost, confirmed by Torgeir Wethal's text as Faust, "What do you want? You are only the ghost of my past, stop making all those faces." Faust calls the two Buyo Kabuki warriors to his side, and they start the original sequence of their fight with the ghost spider woman. Faust had to die and be taken to hell. It could be that the Japanese female character recalled the white Gretchen who had exited in a previous scene and that spectators could imagine her as a ghost come to awaken remorse in Faust. It could be; but this is never directly exposed or explained in the performance. Perhaps these thoughts were subtexts that helped the director give indications for the scenes which already functioned in themselves theatrically, independently from the meaning that was being conveyed. Fifteen years later, noh performer Akira Matsui used the same spiderweb effect in *Ur-Hamlet* to catch

the men attacking Hamlet on his return to Denmark, before the killing of Hamlet's uncle Fengo, and the proclamation of Hamlet's harsh laws of the New Order.

Improvisation

The performers from codified traditions did not only contribute with complete scenes but also with a scenic behaviour, which revealed itself in ways of moving, walking, sitting, lying down and speaking. These could be used to improvise new scenes.

During 'The Crossing' work session at ISTA Bologna in 1990, Japanese onnagata (female impersonator) Kanichi Hanayagi and Odin Teatret actor Torgeir Wethal improvised a scene with a piece of paper that they passed to each other turning it into a letter, a fan, a screen, a baby... The improvisation was repeated and fixed in front of the ISTA participants and became a central scene in Theatrum Mundi from 1990 until ISTA Bielefeld in 2000. It was a delicate love scene. When the Theatrum Mundi used the theme of Faust, Kanichi's onnagata became a version of Gretchen. Later this role was developed further by adding Gretchen killing her child with a stone just before the *bikinuki*, a sudden change of costume from a red to a white kimono. In this scene, Odin Teatret's Death character Mr Peanut, in his white bride version on foot, was called in to give the stone to Gretchen and then to help undo the strings that allowed for the sudden change of costume that was also underlined by a change of light.

To create a counterpoint to the delicate love scene, I was asked to improvise as Mr Peanut with Balinese Tjokorda Raka Tisnu's demon queen Rangda. For the next Theatrum Mundi the improvisation was developed in a meeting with I Made Djimat's Cheluluk, a character that was allowed to be more humorous. We improvised various grotesque positions of seduction and courting as if inspired by the love scene we could see in front of us. The timing that kept we four performers together was given by the Portuguese song *Lagrimas* sang by Roberta Carreri as I Nyoman Budi Arta embraced her to create a third amorous couple in the background.

It is surprising to see the photographs of the rehearsals for *Faust* during the ISTA session in Salento (South Italy) in 1987. The Indian Sanjukta Panigrahi has her hair loose and is not wearing her traditional costume, beside her the Japanese Katsuko Azuma is wearing trousers. Kanichi Hanayagi is dressed in a western summer dress and hat. I have been told that during the work on the improvised scenes, Sanjukta refused to step on a book as requested by Eugenio, because it was taboo for her. A taboo also arose during a scene for the Crossing at ISTA in Bologna in which Sanjukta, Kahno, Padmini and I were protecting the flame of a candle. At the end we had to put out the flame, but as it was taboo for some of the Asians to blow the flame out, and I wanted to respect that, we waved our hands to make enough of a breeze to extinguish the fire.

Another central scene for various Theatrum Mundi was based on an improvisation between Sanjukta Panigrahi and Augusto Omolú. It had started with a task given by Eugenio to Sanjukta. She should teach Augusto how to pass from one of his Orixá, the god manifestations of nature, to another without interruption. Sanjukta and Augusto worked in the White Room at Odin Teatret in Denmark in 1994. Eugenio asked them to create a complete scene. To achieve the task, Sanjukta and Augusto improvised at first

by simply reacting to the quality of energy of the figures from the classical Indian Odissi and the Candomblé Orixá dances: a strong demon danced by Sanjukta could provoke in Augusto a vigorous Ogum warrior or in opposition a soft Oxum woman combing her hair, and Augusto's Oxossi hunter could incite Sanjukta to present a frightened deer running away or the attack of an enraged elephant. The improvisation developed as they added actions of gathering water, offering each other a drink, and postures of devotion and submission for which they exchanged roles. During the Theatrum Mundi in Umeå in 1995, after their dialogue accompanied by intermittent Indian music and Brazilian drums, the slow 'water' sequence was underlined by silence. In *The Island of Labyrinths* the source of water was an illuminated small silver square on the shining black floor.

Outstanding effects

All beauty is ephemeral and disappears. After the most splendid scenes of Theatrum Mundi, the most enormous figures from the different theatre genres entered the stage for a last dance to then fall and die. The Balinese Barong dragon and its companion the demon queen Rangda, Shishi the Japanese lion with a bright red wig, and Odin Teatret's polar bear, were joined by all the characters on foot for the last frenetic dance, while a peasant sowed rice on the wooden floor. Even Death, Mr Peanut on stilts, had to fall and die. But after the fall, he would shed the stilts and the long trousers to reveal a white dress under the tail jacket and then pull off his skull head to transform into a baby held in the arms of a woman. The whole transformation, a combination of different scenes from Odin Teatret's *The Castle of Holstebro*, happened during Sanjukta's *Moksha* dance, the spiritual liberation and last salute. The timing was given by Sanjukta's ankle bells and by the Indian orchestra's music. The last phase of the transformation happened as Sankukta concluded her *Moksha* by swaying slightly and showing the whites of her eyes while the singer Raghunath Panigrahi repeated the word Om. I, as the woman in white, would look up at Sanjukta standing behind me and then again at the death-child smiling in my arms. As the music stopped, the whole Theatrum Mundi group of performers would join us on stage to take the applause. Every time I see a photograph of this group, I am impressed by the amazing achievement of bringing all these different performers together.

At the end of a Theatrum Mundi performance, at the apex of the monsters' last dance, fireworks were often used to enhance the agitation, even if it was not always easy to get permission, especially in indoor venues. At the Theatrum Mundi in Bologna in 1990 the fireworks were exceptional. While on tour in the Marche region in Italy, we had been told about a local folkloric tradition that used the dance of a gigantic papier mâché doll figure, *la Pupa*, moved by a person inside it, which sprouted fireworks all around her. We invited a *Pupa* to end the Theatrum Mundi in Bologna in 1990. She entered as the last figure of the 'monster' scene while Mr Peanut on stilts still circled around her. The stage lights were turned off and the fireworks started shooting from the dancing *Pupa*. Looking at the video today, I wonder how we were allowed to have fireworks so close to the spectators. Since that evening, Mr Peanut's coat has holes in various places left by the flying sparks.

In Lisbon, the opening and closing of *Four Poems for Sanjukta* were performed by a large group of folkloric dancers of all ages that came with us to the capital from Montemor-O-Novo. In *Ur-Hamlet*, a particularly estranging effect was achieved by the appearance of a modern tractor which entered on stage to lift pallets loaded with the dead bodies of the 'Foreigners' who had invaded the castle of Elsinore. In *Anástasis* in 2023, a new 'animal' joined the Theatrum Mundi family: a bull that danced, died and resurrected. It originated from the Brazilian cavalo marinho *brincadeiras*, a traditional folkloric game-feast with masks, dance and music. Alício Amaral and Juliana Pardo of the theatre group Mundu Rodá guided the sequences with the bull, adding a colourful and impressive choreography in which all fifty ISTA participants moved large bow circles of ribbons. They invaded the whole stage with the energy of a feast.

In *The Marriage of Medea* a real Balinese wooden fishing boat accompanied the whole performance. In its itinerant version, six of the figures of Jason's family pushed the boat on wheels during the wedding procession. They can confirm that the wooden boat was very heavy. It had been bought from fishermen on a beach in Bali with the help of Cristina Wistari, the Italian performer responsible for the Gambuh Pura Desa ensemble and, after being painted again, sent by cargo to Denmark along with a film of how the side balancing supports, the rudder and the sail should be fitted.

The Marriage of Medea was conceived as a ceremony not addressed to spectators. Therefore, to function theatrically, it needed strong visual elements. Theatrum Mundi often has scenes that do not address the spectators, such as the example of the children playing with stones in *Ego Faust*, or the family with pram and plastic bags entering at the end of *Ur-Hamlet*. To be acceptable, these scenes need more theatricality as they seem not to take the spectators into account. In *The Marriage of Medea* the boat was the main spectacular element.

In that performance, Medea was the Balinese Ni Made Partini. She was accompanied by her family, the Balinese Gambuh ensemble, for the celebration. Jason was Odin Teatret's Tage Larsen, and we called his family The Jasonites: a group of fifty very young performers that Augusto Omolú guided in their dances. My role was both the nurse who helps Medea kill her children and Clotho, one of the three Parcae of destiny. For the nurse, I learned songs from the area around the Black Sea, the region Medea came from. I Wayan Bawa was Medea's father, and a wooden sculpture that could be pulled apart was Medea's brother. Medea's jealousy was represented by the scene in Balinese legong keraton in which the female role doubles in order to stage a fight. Creusa, Jason's second wife, was a metal sculpture covered in a cloth that burned.

The boat came into the picture as we considered what could happen before the ceremony: a journey. Medea could arrive from the sea by boat to Struer, the closest port to Holstebro where we should perform. Jason would wait for her on land. The imagined ship became one of the Balinese fishing boats when Eugenio and I were admiring their colours and shapes on the Balinese shores. The fishing boats immediately caught our attention and were an evident theatrical element. Yet to decide to buy one, find the people who would sell and prepare it, and have it sent to the other side of the world needed determination. Eugenio's capacity to confront all kinds of difficulties and not to give in to common sense is definitively one of his qualities as a director. In the pause between

Theatrum Mundi presentations the fishing boat would be exhibited on the roof of our theatre in Holstebro, and now it is part of the installation of the Red Room of LAFLIS, the Living Archive Floating Islands in Lecce, Italy, dedicated to the Third Theatre.

Archetypes and humour

When presenting a performance that should reach spectators who are unfamiliar with its language and codes, communication is possible by composing archetypal scenes about life and death, love and war, poverty and richness, power and submission, and victory and defeat, which all kinds of spectators can recognise. Even scenes that should generally seem funny need to build on relationships of competition, ability and possession that every human being is familiar with independently from the context they belong to.

I have already described the love scenes created for the Theatrum Mundi since Bologna in 1990. A different love scene was developed for *Ur-Hamlet* by Augusto Omolú and Mia Theil Have in its first edition and with Yalan Ling in its second. In Saxo Gramaticus' story, Hamlet's madness is tested by his uncle, who watches his behaviour with his foster sister Ophelia. To allow the love scene to occur and be coherent with Hamlet's madness, I, as Saxo Gramaticus, used a coloured cloth to hide their meeting. The position of the cloth needed to change following the couple moving in space. I had to hide what was happening, and at the same time to reveal the scene to spectators. Around us, the Balinese women danced with their torches. The feeling of love was evoked by their soft movements and by Annada Prasanna Pattnaik's mesmerising melody on the flute. When Ophelia enters again towards the end of the performance, Hamlet embraces her, then takes her head and drowns her in a big wooden bowl full of water. The spectators hear the spouting of the water and Ophelia's babbles and shouts as she fights to breathe.

Augusto had a different love and death scene with Isabel Ubeda in *The Island of the Labyrinths*. Isabel was a kind of Caliban with the whole body and face covered by a big, dark brown fur coat. During the dancing 'monster' scene, Isabel got rid of the fur and appeared leaping wildly in a red dress. Augusto, as a kind of Mephistopheles, embraced her, and then suddenly hit her on her neck. She slid down on Torgeir, a kind of Faust, and both lay dead on the ground holding hands.

The dance of three women, first Balinese, then Japanese, then from Odin Teatret, each accompanied by their music, also showed the force of seduction in various Theatrum Mundi. In *Four Poems for Sanjukta*, these dances were the frame for the signing of the contract in blood between Faust and Mephistopheles, again anticipating the theme of the next Theatrum Mundi, *Ego Faust*.

I Made Djimat, with the clown monkey mask, had a competition in trying to seduce Jutaiichiro Hanayagi's Japanese clown, and wanted to separate her from Roberta Carreri's Geronimo character. The Japanese clown, dressed as a kind of housewife, had a hilarious way of falling to the ground, while the monkey stroked her hair whilst forming amorous poses, and Geronimo used his duck whistle to frighten away his competitor. In describing the scene, I realise it is difficult to divide exactly the characters and the performers' genre. Notions of 'female' and 'male' don't always correspond, and it is also not clear for spectators who is seducing who.

The Balinese performers are clown experts. The 2009 version of *Ur-Hamlet* started with a grotesque version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The ghost wore a sheet that he tripped over all the time, and Ophelia was played by a man who whilst 'drowning' behind a screen threw female underwear up in the air. Hamlet's uncle limped comically when poisoning Hamlet's father by putting a very big funnel in the ear of the sleeping brother. Only the Balinese ensemble could be allowed to make such fun of a Western classic. All the spectators laughed, while at the same time Augusto introduced the character of Hamlet as a vagabond covered in ropes, wandering and sleeping on cardboard boxes at the side of the stage.

Battle scenes are also recurrent in Theatrum Mundi. In Copertino, in South Italy, the Balinese Barong dragon fought with the Japanese Shishi lion; in Bologna Kanichi Hanayagi fought with the kecak of the whole Balinese group; and in Londrina the Japanese warriors fought with the spider woman. *Ur-Hamlet's* most dramatic battle was between I Wayan Bawa as Fengo (Shakespeare's Claudius) and Augusto Omolú as Hamlet, and between Akira Matsui with his long Japanese sword and I Made Suteja's Balinese *kris*. The fight's intensity was underlined by music and screams. Once the passion got out of control, and one of Augusto's teeth was broken. Nevertheless, in private, I Wayan Bawa and Augusto remained friends. In *Ur-Hamlet*, Akira Matsui brought the plague, which killed the Foreigners who had invaded the castle, starting with the bride at the marriage feast, played by Greek Christina Kyriazidi. The groom, Wout van Tongeren, carried the bride in his arms dancing slowly all over the space for the last thirty minutes of the performance, showing another example of love and devotion in connection with death.

Death has always been present through Mr Peanut in all his different versions and costumes. In *Ur-Hamlet* he did not appear as a character, but in the bones that the historian Saxo Gramaticus dug out of the ground to decipher what had happened in the past and to narrate the story in Latin, and in the skull on the plate brought by Saxo to Hamlet as he dressed the child for the warrior dance. Hamlet places the child's hand on the skull, giving a sign for the Balinese music to start. In this way, *Ur-Hamlet* anticipates the theme of the most recent Odin Teatret ensemble production, *Hamlet's Clouds* when asking what we leave in inheritance. One could say that Odin Teatret and Theatrum Mundi are always making the same performance, or that the themes are passed along from one production to the next, finding different forms to ask the same questions to ourselves and to the spectators.

Artists

Various generations of artists have contributed to ISTA's research and have performed as part of the Theatrum Mundi ensemble. The first to take part in the adventure of performing on the same stage - and with performers who could not communicate with each other through spoken language - were Sanjukta Panigrahi (Odissi dance, India), Katsuko Azuma (Nihon Buyo, Japan) and I Made Pasek Tempo (Balinese dance-theatre). Later I Made Bandem and his wife Swasthi Widjaja Bandem participated in ISTA Salento (South Italy), taking part in the Theatrum Mundi in the castle of Copertino.

Kanichi Hanayagi came for the first time to ISTA on The Female Role in Holstebro in 1986 as an onnagata and then became one of the main Japanese performers when Katsuko Azuma died. Accompanied by Mark Oshima as interpreter and organiser, Kanichi took the artistic initiative and the economic responsibility of bringing a full Nihon Buyo performance to Londrina in 1994 giving a strong new impulse to the Theatrum Mundi composition.

I Made Djimat, Cristina Wistari, I Wayan Bawa and Ni Wayan Sekarini came for the first time to ISTA in Umeå (Sweden) in 1995 and demonstrated that only four people could present a whole calonarang with its dances and music. The desire to help Cristina Wistari and I Wayan Bawa to keep alive the oldest form of Balinese theatre gambuh, as well as their ensemble, was the main reason for accepting Trevor Davies' invitation to perform a version of *Hamlet* in Kronborg Castle in Elsinore in 2006.

Japanese Kanho Azuma and Akira Matsui, Chinese Pei Yanling, American Tom Leabhart (the Decroux tradition), Afro-Brazilian Augusto Omolú (Candomblé orixá dance) and Yalan Ling from Taiwan (Nanguan opera) also joined at different stages. All of them contributed with changes of direction to the Theatrum Mundi composition. We got to know Augusto Omolú when having to satisfy the organiser Nitis Jacon's wish for a Brazilian contribution to the ISTA session in Londrina in 1994, and we met Yalan Ling



Theatrum Mundi final scene, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil. Photo: Emidio Luisi

in Taiwan in 2007 when working with Gang A Tsui theatre on theatre anthropology in combination with Nanguan opera. Yalan was also involved as an ISTA teacher years later in Hungary, after a slow introduction through performing in different Theatrum Mundi. Her role in *Anástasis* as a mother mourning the death of her child touched many spectators.

For the ISTA session in Albino, Italy, in 2016 all teachers except for I Wayan Bawa and Odin Teatret actors were new. Some were introduced to ISTA after participating in The Magdalena Project activities (a network of women in contemporary theatre): these included the Japanese Keiin Yoshimura (kamigata-mai), the Indian Parvathy Baul (baul storytelling) and the Argentinian Ana Woolf. Kathakali, odissi and flamenco were represented by actors of Teatro tascabile di Bergamo, by now recognised as masters of these forms in their countries of origin. They were also a strong presence at the ISTA sessions in Favignana in 2021 and in Hungary in 2023. Alessandro Rigoletti's kathakali demon appeared from the depths of the stage with terrifying screams in *Anástasis* while in a previous scene Caterina Scotti had waltzed behind a light curtain in her fairylike white gown on stilts. The Brazilian group Mundu Rodá (cavalo marinho) joined the ISTA artistic staff for the session in Favignana, Italy. Consequently, the structure of the next big production of Theatrum Mundi, *Anástasis*, at the end of the ISTA session in Hungary in 2023 changed completely and many new scenes were created. The traditional 'love' and 'monster' scenes were no longer included. Only Death's transformation into a child remained.

The death of Sanjukta Panigrahi in 1997 made us think that a new Theatrum Mundi without her would be impossible. But a contract had already been agreed to present a Theatrum Mundi in Portugal in 1998. It was painful to realise not only that it was possible to make the performance, but that in having to substitute such a strong and beautiful presence forced us to find unexpected solutions that improved the outcome. We dedicated the performance to Sanjukta. At the end of the Theatrum Mundi the back curtain opened to show a park behind the back wall window of the Gulbenkian Theatre where an odissi performer danced at a great distance, thereby visualising the ghost of our memory.

I Wayan Bawa took over the direction of the Gambuh Ensemble when Cristina Wistari died in 2008 but did not have the same headstrong obsession that might overcome all organisational difficulties. In 2014 we invited a group of children from Bali to celebrate Odin Teatret's 50th anniversary with other young ensembles from Kenya, Italy and Brazil. Our collaboration with the Balinese ensemble did not continue after *The Marriage of Medea* but instead we have maintained a more frequent continuity with I Wayan Bawa who also performed in the last Theatrum Mundi in 2023, *Anástasis*.

Odin Teatret actor Torgeir Wethal died of cancer in 2010, and he last performed in *Ur-Hamlet* in 2009. On top of that the sudden death of Augusto Omolú, who was killed in 2013, left us in a state of dejection. There is a pause of eleven years between the ISTA session in Poland in 2005 and the next session in Albino, Italy, in 2016, and a pause of fourteen years between the last *Ur-Hamlet* in 2009 and *Anástasis* in 2023: a long time during which to keep the Theatrum Mundi fire alive. The energy of the younger artists helped us: the smile born from a musical improvisation in Favignana between Brazilian Alício Amaral and Indian Parvathy Baul sowed the first seed for possible future scenes.

Chorus

The Balinese ensemble in the *Theatrum Mundi* consisted of thirty-two people in *Ur-Hamlet*. Many of them were musicians, since we needed to have drum and flute players for the gambuh sections and different drum and gamelan players for the baris and topeng dances. These were also powerful means for an effective *kecak*, a soundscape based on a repeated texture of spoken rhythms made with the same hand movements performed by the whole group. One nice consequence of the large Balinese group was that it was cheaper to rehearse in Bali, where we could concentrate totally on the process without having to deal with other everyday questions.

Another regular grouping in the *Theatrum Mundi* was a chorus, either in connection with an ISTA session or collected exclusively for the performance. The first experience of a chorus happened in Bologna in 1990, led by a group of 'elders', which included the well-known Cuban director Vicente Revuelta, the Colombian Santiago García and the opera singer Susanne Vill. They did not have a physical participation on stage but were present through their voices. In *The Island of Labyrinths* and *Ego Faust* a local choir helped expand the vocal musicality of the performances. But it was for *Ur-Hamlet* that a deep structural change took place. It included a workshop for participants to train with all the international artists, participating in the creation of the performance, having daily meetings with Eugenio and finally performing together with all the Asian artists and Odin Teatret actors. The workshop participants were asked to bring one black, one white and one elegant costume. They were always reminded that a costume includes shoes, accessories and hairdo.

With the workshop participants, Augusto Omolú created a choreography of combined Orixá dances with scenes of a mass of people on the attack. Akira Matsui taught a Japanese chant with particular accents on the words, which became the proclamation of the laws of the New Order once Hamlet had achieved power, while I sang over the chorus with very high tones. For the second edition of *Ur-Hamlet* in Wrocław in 2009, the participants had time to develop individual scores or scenes between two or three people. They started from a composition that recreated the positions of painting reproductions and then developed the relationships to create small sketches with a story: a couple of lovers, a family walking in the streets, a fight between friends, a banquet at a wedding... It was interesting for the chorus participants to experience how the pre-expressive principles from the training contributed in building an expressive result without aiming at it directly.

The same workshop format was used for *The Marriage of Medea*. We accepted only actors under twenty-five and dressed them in hip-hop clothes. Augusto Omolú worked on an itinerant version of the dances with the help of Cleber da Paixão's drums and songs. Here the party mood was used to create scenes of the wedding feast. Augusto had a great ability in working with numerous groups, giving energy to the choreographies he created so that every individual gave their maximum. For *Anástasis* this task was taken over by Ana Woolf who based her compositions on Tadashi Suzuki's Grammar of the Feet training, and by Mundu Rodá who guided the feast choreographies with ribbons through a technical knowledge of the impulses necessary to maintain the rhythm of the steps and their captivating energy. Parvathy Baul took over the task of sharing songs so

that all the participants of the chorus could sing together whilst sharing simple dance steps.

Set

The courtyard of the monastery in Bologna and of the military museum in Wrocław, the castles of Copertino and Kronborg, Londrina's lake, the palace in Bologna's park and in the field near Ravenna, the church in Kryzowa, the streets of Holstebro, the theatres in Bielefeld, Lisbon, Copenhagen and Budapest each gave natural settings to the *Theatrum Mundi* performances. This had consequences on the scenes in the performances. We had to decide whether to underline or oppose the symmetry of the space, to use or defy the different levels and heights, or to open or close down the space through lightings. The first question has always been where to place the different orchestras and whether they should create a background or different counterpoints to the action. The second question has always been how to transform the space during a performance.

The National Theatre in Budapest offered many possibilities for *Anástasis*. The stage could be divided into sections and had parts of the stage that could rise or descend. The depth of the stage clearly changed by using just the proscenium, adding sections through transparent and non-transparent curtains, or opening the backstage doors. The digital designer Stefano Di Buduo was given the task of visually transforming the whole theatre space, including the audience, into a garden of blossoming cherry trees that finally wither and die. For *Anástasis* (Resurrection), Eugenio needed nature (the Japanese cherry trees), animals (the Brazilian bull) and humans (the child) to live, die and resurrect. Overall the projections, the curtains and the lights combined to create these transformations. After Death turned into a child held in a woman's arms and all the performers joined for a last acknowledgement on stage, the whole group disappeared on a descending lift platform to reappear twice to take applause, maintaining the same tableau, while clown characters juggled and danced at the sides.

The architect and set designer Luca Ruzza worked for *Ur-Hamlet* in the courtyard of Hamlet's castle in Elsinore. Performing in the open air at dusk, the lighting changed slowly by adding electric projections to the glass bowls filled with water, which reflected and widened the beam of light, as was done in ancient Rome. The stage needed also to be circular to accommodate six-hundred spectators closely enough to see the details of the action. Eight golden *umbul-umbul*, long and thin Balinese flags, blew in the wind and marked out a background, together with two orchestra groups placed symmetrically on the two sides of an entrance. The orchestra banks at the back closed the circle created in part by the spectators' seating. The Foreigners invaded the castle by climbing up from behind or crawling underneath the seating. Only the other characters used the 'official' entrances.

The Danish set designer Jan de Neergaard collaborated for *The Island of Labyrinths* and *Ego Faust*. At first, he offered his propositions in small maquettes but soon realised that Eugenio needed to see the special arrangement in actual size so as to be able to take decisions, even if it meant throwing everything away. Characteristic of *The Island of Labyrinths* and then for *Ego Faust*, were the different stage planes that appeared with the

rising of successive silk curtains, the shiny black and silver geometric floor that defined the space with rectangular squares and stripes, the podium for the main characters at the back, the five orchestra sections distributed at the two sides, and a gangway that rose from the stage front up in between the spectators, which was used for some performers' entrances and exits. A follow spot illuminated both Gretchen's exit with Death as a bride following on behind, and the entrance of the child who ran on stage to where her mother beat her with a leather belt. Faust's table was a white tablecloth stretched by two performers holding it at the sides while the polar bear Otto lay down in front to become a carpet.

Costumes

Sanjukta Panigrahi had a range of brightly coloured saris, which she adorned with golden bracelets, flowers, a complex hairdo and ankle bells. She always asked Eugenio which colour she should choose for the Theatrum Mundi. Eugenio mostly preferred the white or bright pink ones. The Balinese ensemble took hours to prepare their make up and to put on the several layers of their costumes painted with decorative patterns in gold. The characters had different crowns and earpieces always adorned with fresh flowers. The Japanese buyo kabuki costumes also had many layers, hiding various precious kimonos underneath the top one. Their make-up made the skin white and underlined the eyes with red colour and black lines. The Japanese performers travelled with special boxes to transport the very expensive different male and female wigs made of real hair. To dress they placed paper carpets on the floor. Everything in their changing rooms had to be spotlessly clean.

How could the western costumes live up to the extraordinary Asian coloured golden ones? The men wore tails or tailored jackets over elegant black or white trousers. Roberta Carreri in *The Island of Labyrinths* wore a Spanish flamenco dress. It was changed for *Ego Faust* for which she first appeared in a black overcoat and hat with long gloves, which she removed when starting the dance to seduce I Nyoman Budi Arta, revealing a shining grey costume with a pleated long skirt that could be lifted over her head in various positions. To play Hamlet's mother Gertrud in *Ur-Hamlet*, Roberta used this same costume though adding a regal-looking jacket with long sleeves and a double pointed cloth crown bought in Bali. For Saxo Gramaticus in *Ur-Hamlet*, I had a bald head and wore a long, multicoloured silk coat. In other Theatrum Mundi, if I was not in one of Mr Peanut's costumes, I used the Mexican embroidered dresses with very wide skirts in a red, black and white version, adorned by Colombian shawls and high heeled handmade Italian leather shoes.

Music

In the first years, the succession of scenes were simply accompanied by the music that belonged to the tradition being presented in the anthology. Then, when the Theatrum Mundi performances began to build a montage that allowed the different genres to interact, it became more complex to determine the merging of the music with their different melodies, tuning, rhythms and volumes. The pace of the Balinese gamelan was

in total contrast with the sparseness of the Japanese beats. The Japanese instruments and songs emerged from an outline of silence, while the European accordion and guitar created a continuous base on which to place melodies or rhythmical accents. Raghunath Panigrahi's delicate halftone vocal variations, Annada Prasanna's range of ragas when playing the flute, Gangadhar Pradhan's ability to make the *tablas* speak as well as give a rhythm, each at times had to fight with the direct vehemence of the Brazilian *atabaque* drums played by Ory Sacramento, Bira Monteiro and Jorge Paim.

Often in the Asian traditions the musicians have a higher status than the dancers. This could complicate the relationship with them if Eugenio needed to prioritise the visual effectiveness of the action, or when he demanded that the musical instruments should have an expression that could awaken associations, or when – in pure Odin Teatret custom – screams, texts or parallel melodies were added to break the harmony and interrupt the music before reaching its conclusion. Various musicians have collaborated to contribute an essential quality to the live music in the Theatrum Mundi, always a fundamental partner for the credibility of the different scenes. Amongst the musicians I would like to mention Ivan Hansen, Frans Winther and Annada Prasanna Pattnaik.

Danish Ivan Hansen had spent a long time in Bali studying its classical music and finding ways of dialoguing with Western musical tonalities. When he came to the ISTA session in Bologna in 1990, he worked on the tuning of the different instruments, making us all aware of the importance of the choice of a gong to accompany a guitar.

Frans Winther worked on his compositions to include Western choirs in dialogue with the Asian melodies, and to take advantage of the vocal capacities of Odin Teatret's actors and of the theatrical effect of particular instruments like horns and trumpets. When I listen to the recordings of *Ur-Hamlet*, I am always impressed by the music Frans Winther composed for this performance.

Annada Prasanna Pattnaik's amazing musical ear helped find solutions in the most complex montage of contrasting melodies. We really appreciated his capacity of combining actors with little musical training and classical professional musicians in *Don Giovanni all'Inferno*, an opera with Odin Teatret and Ensemble MidtVest.

In *Anástasis*, the musical experience of Brazilian Alício Amaral who played a kind of violin called a *rebecca* and of Parvathy Baul's songs and *ektara* were confronted with Mirto Baliani's contemporary soundscape achieved through the distortion of recordings to find a new Theatrum Mundi musicality. Brigitte Cirla was a singer for *Ur-Hamlet*. Apart from accompanying Gertrud's mourning song at the death of her two husbands and singing Frans' compositions, during rehearsals Brigitte taught me possible variations in very high tones and trained Augusto Omolú in the sound of cock cries.

One composition based on Bob Dylan's song *Tomorrow is a Long Time* was recurrent in many Theatrum Mundi and with the participation of each orchestra. Its origin goes back to an improvisation during a session of The University of Eurasian Theatre in Fara Sabina, Italy, in 1993. Eugenio asked Sanjukta to share examples of how she improvised variations over the text that the singer repeated. Her movements commented or presented different possible interpretations of the situation described by the song. To understand the relationship better between the text and movement, Eugenio asked Jan Ferslev to sing a song by Bob Dylan, repeating the verses while

Sanjukta performed the variations of her interpretation. The repetitions of the verses of the song were fixed to allow the time Sanjukta needed for her movements. For example, when the song says 'I can hear the heart so softly pounding', Sanjukta first put her hand to her ear and marked the pounding with the eyes, then her hand gesture near the chest moved in the rhythm of a heartbeat, then the other hand went to her ear and her hand gesture was repeated.

In *The Island of Labyrinths*, Bob Dylan's song first accompanied Sanjukta alone, and then through her dialogue with Augusto, at which point the Balinese gamelan entered to mark a change in the situation when other performers joined the scene, until the Brazilian drums and Annada Prasanna Pattnaik's flute increased the intensity, before suddenly stopping to hear the sound of sitar strings. The music held all the individual scenes together and gave a common ground to the different performers.

Bob Dylan's song was also used as a base for an improvisation between Akira Matsui, Augusto Omolú and myself in Wrocław, in Poland, in 2005. It is interesting to compare the slow movements of Akira's fan, his steps and turns, to notice how he follows the music to give a completely different perception to the viewer than that of Sanjukta's action. Akira seemed to respond with a continuous flow that opposed the music's intention and creating an association of longing that the song speaks of even if Akira did not understand its language. It is the music combined with the dance that gives the real information.

Narration and simultaneity

The narrative thread in a *Theatrum Mundi* tends to be simple in contrast to the complexity of images, the succession and simultaneity of actions happening at the same time and in the same space, even if belonging to situations that have nothing directly to do with each other. Characters that move close to each other does not mean that they have a relationship.

In a *Theatrum Mundi*, the outline of the story that helps the spectators orientate themselves is usually given by the title, the summary of scenes, the presentation of the characters in the written programme, or with short sentences during the performance itself. When the texts are in a language that the spectators understand, they are informative. For example, in *Ur-Hamlet*, standing behind or beside them, Saxo Gramaticus introduced the characters as they entered: Horvendil, the governor of Jutland, Hamlet's father; Fengo, the governor of Jutland's brother, Hamlet's uncle; Gertrud, Hamlet's mother, cries for her slaughtered husband; Hamlet, who plans to revenge his father and pretends to be mad.

As Saxo, I did not introduce Akira Matsui who brought the plague to the castle. It was the change of lights and music that made evident to spectators that a complete transformation was taking place, marking a turning point in the story. The space had emptied so the spectators could concentrate on Akira approaching the table where the Foreigners who had invaded the castle were celebrating a wedding. The drums and gong underlined how his stick and the waving of his fan hit the guests as well as the bride from a distance, and how they immediately fell to the ground.

Later Saxo continued to explain the story: Hamlet returns with a faithful warrior to take power; Hamlet proclaims the law of a new order; and, tomorrow instead of birds, dogs will wake us. When the other texts said by Saxo Gramaticus did not need to be understood and could consist just in vocal musicality, he spoke Latin. The texts had a meaning and referred to Hamlet's story, but it was not necessary for the spectators to understand them. This was equivalent to the kawi ancient language, spoken by the Balinese in their gambuh scenes.

In *Four Poems for Sanjukta*, Iben Nagel Rasmussen was a storyteller who informed the spectators of what was happening with reference to the characters of Faust and Mephistopheles. In *Ego Faust*, the classical story was followed quite literally through the succession of scenes, helping the spectators relate to what they might already know, even though the power of the performance as it touched the spectators was enabled by a montage of attractions that is often not understood. Eugenio leads the spectators to consider what they are seeing by including empty black frames in the 'film strip' of the performance, which allows for a mental change. For example, this facilitated the acceptance that Mephistopheles was played by two performers, Augusto Omolú and Roberta Carreri, instead of one.

Simultaneity is the base of the dramaturgical structure in a *Theatrum Mundi*. In *Ur-Hamlet*, it seems as if two performances are taking place independently from each other. The Court presenting the story of Hamlet has no relationship with the Foreigners who invade the castle. Their acting codes are dissimilar, one formalised and the other as if every-day. The costumes come from different worlds: the characters of Hamlet's story are elaborated through rich garments while the Foreigners wear contemporary, perhaps more insignificant clothes. Different scenes presented at the same time make a dissection of reality at different levels: while Hamlet stands holding a skull in his hands, the chorus sings the laws of the New Order, a child carries out a warrior dance on top of a covered well, the two king brothers present again the fight in which they kill each other and fall to the ground, the gravediggers cover the bodies of the dead Foreigners with sheets, the tractor truck continues to load the corpses, Saxo says his last text and a family of immigrants enters talking to each other without noticing the spectators.

In *Ego Faust*, while Gretchen kills the baby with a stone brought by Death, a group of young Balinese girls play with pebbles in the other corner, singing a kind of nursery rhyme and giggling. Here the connection is given by the stones, and not by meaning. Connections can be indicated by props, words, music, space, time, costumes, actions, or positions. During the process of creation, our task as performers and director is to understand the cues that lead us along the path that the *Theatrum Mundi* is showing us, not the other way round.

The *Theatrum Mundi* performances decide themselves what they want to be and how to live in the minds of spectators. We can just be witnesses of the process. The future is to be discovered every time, hidden behind the curtain.



Anástasis rehearsals at the National Theatre, Budapest, Hungary, 2023. Photo: Rina Skeel

Géza Pintér-Németh

A Retrospective on *Anástasis* Directed by Eugenio Barba

Abstract: *The performance Anástasis (Resurrection) directed by Eugenio Barba, as part of the 9th Madách International Theatre Meeting (MITEM) and the 10th Theatre Olympics, was presented on 20 May 2023 at the National Theatre of Hungary. The production brought together the results of the 17th ISTA session. The text below summarises the event and gives a retrospective through an interview with Julia Varley and Eugenio Barba, and focuses on Anástasis, a Theatrum Mundi performance in dialogue with the main stage of the National Theatre of Hungary. Analysis of the performance leads towards an interpretation of the Third Theatre movement.*

Keywords: *Third Theatre, Third Space, Hungarian National Theatre, Anástasis, 17th ISTA 2023*

17th ISTA in 2023

The 17th ISTA took place from 8 to 20 May 2023 for fifty participants arriving to Hungary from 27 countries. The first part of the programme (8-16 May) was hosted in Pécsvárad Castle, where in four different halls every morning participants attended parallel group sessions and were introduced to the principles of different theatre genres based on movement or vocal practices. During the afternoons, Eugenio Barba gave theatre theory lectures and led the rehearsals of *Anástasis*, involving all the participants in the process. The theatre-dance traditions represented by the masters in this ISTA session were flamenco, kathakali, noh theatre, Balinese dance, Nanguan opera, and baul song and dance. That Hungary could host such an exceptional event of indisputable significance for theatre studies and actor's training seemed like a distant dream just a few years before. The growing interest in Hungary for theatre anthropology was also a consequence of the publication in Hungarian of important books such as *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*¹, and *The Five Continents of the Theatre*² thanks to Zsófia Rideg, János Regős and Nikolett Pintér-Németh. Recently Hungarian theatre experts have even started using key concepts introduced thanks to theatre anthropology research. András Tímár summarises some key ISTA notions in one of his recent articles *The Able Body*:

1. Barba and Savarese 2005.
2. Barba and Savarese 2017.



105

At the International School of Theatre Anthropology, established in 1979, researchers [sought to understand] where the energy of the Eastern dancer-actor comes from, what principles give rise to the presence of the stage performer, and how the sacred and ritual movement forms of the East could be integrated into contemporary European theatre. The methods for achieving presence were examined through the concept of what Barba calls the 'decided body', which is shaped by extra-daily body techniques. The richness of these techniques reaches the quality of a body-orchestra in the experience of the spectator, as the various communicative tools of the body (body parts, voice, rhythm) can make an impact simultaneously.³

In addition to the programme of research, an ISTA Festival took place at the Bóbita Puppet Theatre in Pécs presenting performances of each artist as an example of their theatre genre. The ISTA Festival is documented in an official programme booklet.⁴ Sinum Theatre, as one of the organisers, was disappointed by the limited interest of the local spectators and practitioners for the unique repertory that the 17th ISTA could offer to the region, noting that most of the seats were taken by the seventy ISTA participants and staff.

Another disappointment was when a few Hungarian participants left the eight-day programme before its conclusion. 25% of the participants of this ISTA session were Hungarians thanks to a special condition in the selection process requested by the programme's sponsor. Usually, ISTA participants are selected from a list of applications that can be three times the actual capacity, so the chosen participants are aware of spending time in one of the 'acropolises' of the international theatre world. ISTA sessions are characterised by an immersive and process-oriented atmosphere, offering opportunities to the participants and the teachers for an exchange of experiences and informal encounters giving birth to long lasting professional and personal relationships.

At times ISTA sessions have ended by showing an interdisciplinary Theatrum Mundi performance, but it has rarely been such a large-scale production as *Anástasis*, involving the participants as well as the ISTA artists in the creative process. The rehearsals were an integrated part of the whole teaching and research process. For most of the participants the experience of performing with international artists on the stage of the National Theatre in front of nearly six hundred spectators was unique, while some participants regretted that the pedagogical priority of the programme had shifted towards the creation of *Anástasis*.

Interview with Julia Varley and Eugenio Barba

GP-N: What were the origins of the *Anástasis* production?

EB: When the director of the National Theatre, Attila Vidnyánszky, decided that there should be a performance in Budapest at the end of the ISTA session, I was suddenly faced with the huge task of deciding what it should be about, since a performance

always tells a story. The ISTA artists come from very different backgrounds, and some of them have not taken part in an ISTA session before. I needed a universally recognisable and extremely simple story. Death, birth and love are the three archetypes around which stories have been built all over the world. Looking for a connection between the three led me to the theme of 'resurrection'. Since we no longer believe in resurrection as we did before, it was not an easy theme.

I remembered a scene of a performance by Keiin Yoshimura that portrays the joy of watching cherry trees blossom. This scene evokes the complementarity of nature: the simultaneous presence of death and rebirth. Then I thought of the Brazilian bumba meu boi tradition, familiar to the ISTA artists Juliana Pardo and Alício Amaral, in which a sacred bull dies and is resurrected by the rhythm of drums. I had a resurrection situation from the world of plants, and one from the world of animals. I needed one from human life and I imagined a child who dies and is then resurrected. This meant showing a family: a father, mother and child. The child's death offered many theatrical possibilities: death, burial, despair, mourning and consolation. I could achieve a dramaturgical structure by placing all of this within a layered, simultaneous montage, in which each scene should affect the spectators through its energy – like the Japanese blossoming cherry trees or the Brazilian bumba meu boi. After establishing the associative links, I could begin assembling the individual scenes.

I invited a digital stage designer, Stefano Di Buduo, giving him the task of transforming the whole theatre space into a blossoming cherry orchard. The ISTA participants could be a large chorus entering and supporting or bridging between scenes, for example after the Brazilian bumba meu boi scene, during the carnivalesque celebration of life, or accompanying the child's funeral procession. These were some of the structural elements, which helped me to find a dramaturgical variety and rhythmic alternation in the production.

When I arrived in Pécsvárad, I still didn't know how all this would come together, and I was genuinely concerned about how I would manage this task. I had only eight days in total and, in this time, I also had to deal with the practical lessons concerning pre-expressivity and the principles of theatre anthropology. The essence of ISTA is to pass on the practical experience of pre-expressivity so the participants not only understand it but learn how to build it into an artistic expression.

Leading both the morning lessons and the creative work simultaneously demanded a lot of energy from me. In the end, fortunately, the performance came together and worked. A key factor in the preparation was that Stefano Di Buduo, our light and digital stage designer, and Mirto Baliani, *Anástasis*' soundscape designer, had visited the National Theatre two months before the rehearsals began. I am grateful to the technicians and the leadership of the National Theatre who during the whole process were generously open to fulfil our requests. In similar situations, our experience is that institutional theatres operate according to rigid rules: you're not allowed to stay five minutes longer in a rehearsal space or you need permission from a specific technician just to move an object, while in group theatre we are used to everyone doing all kinds of tasks. These constraints could have created unbearable conditions, working in an unfamiliar terrain for us. But happily it did not happen.

3. Timár 2022, 11–12.

4. <https://www.sinumtheatre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ISTA-2023-Musorfuzet-Booklet.pdf>

GP-N: How do you look back on *Anástasis* today, after one year?

EB: This production meant a great deal to us, because we unexpectedly realised that we had created a model that could be applied in other contexts as well. Today, we are trying to present it as an intercultural performance, based on a cast of fifty actors from the host country, who work together with performers from all over the world. There was a plan to re-stage *Anástasis* in China with fifty or sixty Chinese actors and with the ISTA ensemble, but finally the organisers cancelled it, saying it was too expensive. In this perspective, Attila Vidnyánszky's attitude was exceptional: he made it possible for the production to happen. Someone has to believe it is a truly special and globally unique production.

JV: It was also important that we were able to apply what we had learned from *Ur-Hamlet* and *The Marriage of Medea*, previous Theatrum Mundi productions for which artists coming from far away were joined by a larger chorus group. Since the ISTA session in 2016, we had gone back to inviting individual artists to represent their theatre genre. Now *Anástasis* offered again the possibility of creating a Theatrum Mundi performance with the participants forming the chorus.

GP-N: My impression was that *Anástasis* represented a synthesis of the 20th century vision of the Third Theatre movement or was it the summary of an entire professional life?

EB: One could say that *Anástasis* embodies the experiences that Julia, the various artist-teachers, and I have accumulated through our work with ISTA. ISTA, primarily through Odin Teatret and me, sparked an interest for Asian theatre traditions all over in Europe, especially amongst Third Theatre groups. It happened from the 1970s, with significant contributions from people like Renzo Vescovi, the founding director of Teatro tascabile di Bergamo. We are talking of about fifty years of accumulated intercultural exchanges and research.

All these ever evolving and reciprocal artistic relationships are still reflected within ISTA today, supporting the emergence of theatre works that differ from what is usually considered theatre. It is still called theatre, but in every aspect – technical, economic, aesthetic, and social – it is different from conventional models. Attila Vidnyánszky made it possible for this kind of miracle to happen in Hungary, understanding that theatre can be something different from other standards around the world. Even now, I encounter people for whom the Hungarian ISTA opened new horizons.

JV: ISTA is built around theatre anthropology and its core principles like the study of pre-expressivity. In Hungary the teaching was also oriented toward the creation of a performance, creating a connection between the pedagogical and creative processes and allowing participants to see Eugenio Barba directing first-hand. The experiences of ISTA and of Odin Teatret converged in this format. There had been previous Theatrum Mundi productions at the end of ISTA sessions, but not in such an integral way that allowed the participants to follow the whole creative process.

Another convergence happened between the younger and older generations of artists. Early ISTA performances were filled with a youthful enthusiastic energy ready to confront the world. That energy was present when I had to embody the character of Mr Peanut, the skull-headed figure in a suit on stilts. Last year I wasn't on stilts, but when I was on stage as Mr Peanut with nearly forty participants behind me in the funeral scene, that same energy surged through me. For me it was a reconnection with something essential.

EB: *Anástasis* was a distillation, a manifestation of something basic.

GP-N: How do you look back on ISTA today?

EB: The Pécsvárad Castle was a beautiful venue. Spaces are significant for me, and the conditions there were exceptional. At the same time, it was bitterly cold when we had to work in a wind-exposed space covered only by tarps, and this had a harmful effect on the quality of the programme.

JV: The presence of István Berecz, representing Hungarian folk dance, who took integral part of the creative process, was unique. I have many beautiful memories of the people we met in Pécsvárad and Pécs. At the same time, there was a noticeable national imbalance among the participants. There were many Hungarians, and some of them did not appear to be particularly motivated. Maybe they came only because of the encouragement of a university department head. If we were in a similar situation again, we should devote more energy to building bridges.

GP-N.: Will there be another ISTA? Is there anything planned?

EB: There are no plans for the moment, but perhaps one day there will be another mad person who believes that an ISTA is a better investment than a tank or other weapons.

Was *Anástasis* a Third Theatre performance?

As it is well known, Eugenio Barba defined as Third Theatre a movement of theatre groups with their autonomous production systems and ethical principles, different from those of traditional and experimental theatres. Odin Teatret's 60th anniversary in 2024 and the Hungarian ISTA session in 2023 were occasions to reflect on the contributions and lessons offered by of this movement.

The concept of Third Theatre, along with its theoretical and historical contexts, was summarised among others by theatre historian Ian Watson.⁵ In the decades following the 1970s, the term was adopted by a great number of theatre groups. Watson identifies the key characteristics of Third Theatre as theatres that are typically independent, though not amateur; theatres that often exist on the periphery; whose members do not tend to come from institutional training; groups that distinguish themselves from both mainstream repertory and avant-garde theatres; that usually define themselves

5. Watson 1993, 18-21.

as collectives in which personal and professional lives are intertwined; and that often cooperate in networks.

Another striking definition of Third Theatre can be found in the synopsis of a recent book by Jane Turner and Patrick Campbell:

...we are not arguing that Third Theatre is either a monolithic entity or a postmodern cacophony of fragmented difference – we recognise that the Third Theatre is a plural, transnational community, but nevertheless one with a shared (often unwittingly) set of values and practical principles, as well as a number of definable concerns.”⁶

Many European and Latin American groups share the principle, intention and often compulsion of experimenting with alternative theatre spaces, for example by making street theatre.

Barba's work – since the foundation of Odin Teatret – is characterised by a physical and conceptual openness: his productions are often created in non-conventional theatre spaces indoors or outdoors. The creative re-interpretation of the material and symbolic conditions of an institutional theatre space – the main stage of the Hungarian National Theatre – by an ‘outsider’ is a constitutive element of the performance *Anástasis*.

Anástasis was created with the active involvement of all ISTA participants, many of whom belong or used to belong to theatre groups closely related to the Third Theatre movement. Marco De Marinis⁷ underlined that the experience of ISTA is a common source for transgenerational or often autodidactic pedagogical practice for Third Theatre groups.

Anástasis, a result of the 17th ISTA, can be understood as an intercultural montage of different theatre traditions and as an experiment towards enchantment. As Campbell and Turner mention:

For many of the Third Theatre groups, we argue that their training laboratories, approaches to dramaturgy and engagement with cultural action foreground and specifically seek to restore a sense of enchantment.⁸

Seeking enchantment was surely a main driving force of the ISTA participants who stayed until the moment of performing. It was not necessarily seeking a personal enchantment that alters the state of consciousness but serving a ‘collective theatre construction’ resulting in a different kind of (cathartic) encounter between artists and international spectators.

The montage of different traditional forms in *Anástasis* recalls what Turner and Campbell explain about the relation between theatre anthropology and Third Theatre: groups often set out to “objectively dissect local cultural forms”⁹ to gain useful training material or to stage elements in a production. In *Anástasis*, the montage approach of traditional forms was criticised by some Hungarian spectators. The culturally specific

6. Turner and Campbell 2021, 162.

7. Marco De Marinis 2023/2024, 21-32.

8. Turner and Campbell 2021, 163.

9. Ibidem 8



Matheus de Aquino and Rodrigo Lopes dos Reis with chorus in *Anástasis*, Theatre Olympics, National Theatre Budapest, Hungary, 2023. Photo: Francesco Galli

interpretation of aesthetical principles is more dominant in Hungary among theatre makers and theoreticians, as András Tímár underlined in his review of *The Secret Art of the Performer*.¹⁰

This is interesting for the elaboration of the traces that the 17th ISTA left behind in Hungary. I think that the participants did not only receive a technical ‘toolkit’ or a taste of different disciplines but an ability to interact with the sources behind the traditions, what ISTA calls ‘learning to learn’.

The intention of embodied practice of traditional forms is not to dissect the form but to

re-experience [...] the relationship between the object and natural environment [of the sources behind the traditions], enabling a re-connectivity to language as a lived experience through a pre-conceptual observation of the environment. This state of mind has something to do with a childlike approach of discovering the world...¹¹

I reckon that re-experiencing the sources behind the tradition is one of the main goals of ISTA sessions. The early morning rituals, the natural environment and the historical buildings become essential elements of the programme. As a participant of the 15th

10. Tímár 2021, 108.

11. Pintér-Németh 2025, 153.

ISTA in Albino, Italy, I confess that now I can't remember the technical approaches of the various disciplines, but I do recall my state of mind at five in the morning looking at a bird flying above my head in the sky.

During the preparation of *Anástasis*, Eugenio Barba's review of the National Theatre's main stage possibilities – just as for an alternative space – was the natural consequence of an encounter between his artistic biography and the venue. The involvement of different expressive forms, unusual for an institutional theatre, was also part of the process: how some actors entered on stage from the audience; the use of digital images which had an effect on the visual language of the production giving a depth of perspective and making the audience part of the stage; the use of rising platforms to open the vertical possibilities of the set design and evoke a continuous slow or dynamic transformation.

The performance *Anástasis* transformed the Hungarian National Theatre's main stage into the place of an experience centred event, which – drawing on Edward Soja's concept – could be explained as a 'third space'. Soja describes the 'third space' as emerging from the overlapping of the first space (the physical building) and the second space (its conceptual or symbolic interpretation, such as a street name). Therefore, the third space is grounded in personal experience. The origin of this idea is based on Jorge Luis Borges' story, in *The Aleph*, which describes a magical glass sphere that reveals the entire universe when it is viewed from a specific point. As Borges writes: "The Aleph's diameter was probably little more than an inch, but all space was there, actual and undiminished."¹² The *Anástasis* production can be seen as an attempt to transform the whole main stage of the National Theatre (including the audience), into such an 'Aleph', a third space which also serves as a distillation of a life's work and a convergence of the Third Theatre movement.

Since the performance was not based on a pre-written script or play, its dramaturgy was built on the physical presence of the actors, the communication of the 'body-orchestra' as well as a soundscape from various sources. Following Li Wei,¹³ one might say that *Anástasis* transformed the National Theatre's main stage into a site of a *translanguaging* event, a space where the spectator becomes an active agent of the environment and the theatre experience can transcend the everyday. The performance was an example of Third Theatre, a theatre that proclaims the ideal of a living space, outside of power structures, and an event space ideal for free expression of opinion and human encounters.

Anástasis appears to be a fruit of the Third Theatre movement, a performance that challenges the understanding of conventional theatre spaces, opens associations to establish an impassioned relation with the building hosting it and with the increasingly polarisation of our contemporary global society.

12. Jorge Luis Borges, *Aleph*, available on this link: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/borgesaleph.pdf>

13. Wei 2018, 9-30.

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Facts and Tales

ISTA sessions 8 - 9

ISTA 8

LONDRINA, 11-22 August 1994

Tradition and Founders of Tradition

Nitis Jacon Introduces

The first time I met Eugenio Barba, to tell the truth, it should have been a second meeting. It was 1988, in Huampaní, Peru. Ten years before I had been invited to participate in the first theatre meeting in Ayacucho. I could not go at that time as the Government Social Department would not allow me to leave the country because of political reasons. Before going to Huampaní, I had seen some performances by Odin Teatret and Farfa, in Montevideo. I also took a course conducted by Eugenio Barba and had seen the work of Iben Nagel Rasmussen. It was in the *Reencuentro Ayacucho* (Ayacucho Re-encounter), though, that I had the real chance to exchange experiences and knowledge and learn from Eugenio Barba.

At first, I didn't know exactly why I had gone to the *Reencuentro Ayacucho*; I didn't know what I was looking for. I even had a certain misgiving about getting in touch with a theatre director who had become a sort of myth for the Latin American theatre. However, I learned. Above all I learned that it was really a re-encounter: with unconscious roots, with the very work that we were developing here in Londrina, full of so many fears and doubts, with the same *ethos* that had fascinated me in the theatre of Guarnieri and Boal, in Zé Celso's Oficina, in the courage of João das Neves and his permanent indignation. I could recognise in him *my* theatre, *our* theatre.

About a year ago, Eugenio Barba invited me to hold an ISTA international meeting here in Londrina. It would be the first meeting to be held outside Europe, the first meeting to be held in Latin America. I asked him for some time to think about it before taking my decision. In fact, I was not in doubt. I always knew what this would signify, what it would be to introduce Afro-Brazilian culture in a scientific-pedagogic congress, considering that the theme was really appropriate to our needs. What I was not certain

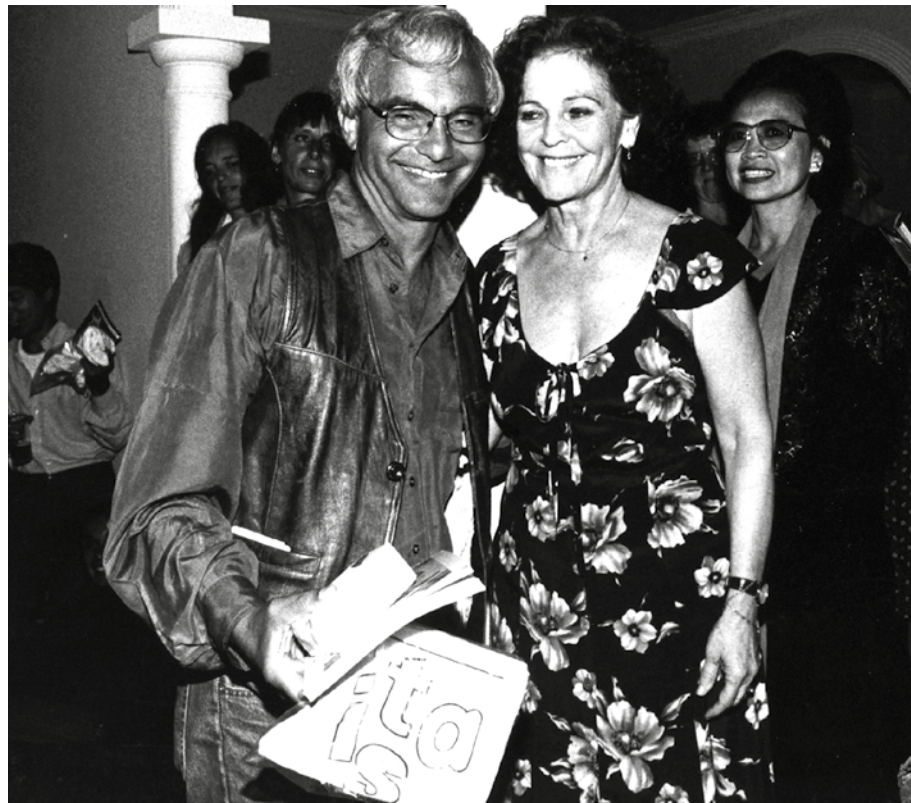


about was if we would have the 'ante' for such a big project. In a country in which culture is relegated to an 'empty space', without political support or funds, one must dream, dare and sweat much in order to realise Peter Brook's metaphor. But the first step was the sensibility and enthusiasm of the Mayor of Londrina, Luiz Eduardo Cheida, who incentivised us and guaranteed his support: "Let's do it!". Afterwards the receptiveness of the Minister of Culture, Jeronimo Moscardo, who gave me in a few minutes of interview on the eve of his inauguration a lucid explanation of the policy which he was assuming.

Suddenly, I no longer felt alone. I had partners, not those whom I always had in dreams, but of the real world. At the age of sixty, Londrina assumes its mature role. With the saving of ethics and open government, the Nation recuperates State and demands a new cultural policy. All these things are inevitably linked. Without them we would take more time to be able to recognise, respect and go beyond our myths. And our traditions.

Londrina, 15th of November 1993

Nitis Jacon, Director of FILO (Festival Internacional de Londrina)



Eugenio Barba and Nitis Jacon, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi

Eugenio Barba

Tradition and Founders of Tradition

Traditions preserve and pass on a form, not the sense that animates it. Everyone must define and reinvent the sense for themselves. This reinvention expresses a personal, cultural and professional identity.

Traditions stratify and refine the knowledge of successive generations of founders through their forms and allow each new artist to *begin* without being obliged to start from scratch. Traditions are a precious inheritance, spiritual nourishment, roots.

They are also constrictions. There is no identity without a struggle against the constrictions of the forms inherited from 'tradition'. Without such a struggle, artistic life collapses. The spark of life, in art, is the tension between the rigour of the form and the rebellious detail that shakes it from within and makes it take on a new value, unrecognisable features.

The performer who does not belong to a codified scenic tradition often risks feeling disinherited, rootless, without concrete reference points to disobey. Those who do not have a tradition often idealise it and regard it with superstitious belief, as though it could give sense to their work.

A longing for form has permeated the theatre of our century, from Stanislavski to Grotowski, from Meyerhold to Brecht, from Artaud to the great and unacknowledged Decroux, from Gordon Craig to Isadora Duncan, Jaques Copeau, Martha Graham, Kazuo Ohno... A lineage of founders of tradition unfolds across the artificially separated fields of theatre, mime and dance.

Each of us is the child of somebody's work. Every founder of tradition has a past which they have chosen. It is for us to decide, on a professional level, which history we belong to and who our ancestors are, ancestors in whose values we recognise ourselves. They may belong to distant eras and cultures, but the sense of their work is near to us.

To the hurried glance, the distinction between traditions and founders of tradition is equivalent to that between classical schools and innovators, between the orthodox and the rebel, between the classical Asian actor-dancer hidden within a golden costume and the restless and eclectic research of contemporary performers. It is not like this. Even the most rigid tradition only lives through reinvention by its interpreters. The more subtle and imperceptible these inventions seem, the deeper they actually are.

In daily practice, 'tradition' is equivalent to 'knowledge', or rather 'technique', a much more humble and efficacious word. Technique does not define us but it is the necessary instrument for overcoming the borders which confine us.

Technical knowledge allows us to meet other forms and introduces us to the 'tradition of traditions', to those principles which constantly recur under the differences of styles, cultures and personalities.

The aim is not to identify oneself with a tradition, but to construct a nucleus of values, a personal identity, both rebellious and loyal towards one's own roots. The way to achieve this is through a minutely detailed practice that constitutes our professional identity.



Eugenio Barba, Sanjukta Panigrahi and Carlos Simioni during a demonstration, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994.
Photo: Emidio Luisi

8th Session - LONDRINA (BRAZIL) - 11-22 August 1994

Title: Tradition and Founders of Traditions

Organisers: Nitís Jacon, FILO, Festival Internacional de Londrina. **Financed by:** Fundação Banco do Brasil; Universidade Estadual de Londrina; Prefeitura Municipal de Londrina; Ministério da Cultura; Grupo de Teatro Núcleo I; Grupo de Teatro Proteu; Secretaria de Estado da Cultura do Paraná; Government of India; Department of Tourism; The Japan Foundation.

Artistic Staff

Bali:

Swasthi Widjaja Bandem, dancer
Desak Suarti Laksmi, dancer, musician
Tjokorda Raka Tisnu, dancer, musician
Tjokorda Istri Putra Padmini, dancer
I Nyoman Sedana, dancer, musician
Ni Nyoman Candri, dancer, singer
I Gede O Surya Negara, dancer, musician
Ni Ketut Suryatini, dancer, musician
Ida Bagus Nyoman Mas, dancer, musician
Ni Warastrasari Dewi Bandem, dancer

Brazil:

Augusto Omolú, orixá dancer
Ory Sacramento, musician
Jorge "Funk" Paim, musician
Bira Monteiro, musician

India:

Sanjukta Panigrahi, odissi dancer
Raghunath Panigrahi, singer, musician
Gangadar Pradhan, musician
Hemant Kumar Das, musician
Kishan Lal Sharma, musician

Japan:

Kanichi Hanayagi, Nihon buyo dancer
Shogo Fujima, Nihon buyo dancer
Sae Nanaogi, Nihon buyo dancer
Yoshikazu Fujisaka, musician
Taro Yamaguchi, singer, musician

Odin Teatret:

Kai Bredholt, actor, musician
Roberta Carreri, actor
Jan Ferslev, actor, musician
Iben Nagel Rasmussen, actor
Tina Nielsen, actor
Isabel Ubeda, actor
Julia Varley, actor
Torgeir Wethal, actor
Frans Winther, musician

Special Guests

Giuseppe Confessa, Italy/Bali
Mark Oshima, Japan
Tom Leabhart, USA

Scientific Staff

Kirsten Hastrup, Copenhagen University, Denmark; Marco de Marinis, Bologna University, Italy; Lluís Masgrau, Theatre Institute, Barcelona, Spain; Patrice Pavis, Paris 8 University, France; Jean-Marie Pradier, Paris 8 University, France; Janne Risum, Århus University, Denmark; Franco Ruffini, Bologna University, Italy; Nicola Savarese, Lecce University, Italy; Ferdinando Taviani, L'Aquila University, Italy; Susanne Vill, Bayreuth University, Germany

Programme

The 8th ISTA programme included a closed session for 93 participants and an open session for a bigger number of interested spectators. The open session took place in the town of Londrina in different theatres while the closed session took place in Estancia Aguativa, a countryside hotel in Cornelio Procopio.

The choice of the place where the closed session takes place is determined by the possibility for the artists, scientific staff and participants to share the same conditions, sleeping in shared rooms, eating together and with at least four big spaces for classes, meetings and demonstrations.

Closed session (11-17 August 1994)

Daily Programme:

06:00-07:00	Blue and Green (silent time, breakfast)
07:00-08:15	Building the Wall (the technique of techniques)
08:30-10:30	Jaguar and Colibri (work on energy)
10:45-12:00	A Garden of Light and Shadows (oppositions in technique)
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:15-15:00	Labyrinths (individual and collective paths)
15:15-19:00	The Long March (from presence to representation, from pre-expressivity to dramaturgy)
19:00-20:00	Supper
20:30-21:30	Quetzal (performances from different cultures).

Open session (18-22 August 1994)

During the ISTA session, a four-day symposium (18-21 August) on "Tradition and founders of traditions", led by Eugenio Barba, was held open to the public.

It included work demonstrations by ISTA's artistic staff and lectures by Eberto Garcia Abreu (Cuba), Kirsten Hastrup (Denmark), Tom Leabhart (USA), Patrice Pavis (France), Jean-Marie Pradier (France), Franco Ruffini (Italy), Nicola Savarese (Italy), Victor Varela (Cuba), Susanne Vill (Germany).

ISTA presented fourteen performances by Balinese, Indian and Japanese ensembles and Odin Teatret, and one *Theatrum Mundi*.

Names of times and places

An essential part of the organisation of an ISTA session is dedicated to shape a spatial framework which helps concentration and unfamiliarity. Hence the important task of giving a name to the different spaces to be used during the closed session and to the participants' groups. The groups should consist of a limited number of participants thus guaranteeing the best conditions for the practical work and individual feedback from the teachers. The number of groups depends on the session's total number of participants.

The names of the venues and of the programme are chosen from theatre history examples, geographical references, personalities, cultural milestones, or animals, mountains, rivers, oceans that belong to the place where ISTA takes place or to the

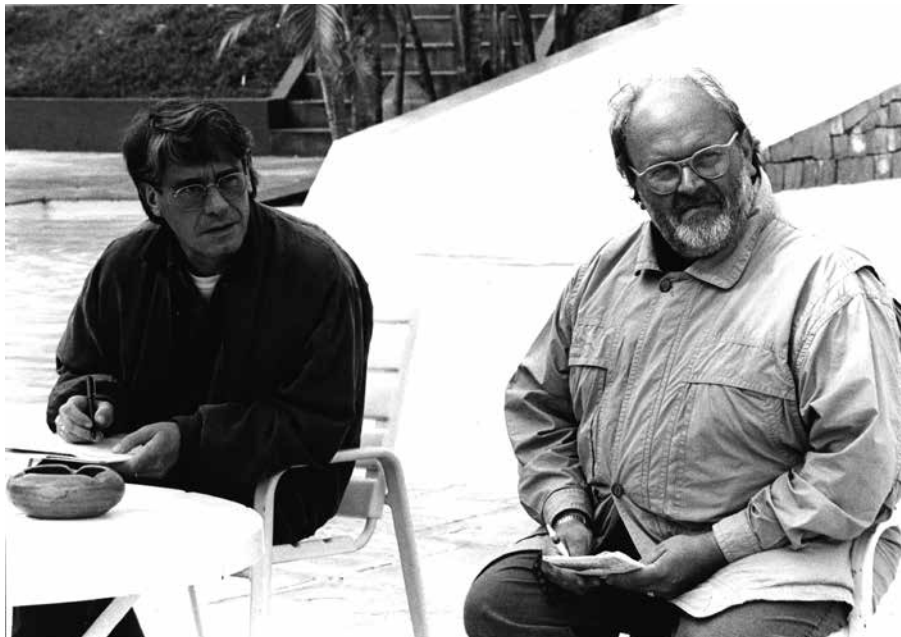
countries and culture of the different artists. The names have complementary characteristics similarly to how energy is classified in actor traditions or terms are used to explain the manifestation of different aspects of the creative work of the actor.

The 93 participants at the 8th ISTA in 1994 were divided into different groups for the daily activities. This permitted the participants to work together in different combinations. The groups of a Garden of Light and Shadows included two leaders combining their different kind of experience.

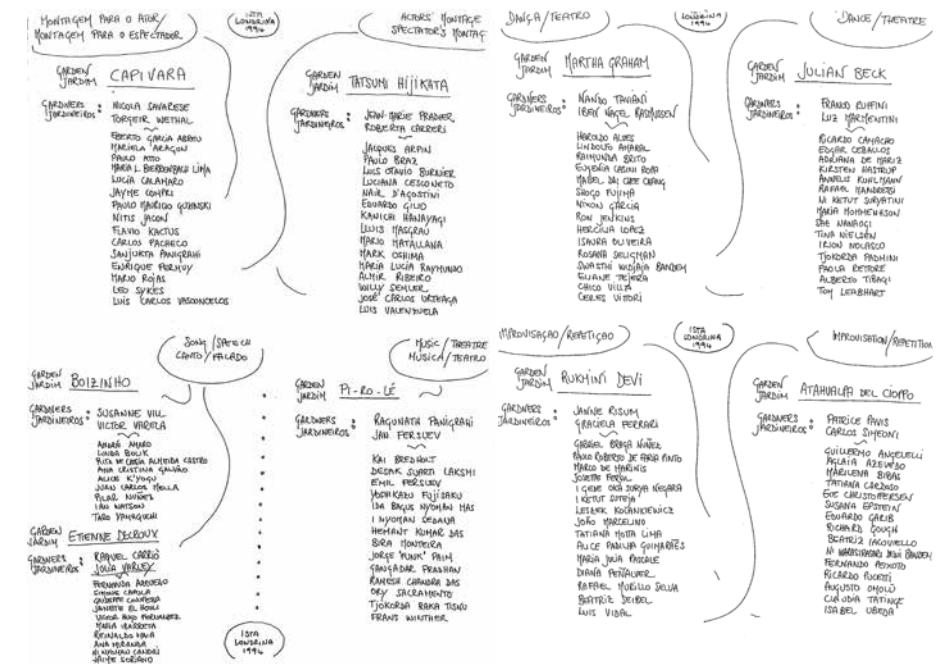


Programa		
6.00 - 7.00	"BLUE AND GREEN" (breakfast-café da manhã) "AZUL Y VERDE"	
7.00 - 8.15	"BUILDING THE WALL" - The technique of techniques "A CONSTRUÇÃO DO MURO" - A técnica das técnicas at-na Olympia	
8.30 - 10.30	"JAGUAR AND COLIBRI" - Work on energy (elaboration of the scenic bios) "JAGUAR Y COLIBRI" - Trabalho sobre a energia (elaboração do bios cênico)	
Tandava/Lasya Keras/Manis Aragoto/Wagoto Animus/Anima Ogun/Oxun Jaguar/Colibri Osoresan Tikal Konorak Delphi Alice Springs		
10.45 - 12.00	"A GARDEN OF LIGHT AND SHADOWS" - Oppositions' technique "UM JARDIM DE LUZ E SOMBRAS" - A técnica das oposições	
	Julian Beck > Martha Graham	Dance/Theatre Dança/Teatro
	Etienne Decroux > Boizinho	Song/Speech Canto/Falado
	Rukmini Devi > Atahualpa del Cioppo	Improvisation/Repetition Improvisação/Repetição
	Capivara > Tatsumi Hijikata	Actor's montage/ Spectator's montage Montagem para o ator/ Montagem para o espectador
	Pi-ro-lé >	Music/Theatre Música/Teatro
12.00 - 13.00	LUNCH ALMOÇO	
13.15 - 15.00	"LABIRINTHS" - Individual and collective paths "LABIRINTOS" - Caminhos individuais e coletivos	
15.15 - 19.00	"THE LONG MARCH" - From presence to representation (From pre-expressivity to dramaturgy) "A LONGA MARCHA" - Da presença à representação (Da pre-expressividade à dramaturgia) at-na Mausoléu	
19.00 - 20.00	SUPPER-JANTAR	
20.30 - 21.30	"QUETZAL" - Performances from different cultures "QUETZAL" - Espetáculos de diferentes culturas	

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Nando Taviani talking to participants, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi
Torgeir Wethal and Nicola Savarese, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi

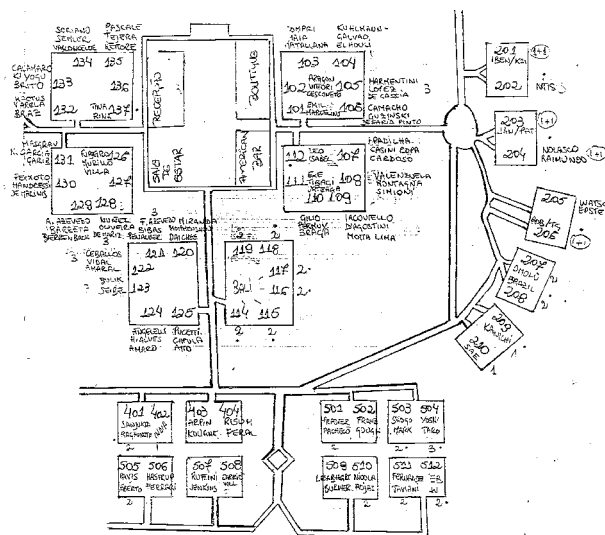


<u>OSOROSE</u>	<u>TIKAL</u>	<u>KONORAK</u>	<u>DELPHI</u>	<u>ALICE SPRINGS</u>
OSORLO ALVES QUILHERIO ANGELELLI JACQUES AEPIN FERNANDA ABEUZO MARILENA BIEBS RAIMUNDA BRITO RICARDO CANACAO TATIANA CARDOSO BEATRIZ IACHIELLO JESSE KOLAKIEWICZ ANA MIRANDA MARIA MONTENSHON ISAURA OLIVEIRA ENRIQUE PABOYU MARIA LUCIA RAYMUNDO JANNIE RISSUM NICOLA SAVARESE ISABEL UBEDA VICTOR VARELA LUIS VIDAL IAN WATSON PATRICIE PAVIS	PAULO ATITO MARILEIA ARAÇON AGLIAIA AZEVEDO GABRIEL ARAÇON NUDES EUGENIA GILSON COFA ESSE CHRISTOFERSEN JOSETE FERAR HERZELIA LOPEZ REINALDO MAIA RAFAEL MANDRESSI JOÃO MARCELINO LUIIS MASTRAN TINA MELSEN FILAR NUJES CARLOS PACHECO ALUIR RIBEIRO MARIO ROJAS BEATRIZ SEIBEL ROSANA SELIGMANN JAIME SOKIANO TORQUE WETHAL FRANCO RUFINI	EBERTO GARCIA ARCEU MARILEIA BEZERRAS LIMA LUIIS ESTAVO BORNIER MARCEL DA CHEE CHANG PAULO ROBERTO DE AGUIA PINTO MARCOS DE MARINIS SUSANA EPSTEIN MARIA ISABRETTA FLAVIO KACOTS ANNELIS KUHLMANN LUIZ MARIENTINI MARLO MATHALISA JOAN CARLOS TEJELA TATIANA TOTTA LIMA RAFAEL YUELIO SELVA IRION NOLASCO JEAN MARIE PRADIER WILLI SEMLER LEO SYKES ELIANE TEJERA JULIA VARELY GRACIELA FERRARI	PAULO BRAZ LINDA BULK LUCIA CALATARDO RAQUEL CARLOS EDGAR CEBALLOS LUCIANA CESONEDO VICTOR FERNANDEZ NIXON GARCIA EDUARDO GARIB EDUARDO GILLO KIRSTEN HASTROP NITTS JACON ALICE K.YOYO TOM LEABHART IBEN NAGEL HUNSTEN ALICE PADILLA GONZALEZ DIANA PETAULIER PAOLA BETTORE CLAUDIA TATTINGE JOSE CARLOS VETTERGA LUIIS CARLOS VILLOVERLOS FERNANDINO TAVIANI	RODRIGO ALVES DE LIMA LINDOLOS AMARAL ANDRÉ AMARO SIMONE CAPULA JAYME COMPAI VAILR D'AGOSTINI RITA DE JESUS MATEUS COSTO ALZIANE DE MATEIZ JANETE EL NOBU ANA CRISTINA GALVAO RICHARD GOUFH PAULO MAURICIO GONSKI RON JOURKUS MARIA JULIA PASCOAL FERNANDO PEIXOTO RICARDO POBETTI ALBERTO TIRAGLI LUIS VALENZUELA SUSANNE VILL CHICO VILLA CERES VITORIO CARLOS SIMIONI
<u>8.30-10.30</u> 12.8. TANABAYA/LASYA 13. KERAS/HANIS 14. ARACATO/MAROTO 15. ANIHUS/ANIMA 16. OXUN/OXUN 17. JAGUAR/COLIBRI	<u>8.30-10.30</u> 12.8. KERAS/HANIS 13. ARACATO/MAROTO 14. ANIHUS/ANIMA 15. OXUN/OXUN 16. TANABAYA/LASYA 17. JAGUAR/COLIBRI	<u>8.30-10.30</u> 12.8. ARACATO/MAROTO 13. ANIHUS/ANIMA 14. OXUN/OXUN 15. TANABAYA/LASYA 16. KERAS/HANIS 17. JAGUAR/COLIBRI	<u>8.30-10.30</u> 12.8. ANIHUS/ANIMA 13. OXUN/OXUN 14. TANABAYA/LASYA 15. KERAS/HANIS 16. ARACATO/MAROTO 17. JAGUAR/COLIBRI	<u>8.30-10.30</u> 12.8. OXUN/OXUN 13. TANABAYA/LASYA 14. KERAS/HANIS 15. ARACATO/MAROTO 16. ANIHUS/ANIMA 17. JAGUAR/COLIBRI

ISTA's Home in Aguativa

During the 8th session of ISTA, organised by Nití Jacon in August 1994 in Londrina, Brazil, the closed part was held at a holiday hotel in the country. In one night all the recreation signs had been changed to indicate the spaces for our theatre activity. Big common rubbish bins and cleaning utensils had been distributed amongst the participants. The silence at breakfast and around the sleeping quarters had been instituted. A stage was arranged in what we called the Red Square. The football and volley-ball fields, the tennis court, the swimming pool area, the parking, had become empty training spaces for the morning classes. Other rooms were used as a library, as offices, stores, or as music, meeting and changing rooms. The big hall was given the name Mausoleum; there we would rehearse the *Theatrum Mundi*, listen to university professors speaking six different languages and see demonstrations and performances of the ISTA artistic staff from India, Bali, Brazil, Europe, North America and Japan.

On the third day, I walked from the big pagoda-like restaurant, where we all eat together, along the path that would take me back to the rehearsal space. We were having a pause and I could take my time. Along the way I smiled as I looked left and right. A coloured sari was laid out on the grass in the same way Sanjukta would put it outside her home in India. Beside the entrance of their hut Raghunath was preparing sugar with tea and burning incense. At the next porch Leszek sat outside smoking a cigarette. I wondered if he had taken his favourite Polish brand with him. On a tree the red wig of Shishi, the kabuki lion character, was hung up to dry beside many pairs of white tabi, the Japanese shoe/socks. I met Kirsten and Janne wrapped in towels, obviously on their way to the swimming pool to take advantage of the sun Denmark does not offer. Nando and Marco walked up and down discussing, as they always do when they meet in Italy. In the library Nixon was writing in Spanish and Patrice was reading in French. Susanne's German opera voice echoed all over. Victor was disappearing into the woods while the other Cuban, Eberto, distributed leaflets about the next Festival in La Habana. The Scottish-Australian-



Lunch pause, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi

American Ian enjoyed the Brazilian coffee offered – as is customary – at the entrance of the hotel. Gamelan music came from the Balinese house. From the Brazilians' the sound of local television. Eugenio was probably resting in his hut. Kai played accordion in front of Odin's changing room while Isabel rehearsed some steps on the grass. Graciela, who I had last met in Cordoba, Argentina, carried her bedclothes to the washroom for a change of sheets.

During its first session in Latin America, the ISTA had once again become a community. The standard of the Aguativa hotel added unusual luxury to the already privileged space of meeting and research that an ISTA session is. We had become a village, with its street and squares, its rhythms and meeting points, its colours and habits.

(Julia Varley)

Scientific staff

Ever since the 1st ISTA, university professors and lectures, theatre scholars, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists have accompanied Eugenio Barba in the discussions around the chosen theme. They were called the Scientific Staff to distinguish them from the artists and masters from the different theatre genres called Artistic Staff.

To enrich the possibilities of information and discovery the correspondence with the Scientific Staff in the period before an ISTA was intense. The scholars were given specific tasks and prepared so that they could be ready to improvise, stimulating a complementary way of thinking.

Patrice Pavis and Eugenio Barba exchanged various letters. As an example of the correspondence, we publish a copy of a letter to Patrice Pavis by Eugenio Barba. It is interesting to note how Eugenio underlines that it will be the first time for the Asian ensembles to present performances in Brazil and that this influences the programme of ISTA.

NORDISK TEATERLABORATORIUM

Odin Teatret ■ Farfa ■ ISTA, International School of Theatre Anthropology ■ Odin Teatret Film ■ Odin Teatrets Forlag



Cher Patrice

1e 22 août 1993

déjà à Fara Sabina je t'avais dit que l'ISTA aurait payé ton voyage au Brésil. Donc il ne devrait pas avoir de doutes à propos. Tu recevras une invitation de la part des organisateurs qui te demanderont de ^{prior} ~~demander~~ tes autorités de payer le voyage. Si tu peux, tu le ~~fixes~~ demandes. Nous tous recevons cette invitation car les Brésiliens comptent épargner les voyages.

L'ISTA à Londrina sera différente. C'est la première fois que les ~~différents~~ théâtres asiatiques seront présent en Amérique latine. Tout le programme prendra cela en considération. Je ne pense pas faire un travail sur un spectacle (Faust, Crossing, Shakuntala), mais de travailler pendant quelques heures en incorporant différents niveaux d'expériences, aussi la réflexion critique/théorique. Pendant cette période tu devras présenter une demi page de quelqu'un(e) que tu considères un reformateur essentiel du théâtre et la commenter pendant une demi-heure (qui devient une heure à cause de la traduction). Il faudra que tu m'envoies cette page le plus tôt possible afin que je puisse la traduire en espagnol et en portugais. Je te donnerais des informations sur l'ISTA au fur et à mesure que je les élabore. Pour le moment nous sommes tous immergés dans cette activité particulière que nous avons commencée il y a 5 ans, ^(FESTIVAL) UNE SEMAINE DE FÊTE, une manière de revitaliser une communauté ~~avec~~ une problématique ^(marché unique) autour de la quelle on fait des initiatives. Cela correspond à une autre manière d'utiliser le théâtre comme ferment culturel, ou ^{comment} lui faire transcender sa vocation de ~~simple spectacle~~ spectacle. ^{Le Fastage} est le correspondant dans les années 90 de ce que l'Odin X a mis au point dans les années 70 et que nous avons appelé LE TROC. (A ce propos, L'ETRANGER QUI DANSE est épuisé, je te envoie un exemplaire extra que j'avais).

Je suis un peu étonné de ~~ton~~ doute si tu peux écrire librement sur LE CANOE DE PAPIER et si j'ai envie de voir les désaccords étalés en publique. Mais l'amitié et le rapport professionnel profond et engagé se base sur la discussion. Tu oublies que

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mes collaborateurs plus proches et plus anciens ont des idées très différentes des miennes. Tu peux donc, en toute tranquillité écrire pour une revue tes réactions et tes commentaires. Si tu trouves le temps...

Naturellement je trouve que toute objection devient intéressante si elle est pragmatique, si se réfère à l'empirie et à la tangibilité que la pratique représente. Quand tu écris (commentant ma lettre du 21 juillet) "la problématique de la sous-partition comme principe trans-culturel est une vision essentialiste qui n'est pas correcte et ... métaphysique", j'aimerais savoir un peu plus, surtout avoir un point de vue ou des faits qui aident à re-diriger le cours de ma recherche à l'intérieur de l'anthropologie théâtrale. Par exemple, tu peux argumenter que dans une tradition bien précise, les acteurs (danseurs) n'utilisent pas de sous-partition. Alors, évidemment, le principe n'est pas trans-culturel. ^{Mais} Si on le trouve dans toutes les cultures scéniques (c'est ma thèse), alors c'est trans-culturel.

Il y a des termes que deviennent terriblement stériles pour comprendre cette expérience "complexe" qu'est un spectacle. "Lire" est un de ces termes. Le ~~kk~~ spectacle est perçu (donc vécu) par le spectateur qui ensuite interprète (si tu veux tu peux utiliser ~~kk~~ "lire"). Mon objection à ~~xxxxxxx~~ ton affirmation (dans ton article) "on lit la partition, mais on vit la sous-partition" se réfère justement au spectateur. Malgré mes 30 ans de travail pratique, je ne sais pas comment l'acteur, au niveau individuel, crée l'unité dans cette complémentarité. On doit ~~se~~ ^{le} atteindre cette unité, et chacun y essaie (donc le point de départ ~~xxxxxxx~~ pratique est présent partout). Mais comment on règle cela, est vraiment un mystère individuel. Qui peut être mis à nu et même ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ conceptualisé,

Si tu as envie, tu peux être hôte de l'Odin pendant la Destuge (3-13 septembre). Naturellement cela comprend aussi le voyage. Bon travail, bon été, salutations amicales

Signature

ISTA 8 Preparation

Particular attention in the preparation of the 8th ISTA was given to the development of the theme 'Tradition and Founders of Tradition' and Eugenio Barba wrote a specific letter about this to the Scientific Staff ten months before the session.



Raquel Carriò
C/o Consejo de Artes Escenicas

Montréal, 27.11.93

Cara Raquel,

come sai il tema della 8a sessione ISTA è:
TRADIZIONE E FONDATORI DI TRADIZIONE.

Uno dei tuoi compiti è di scegliere una mezza pagina di uno dei riformatori del teatro del nostro secolo che tu consideri come fondatore di tradizione. Dovrei ricevere questo testo entro il 1° febbraio. Allo stesso tempo dovresti preparare una spiegazione per questa tua pagina di al massimo mezz'ora da dire durante l'ISTA quando se ne presenta l'occasione.

Hai ricevuto inoltre un invito ufficiale da parte di Nitis Jacon dove lei ti chiede il titolo di una conferenza. Questa è una conferenza pubblica da fare durante la parte aperta dell'ISTA e per questa lascio a te la scelta del tema che vorrai trattare. Se non l'hai già fatto, ti prego di inviare a Nitis il titolo in modo che possa inserirlo nel programma.

Buon lavoro, un abbraccio,

Eugenio

Montréal, 27.11.93

Dear ...

As you know the theme for the 8th session of ISTA is:

TRADITION AND FOUNDERS OF TRADITION

One of your tasks is to choose a half page from one of the theatre reformers of our century that you consider to be a founder of tradition. I should receive this text by the 1st of February. At the same time you should prepare an explanation for this page of yours of maximum half an hour to present during the ISTA when the occasion arises.

You have received an official invitation from Nitis Jacon in which she asks for the title of a public lecture to give during the open part of ISTA and for this I leave to you the choice of the theme that you would like to deal with. If you have not already done so, I ask you please to send the title to Nitis so that she can insert it in the programme.

Best wishes for your work, a hug,
Eugenio

This letter was sent in Italian and French to Raquel Carriò, Marco De Marinis, Kirsten Hastrup, Patrice Pavis, Jean-Marie Pradier, Janne Risum, Franco Ruffini, Nicola Savarese, Nando Tavianis and Susanne Vill. They responded to Julia Varley who had the task of collecting the texts.

Marco De Marinis sent one page in French and Spanish from « Paroles sur le mime » by Etienne Decroux. Patrice Pavis asked to choose a fragment out of nine pages in French from « Notes sur le comédien » by Jacques Copeau. Jean-Marie Pradier sent one page in French and Spanish taken from « C'était une sorte de volcan » about Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, by Jerzy Grotowski. Janne Risum sent two pages of an article of hers in English on "Artaud on the Poetry of Acting" with quotes from « La mise en scene et métaphisique » and "Rimbaud and the Moderns" by Antonin Artaud. Franco Ruffini sent half a page in Italian from "Un'atletica affettiva" by Antonin Artaud. Nicola Savarese sent one page in English, Spanish and Italian from "My Life on the Stage" by Mei Lanfang. Nando Tavianis sent two pages in Italian from "Il mestiere" by Jacques Copeau, dated 1 May 1909. Susanne Vill wrote a half page herself on Richard Wagner's theatre, music drama and art of interpretation. Raquel Carriò and Kirsten Hastrup wrote texts which we publish here in Spanish and English.

After the ISTA session, Franco Ruffini sent to Eugenio the text "Mimo, attore, azione: La via della boxe", which was from the lecture given in Londrina. Franco sent it so Eugenio could read it as he had not heard it in Londrina.



Tradiciones y fundadores de tradiciones.

Raquel Carrió.

Hace unos años, en un congreso en Berlín, alguien me preguntaba: ¿qué significa hablar de "tradiciones" en América Latina y El Caribe: refiere a la influencia europea o a las llamadas "culturas populares" tradicionalmente marginadas de la historiografía literaria y teatral¹?

Para asombro del crítico, tuve que responderle que a ninguna de las dos cosas, sino a una tercera cuyo concepto clave sería la síntesis, la integración de "normas" y referentes diversos que definen el carácter *sincretico* de nuestras representaciones. Obviamente, conceptos como "sincretismo" o "transculturación" aparecen repetidos en la historiografía tradicional; y sin embargo, a pesar de eso heredamos todavía el extraño delirio de contraponer sistemáticamente lo "nuestro", "lo propio", o la "autóctono" -palabra todavía más ambigua- a lo que llamamos también abiguanamente, lo "ajeno", lo "foráneo", o lo "extraño"... Pero ¿qué es lo nuestro, sino un largo proceso de asimilaciones y síntesis; aprendizajes y rupturas que conforman una *real* identidad?

El calificativo no es casual. La verdadera identidad no reside en la antinomia de "lo europeo" y "lo autóctono", en el anverso y el reverso, sino en un solo rostro mestizo, mixturado, venido de tradiciones convergentes, o -como diría Arguedas- de "todas las sangres..." Siendo así, el "espacio gnóstico" del latinoamericano redefine su acción en la búsqueda de un teatro heredero de lo europeo, lo africano o lo indígena sin mutilaciones o falsas prevenciones.

El caso del maestro Santiago García, director de La Candelaria, de Colombia, puede ser ejemplar.

Pudiera ser también Atahualpa del Chioppo, Enrique Buenaventura, Augusto Boal, Antunes Filho o Vicente Revuelta...

Sí pienso en Santiago es, sobre todo, por lo problemático que ha sido su teatro de creación colectiva; pero además, por su curiosa "lectura de Brecht" (nada mimética o aplicativa) y por la manera en que ha integrado - en su práctica como director y su discurso teórico- referentes tan diversos como pueden ser la obra de Brecht, el sentido de experimentación

¹El tema se desarrolla con más amplitud en la conferencia: *La investigación intercultural y la escritura escénica en América Latina y El Caribe*.

grotowskiano y la investigación de la realidad socio-cultural, el pasado histórico o los mitos pre-hispánicos hacia la modelación de una nueva dramaturgia. Pienso concretamente en dos espectáculos de Santiago: *Huelga* (a partir del texto de Albio Paz; grupo Cubana de Acero, Cuba, 1980) y *Corre-corre, chasqui carigüeta*: un espectáculo desconcertante por su renuncia al folklorismo, a la fácil manipulación de lo indígena y, en cambio, su propuesta de una búsqueda ontológica -y desde luego estilística- de un "Ser" nacional o continental pero al mismo tiempo convergente con los elementos de la tragedia clásica. Más que una reconstrucción historicista, lo que propone, sobre las ruinas de lo antiguo o lo perdido, es la indagación de arquetipos que evidencian una condición de lo trágico...

Quizás sin proponérselo, Santiago reflexiona sobre un hecho esencial en la cultura teatral latinoamericana: diferencias entre la expresión folklorista y la función del teatro. Visto así, no se trata de re-presentar los mitos, las tradiciones, la "utilería" per se. Se trata de refundar una herencia. Crear la tradición de universalidad de nuestros mitos. No encerrarse en el pasado histórico o en los límites de la propia casa, sino sentirse herederos legítimos de todas las tradiciones -occidentales u orientales, antiguas o contemporáneas- que convergen en un tema, un personaje o un actor sobre la escena.

Un "fundador de tradiciones" en América Latina es necesariamente un integrador de fuentes, un refundidor de mitos como lo fueron, en su tiempo, Sófocles o Shakespeare o, contemporáneamente, Müller. En todos los casos, la "norma culta" que heredamos empezó siendo síntesis de expresiones populares: tradición oral o escrita que encontró en el imaginario del dramaturgo, del director y del actor una re-escritura de sus signos.

Paper presented at the 8th session of ISTA
Londrina, August 1994

Kirsten Hastrup Incorporated Knowledge

In this session I discuss the way in which culture is absorbed by the body. My perspective is that of a cultural anthropologist.

As you will detect, there are many parallels to theatre anthropology, even certain connotations, but the two fields also have distinct knowledge interests. Let me just briefly state, therefore, that from my general anthropological perspective, acting is seen as a specific instant of those social actions that are normally studied by anthropologists.

Fieldwork

Anthropology is based on fieldwork, that is a prolonged stay in another culture. Fieldwork boils down to *living another culture*. There is, of course, a lot of systematic work involved, a lot of method and questioning, but the essence of fieldwork is to *learn another culture by way of experience*.

The purpose of exposing oneself to alien lifeways, is not only to *document* 'otherness', or to *verify* diversity. Nor is it simply to *understand* another society. The people who live there already are masters of understanding – if tacitly and practically. The goal of anthropology is not simply to recast what is self-evident for others, but to achieve a general theoretical comprehension of those processes, by which whatever culture becomes self-evident in the first place.

Beyond the uncovering of local or cultural knowledge, there is an ambition to produce a theoretical knowledge, which transcends the singular instances.

This is one parallel to theatre anthropology, aimed at research in those general principles that underlie various scenic traditions and dramatic styles.

My own principal fieldwork took place in Iceland, a small island society in the North Atlantic of about 250.000 inhabitants. Apart from disclosing the inherent intricacies of Icelandic culture, my fieldwork also taught me that most cultural knowledge is transmitted by way of the body (rather than words). It is the body-in-life, the living person, that is the locus of experience. In order to really know culture, one has to 'suffer it', as it were.

Let me give you an example. In Iceland, half the population live from fishing. This is thoroughly documented both in statistics and in local images. There would be no point in my simply collecting more information on this, or in conveying local images to the rest of the world, as if a fixed system of meanings.

As anthropologist, my aim was to get to the experiential core of these images, in order that I might understand their motivational force in the daily life of the Icelanders. After all, this is what gradually becomes history.

So, I went living the fishing. The natural place to start was the fillet-factory, since that was where women worked. I filleted and packed endless amounts of iced cod and

Mãe de Santo Wilma, Nitis Jacon and Kirsten Hastrup, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994.
Photo: Emidio Luisi

haddock, rather unskillfully I may add, and I can still feel the cold in my fingers after twelve hours of work.

I also wanted to go fishing for myself, as it were, that is being with the men. It was difficult to find a vessel that would take me onboard; however, clearly, I would be a nuisance. Insistent as anthropology is, I finally succeeded, and one early morning at 3 o'clock, I was on my way. The weather was extremely rough – as it very often is on the North Atlantic – and once beyond the harbour, I was certain that I would never return. The image of the hero-anthropologist (exploring the precarious life of the northern seas), vanished – or rather it melted into that of a forlorn woman, facing her imminent drowning with some dread.

After some time, this woman nevertheless remembered that she was an anthropologist and started asking all sorts of questions to the skipper. Skipper was a man of few words, however, and only occasionally would he answer me by way of a grunt or a silent nod. The crew was also a silent lot, and after a while I, too, stopped talking. Words seemed out of order.

As day and night passed, I realised that if I wanted coffee, food or sleep, I had to organise myself. No one was going to offer me anything or tell me what to do. And certainly, nobody was going to comfort me, or to reassure me about me about my survival.

If, at first, I was slightly hurt by the fishermen's negligence, afterwards I realised that they had in fact taken me very seriously. They had let me *experience* the uncertainty of fishing, and the actual powerlessness of words in this violent nature. What is more, by reducing me to invisibility, they had truly treated me as a woman. I *had* no place in their world.

Through this experience I learnt that the 'maleness' of fishing was not simply a statistical feature, it was a cultural model, which contained its own motivational force, also in the relation between men and women ashore. Once I had realised this, everything fell into a distinctive pattern. And from my nowhere-position in the men's world I looked towards land with a new comprehension. The silence at sea was packed with meaning. But I could not hear it, until I let myself become part of it.

The general point is that living another culture, as we do in fieldwork, implies a *merging of action and awareness*. This merging is the basis for the self-evidence of incorporated cultural knowledge – in our everyday life.

In the beginning was the body

Whether a fisherman hunting his prey on the North Atlantic, an anthropologist doing fieldwork, or an actor staging a particular character, I would contend that in the beginning was the body. Not the biological body – but the body-in-life (to use one of Barba's terms, or *the incarnate subject*).

The routines of the body are the foundation of the dull compulsions of everyday life – studied by anthropologists. It is, therefore, impossible to develop an adequate theory of social action, without a conception of the embodied social agent. Let me repeat here that I include acting as a special instance of social action. Sometimes *very* special indeed, yet also always within the range of cultural embodiment.

Theorising the body as the locus of agency, means establishing a general theory of the dynamics of incorporation – and regulated improvisation. We could even speak

of a theory of embodied motivation. In society, *motivation* is what directs energy into movement.

In one sense the body is a limit. For anthropology and acrobats alike there are physical limits to action – if not the *same* limits. As enculturated the body is also a site of resistance in another way. It resists certain positions, certain sounds, certain motions and hence certain emotions.

Anatomy may *dispose*, but cultures will *propose*. Through the interplay between disposition and proposition, the habits of everyday life are formed. In the civilising process – for the individual as well as the species – propositions gradually become *learned dispositions*. They become part of the body-memory.

Individually, we know how certain sensations immediately recall particular instants or emotions. The sensational body is a repository of deferred knowledge. And collectively, too, societies remember their history through ritual practices, festivals, and other self-celebrations, that all of them involve collective action, or one might say *corporate* movement.

However, the-body-in-life is not only limit or a site of resistance, it is also capital and a site of transcendence. The body is a potentiality which is elaborated and developed in social relations. Although there are learned dispositions that cannot easily be unlearned, action is not rule-governed in any simple way. There is always room for improvisation in the social space. As subject, any social actor makes his or her own way.

Thus, whether we focus on the body as limit or as capital, there is no absolute distinction between innate and acquired behaviour. The enculturation of the body is a never-ending process – of the incorporation of knowledge.

Enculturation

Let me stop for a moment at the notion of enculturation, since this is widely used in theatre anthropology. The ordinary enculturation, to which all of us are subject, for the most part takes place implicitly, or by way of analogy. Our living presence in society is a means to learn to act socially. By contrast, the learning of particular performance techniques and the learning of another culture in fieldwork, represents an explicit socialisation, an acculturation – that is deliberate internalisation of a new set of dispositions.

The distinction between enculturation and acculturation, or between the ordinary body of people in general and the extra-ordinary body of the performer, or between the real and the fictive body, may be analytically useful, but it is ontologically dubious, I believe. There is *always* a self acting. Always a notable dialectic between learning and performing. And did not Stanislavsky tell the actor always to act in his own person. "You can never get away from yourself. The moment you lose yourself on stage marks the departure from living your part and the beginning of exaggerated false acting," (Stanislavsky 1963: 91).

Presence in the world – and on stage – means *living our part*.

In the case of fieldwork, which is a condensed process of enculturation, it is clearly not the mere physical presence in a foreign country that produces understanding of the local script, but the living of the other culture.

In the field we have to live our part – and it is a part allotted to us by the others. If you want to truly *know*, there is no way to insist on your own definition of the situation.

If you do, you will never hear the significance of silence, or see how immobility may also be an action.

Let me give you an example of this. Part of my fieldwork in Iceland was among farmers, and on the farm where I lived, I was given the role of milk-maid – among others. For a couple of months I milked and tended thirty cows – not very skilfully at first. Taking the cattle to the pasture was my major problem in this rugged and unbounded landscape. I had to keep the flock together across large and open stretches of more or less rocky ground before arriving at the grazing slot for the day, which then had to be bounded by a mobile electric fence.

Once the whole flock went madly astray, and it took a couple of men several hours on horseback to collect them again. I was shameful, of course.

But the point is not to exhibit my remarkable lack of skill, but to point to its source. It is not simply that I had been working at a desk for most of my life. More importantly, I could not act adequately, when I still saw the cows as a flock, even a category, and myself as an anthropologist performing as milkmaid.

I could only succeed when I truly began *living the character*. That is, when I began to see the cows as named individuals with distinct behavioural dispositions, and when I gave up my resistance to yelling at them on my way to the pasture in what at first seemed to be an almost obscenely loud and distorted tone of voice.

From then on, the farmers could also see *me*, and talk to me about their vision of the world. Of course, others cannot see you from your own perspective, and to establish a true relationship the parties must be present in the same space. This has to *be theirs* – if there is any point to fieldwork.

To conclude on enculturation, then, it implies – not only that action and awareness becomes one, as previously stated – but also that *performer* and *character* conflate. Meaning emerges in the process.

The absent body

If the body-in-life is the locus of experience and action, it is curious that it has been absent from theories of human agency. Why do we keep talking about persons *having* bodies, actors *using* their bodies, instead of seeing all social agents as *being* bodies? Why is the distinction between subject and object still cast in the terms of mind and body.

We know it to be part of the Cartesian legacy, and of the wave of rationalism in the history of ideas. Rationalism implied a quest for instrumental control and firmness of will. The controlling subject was located in the mind. Proper understanding involved disengagement from the bodily self – seen as a source of error and vice.

With the view of the world that I propose here, this is no longer tenable. There is no knowledge without a knower, an incarnate subject.

The tenacity of the Cartesian dualism is owed to the fact that it echoes important aspects of human experience. While it is true that human experience is incorporated, it is also true the body tends to disappear from our awareness of *how* we experience. The seer does not see his own eye.

And this is important: The body itself deceives us by its dual nature, ecstasy and recessiveness. *The ecstatic body* consists of the senses – such as the gaze and the voice – by

which we reach out for the world and take it in. *The recessive body* refers to all those invisible and unknowable processes that transform the sensations.

The ecstatic functions project the body into the world, and they are therefore prominent in shaping the experiential field. By contrast, the recessive functions give rise to no projective field, and they are therefore easily overlooked in the phenomenology of experience.

The incorporation of culture, that is the process of enculturation, implies a process of sedimentation. In this process, the sedimented culture becomes part of the hidden or recessive faculties of the self. Whether primary or secondary enculturation, culture becomes ‘second nature’.

The fieldworker, or even more explicitly: the actor, experiences a gradual reshaping of the body’s actual abilities. This brings the body into focus, as a source of agency.

Yet in daily life, the body tends to disappear from our image of our wilful acting selves. Only when in pain, or otherwise incapacitated, does the body become manifest and demands attention – as object.

The mind-body dualism thus is a motivated misreading, but a misreading it is. Ontologically, there is more to the subject than a mind; and there is certainly more to the body than an object. For a person to be present – they (mind and body) must be confused.

Presence

We are left with a paradox of absence and presence. As zero-point of perception, and as repository of enculturation, the body-in-life has been absent from view. Yet it is only by way of one’s whole self, that one can *digest* the perceived, *make sense* of the sensations. One cannot practice culture (action implies presence) with the mind alone.

Cultures are not only linguistic communities – they are corporate fields of action. This is why fieldwork is not simply a linguistic event – a dialogue. Even if our friends in the field have been construed as ‘informants’, no-one has information on culture in its totality, that can be called up and expressed in discursive statements. Beyond the words, important aspects of culture must be performed to be *presented*. That is why to study them we must be in the field in the first place. There is no way to substitute fieldwork with a questionnaire or a phone-call.

Words melt into silence and leave no trace. By contrast, experiences (which of course often are accompanied by words) are embodied and leave their marks. They may be small and appear insignificant, but they will always be part of that recessive body, with which subsequent experiences must resonate.

One may *call* for the cows, or *look* for the invisible prey at sea. Both the voice and the gaze go beyond you, as does your ecstatic desire for the loved one. Yet their direction is motivated from an unknown inner force that recedes from view. In the zero-point of perception is the master *motive* for action.

For the anthropologist to get at the nature of local motivations, and their directive force, she has to be *present* in the space, which is moved by this force. One cannot see the hidden people if one is not there. Presence cannot be pretended; tending the cows is a real action. As such it is imbued with value – and with motivating force.

Concluding remarks

One of the tasks of anthropology is to theorise about motivational forces – that is those sources of energy which produce (local) history.

Culture as incorporated is a potentiality, not a regime of law and order. Meaning is always emergent, and each moment contains a ‘surplus’ of possible successors. Only one next-step can be taken at the time, however. The choice of direction is made on the basis of a particular orientation in a social and moral space.

The sensation of displaced experience in the anthropological fieldwork has taught us that orientations may shift, and that the motivational force in culture can be put to effect in many different ways. In that sense, anthropology, ideally at least – may be potentiating.

The sensation of displaced experience – which I like to call the performative parallax – is even stronger in theatre – ideally at least. As telescoped social drama, or as condensated energy fuelling unprecedented or paradoxical actions, theatre may make the spectators experience, (not simply *see*) the ‘surplus’ of any moment. When ‘taken in’ this experience leaves lasting trace on the spectator’s embodied motivation. By moving people, theatre makes history.

For both anthropologists and for actors – the key thing is to be truly present. We have to really be there – to reveal.

Culture/Tradition		ISTA 13/8 94	
Image :		Relation:	Strategy of identification:
1. ○ ○	cultural islands	- separation	- contrast
2. 	cultural pluralism	- touching	- contest
3. 	cultural creolization	- mixing	- crossing
4. 	multi-culturalism	- absorption	- merging

Kirsten Hastrup's notes for her lecture, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994.

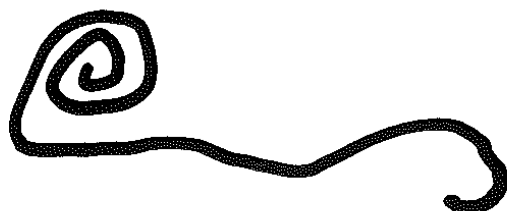


Kanichi Hanayagi, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994.
Photo: Emidio Luisi

Otelo

(BRASIL)

Augusto Omolú
e Ensemble



Julia Varley

Augusto Omolú A letter to remember

Abstract: Augusto Omolú joined the artistic staff of ISTA for the Londrina session in 1994 and was present at all ISTA sessions after that until the Bielefeld session in 2000. In 2013, Augusto Omolú was killed in his home in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. This article presents his contribution to theatre anthropology, ISTA, Theatrum Mundi and Odin Teatret with the Afro-Brazilian dance of the orixás from the Candomblé rituals. With Odin Teatret, Augusto Omolú performed in Andersen's Dream, Great Cities Under the Moon, Ode to Progress and in the demonstration created after the ISTA session in Copenhagen in 1996, The Whispering Winds.

Keywords: Augusto Omolú, Orixá dance, Candomblé, Orô de Otelô, Theatre and ritual

Augusto Omolú and theatre anthropology

The first time Afro-Brazilian Augusto Omolú and his musicians were invited as part of the ISTA artistic staff, to teach the participants, give demonstrations and present a performance was in 1994 for the ISTA session in Londrina, Brazil. His contribution gave a new perspective to theatre anthropology. Until then comparative research in theatre anthropology had mostly been based on artists coming from Asian and European theatre and dance genres and traditions. Augusto, being trained as a classical and modern dancer, had the capacity of repeating, fixing and thinking with his body-mind as a whole, besides possessing an embodied knowledge originating from African diaspora rituals based on dance and drum rhythms. He was able to recognise the technical knowledge intrinsic in the dance movements he had learned since he was a child. His experience widened the horizons of theatre anthropology, giving an awareness that also concerned other Latin American forms to be found in many village feasts. Traditional folkloric dances, songs and rhythms that are passed on from generation to generation through a practice in the community are a reference for principles that enhance the performer's presence as studied in other theatre genres. This realisation has had a great influence on group theatre all over the world. When Augusto was killed in 2013, I wrote a letter to



him, wanting to remember not only his personality and artistic power and beauty, but also his ambition of transforming the dance of the *orixá* – the gods of the Candomblé religion – into a codified form. This ambition was born within ISTA sessions when Augusto experienced artists like Sanjukta Panigrahi, I Made Djimat, Kanichi Hanayagi, Akira Matsui performing and giving demonstrations of the apprenticeship for ancient forms of odissi, gambuh, kabuki and noh. The letter has been published in Brazilian, Italian and Spanish. Here it is published for the first time in English.

The letter

July 2013

Dear Augusto,

You had told me that only after completing your artistic mission, you would assume the responsibility of becoming a *pai de santo* in the Candomblé, the religion in which you were born. When age would prevent you from dancing in theatres, you would return to live permanently in Brazil and assume the role indicated to you before he died by the old *pai de santo* of your *terreiro*, the Candomblé ceremonial house in your neighbourhood in Salvador. I always believed this would happen. But...

There are moments when I get angry with you because you allowed the unthinkable to happen to you, something we couldn't accept or believe when we heard the news, something that perhaps wasn't even consciously desired by the person or people who drew a murderous knife against you. So, from one day to the next, we can only speak to you through our many disorderly memories. Will someone take up your legacy? Will someone be able to bring to life the essence of your work, your joyful rigour, your dance, your *axé*? Will someone express on stage the same desire to live and offer what burned in your eyes? Will someone take care of all the children and young people who had chosen you as their mentor?

Your experience was written in your body. You knew how to speak and explain well, but you didn't put words on paper. You have worked as an actor in theatre; you have created many choreographies as a classical and modern dancer; you have taught the dance of the *orixás*, the deities who manifest themselves in nature's forces, in Salvador and around the world. One of your ambitions was to enhance the value to your Afro-Brazilian culture. How could you establish a tradition that was both new and ancient, and that would endure over time beyond your embodied technique? You should have conveyed the wholeness of yourself and your knowledge: that which was imbued in your noble posture, in your very black skin, in your generous and sometimes ruthless smile, in your braided or short hair that sprinkled water far away when you twirled because you wet it before going on stage, in the sinuous movements of your bare shoulders, in the wise rhythm of your feet, in the memory inherited from your ancestors who arrived in Brazil in chains from various African nations, each with its own dignity of rhythms, songs, languages, and dances.

When you were born, your godmother was possessed by Omolú, the *orixá* who takes care of the cemeteries and the dead, covered with a long cape and skirt of straw that even hides his face. We took inspiration from this costume for the character of Guga,

with which you performed in Odin Teatret's street performances. Guga wore a mask sculpted in leather by Fabio Butera. You named him with the nickname your friends used to call you. When you explained to me that my *orixá* was Iemanjá, the goddess of the sea, the mother, you said that your real *orixá* was half Ogum and half Oxalá, half warrior and half wise old man. This was to clarify that Omolú was merely your artistic name, which had stuck with you from when you danced that *orixá* at the beginning of your career in folkloric performances in Bahia. You showed the sick parts of the body, pointing at the ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and then a shiver ran through your arms, which lifted behind your back as you knelt, bending forward to pound your fists on the ground before jumping upward. How many times have I seen this sequence of actions when Othello killed Desdemona in your performance *Orô de Otelo*? In the pantheon of the *orixás*, Omolú's rhythm was the one that seemed simplest to me, with its repetition gradually increasing in speed.

You had many brothers and sisters from different fathers. Your mother was the centre of the family. You were very close to her, and thinking of her moved you during an event during the Holstebro Festuge (Festive Week). We had visited the cemetery with the Ageless group, the actors from the workshop we led together with Deborah Hunt, who created large masks with the participants. We had been allowed to enter the cemetery with only one mask during one of the night performances. The actress placed a flower on a grave and then released a white balloon. Outside, we all waited in silence. Under the masks, some were crying. You were standing aside, also silent. Your mother had died recently. We had visited her one day with Odin Teatret, and you had proudly introduced her to us.

You were also proud to welcome us in Salvador to the bar in a room on the third floor of a house of yours where you didn't live. At the airport in Rome, you bought some colourful Murano glasses for that bar, which I thought were extremely kitsch but which you considered to be wonderful. You always brought gifts from abroad and took care of the homes of your family, your children, but also sisters-in-law, daughters-in-law, cousins, uncles, godfathers, godmothers, nieces, nephews and neighbours. You were young when you had your first son, Gustavo, who had studied computer science and had already made you a grandfather twice when we met. Your second daughter, Luana, lived in Jericoacoara, the tourist paradise south of Fortaleza in Brazil, with Andrea, the Argentine mother you were madly in love with when you first arrived at Odin Teatret. Your salary disappeared in telephone calls. Little Alina, meanwhile, was living in Paris with Lisa Ginzburg, your last wife. You had seen her forty days before dying. You loved playing with her. You showed us her photograph: Alina has your dark complexion, and on the street it's hard to believe that the slender, ivory-skinned Italian woman is her mother. Around you, in addition to your family, a large circle of students has gathered, some Latin Americans, many Italians, others from the rest of the world. You were sorry that there were so few Brazilians.

It was January 13, 1993, when we met you. Eugenio Barba and I were travelling in Brazil to prepare the ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) session, which would take place in August 1994. Nitis Jacon, the director of FILO (Londrina International Festival), was absolutely determined to present a Brazilian tradition alongside

those from Japan, India, Bali, and Europe. We were doubtful that among Brazil's popular performances, a structured and repeatable form comparable to the codified Asian forms could be found. We were sceptical about the possibility of finding an exponent of such a tradition capable of verbally explaining and technically demonstrating, without any difficulty, the various layers of his or her embodied knowledge, which in artistic practice is a unity, separating the form from its ritual or festive context.

We had seen bumba meu boi in Brasília, São Luis, and Fortaleza. In Salvador, accompanied by our filmmaker friend Paulo Dourado, we attended rehearsals and classes with various Afro-Brazilian dancers, as well as many Candomblé and Caboclo ceremonies. Early one morning, Paulo led us into a large room where about seventy dancers were sweating to the pounding beat of the drums. You were introducing them to the dances of the different *orixás*. You showed Oxóssi, the hunter, with his double leaping step, the horseman's whip, the middle finger like an arrow aiming, the rope tightened around his grip, the strong body, and the victorious expression on his face. Then you moved on to Oxum, the goddess of fresh water, vanity, love, and beauty, who looks at herself in the mirror, combs her long hair, and adorns herself with jewellery. Suddenly, your expression changed from determined, masculine and vigorous, to soft, feminine and seductive. You weren't effeminate, nor artificial. You were filled with an inexplicable energy that had completely transformed you before our eyes. Eugenio and I looked at each other. We knew what we were both thinking: only by watching the dances of Sanjukta Panigrahi, the unforgettable Indian Odissi dancer and founder of ISTA, had we seen a similar transformation. For Eugenio and me, it was love at first sight, like what happened to many of your students.

Paulo Dourado introduced us at the end of class at the bar where you gathered to drink beer with students, friends and musicians. It was near the Teatro Castro Alves, where you worked as a principal dancer in the contemporary dance company. *Geladinha* is a word that comes to mind when I think of Brazil: the beer must be cold, and if it isn't, you order another. There were many bottles and glasses on the table. Paulo tried to explain who we were. During Odin Teatret demonstrations, you have often said you thought then you were dealing with curious tourists who would quickly lose interest in your dance. Between one beer and another, we managed to convince you to take us to your *terreiro*.

Back then, we still didn't speak Portuguese, but Spanish, and Paulo translated. You forced us to learn Portuguese, the only language you knew. Years later, Eugenio told you that to stay at Odin Teatret, if not Danish, at least English was mandatory. Lilicherie McGregor, the New Zealand director who was an assistant rehearsal assistant for *Andersen's Dream*, tried to teach you with infinite patience: one, chwo, three... (I wonder why in Brazil the t becomes c...) You managed to count to eight, the beats needed to convey the rhythm of the dance you taught. Then, when you married Lisa Ginzburg and lived in Rome for a while, the Italian words you liked began to creep into your explanations. Even though your great intelligence was revealed in your body language, you always had some intellectual urges, like, deep down, many actors at Odin Teatret.

That day at the *terreiro*, we talked about energy, about the meaning of the word



Ory Sacramento and Augusto Omolú in *Orô de Otelô*, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi

axé, about codified and improvised movements, dance, theatre, ritual and religion. You showed us the stones that Candomblé devotees plant in vases to mark their initiation into the cult. These stones are like seeds and they grow, you explained. You pointed at the offerings, the houses of the various *orixás* with their objects, the kitchen, the paintings on the walls, the chairs that belonged to the *mãe de santo* and the *ogan*, the ceremonial assistant, the ceremonial drums protected by a white cloth. You too were an *ogan*, and like the drummers, you didn't fall into trance like other followers. You mentioned the *fundamento*, the sacred elements of Candomblé, which were not to be communicated externally and could not be part of an artistic expression disconnected from the ritual. Religion had a secret part with a rigorous discipline that required isolation from the outside world, and a public part. You called the open ceremony a 'feast', which included dances, music, and food shared with everyone present, even non-affiliates. The *orixás* would descend during the dances and 'ride' their devotees.

Toward the end of our visit to the *terreiro*, we sat on white plastic chairs. Eugenio asked you if you were able to dance while sitting. You nodded, smiling. Eugenio asked us to improvise a dialogue between strong and soft energies: you should use the *orixás'* dances, a codification passed down to you by tradition, and I would use my personal codification as an Odin Teatret actress, with elements I had invented myself. We had never done something like this together before, but it wasn't difficult. Even though I still had no idea what your movements meant, and you couldn't interpret mine, we had a common language. Our energy modelled precise forms that, alternating, rhythmically intersected, merged and reacted to each other. They seemed to be telling us something.

Paulo was amused and started to laugh. He enjoyed watching actors at work, he commented. That afternoon, Eugenio decided to invite you to participate in the ISTA session. You did not know what ISTA and theatre anthropology were, but you accepted and it was the beginning of a long process of mutual learning.

When you died, Francesca Romana Rietti, the scholar who at the time worked at the OTA-Odin Teatret Archives, wrote to Eugenio:

From: francesca

Sent: June 3, 2013 10:30 PM

To: gegge

Subject: Re: No Subject

Dear Eugenio,

Yesterday I tried a thousand times to reply to you by email, but I couldn't; the email always bounced back. So, this evening I am writing only to you to tell you that Augusto's departure has left me frozen in my chair, stunned, incredulous at the senseless pain and a death devoid of grace and dignity. Then, before my soul's eyes, so many images of so many years with Augusto flashed one after another, from those at university to the last, always beautiful, conversations we had when he returned to the North, with the promise – today broken – to visit him in his native Babia. And one of the most beautiful images, one of the many for which I will be grateful for ever, was the one tied to the dancing joy in your eyes as you watched him work and dance. Then the engine ignited by that joy in your eyes would slide down your spine, you would jump up from your chair and begin a beautiful dialogue with him because he followed you, giving shape to the dance of your thoughts. You were so beautiful together. I want to remember Augusto like this. I want to remember him for the joy he gave.

Hugs, Francesca

When Eugenio shared Francesca's letter with all of us at Odin Teatret, he said to me 'it is true, it was exactly like that'.

You died when we were in the middle of the women's Transit Festival at Odin Teatret. In those frenetic days, we had no time to grieve; it wouldn't have been fair to our guests. I could only dedicate my opening speech to you, in which I also spoke about the violence that surrounds us, the kind that strikes women in particular, but not only.

Eugenio confessed to me that he considered you to be our son, because we followed your development together. To me, however, you were a brother. One of those with whom you share a good amount of history, whom you love, and who sometimes make you burst with rage, like when you arrived five minutes before closing time at the Serbian embassy to collect the visa we had managed to get you issued urgently. We had been waiting for you at the BITEF Festival in Belgrade to perform *Andersen's Dream*, and you didn't even have ten euros in your pocket to pay for it; or when, without warning, you arrived two days late for the three-week tour at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen.

There was a lot to do to introduce you to ISTA on an equal footing with the other teachers. All of them had been trained by Eugenio with long periods of observation and

collaboration, they had learned to give demonstrations, and above all, they presented a performance of their tradition. It was important that the ISTA participants should forget the hours spent poring over technical details and comparing terminology when faced with the persuasive and magnificent evocative power of a performance. You had neither a demonstration nor a performance. You really needed to create them to participate in ISTA as a representative of the *orixás'* dance tradition. You showed us various parts of the choreographies you knew as a ballet dancer and a sequence of *orixá* dances. You seemed to have different identities that depended on the music that accompanied you. By watching you, I began to learn the names of the dances of each *orixá*. This knowledge proved essential in assisting Eugenio when it came to creating the performance *Orô de Otelo* (Ceremony for Othello). You had never thought of the *orixás* as characters that could establish a dialogue with each other.

Pierre Verger had collected many testimonies, photographs, and drawings from the world of Candomblé. We looked through his book, searching for inspiration for our work with you. We asked you for stories. You told us one about Iansã. She had a relationship with two men: Xangô, her husband, and Ogum, her lover. They were jealous of each other. This story was the first step towards your performance: a scene of seduction, amorous encounter, and violent confrontation. It took time. It was one thing to have you move from one *orixá* to the next without interruption, quite another to convince the musicians accompanying you to do the same. The greatest difficulty, however, was to convey to you the experience that simply performing a succession of different elements is not enough to create an effect of their relationship.

We invited you to Holstebro in Denmark to work with the Indian dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi and her musicians. It was an opportunity to explore the possibilities of your knowledge through another tradition. Sanjukta didn't speak Portuguese, you didn't speak English. Eugenio left you alone in the Black Room with the task of creating a scene together. The only way to communicate was through stage language. Sanjukta began to improvise, moving from the representation of an elephant to a peacock, from Radha to Krishna, from a serpent to a demon. You followed her, responding to her transformations with your own: from Oxumarê to Nanã, from Iemanjá to Ossaim, from Iansã to Ogum... To mark the change, Sanjukta used a pirouette. Together, we imagined you could use a similar procedure with a *baixavento*, the slight loss of balance with a backward fall that marks the taking possession of the devotee by an *orixá*. When you changed *orixá* it was as if the *baixavento* infused a new energy into your body.

We were worried that your professional familiarity with Sanjukta would create problems. You touched her and held her in your arms, following Brazilian customs and Western dance conventions. This behaviour was taboo in traditional Indian dance, especially for a Brahmin like Sanjukta. She reassured us with a mischievous smile. It seemed she deeply enjoyed your affectionate irreverence. Her musicians found your dances unrefined and compared them to indigenous or folk dances. After a few days, you won them over with the power of your dance. You had the self-confidence and cheerfulness that allows Brazilians to use words like negro and popular without inhibition, and to call presidents of the republic by their first names instead of their surnames.

That week in Holstebro, you also worked with Odin Teatret's actors. We were in our White Room. Oxalá, the old man, with his back increasingly bent with age, destroyed our legs. Despite this, we became very fond of you. The same happened with your students: the more you challenged them, the more they sweated and struggled, and the more they were willing to do anything to follow and be close to you. In Holstebro, you also gave your first demonstration. We asked you to present all the dances you knew and narrate your artistic autobiography. You stormed our collections to make the costumes of the various *orixás*. You still didn't believe in the effectiveness of naked action, and you wanted to impress us. We heard you talk about your first teachers: Mestre King of the Ballet Folclórico in the 1970s, and Emília Biancardi, who directed the Viva Bahia group.

Your eyes had to learn to create what isn't there. Creating a relationship through a way of looking is an obvious technique for an actor, but not for dancers who focus on the pattern of their movements and not on the image that might be produced in the spectator's mind. When we worked on the scene between Iansã and Ogum and Xangô, I moved in the space so you could see clearly where Iansã was when you were dancing Ogum or Xangô, and where Ogum and Xangô were when you were dancing Iansã. You understood it with your body by thinking of the distribution of positions in space: Ogum watched from afar and then ran to separate the other couple; then you were Iansã on the right, lifting her skirts in the wind toward Xangô, and when you became Xangô, you slid to the opposite side, keeping your fists clenched.

Then you learned to project and fix your gaze into space to indicate how Iansã, while dancing, invited Xangô, seduced him, drew him toward her, and sent him away. Ogum, dancing on the same spot, spied Iansã and Xangô as they danced together, his gaze from underneath like an animal ready for battle. Your Ogum would hold the sword and shield, showing first the palm and then the back of his hand in rapid succession. Your Xangô would become entangled in Iansã's skirts not only with a back-and-forth movement of his arms, but also with his eyes, which attempted to master the wild and stormy nature of the woman in front of him.

I don't remember exactly when Eugenio decided to work with you on the story of Othello. Perhaps it was the jealousy between Ogum and Xangô that inspired him to develop this theme. As a director, Eugenio needed a personal starting point. While you used elements of your culture – the dance of the *orixás* – he tried to meet you halfway with the baggage of his own culture: the opera arias played by music bands in the squares of southern Italian towns during the celebrations of their patron saints. Othello, a black man, was a character who fitted you perfectly and whom audiences across the globe could recognise.

We worked again together in Salvador, in your Bahia, on what would become the performance *Orô de Otelô*. You were alone on stage, telling the story of Othello through dance, accompanied by the rhythm of the three drums played by three musicians, interspersed with recorded fragments of Verdi's opera. Eugenio was the director, and I was his assistant director. It would be more accurate to call me the dancer's assistant, or more simply, the translator of the director's intentions, which are often not easy to understand, even for his actors.

The performance premiered at ISTA in Londrina in 1994 and last performed in Holstebro during the Odin Week Festival in 2012. With it you have toured many countries. To make you more independent and facilitate its dissemination, we recorded the music for a version of the show entirely by yourself. But whenever possible, the three musicians accompanied you. How can we forget the time in Florence when, cheerfully disobeying my instructions, the four of you returned to the stage, raising your arms together like victorious football players, to the applause of 400 enthusiastic spectators? Or the performance during the ISTA session in Portugal in 1998 in the deconsecrated church of Montemor-O-Novo with a huge crucifix towering over the stage?

In Salvador, rehearsals had been difficult. You didn't understand what Eugenio was asking of you, and he didn't have a sufficient understanding of what you could offer. Eugenio didn't understand Portuguese, and his Spanish wasn't always clear to you and the musicians. The initial idea was a performance constructed entirely around *orixá* dances: their manifestations, with their inherent modulations of tension and qualities of energy, would express the passions of Othello, Iago, and Desdemona. For us, it was important to preserve the logic of your tradition, without introducing contemporary dance or theatre elements foreign to your practice. I often repeated: don't do what Eugenio asks of you, but what he wants to see. You lacked the experience that we actors at Odin Teatret have in following our own path, guessing the direction to take from the tasks assigned by the director, who doesn't anticipate the outcome. Lately, you had humorously talked about your misunderstandings during these first rehearsals.

All the ISTA artists were familiar with the process we at Odin Teatret call of 'reduction', that is, how an action can be performed by showing only its impulses. It



Augusto Omolú and Tjokorda Istri Putra Padmini, ISTA 8, Londrina, Brazil, 1994. Photo: Emidio Luisi

was the most obvious way to erase the aesthetics tied to the form of the spectacular genre and emphasise the essence of the tensions that give rise to the action. The external form is compressed so as not to fully erupt into the space, and at the same time the muscular tensions, with their oppositions, resistances, directions, and restrained signs, are maintained or strengthened.

In the first scene of the performance, accompanied by the love dialogue between Othello and Desdemona from Verdi's opera, you entered elegantly dressed in white. You were immersed in reading a book: Shakespeare's *Othello*. The audience saw a simple walk, with a few interruptions and changes in direction. It seemed as if the reading stirred something inside you, that you responded to the written words with thoughtful pauses, and glances that wandered into space and quickly returned to the written words. Instead, what underlay and determined the dynamics of your steps and every minimal dynamic shift was the dance sequence of Ogum, in which you sharpened your swords with decisive steps to the right and then to the left. The reduction of the form forced you to concentrate on the action, thus avoiding 'playing'.

In the transition from dance to theatre, your first temptation was to interpret emotions and represent them with your face. Then you would lose the expressive power of the *orixá* dances, rooted in action as you began to flaunt imaginary states of mind. You thought that when Eugenio asked you for more gentleness, you had to exhibit it. Classical music also made you lose your roots, the sense of weight in your body and the connection with the earth that you immediately rediscovered when the rhythm of the drums brought you back to your dance of the *orixás*. Years later, in demonstrations where we explained together the process of creating the performance, you were able to immediately demonstrate the difference in the way of walking that I helped you become aware of in those early days: with Verdi's music, you straightened your ankle and knees and touched the ground with the tip of your foot like a ballet dancer, with the rhythms of Candomblé your whole foot-sole was on the ground; with the opera music, you elevated and your centre of gravity shifted to your chest; with the rhythms of Candomblé, your base was in your pelvis and firmly rooted to the earth. It wasn't just your strength or lightness that changed, it was as if the culture and expressiveness of your body changed. To use our working language, you were more organic when you danced the *orixás*. With the help of the drums and by becoming aware of how your body automatically reacted to the music, we gradually managed to ground you even when Verdi's music accompanied you.

The reduction was also useful for other scenes: you took off your jacket, shirt, and shoes with the sequence of actions that indicated the writing of Xangô's laws; Oxumarê's snakelike attacks expressed Iago's rage and defiance of God; with Nanã's raised arms, you invoked the memories of Desdemona's handmaiden; Omolú's shaking of the hands served to drop the handkerchief you picked up with the movement of the fish shimmering in Iemanjá's sea. But for the scene in which Desdemona prepares for bed and, unaware, waits for Othello, we needed more variation and nuance. For the first time, in the ballet rehearsal room of the Teatro Castro Alves, you improvised inspired by Oxum. You didn't have to stick to known forms, but rather invent positions, ways of walking, kneeling, lying down and running, always with the same quality of energy. You later repeated this process many times in your workshops. You explained that it

wasn't so much that the students repeated the shapes you had shown, but that they felt the pleasure of getting wet with water, the sensuality, the softness, the desire to beautify themselves and to seduce.

It rained every day in Salvador, and rehearsals lasted from early morning until late at night. Despite your efforts, Eugenio was dissatisfied. He felt he couldn't guide you towards the door beyond which the world changes. He became impatient and irritable. When he had to leave, he decided I would stay in Salvador to work with you. To finance the extension of my stay, I gave one workshop in the afternoon and two in the evening at the Castro Alves Theatre. I rehearsed with you in the morning. You were often late; a couple of times you didn't show up. It was July, and the rain persisted, falling monotonously. The people of Salvador don't use umbrellas because rain is hot. I waited. It was my summer vacation. The World Cup was raging, and Brazil was in the final. Discipline and concentration weren't the order of the day. I was about to surrender, but you convinced me not to give up. I didn't understand what you were thinking, whether the work interested you, what your intentions were.

Once in the studio, we worked well together and made progress. The dancer's mannerisms began to disappear. By better understanding the possible variations of the different *orixás*, I was able to help you enrich your score with detail while you let the music carry you. One day we also worked on the voice and the different sounds that characterise the *orixás*. Enthusiastic, I imagined that just as Sanjukta Panigrahi had re-established the classical dance of odissi in India, you too could codify in a vast vocabulary the movements of the hands, eyes, feet, and even the voices of each *orixá*. You would complete the dances with infinite detail to achieve a richness of expression like other performance genres. But perhaps it was more important to attract street children with the sound of drums and make them dance to give them a sense of belonging, as you did with your Ilé de Omolú, the school you managed to get financed by a friend who lived in São Paulo and others who believed in your project.

We worked extensively on the dialogue in which Othello accuses Desdemona of betrayal. It seemed impossible for you to follow the rapid exchange of lines sung in the opera by Luciano Pavarotti and Tiri Te Kanawa, with the alternating male and female *orixás*. I constantly stopped the music that dictated the rhythm by pausing the small tape recorder we used in the ballet rehearsal room at the Teatro Castro Alves. We had fixed every reaction, but you needed time to incorporate and remember without hesitation. As soon as you were distracted for a second, the music continued undeterred, and you found yourself leaping like Ogum while Desdemona sighed, or carefully combing your hair like Oxum while Othello screamed. Over time, this became the most impressive scene in the performance, and you also performed it in public demonstrations.

You have always had the tendency to think that the spectators were more interested in seeing you dance to classical music than in listening to the rhythms of the drums and watching the dance of the *orixás*. We laughed together whenever we remembered the pirouettes and leaps you performed on the large floating stage on Holstebro lake during a Festuge (Festive Week) instead of performing Ogum's dance as scheduled; or when we thought about the scenes of a couple in love you performed with Carolina Pizarro in 2011 when, always as a classical dancer, you chased each other through the trees until

you splashed and rolled in the muddy water of the Holstebro park pond during the last Festuge you participated in.

The *orixás' xiré* in *Orô de Otelo* exhausted you, especially when you didn't have the support of the drums, while the energy needed for the two sword strokes that marked the killing of Desdemona always burst forth, followed by Omolú's sign of the cross and the slow descent to the ground with the last tremor of the hands. In the *xiré*, starting with Ogum, you introduced all the *orixás*, in multiple versions and with the different rhythms of Keto, Angola, and Jeje. After Desdemona's killing, you rose for the *avania*, the closing of the Candomblé ceremony, in which the *orixás* bid farewell before retiring. After the deafening beat of the drums, the silence was punctuated by your panting. You slowly backed away and nonchalantly gathered up the fateful handkerchief and your clothes scattered around the space, while the musicians joined you for the final *baixavento*. A relaxed collective smile marked the end of the performance. They continued to burn candles before the drums, illuminating the leaves that, like Ossaim, you had rubbed on parts of your body before throwing them into the air and scattering them on the floor where you would soon crawl like Oxumarê.

In Iansã's scene with Xangô and Ogum, the three *orixás* were performed accompanied by different rhythms with and without drumsticks. This also helped the audience understand the change of character. The transition from one rhythm to the other was very fast. It was difficult to synchronise this change during rehearsals in Salvador with



Sanjukta Panigrahi and Augusto Omolú in *Theatrum Mundi*, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

the three musicians. Then, when only one musician accompanied you on tour, the transitions seemed impossible. Ory Sacramento, Jorge Paim, and Bira Monteiro were the first musicians to follow or lead you, because the drums decide the dance. During the ISTA session in Portugal, Ory demonstrated that a single musician could do the work of three. To save time accompanying your movements, he put the drumsticks in his mouth, held the base of the rhythm on the smaller drum, and marked the accents on the larger one. He sang, whispered, muttered, and made the most incredible faces from fatigue and concentration, but he was having fun at the same time. The following year Ory was replaced with the same skill by the younger Cleber Conceição da Paixão, who made all the Balinese girls in the performance *Ur-Hamlet* fall in love with his enthusiasm and openness.

For ten years, you were one of the artistic staff teachers at the ISTA sessions: in Londrina in 1994, in Umeå in 1995, in Copenhagen in 1996, in Montemor-O-Novo and Lisbon in 1998, in Bielefeld in 2000. You had asked me many times how to join Odin Teatret. Eugenio had tried in every way to discourage you, but you were certain: you wanted to grow artistically and remain in an environment that would allow you to do so. You were tired of asking permission to leave the *corps de ballet* every time you had to travel. ISTA had made you aware of the principles embedded in your dance. You claimed that you had not previously been aware of the value of your *orixá* dance, even though you belonged completely to that culture. The ISTA comparative study had revealed to you the dynamic logic of your steps and the movements of your arms, shoulders, head, and hands. The dances of the *orixás* were dictated by a reason: how a warrior attacks and defends himself with his sword; how a healer strips leaves from trees, grinds them, and drinks them; how a serpent attacks its prey; how the waves of the sea lap the shore; how an old man holds his stick; how a legislator writes and displays laws. Hidden principles filled these dances and imbued them with *axé*, power and life.

'How will you survive in the Danish cold?', Eugenio asked, 'without knowing the language, without friends, without family?'. The different discipline of an actor, the reserved nature of the people, the isolation in a small Nordic town... At ISTA you were treated with the respect of a master, yet upon entering the Odin Teatret you would have to start from scratch, you would become a beginner with duties and responsibilities. But you insisted.

In the winter of 2002, at the Portuguesa Festival in Venezuela, there was a meeting about Eugenio Barba's influence in Latin America. Eugenio decided to present *Orô de Otelo* along with my solo performance *Doña Musica's Butterflies*. On the way back from the Festival, among the clouds, flying together towards Brazil, you and Eugenio whispered to each other the whole night. The dice had been cast: you would participate as an actor in the next Odin Teatret performance. You arrived in Denmark in early January 2003. You had to face the cold winter, the rehearsals, Eugenio's demands, the incomprehensibility and incomprehension of a new country. How many times did we find ourselves talking about the way you were welcomed, the problems you encountered, the difficulty of feeling accepted?

Rehearsals were beginning for the performance that would become *Andersen's Dream*. One of the themes was the slave trade and the cultures that arose from the

African diaspora. Eugenio had also told us the story of a black man who believes himself to be the Saviour, who is killed by a group of elderly people in a nursing home, placed in a coffin, and who was then resurrected with a torch in his hand. Your persona could fit these themes well. But your entry into Odin Teatret was also useful for shaking up the dynamics of an established group: our automatic behaviours had to adapt to your different experience. Eugenio had left us alone in January. We had a month at our disposal: each of us had to prepare an hour of materials and stage an Andersen fairy tale of our choice with the other actors. In February, we would resume rehearsals together.

You arrived a few days late, and in the directors' turns we had drawn by lot, it was your time to stage an Andersen's tale. You chose to stage several characters from the fairy tales that had fascinated you. Drawing on your experience as a choreographer, you had us perform a ballet: definitively a new experience for us! Then, in the scene prepared by Kai Bredholt, to represent the story of the tin soldier and the ballerina who throws herself into the fire, you wore a real tutu and danced an imaginary *pas de deux*. This scene remained in the final montage of *Andersen's Dream*. The lighting was low, slightly tinted blue. Scheherazade, a puppet, spied on you from a corner, sitting on my lap. With her small hands, I followed the impulses of your pirouettes on the fake snow and as you disappeared in a final blaze. You wore a mask with Andersen's face that limited your vision, but you still managed to maintain the lightness and balance of your ballerina leaps. When Jan Ferslev came to Salvador to pay you our last respects, he placed Andersen's mask in your coffin. Thus, something of that performance that united our lives for ten years will remain with you forever.

In *Andersen's Dream*, you had a dialogue with Tage Larsen, the fairest and blondest of us. You were opposites, like the swan and the ugly duckling in the first scene, or like the man and his shadow when, toward the end, the shadow in Andersen's fairy tale takes power and hangs its master. Together with Tage, swinging on a swing that broke up the space, you enjoyed teasing Roberta Carreri in her striptease scene; you were happy to take Iben Nagel Rasmussen in your arms and literally fly with her, to let yourself be manipulated like a puppet by Torgeir Wethal, hidden behind a red Ku Klux Klan-style hood, and to sweetly sing a Brazilian song while crossing the stage in a military uniform with the corpse of a woman in a wedding dress on your shoulder. Halfway through the performance, in a group scene, the actors gathered for a barbecue party. We ate sausages, drank beer, and told jokes. Then you came in dressed as a soldier and pulled a growling dog out of a sack. "I was born in Denmark," you said, "Denmark is my home." And we, along with the audience, burst out laughing. Your Danish accent was incredible; you truly were the essence of a foreigner, as all of us at Odin Teatret ultimately are.

That's why we enthusiastically attended the dinners you hosted at the theatre. You would prepare a *moqueca de camarão* and invite everyone. We regularly sat down to dinner two or three hours late, but we didn't complain because you filled the time with *caipirinhas*. You always had the music playing while you cooked: you loved dancing *forró* while waiting for the rice water to boil. At Odin Teatret, you brought a piece of Brazil also outside the theatre where you worked and lived. In the middle of winter, we went to the Struer Fjord for a ceremony for Iemanjá. We were all dressed in white: instead of the lace dresses of the Bahia women, we were bundled up in sweaters, wind jackets,

coats, long johns under our pants, and boots. You managed to find a white padded jumpsuit and wearing it, you waded into the icy water of the fjord to scatter the flowers and candles you carried in your basket. There was snow on the beach and it was real, not like the one in the performance.

In *Andersen's Dream* we had dialogues. In one, you spoke Brazilian and I spoke English. To find the text that no one would understand except us, we improvised a dialogue between Othello and Desdemona and then the story of the princess and the flying dog from Andersen's tale of the lighter. The actions were extracted from the scene we called our *fundamento*, the sequence we created at the ISTA session in Bielefeld in 2000. Eugenio was busy rehearsing a Japanese buyo-style performance with Kanichi Hanayagi and Sae Nanaogi, and he asked us to work together alone to prepare a scene. We took inspiration from some painting books, reproducing the images with positions and actions. From a Botticelli painting, we derived a series of poses that we repeated, helping ourselves by numbering up to seven; from Delacroix, figures of horses and waving flags. We used these titles to remind each other of the sequence. We advanced slowly, first transforming the position into action and then immediately connecting it between ourselves. Sometimes I would grab you like making bread, other times you would spin me on your back with the technique of a dancer. The shapes were determined by the paintings, but ours was a dialogue of rhythms and impulses.

I had the feeling that in our *fundamento* scene, our bodies were uniting to create an Oxumarê, an *orixá* who has always fascinated me. You said he was half woman and half man. When you danced it, you transformed into a serpent by joining your arms above your head. In this position, you lowered yourself until you lay on the ground, opening and closing your body so that your feet touched your hands at regular intervals. In the Oxumarê dance, you always stained your white trousers. From human, you became an animal. In our scene, we managed to create a single being, similar to an animal, man and woman together. When we presented it for the first time at the rehearsals for *Andersen's Dream*, accompanied by Frans Winther on the violin, we had dressed and made ourselves up in half black and half white. You had covered half your face with white make-up; I had covered half mine with black.

Your colour worried us when you travelled: today's Europe is not the most welcoming place for a black person. Plus, you didn't speak any languages. You almost always managed to reach your destination, often just before it was too late. You had a knack for seducing the flight attendants so you wouldn't pay extra and still change your flight schedule. Once, this didn't work: they stopped you at the Danish border because your hair cream contained a product that dogs recognised as cocaine. The customs officials were convinced that your frequent trips to Billund Airport were those of a drug mule and held you for hours without letting you make a telephone call. We were horrified that something like this could happen in democratic Denmark. You were shocked too. We lodged a formal protest and received an apology. For a long time, you didn't forgive the Danes. It was the first time I heard you say you were going to leave Odin Teatret. But you stayed, and in Holstebro, you choreographed children too young to walk.

For a regional festival called *Vinden* (The Wind), we travelled with the Cuban group Teatro Buendía through the villages of Jutland. Together, we improvised local activities,



Augusto Omolú. Photo: Carlos Sato

small spectacular performances, parades, and short courses in schools. One day, you discovered that the students you were supposed to be preparing a parade with to visit a retirement home were still in their cradles. 'What? Me? An internationally recognised choreographer working with babies?'. Once the initial shock wore off, you lined them all up with ribbons between their fingers imitating Iemanjá's hand movements, the teachers pushing the prams, and the slightly older children following behind. I brought up the rear with the Mr Peanut, the Death character whose face is a skull.

But the greatest shock for you was seeing the state of the bodies of the young people who attended the courses with the ambition of becoming theatre artists. They had no sense of rhythm, they got confused by the simplest steps, they were incapable of repeating what you showed them over and over again, they lacked strength. You were sincerely concerned for this humanity that was growing up under the illusion of knowing only through the intellect, seemingly interested in the religiousness of your dances, yet without understanding that the energy of nature manifests itself in actions rather than emotions. So you learned to explain not only how to put one foot in front of the other, how to raise one arm in one direction and the other in the opposite, how to jump at the same time as you strike a blow, but also how to transform movements into actions. Behind every step was a reason, and precision was provided by rhythm.

When you participated in the Odin Teatret demonstration *The Whispering Winds* on the relationship between theatre and dance, in which each had made the journey from theatre to dance, you started from the opposite. You were born in a *terreiro*, you became a dancer, you encountered theatre anthropology. Classical and modern dance gave you discipline, cultural background and motivation; theatre anthropology developed your capacity for analysis and transformation. In the demonstration, you took a score and

performed it first as a dance and then as a sequence of theatre actions. You changed the accents, inserted pauses in the flow, increased the strength of the impulse, made small variations in rhythm. You focused on the effect of what you were doing outside yourself, rather than on the form of your body's movement.

You were also proud to be the only one who remembered the entire sequence of the perfect exercise that Eugenio had requested for the ISTA session in Portugal. We called it Tre-tre (Three-three): Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Roberta Carreri, and I each proposed three exercises that were sequenced. At that ISTA, all the masters from the various traditions learned the exercise and transformed it according to their own rules. For the first time, instead of identifying common principles by comparing different forms, we focused on the same form to introduce different principles determined by the performative genre. You worked hard on your breathing, establishing inhalations and exhalations for each action. You were as enthusiastic about teaching that exercise as you were about dancing in the performance *Ode to Progress*, in which you were dressed as a woman. You wore a mask made by Klaus Tams that hid your beard; you had a wig, a red dress, and lots of necklaces. Mr Peanut caught you with a large butterfly net in which you placed your doll, which appeared white, but when you turned it, it turned into black. That was a simple performance for you, all based on a dialogue of actions and reactions.

Instead, the work on your Hamlet character was painful. I watched from outside the scene in *Ur-Hamlet* where you fought the Balinese I Wayan Bawa, in which the uncle was killed by his nephew, who established the law of the strongest. You were both invaded by demonic forces that you seemed incapable of controlling. My character, the old chronicler Saxo Grammaticus, accompanied your fight with shrill cries, the orchestra played at full blast. Every evening I was tormented by the fear that you would not control the blows you were exchanging, that you would thrust the sword too deeply into I Wayan Bawa's mouth, or that you would be wounded by the Balinese *keris*. Yet you knew the limit beyond which you could not go.

You chose to tie yourself with white ropes. You used them to whip Hamlet's mother, and they were the same ones the innocent Balinese girl used to leash you with, the same one you transformed into a warrior in the final scene. You had to feign madness, and French singer Brigitte Cirila had taught you how to crow.

For the second version of *Ur-Hamlet*, while the Balinese ensemble presented a comic version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, you wandered around the stage dressed as a tramp, dragging cardboard boxes tied with thick white ropes. Perhaps with that opening, you had finally discovered the strength of your character, which couldn't be fuelled solely by the sound of drums, but had to embrace the complexity and inevitability of power that erases even the tenderness of love. We were supposed to present the performance in China, but...

I was preparing the performance *Ave Maria* to present that evening when Paulo Dourado called from Salvador to tell me the news he didn't have the courage to tell Eugenio directly. I called Eugenio. Then I thought about how to tell Jan Ferslev, your friend you called *jacaré* (alligator). But he had already heard everything from Patricia Alves in São Paulo. Meanwhile, the news was spreading on Facebook, and many were incredulous and in tears. Eugenio wrote in English to the people at Odin: "Paulo

Dourado called and said that Augusto was killed in his home in Salvador. The police assume it was thieves. We're meeting today at 11 p.m. at Sanjukta's *varde*. Those of you who are far away will be with us." That night, around the mound of stones shipped from all over the world by people who had met Sanjukta at ISTA, we lit many candles, sang in Brazilian, drank, and told stories. We need to tell stories to remember. Your life ended in your house in Barquinho, near the sea. You had returned to Salvador with your head full of plans; work was an absolute necessity for you. Now you were dancing with Sanjukta somewhere in the darkness.

Among the thousands of messages of condolence we have received, I want to end with this one, which defines you as the person capable of making foreigners feel at home and of representing Odin Teatret with your generosity.

*Queridos do Odin,
É com grande tristeza que recebemos hoje a notícia do falecimento do Augusto Omulú, na sua chácara na Bahia. Imaginamos a tristeza de vocês e oferecemos nossas condolências.*

Foi por intermédio do Odin que tivemos a oportunidade de conhecer Augusto, que mesmo sendo nosso conterrâneo tivemos que atravessar o mar para encontrá-lo. Na semana que estivemos com vocês em 2011, quando tudo era tão estranho à nós brasileiras, o clima, as pessoas, a língua e as linguagens, Augusto foi a porta aberta do Odin, que nos recebeu no primeiro dia como se fôssemos velho amigos se reencontrando. E talvez essa seja a verdade.

Sem palavras para descrever a tristeza que nos assaltou nesta manhã, resolvemos nos juntar em solidariedade com o grupo que o acolheu e o norteou para o desenvolvimento da sua pesquisa, tão rica as artes cênicas do Brasil e, acreditamos, do teatro contemporâneo mundial.

*Grande abraço,
Tatiana e Juliana (Cia. Pessoal de Teatro)*

Dear Odin People

It is with great sadness that we received the news of the passing of Augusto Omulú today, at his home in Bahia. We imagine your sadness and offer our condolences.

It was through Odin that we had the opportunity to meet Augusto, who, despite being our compatriot, we had to cross the sea to find. During the week we were with you in 2011, when everything was strange for us Brazilians – the climate, the people, the language, and the languages – Augusto was the open door to Odin, who welcomed us on our first day as if we were old friends meeting again. And perhaps this is the truth.

With no words to describe the sadness that overwhelmed us this morning, we have decided to gather in solidarity with the group that welcomed him and gave him a point of reference for the development of his research, so enriching for the performing arts of Brazil and, we believe, for contemporary theatre worldwide.

A big hug,
Tatiana and Juliana, Cia. Pessoal de Teatro

Sometimes when you danced, it seemed you wanted to reveal to us the strength of life and simultaneously mock us, as in the final scene of the performance *Great Cities Under the Moon*. The performance presented bombings, ruins, exile, and you appeared in the final scene wearing a red bowler hat, carefree, brisk, a burst of insolence. You danced, cheerfully throwing fistfuls of ash into the air as you pulled out the blade hidden in your cane and loaded us all onto a Chinese junk that was taking us away. In a scene just before, we had sung these verses by Li Po while in the darkness we glimpsed the face of Torgeir, our comrade who died three years ago. Dear Augusto, you listened to these verses from outside, as you prepared. You were there, beside us, ready.

And if you ask how I regret that parting:
It is like the flowers falling at spring's end
What is the use of talking, and there is no end of talking,
There is no end of things in the heart.
I call in the boy
Have him sit here on his knees
To seal this letter
And send it a thousand miles, thinking.



Augusto Omulú. Photo: Carlos Sato

ISTA 9

Umeå, 9-21 May 1995

Form and Information

Eugenio Barba

Form and Information:

The Performer's Learning in a Multicultural Dimension

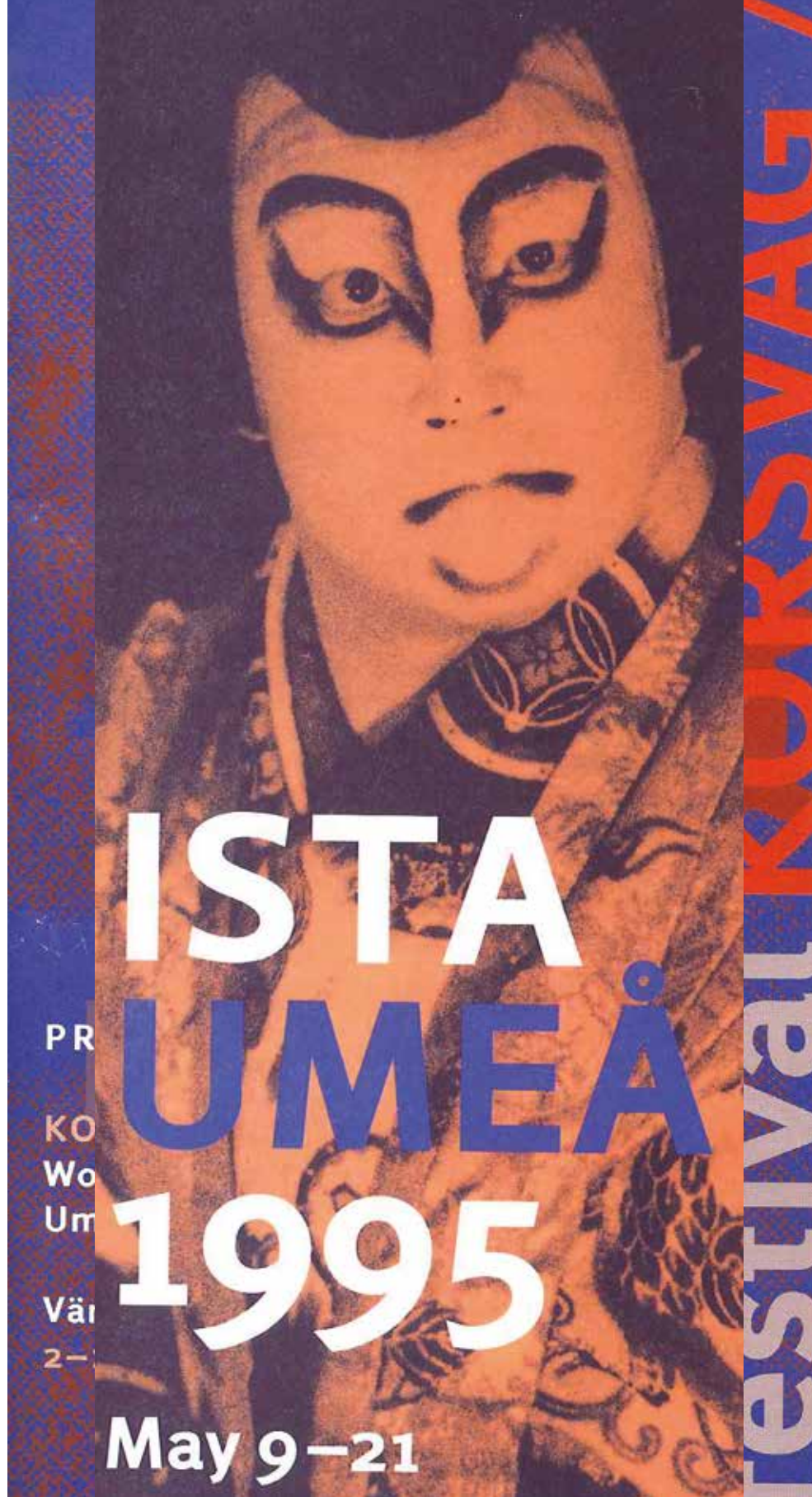
Performers who do not belong to a codified genre begin their apprenticeship with the inherent gifts of their personality, so-called 'talent'. They use as points of departure the suggestions contained in the texts to be performed, the observation of daily behaviour, the emulation of other performers, the study of books and paintings, the director's instructions.

Performers who belong to a codified genre find the preliminary points of support in the very style that they are learning. But underneath the differences in the learning processes, as well as the aesthetics and the styles, there is a net of techniques based on a few common principles.

The performer's professional identity is rooted in these recurring principles which we could call 'the technique of techniques'. All different techniques are founded on them. They are not what is characteristic in each tradition, but the stratagems through which performers learn to learn. Performers embody these principles, transforming them from ways of acting into ways of thinking.

Since its creation in 1980, ISTA has reserved a privileged space for 'the experience of the first day', comparing various techniques at their most elementary level: that which performing masters have learnt in the first hours of their apprenticeship. In 'the experience of the first day' we find hidden and present, as a seed, the specific ways in which each tradition models scenic energy. The technique is the other face of an attitude – an ethic – through which performers give a meaning to their artistic action.

The ISTA in Umeå presents an opportunity for becoming acquainted with the 'first day' of some of the main Asian and western performance genres. It will also re-evolve the vision and the practice of the innovative schools of the 20th century, from Stanislavski to Meyerhold, from Copeau to Decroux and Grotowski.



9th Session - UMEÅ (SWEDEN) 9-21 May 1995

Title: Form and Information

Organisers: Sven Sahlstrom, Umeå Teaterforening and Chris Torch, Intercult, Shikasta/Riksteatern. **Financed by:** Umeå Kommun, Umeå Kulturforvaltning, Baltic Group, Umeå University, Statens Kulturråd, Det Svenska Institutet, Umeå Folkets Hus, Vasterbottens Lans Landsting, The Swedish International Development Authority, Norrlandsoperan, ABF i Umeå, Arbetsformedling, Nordiska Kulturfonden and Teater och Dans i Norden.

Artistic Staff

Bali:

I Made Djimat, dancer, musician
Cristina Wistari, dancer, musician
I Wayan Bawa, dancer, musician
Ni Wayan Sekarini, dancer, musician

Brazil:

Augusto Omolú, orixá dancer
Ory Sacramento, musician
Jorge "Funk" Paim, musician
Antonio Carlos dos Santos Araujo, musician

India:

Sanjukta Panigrahi, Odissi dancer
Raghunath Panigrahi, singer, musician
Gangadhar Pradhan, musician
Hemant Kumar Das, musician
Pradeepta Sekhar Mohapatra, musician

Japan:

Kanichi Hanayagi, Nihon buyo dancer
Mark Oshima

Odin Teatret:

Kai Bredholt, actor, musician
Emil Ferslev, musician
Jan Ferslev, actor, musician
Frans Winther, musician
Isabel Ubeda, actor
Julia Varley, actor

USA:

Thomas Leabhart, Decroux tradition actor

Scientific Staff

Clelia Falletti, La Sapienza University, Italy
Kirsten Hastrup, Copenhagen University, Denmark
Ronald Jenkins, Wesleyan University, USA
Marco de Marinis, Bologna University, Italy
Lluís Masgrau, Theatre Institute, Barcelona, Spain
Patrice Pavis, Paris 8 University, France
Jean-Marie Pradier, Paris 8 University, France
Janne Risum, Århus University, Denmark
Franco Ruffini, Bologna University, Italy
Nicola Savarese, Lecce University, Italy
Mirella Schino, L'Aquila University, Italy

Programme

The 9th ISTA closed session took place in Lövanger, a tiny village 80 kilometres north of Umeå, while the open session with the symposium and most of the public performances took place in Umeå.

Closed session (10-17 May 1995)

Daily Programme:

06:00-07:00 Time of Stillness (breakfast)
07:00-08:15 Digging under the Surface (the technique of techniques)
08:30-10:00 First Steps (the foundation of scenic bios)
10:30-12:30 The Origins and the Present (flashes on our professional identity through demonstrations and stories)
12:30-13:30 Lunch
13:30-15:00 Chaosmos (individualism and synopsis)
15:00-16:15 Waiting for the Ghost (the performer's dramaturgical invention)
16:30-18:30 The Island of the Labyrinths (the director's dramaturgical invention)
19:00-20:00 Supper
20:30-21:30 Flying over the Surface (performances from different cultures).

Names of 'First Steps' groups: Zeami, Kalidasa, Thespis, Atahualpa, Caboclo, working with I Made Djimat in the Mississippi room, with Augusto Omolú in the Nile room, with Sanjukta Panigrahi in the Ganges room, with Kanichi Hanayagi in the Yang-tze room, with Tom Leabhart in the Amazonas room.

Names of the 'Waiting for the Ghost' groups: Aoyama, Bhubaneswar, Salvador, Batuan, Claremont, Bayreuth, working in Yang-tze room, Ganges room, Nile room, Amazonas room, Volga room, Niagara Falls room.

Open session (17-21 May 1995)

During the ISTA open session, a five-day symposium (17-21 May), led by Eugenio Barba, was held open to the public. It included work demonstrations by ISTA's artistic staff.

ISTA presented sixteen public performances by Balinese, Indian, Japanese, North American ensembles and Odin Teatret, organised one barter and presented one Theatrum Mundi.



Kanichi Hanayagi dancing with a participant, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

Julia Varley

ISTA Umeå in Løvanger

Abstract: Extract of the article "The Pre-Expressive Famil" by Julia Varley published in The Performers' Village (Drama, Copenhagen), pages 122-24, giving some information about the everyday life at the ISTA session in Umeå, Sweden.

Keywords: Pre-expressivity, Biomechanics, Exercise, Score, Precision

It was May and it snowed. We were in the north of Sweden, at the time of year when the nights hardly exist. When Raghunath from India and Augusto from Brazil woke up one morning to find the door of their huts blocked by snow, they were horrified. In such a situation they thought it was impossible to work and they were surprised to see everyone else normally walking up to the gym, or Mississippi room, to take part in the hour of *Digging under the surface*, the time dedicated to the *technique of techniques*.

Snow, snowballs and the snow-Ganesha-elephant-god are some of the memories from the 9th session of ISTA, in 1995, organised by Chris Torch and Sven Sahlström. We were staying in a village of small wooden huts, which was built to offer a roof to the nomads who came from the surrounding Lap country to go to church on Sundays. Each little hut had a fireplace and simple wooden furniture. Spring offered the first crocuses in the grass, light which never disappeared from the sky, and then lots and lots of snow. Weather became a great topic of conversation in this ISTA village. This session had the title *Form and information - actor's learning in a multicultural dimension*.

Normally one speaks of the opposition between form and content. At Odin Teatret and within ISTA we usually refer to the complementarity of form and precision. Now the terminology was changing while focusing on the relationship between form and information. When we were deciding on the theme for this ISTA session, wanting to dedicate it to how theatre craft is passed along generations in different cultures, we chose the title which would later have other implications. We were addressing actor's learning as in India with gurus, in Japan with the artistic families, in Bali with the villages' feasts, in Brazil with the Afro-religious ceremonies, in Europe and America with the traditional and alternative theatre schools. Sanjukta Panigrahi, Kanichi Hanayagi, I Made Djimat, Augusto Omolú, Tom Leabhart, Odin Teatret, the university professors together with the help of participants coming from North America and Europe covered a wide range of experience within the different traditions of actors' apprenticeship. We concentrated on exercises, either the first ones which had been learnt or those each artist felt fundamental



165



Augusto Omolú and Sanjukta Panigrahi in *Theatrum Mundi*, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

to achieve an actor/dancer's scenic presence. The title of the session referred to the form – the way – in which actors learn and to the information – the what – actors learn. But while analysing the exercises and wanting to help Eugenio Barba invent the 'perfect exercise', these words and concepts started indicating towards something deeper. The relationship between form and information was taking us towards the mystery in the actor's craft, towards the energy which expresses despite the actor's will, towards the merging of pre-expressive and expressive levels.

When I was a young actor at Odin Teatret and desperate to learn from the examples of my elder companions, precision was one of my main aims. During rehearsals one day I heard Eugenio comment on a scene which Else Marie Laukvik was repeating. He was admiring her incredible precision. I could see that Else Marie was repeating her scene differently each time. I started to understand that precision had nothing to do with doing the same again. During a public seminar in Bologna, Italy, in 1994, all the Odin actors were asked to define what they meant by precision. Jan Ferslev said that in Danish to be precise means to be on time. If we are expected to be in the rehearsal room at eight o' clock in the morning, to be precise could mean arriving ten minutes early, but also to be by the door and extinguish the cigarette as one sees Eugenio walk down the corridor some minutes after eight. Precision is to be in the right place at the right time. But what determines that it is right?

When I am asked to explain what makes that an action is no longer formalistic and empty, but is able to acquire a meaning for a spectator and seems to have a meaning for the actor, I answer that it does not depend on the content of the action, but on the

precision of the action, what could also be called the action's necessity and motivation.

After the ISTA session in Umeå, instead of speaking of 'precision' I prefer to say 'information', a word which I find much more appropriate and less confusing. To avoid new misunderstandings or associations to newspapers and computers I say 'deep information'. The action is scenically alive because of the deep information it contains. This deep information is a kind of energy. Something that technically I can describe through resistance, rhythm, direction, but that actually I am not able to define. The deep information is a mystery. I only know that it is there. I know how it feels, the sensation, but I do not know how to explain or analyse it.

In Umeå a lot of time was spent examining Meyerhold's biomechanic exercises. We looked at a film where the exercises were performed by various generations of Russian pupils and we watched Ralf Raüker time and time again as he presented *the throwing of the stone*, which he had learnt from Gennadi Bogdanov. Ralf would also tell us about the explanations and words used by his master as Eugenio tried to discover the logic behind an exercise which divided a simple action into many phases which were always denying each other. The exercise contains an information which is automatically passed on to the pupil through its form. By learning the form, the body's mind understands and incorporates the principles behind the form. The exercise, or the action, automatically expresses the information it contains, without the actor necessarily being aware of it. What the exercise needs to express is its sense, not stories or meanings. So we have a pre-expressive level of presence which needs to express, a presence that incorporates information. In a performance the meanings and stories to be read can become abstractions in both the actor's or the spectator's mind, but the information which gives life to exercises and actions at the pre-expressive level is tied in an indissoluble way to the modelled form, it is the intelligence which cannot be separated from the body. It is the pre-expressive expression! This deep information is easily perceived, but difficult to explain. It is the mysterious point with no words around which I battle within my *pre-expressive family*, when my point of view as an actor cannot agree with observers, spectators and scholars.



Cristina Wistari, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

Cristina Wistari

Voice in Balinese Dance Drama

Abstract: Cristina Wistari describes vocal work in Balinese dance theatre with examples of her training with I Made Djimat and Ni Nyoman Candri, confronting questions of song and spoken text, of ancient and contemporary language in arja, topeng and gambuh.

Keywords: Balinese dance theatre, Gambuh, Voice, Opera

Cristina Wistari first came to an ISTA in 1997 for the session in Umeå. She was part of the Balinese ensemble directed by I Made Djimat, accompanied by I Wayan Bawa and Ni Wayan Sekarini. She lived in Bali studying classical Balinese dance for thirty years. In 1993 she started the Gambuh Project with the aim of preserving the most ancient dance form in Bali. She regularly performed gambuh and topeng in the temple festivals in Bali as well as leading workshops and performing abroad. In 2000 she published the book *Gambuh*. Cristina died in 2008. Here she talks of her vocal apprenticeship in an interview of 2000 for *The Open Page* n. 6.

(...) The first thing I learnt vocally as a Balinese performer of classical styles was gambuh. My teacher, I Made Djimat, taught me the *ucapan* (dialogue), which is a particular way of speaking. He would say a syllable, and I would repeat it. Later I worked on arja with Ni Nyoman Candri, a very experienced singer and teacher, to help open my voice.

The Balinese spontaneously use nasal sounds as part of their language, while I needed a lot of time to learn to take their high pitches. Ni Nyoman Candri would sing the first line without ornamentation, which in arja is always the most complex, and through repetition slowly my voice changed. Only after the basic line has been learnt is one allowed to add variations.

The Balinese don't have specific voice exercises so all I could obtain were the tones. I remember I spat and coughed a lot. Ni Nyoman Candri also remembered that in the beginning her throat scratched and that she suffocated and had to spit many times.

The search for the correct sound has been very difficult, and I have found it



only recently for the *ucapan*, but not yet for singing, perhaps because I feel self-conscious as a foreigner.

I regularly perform the character of Panji, a male noble *manis* (soft) character in gambuh, and Rangga, the Prime Minister in topeng. These characters should speak with a high pitch and delicate voice. It is very difficult to find men who can speak in the *manis* style for male characters, so these roles are often played by women. An old master known for his excellent voice capacity gave his Panji a very high thin quality.

I remember that when I tried to make my voice smaller, another great master told me not to use falsetto, but my own voice. In the topeng mask dance, I had to find male voices with strong intonations that Balinese women usually do not do, except in the group I work with now. But the women in that group are arja singers, so they have worked with voice since they were children.

In the beginning, when I had to speak the ancient Balinese language Kawi without understanding anything at all it was terribly difficult. I had no points of reference, and I had to learn everything by heart. It is a very complex language that only a few people study seriously, like the Dalang of wayan kulit, the shadow mask performance. Few people really speak the proper high-class Balinese. Although I would never say I know Kawi, one learns certain sentences that are often repeated. It is like Latin for an Italian.

My teachers did not consider it to be important that I understood the words, but that I should understand the situation, the musicality and the feeling of the character. Within the same situation different sentences can be used. For example, in the final duel scene, I now have a series of sentences with which I can improvise.

Gambuh performances today can be full of improvisation, while repeating etiquette sentences like 'come here', 'go there' or 'don't do this'. The sentences must respect the rank of the characters and make some reference to the story, reacting to the situation. If my partners in the scene don't keep to the text and improvise in Balinese style, depending on the intonation of what they say, I can choose one sentence rather than another. To improvise is fun and gives a much greater freedom. The story is always explained in the action and not in the text.

There is a standard style for each character. Generally speaking, you would not say that the intonation is connected to emotion, but if Prince Panji gets angry with his brother, a strong *keras* character, their voices will change and become sharper. When the emotion is over, the voice will return to the tonality that is correct for the character. When you find your vocal score, you keep it. The text can change, but you keep to that way of using the voice.

In gambuh, the teacher brings a story that has been passed down for many generations and everybody more or less knows what it is about. Within the tradition no new texts are written. In the past the master based the *ucapan*, the text that the different characters speak, on a story, and the dancers learnt it by heart. It was not a written tradition: the master prepared the text for a special occasion; it was not something that would be published or kept.

In arja the stories are quite banal, although the voice-work is beautiful. In both



Cristina Wistari and Ni Wayan Sekarini in a topeng performance, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

gambuh and topeng, the main narrative is carried by the servants. The noble roles have the responsibility of character, voice and speech, but the servants tell the story and explain. They speak about all that which has to do with society and religion.

Contemporary comments are never put in gambuh, but always in topeng. So the servants' roles are very difficult and important and they are given to expert people, who have studied and know the stories very well. They must be very quick.

In gambuh, it is very new that women dance since, as recently as twenty-five years ago, men played the female roles. Women have never played topeng, except now in my new group, because women are traditionally mute. Apparently this was because women did not know the language and the texts, and they had not studied, but now they all go to school and artists like Ni Nyoman Candri must learn Kawi. In the new topeng group, women can at last improvise texts that speak of their own way of seeing their life in Bali.



I Made Djimat, ISTA 9, Umeå, Sweden, 1995. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

Enrico Masseroli I Made Djimat

Abstract: This article includes some of Enrico Masseroli's stories, part of a still unpublished book on his experience in Bali. It is in homage to I Made Djimat, the Balinese master, who participated in an ISTA session for the first time in Umeå in 1995. The stories look behind the scenes of Balinese dance-drama.

Keywords: Balinese dance-drama, Gambuh, Topeng, Baris

Djimat, finally

January 1979, third week. I had stopped by the village of Batuan a first time and had found I Made Djimat's house, but he wasn't there. Because of the language barrier, I couldn't understand from his wife when I could find him. I couldn't wait to escape from Kuta, where the streets were besieged by sellers. I hadn't come to Bali to be at the beach among tourists! So, when I finally found him on a second try, it was the day of destiny.

Djimat remembered the year before in Santarcangelo in Italy, when I spoke to him after his performance. He even remembered that Vanna, a colleague actress from Teatro tascabile di Bergamo, was with me.

I took my first lesson right away. Djimat had a completely different attitude compared to the dull professor from the capital Denpasar. He followed me closely, shaping my body like a sculptor. He vigorously hit my arm from underneath if my elbow wasn't in line with my shoulder, he pressed my hips and squashed me hard to lower my centre of gravity and widen my legs. I challenged myself not to give up, sweating profusely.

After the lesson, he invited me to stay with him. I accepted immediately. I had found my Master.

A baris on a motorbike

January 1979 again. During my stay in Kuta, I had met a red-haired Australian girl, Joan. In fact, she had approached me at a restaurant, politely asking if she could sit down at my table even if the room was not full.

After I moved to Batuan, one afternoon Joan came to visit me on a motorbike. After the lesson, Djimat informed us that he had to dance that evening at a hotel in Sanur. He needed a motorbike and asked if we could go to Ubud to rent one for him. In Ubud there were none available where he had directed us. At another rental shop, the price was double what Djimat had told us to pay. When we returned empty-handed, Joan



generously lent him her motorbike for the evening's engagement. Now running late, his face already made-up, wearing the baris costume with its long fringes, the triangular crown with the vibrant pearl shells on his head, and the *keris* (dagger) tucked behind his shoulders, Djimat dashed to the hotel, where an impatient gamelan colleague was waiting on the driveway to escort him directly to the stage.

Sound osmosis

1981. Professor Ferruccio Marotti and Eugenio Barba arrive at I Made Djimat's theatre-home. They're touring the island organising their future projects. Since it is time, Djimat invites us all to lunch. A table and chairs are set up on the stage, where the gamelan instruments are lined up. When the food arrives, the host apologises for not having enough cutlery for everyone. Barba, smiling, comments: "Eating with your hands, Balinese style, is like being a child again."

After the meal, the well-known director asks Djimat if he can offer a demonstration of his art. Djimat immediately agrees, but before beginning, one by one, he removes the covers from the instruments. Then he displays all his mastery, moved by an impressive energy. Rhythm and music silently illuminate his body.

After the demonstration, everyone congratulates him. Barba asks him why he had removed the covers from the instruments. The guest had imagined that Djimat had prearranged everything and expected the musicians to appear. "Nothing was planned – Djimat explained candidly – but in this way I could hear the gamelan accompany me in the dance."

Kerahuan: the possession of the Jauk

When Djimat has performances in different places, I am happy to accompany him and help him put on his costume. I remember well the time he danced the Jauk, the demon with long, vibrating nails, a character from the sacred drama *calon arang*, in a packed ceremony. Djimat, always brilliant, seemed carried by a divine energy, in a state of grace, as we would say, hypnotising everyone. As soon as the last gong rang out, a spectator, sitting among the crowd on the lawn in front, began to scream, in the throes of convulsions.

They called Djimat and I followed close behind. With a priest, we approached the man in a state of *kerahuan* (possession); he was surrounded and supported by those present. The priest sprinkled the man with sanctified water, while he screamed, gasping, as if he were about to vomit. Another priest climbed onto a nearby altar and Djimat was now standing beside him, praying intently in front of the offerings that had just been prepared. The priest blessed the man while reciting his mantras. I saw those present kneel and sit down. After a few minutes, the man calmed down, Djimat and the priest smiled at each other, knowingly. Everyone regained composure, and the ceremony resumed as if nothing had happened.

Back home, I asked Djimat to explain what had happened: "We had arrived late, and I hadn't participated in the preparatory ritual with the others. That's why the Jauk took offense, and when I finished the dance, he entered that spectator. That is why the priests had to intervene, and I had to apologise."

Structural improvisation

Along with the primary vocabulary of Balinese dance-theatre, my master Djimat taught me the baris tunggal (a solo baris dance). Specifically, he taught me one of his choreographies, following an audio recording. Every time I saw him dance, I asked insistently, "On stage you did something completely different from what you teach me (in the development and details, not the structure). Why?" He replied, "When I lead the gamelan, I am free, I improvise... You will understand in time."

It took me years to fully understand that the baris and its choreography are not the same thing. While it is true that Asian technical teaching is based on imitation, learning doesn't mean copying. Copying perfectly is only the beginning. Then, the memorised choreography must be forgotten and reinvented each time. Only then can the baris warrior truly emerge in the dance.

Studying topeng

As with the first dances, the baris and the jauk, learning the noble characters of topeng (the ministers, the old counsellor, and the king) meant learning their choreography, through which I could assimilate their structural and distinctive elements. It was then necessary to fully understand which postures and gestures serve as junctions, marking the transitions between the parts that invariably compose each dance. I had to avoid anchoring myself to the details of the dance I had studied because, when conducting the gamelan in a real performance, in its living and unique space, one must freely improvise its development and articulation.

With Djimat, I also studied comic characters, trying to copy them as best I could. With the early and inevitable realisation that if you don't find a personal approach, embracing and wearing a character's identity, you won't get anywhere. You can copy a choreography, but not the comedy of a clown.

The work with Penasar, the storyteller, the key character of topeng, was unique. His dance is quite free. Djimat masterfully develops the Penasar, emphasising his jovial and exuberant nature; others, however, present him in a more static form, focusing on his vocality. In fact, traditionally, the Penasar enters the stage singing, and it is not easy to transcribe and learn the texts in Kawi (ancient Javanese, used in topeng). If you try to understand their meaning, you often can't get a clear translation when asking different teachers or even asking the same teacher at different times.

I fondly remember the time Djimat took me with him to the river for vocal training. That day, he had two topeng performances, and the exercise would have been particularly useful to him. We entered the water and crouched so that only our heads were above water, while the strong current lashed against our necks. Thus, letting our voice sing with long breaths, I felt the beneficial massage of the water on my larynx and vocal cords.



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.



"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

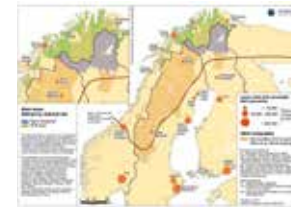
their belt. It had inspired the work of the Odin and the research team around them.

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 Casmeli, Richard Sseruwagi, Kemal Görgü, Lamine Dieng, Mina Azarian, Ani Guinez, 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.

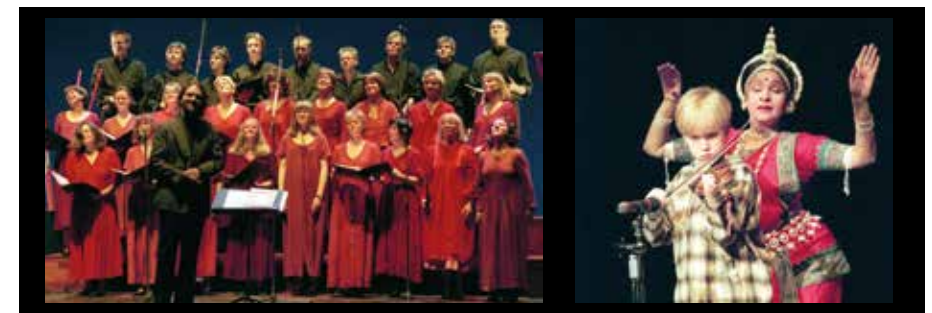
The voice of the Master of Ceremonies, David Lenneman, was heard as the tube trumpets grew silent. He read a text of the major writer Sara Lidman (1923-2004), born in Västerbotten (Sweden). It was written and spoken in dialect, well-known by all. Her words reflected on why salmon swim upstream, to reach 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 Lövånger, 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

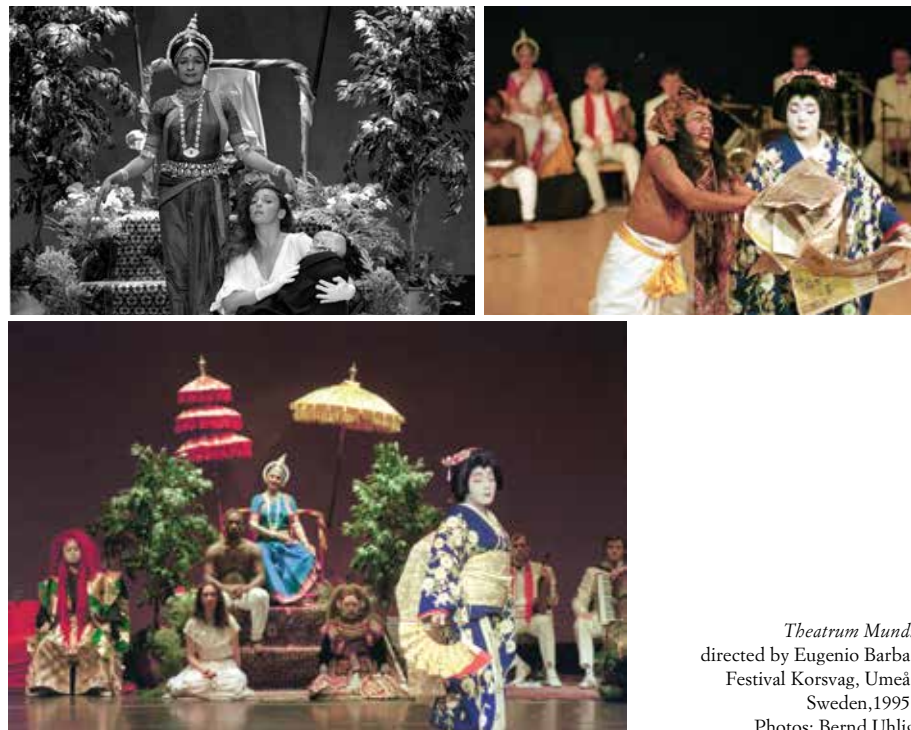
6. Theatrum Mundi

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/Korsvåg 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

Reflections and Discussions

Valentina Venturini About Nicola Savarese

Abstract: This article was first published in Italian in "Teatro e Storia", n. 45/2025, pp. 409-21 as part of a dossier about Nicola Savarese, a scholar whose research was both practical and theoretical. His main publications are listed here, together with his fields of interest that ranged from Asian theatre to ancient Greek and Roman theatre. Nicola was part of ISTA since the first session in Bonn in 1980 and the collaboration with Eugenio Barba has produced two fundamental books for theatre anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer and The Five Continents of Theatre.

Keywords: Asian theatre, Greek and Roman theatre, Eurasian theatre, Plausible imagination

Epitaphs

'There is something stronger than death and it is the presence of the absent in the memory of the living,' is written on one of the tombs in the small cemetery of Brancion-en-Chalon.¹ For me, and for many others, Nicola Savarese will never die. Like Nando Tavian, his soul brother, will never die. Nicola Savarese had created a website for Nando, *The Nandless*,² to avoid giving up or getting used to the idea of his absence.

Nicola's absence will continue to nourish memory and recollections; his presence will continue through his teaching, studies, writings, and his way of passing on knowledge, evaporated – as described by Franco Ruffini – in heavy, compact, dark grey clouds, capable of raining down 'a God-sent flood' on anyone who dares to pass beneath them.

The introduction to *Minima Orientalia*, the last book Nicola was working on and which he left finished and ready to be published, begins with an image emblematic of his way of working and being in the world, that of a white rhinoceros of the rarest species. Eugenio Barba, his other soul brother, smiling would often call him a rhinoceros, free to traverse

1. Each chapter of Valérie Perrin's novel, *Cambiare l'acqua ai fiori* (Perrin 2019) features, at its epigraph, an epitaph from the graves in the cemetery where the protagonist works as a caretaker. My citation takes the epigraph from chapter 13 (55). To write her novel, Perrin gathered information, epitaphs and impressions by visiting various cemeteries, from small ones like the one in her hometown in Burgundy – where she also interviewed and collected the stories of the gravedigger who had worked there for thirty years – to the large ones in the metropolises. 'There's always something for those who know how to look; they're much more interesting for the living who frequent them than for the dead; they're elsewhere', as the author put it in an interview with Elena Masuelli (see Masuelli 2019).

2. *Nandless. Dedicated to Ferdinando Tavian*: < <https://nandless.it> > (last viewed: June 30, 2025)



boundless spaces and at the same time capable of exploring them meticulously, millimetre by millimetre. This was his way of conducting research, the essence of his method, which he always understood in the etymological sense of ‘a road to reach beyond’.

‘In 1515 – Nicola writes – Albrecht Dürer, the greatest German painter of the Renaissance, drew a rhinoceros without ever having seen it.’ Nicola pauses to comment further: Dürer drew it ‘based on descriptions he had only read or heard. That is, *he took his risk*.’³ Like Nicola himself, embarking on a path to reach beyond, well aware of the risks he was taking and of his implied responsibility.

Nicola began his graduation in 1971 with a thesis whose title should have been *Le tragedie dell'orrore nel Cinquecento italiano* (Horror tragedies in 16th-century Italy). He went beyond the subject, turning it into the centre of a field to be investigated in its entirety with precision. The topic became the nucleus of a cell that developed into two volumes: *Per un catalogo bibliografico e critico delle tragedie italiane nel Cinquecento: dall'Orbecche di G.B. Giraldi (1541) all'Afrodite di A. Valerini (1578)* (For a bibliographical and critical catalogue of Italian tragedies in the 16th Century: from G.B. Giraldi's *Orbecche* to A. Valerini's *Afrodite*). While working on his thesis, Nicola immediately grasped the real handicap for studies on the subject: the lack of an inventory of the 16th-century plays scattered throughout various libraries. To gain a precise understanding of the subject, he believed it was necessary to read the books that contained them, which, in addition to the text of the play, contained a lot more information: ‘They presented a wealth of information largely ignored by scholars and literary critics: for example, in the dedicatory letters prefacing the play, and addressed to eminent figures according to the custom of the time, one often found information about the staging, the actors, and the audience's reactions to the performance.’⁴

The research on the theme had given rise to the need for a catalogue that, for Nicola, resembles more a *forma mentis*, a way of thinking. With a similar procedure, the vast breadth of fragments from the East, collected during his long wanderings through Asian theatres, over the years became *Minima Orientalia. Dizionario illustrato di frammenti esotici* (Illustrated dictionary of exotic fragments), whose entries deal, as the subtitle states, with ‘archaeologists, actors, composers, choreographers, costume designers, dancers, diplomats, playwrights, explorers, philosophers, photographers, journalists, linguists, sailors, merchants, missionaries, military personnel, musicians, naturalists, painters, poets, novelists, set designers, writers, scholars, translators, travellers, plus some notions about the East’. The path to follow is always that of going beyond: ‘We collect, organise, arrange, tell basic stories alongside marginal episodes, overlooking the fact that even the most extraordinary stories can *be invented* by combining reality and fantasy.’⁵ As Dürer had done, with his never-before-seen rhinoceros. Nicola called it ‘plausible fantasy’, and it was the very essence of his approach to theatre history: always *imagining* the material side of phenomena, as he

had learned from Nando Tavian, ‘whose studies are a true godsend,’⁶ to whom the dictionary is dedicated.

‘Plausible fantasy’ is not intended to establish analogies between forms [...], but simply to remind the scholar that it is necessary to clearly visualise the scene being reconstructed, and that to do this, one cannot avoid using an imagination that helps him or her glimpse what the document doesn't explicitly state.

[...] Here, then, is a good starting point for a theatre scholar: obviously stick to the fragments and testimonies, but reassemble them, read them, and interpret them in the light of a broader and more adequate experience of theatre in terms of performance techniques and material constraints).⁷

Fundamental, then, is the choice of perspective, the point of view through which to frame (also with a long shot) and focus.⁸ We need to approach the study of a topic by reconstructing and simultaneously imagining the overall context as plausible, based on constants, similarities, and identities that recur, regardless of geographical, temporal, social, and cultural boundaries. Historiography, therefore, is not a memory of what is no longer visible, but a method for shedding light on phenomena otherwise destined to remain obscure; with all the risks that such a view entails. Looking at the ways of operating, rather than the work, and, at the same time, looking at the work through the ways of operating. After all, how many times have Nicola Savarese, Fabrizio Cruciani, Franco Ruffini and Eugenio Barba repeated – and repeat – that theatre is not an art of works, but of ‘ways of working?’⁹

Bibelot

Nicola had first approached theatre history as a ‘bookworm’, as he himself says in a fragment of the film *La città del teatro* (The City of Theatre).¹⁰ Almost immediately, however, following his meeting with Odin Teatret and Eugenio Barba, he was catapulted into another world. His vocation to expand and explore every field of inquiry was

3. Nicola Savarese, *Introduzione*, in Id., *Minima Orientalia. Dizionario illustrato di frammenti esotici*, unpublished at the time of my writing this article. The italics are mine.

4. *Ibidem*.

5. *Ibidem*.

6. *Ibidem*.

7. Venturini 1994, 22-23.

8. Nicola was also a good photographer, as he happened to demonstrate in his exploration of ISTA since the first session in Bonn, in 1980: ‘As the days progressed and the work in the School evolved, my task as photographer began to get complicated. – Nicola wrote in the beginning of his photographic diary – Everything was always the same and yet always different. Something was happening that the camera could no longer grasp the way I felt it. I realised that the relationships between the people were changing, between all of us who lived there, each doing their own work. This repeatedly escaped the camera although I took it with me everywhere, quietly accepted by everyone. So, I decided to photograph what for me was the reflection of this new relationship: each of us as the days went by and in the evolution of the work within the School’: Savarese 1982, 13-15; then republished in Savarese 2021, 87-97.

9. Cruciani 1991, 3.

10. I am referring to a fragment of an interview with Savarese taken from *Voices from ISTA*, directed by Claudio Coloberti, 2007, a fragment later reproduced in the recently released film, *La città del teatro*, directed by Vito Zaggarro, 2025.

combined, more than ever, with a focus on the relevant material aspects. Like a rare kind of rhinoceros, Nicola entered the materiality of theatre with vigour but also full responsibility, to the point of founding, together with Adriana Molinar, a Panamanian actress and director, the Arcoiris theatre group, of which he was both director and actor, studying and simultaneously performing theatre in squares and villages from 1976 to 1981.

Accustomed to travelling the world, curious about its traditions, its theatres, and the related universe of books, his meticulous analysis of documents and his tendency to catalogue were now combined with the study of Asian traditions, his bond with Odin Teatret, and his field experience, honed by that authentic school of seeing that for him, as for many, was ISTA, Eugenio Barba's International School of Theatre Anthropology, in which he participated from the first session (Bonn, October 1-31, 1980). In between practical exercise and theoretical study, it was a period of true apprenticeship and perfecting in that *art of seeing* that knows how to produce images from his studies to then combine them creatively.

'Plausible imagination' consists of picturing things, reconstructing them visually, starting from the fragments we possess, from verified concrete realities and from possible realities. In English, the very act of imagining something is called *visualising*. I believe every historian should possess this kind of visual imagination, but theatre historians must make a little more effort because theatre is already an object intended for vision. Theatre is not at all ephemeral, as is said; on the contrary, it is an art intended for vision and therefore entrusted by principle to memory.¹¹

At the heart of the land of theatre, Nicola placed the East in its relations with the West. The interest in this field of study arose in 1973, when he began writing on the subject with *Introduzione al teatro classico giapponese* (Introduction to classical Japanese theatre).¹² Almost immediately, it became the terrain through which to give voice to a profound passion 'nourished by knowledge but not exhausted by knowledge,' according to Franco Ruffini. It was precisely the comparison with the ancient Asian theatre traditions that drew Nicola's attention to the original forms of Western theatre. He had the premonition, which later became a certainty, that 'only a living experience of the land of theatre can refocus the vision of lost theatres.'¹³ His research on Asian theatres and their relationships with European and Western theatres culminated in what were from the beginning scholarly monuments on this subject: *Anatomia del teatro. Un dizionario di antropologia teatrale*, 1983,¹⁴ which then became *Anatomie de l'acteur. Un dictionnaire d'anthropologie théâtrale*, written together with Eugenio

Barba in 1985 and translated into dozens of languages throughout the world;¹⁵ *Teatro e spettacolo fra Oriente e Occidente* (Theatre and performance between East and West) in 1992, also translated into several languages¹⁶ and altered for a minor version, *Il teatro eurasiatico* (The Eurasian theatre) in 2002;¹⁷ and *I cinque continenti del teatro. Fatti e leggende della cultura materiale dell'attore* (The five continents of theatre. Facts and legends of the material culture of the actor), again with Barba, in 2017.¹⁸ After-

15 *Anatomie de l'acteur. Un dictionnaire d'anthropologie théâtrale*, with Eugenio Barba, Cazilhac-Rome, Buffoneries-Contrastes-Zeami Libri, 1985; *Anatomía del actor. Diccionario de Antropología Teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Mexico City, Gaceta Editorial, 1988; *El arte segreto del actor. Diccionario de Antropología Teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Mexico, Gran Festival Ciudad de Mexico-Escenología, 1990; *The Secret Art of the Performer. A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, with Eugenio Barba, London-New York, A Centre for Performance Research Book-Routledge, 1991; *L'énergie qui danse. L'art secret de l'acteur. Un dictionnaire d'anthropologie théâtrale*, with Eugenio Barba, Lectoure, Bouffoneries, 1995; *Haiyuu no kaibougaku. Engeki jinruigaku jiten nija no bi gei. Engeki jinruigaku no jisbo*, with Eugenio Barba, Tokyo, Parco Co. Ltd., 1995; *A arte secreta do actor. Dicionário de antropologia teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, São Paulo-Campinas, Hucitec, 1995; *Tajna umetnosti glumca. Rečnik pozorišne antropologije*, with Eugenio Barba, Belgrade, Institut za pozoriste, 1996; *L'arte segreta dell'attore. Un dizionario di antropologia teatrale*, with Eugenio Barba, Lecce, Argo, 1996 (2nd ed. reviewed and corrected); *Slovník Divadelní Anthropologie. O Skrytém Umení Herců*, with Eugenio Barba, Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny-Divadelní Ústav, 2000; *Oyuncun Gizli Sanatı. Tiyatro Antropolojisi Sözlüğü*, with Eugenio Barba, Istanbul, Yapi Kredi Yayınları, ed. Cem AKAS, 2002; *L'arte segreta dell'attore. Un dizionario di antropologia teatrale*, with Eugenio Barba, Milano, Ubulibri, 2005 (3rd ed. reviewed and integrated on occasion of the 25th anniversary of ISTA) Bari, Edizioni di Pagina, 2011; *Sekretne Sztuka Aktaora. Słownik Antropologii Teatru*, with Eugenio Barba, Wrocław, Ośrodek Badań Twórczości Grotowskiego i Poszukiwan Teatralno-Kulturowych, 2005; *El arte secreto del actor. Diccionario de antropología teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Havana, Ediciones Alarcos, 2007; *Η μυστική τέχνη του ηθοποιού. Αρχές θεατρικής ανθρωπολογίας*, with Eugenio Barba, Athens, Koan, 2008; *El arte secreto del actor. Diccionario de antropología teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Lima, Editorial San Marcos, 2010; *Словарь Театральной Антропологии. Тайное искусство исполнителя (Slovar' teatral'noi antropologii. Tainoe iskusstvo ispolnitelia)*, with Eugenio Barba, Moscow (Москва), Артист. Режиссер. Театр (Artist Rezhisser Teatr), 2010; *مدنکار جا عیضم رنه*, with Eugenio Barba, Kerman, Iran, Sooreh Mehr Press, 2011; *Arte secretă a actorului. Dicționar de antropologie teatrală*, with Eugenio Barba, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2012; *演員者的秘藝*, with Eugenio Barba, Taipei, ARTS/Taipei National University of the Arts, 2012; *A Arte Secreta do Ator. Um Dicionário de Antropologia Teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, São Paulo, Realizações Editora, 2012; *El arte secreto del actor. Diccionario de antropología teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Bilbao, Editorial Artezblai, 2012; *Oyuncunun Gizli Sanatı. Tiyatro Antropolojisi Sözlüğü*, with Eugenio Barba, Istanbul, Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2017; *El arte secreto del actor. Diccionario de Antropología Teatral*, with Eugenio Barba, Buenos Aires, Libros del Balcón, 2019; *Színház titkos művészete. Színházi antropológiai szótár*, with Eugenio Barba, Budapest, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem - L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2020.

16 *Teatro e spettacolo fra Oriente e Occidente* (1992) was the winner of the 1994 Pirandello Prize and the Diego Fabbri Prize. The book has been reprinted numerous times and translated into several languages: *Teatro eurasiático. Danzas y espectáculos entre Oriente y Occidente*, with an editor's note by Edgar Ceballos, Mexico, Col. Escenología, 2001; *Eurasian Theatre. Drama and Performance Between East and West from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, Holstebro-Malta-Wrocław, Icarus Publishing Enterprise, 2010.

17 Savarese 2002.

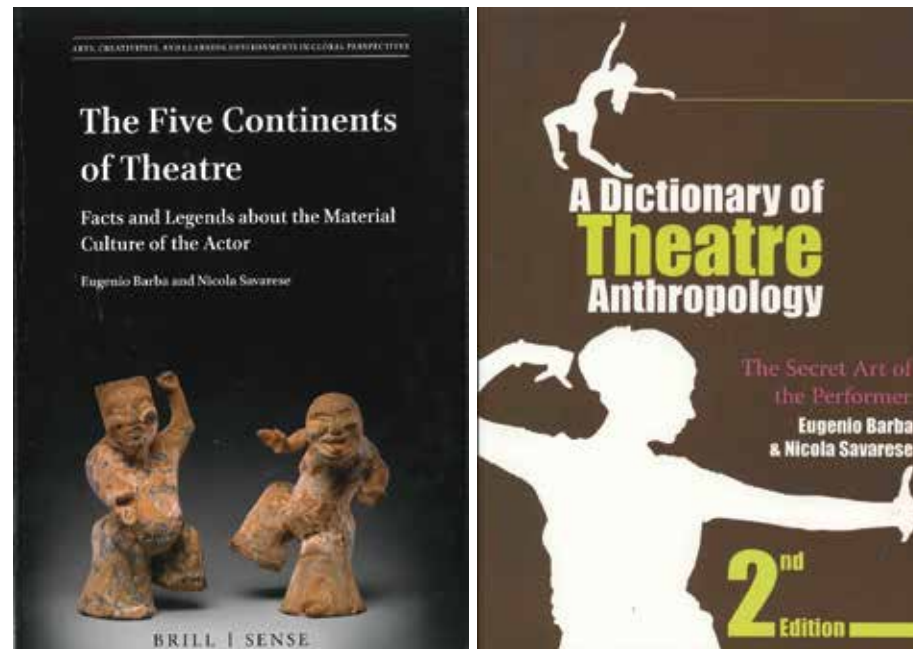
18 Barba e Savarese 2017. The book has had several reprints and translations: *Celecinci Continente ale Teatrului. Fapte și legende din cultura materială a actorului*, with Eugenio Barba, Sibiu, Nemira-Teatrul Național "Radu Stanca", 2018; *The Five Continents of Theatre, Facts and Legends about the Material Culture of the Actor*, with Eugenio Barba, Leiden-Boston, Brill-Sense, 2019; *Les cinq continents du théâtre. Faits et légendes de la culture matérielle de l'acteur*, with Eugenio Barba, Lacoste, Éditions Deuxième Époque, 2020.

11 So says Nicola Savarese in Venturini 1994, 22.

12 See Savarese 1973; written during the Seminar of Prof. Benito Ortolani at the Teatro Ateneo of Rome La Sapienza University.

13 Again see Venturini 1994, p. 22.

14 Barba and Savarese 1983. On the cover, at the top, before the title, we read: 'From the International School of Theatre Anthropology directed by Eugenio Barba,' followed by the title, a photo, and, below, 'A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology edited by Nicola Savarese.' The publisher's name follows.



wards Nicola returned to what he called his *bibelot*, that is, the Greek and Roman theatres that had been left dormant during his oriental forays and could now come back to life; a new life.

The Western ancient theatres appeared in a different light, less familiar but richer in perspective, to his increasingly discerning way of seeing. This was already evident in the lecture he gave at the Sorbonne in 1992, *Storie emergenti del teatro eurasiatico: la tragedia greca e l'arte del cantastorie* (Emerging stories of the Eurasian theatre: Greek tragedy and the art of the storyteller),¹⁹ and became even more evident in what can be considered the first port of this other journey into boundless territories, *Teatri Romani. Gli spettacoli nell'antica Roma* (Roman theatres. Performances in ancient Rome), 1996,²⁰ which Taviani defined 'a critical anthology that manages to observe with a new and distant eye a subject that would seem all too well known'.²¹ Nicola will return to this field several times, continuing to broaden it and to take on different perspectives, always fully aware – being neither a Romanist, nor a philologist, nor a scholar specifically oriented towards ancient theatres – of the 'professional' risk that he was taking. And

19 Published in Savarese 1994, 103-119 (lecture held on November 27, 1992, at the Université de la Sorbonne, Salle Louis Liard, for the colloquium 'Penser l'histoire du cinéma: repenser l'histoire du théâtre').

20 Savarese 1996 (editing of the anthology and introduction: *I paradossi dei teatri romani*, pp. IX-LXX-VIII); *Teatri Romani. Gli spettacoli nell'antica Roma* (2nd ed. with the addition of the essay: *L'orazione di Libanio in difesa della pantomima*, pp. 326-353), Imola, Cue Press, 2015.

21 Taviani 1997, 282.

which, I would even say proudly, he displayed in forms that were new to the scholarly community, such as the conference-performance *Quo vadis? A teatro con gli antichi romani: mimi, attori, aurighi e gladiatori* (Quo vadis? A theatre with the ancient Romans: mimes, actors, charioteers and gladiators), 1997, presented for the first time at the Teatro Storchi in Modena, in front of around 700 spectators.²² This conference-performance was another highly personal way, innate in him, of uniting practice and theory.²³ Nicola had inaugurated it during his studies on Antonin Artaud, the first of which was, in fact, a lecture-performance prepared for the 50th anniversary of the Colonial Exposition in Paris. It debuted at the Santarcangelo di Romagna Festival with the title *Parigi/Artaud/Bali – nel cinquantenario d'una visione* (Paris/Artaud/Bali – in the 50th anniversary of a vision), 1981. After over a hundred performances in Italy and abroad, it became a 'book' sixteen years later, in 1997.²⁴

Regarding studies on ancient theatres, the major exhibition at the Colosseum was memorable: *In scæna. Il teatro di Roma antica* (In scæna. The theatre of ancient Rome), 2007.²⁵ Its relevant catalogue was hyper-nourished with knowledge, coherent to Nicola's mindset. Other more specific interventions were born from the fragments accumulated by ploughing the fields around the theme of ancient theatres. Fuelled by a profound passion for the theme without identifying or exhausting it totally, Nicola writes *Rappresentazioni teatrali in epoca imperiale* (Theatre representations in the imperial era) in 1999;²⁶ *L'orazione di Libanio in difesa dei pantomimi* (Libanio's speech

22 Modena, Teatro Storchi, April 7, 1997, an ERT Emilia Romagna Teatro production. Repeated in July of the same year at Volterra Teatro 97 Festival, then managed by C.S.R.T. – Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale e Piccolo Teatro di Pontedera.

23 On March 23, 1996, at the Teatro Storchi in Modena, Savarese performed his entire lecture repertoire non-stop from 4:00 p.m. to midnight: *Paris/Artaud/Bali*; *Eisenstein or the Golden Age* (on the film *¡Que viva Mexico!*); *My Oriental Divan is Mishima* (on the writer's suicide); *Salome's Dance* (on the principles of theatre anthropology); and *Orson's Last Hoax*. Taviani wrote: 'Savarese certainly didn't invent the genre of lecture-performances. He reinvented it. He shifted the emphasis from the art of the lecturer to that of the spectator; from the outline to dribbling; from montage as rhetorical and didactic effectiveness to the montage-mixture that creates a sort of independent chemical reaction in the mind of the spectator. His cultural polemic is not against ignorance, but against the lesson. He does all that work to tear apart the lessons. Not to make them *say* something valuable, but to *push* the minds of those who assist to look at something beyond. Eisenstein repeated to his film students that teaching is impossible, one can only learn. By going astray. The rest is well known'. (Ferdinando Taviani, *Il conferenziere imperturbato*, cit., pp. 289-290)

24 The lecture-performance premiered at the Santarcangelo di Romagna Festival on July 10, 1981, and, after over a hundred performances in Italy and abroad, it became a 'book' sixteen years later, in 1997, *Paris/Artaud/Bali. Antonin Artaud vede il teatro balinese all'Esposizione Coloniale di Parigi del 1931*. The study began to take shape with the essay *Artaud vede il teatro balinese all'Esposizione Coloniale Internazionale di Parigi del 1931*, published in Savarese 1996, 35-84; it continued his 'journey' passing through *Bali: un'ossessione in chiave anti occidentale*, published in "Prima Fila," no. 27, 1997, pp. 16-18, and later became a book, *Paris/Artaud/Bali. Antonin Artaud vede il teatro balinese all'Esposizione Coloniale di Parigi del 1931*, L'Aquila, Textus, 1997 (new edition CUE Press, 2021).

25 Savarese 2007.

26 Savarese 1999.

in defence of the mimes) in 2003;²⁷ *Il costume teatrale* (The theatre costume) in 2004;²⁸ *A teatro con gli antichi romani* (To theatre with the ancient Romans) in 2008²⁹; *Guida alla memoria* (Memory guide) in 2019,³⁰ and then the two volumes almost ready to be printed: *Fasti dei teatri romani. Memorie di illustri spettatori. Antologia in latino con testo a fronte* (The glories of Roman theatres. Memoirs of illustrious spectators. An anthology in Latin with facing text), with Vincenzo Blasi³¹ and *Paradossi dei teatri romani. Novissima storia del teatro latino* (Paradoxes of Roman theatres. Recent history of Latin theatre).³²

To do away with the East

Along with a myriad of books, Savarese's library also contained the collection of material for his research. Starting with those for his dissertation, organised and catalogued in drawers overflowing with index cards linked to notes or volumes. This material was catalogued, not abandoned but left to rest, as if to preserve other vital future possibilities. In our meetings over the last few years, he often told me, in ever greater detail, about the many open worktables in his home in Carpignano. He continued to write, ask and search for material, photographs, documents, and thoughts to share. One of his latest publishers, Mattia Visani of Cue Press, has layout templates created by Nicola himself, material and nearly finished texts in such quantities as to cover a decade's work. This is in the 'editorial programme' that continues to occupy a prominent place on his computer desktop and which, not coincidentally, he titled *Napoleone. Editorial programme*, the tables (11 in total) are meticulously catalogued, including the progress of the work. All have passed the first phase ('Material complete. Book is set up'), some are in the next phase ('Materials arranged with Contents'), others are ready for print ('Finished book in need of retouching').³³

The subjects of these book projects testify the rhinoceros-like dimension and the passionate strategy that was at their origin. It is no coincidence that the publication dates

of his books and essays never indicate simply the time when, with publication, the study ends, but rather the time when it begins to live. The work on his studies never finished. Nicola has never stopped returning to them, rethinking them, expanding or modifying their boundaries, as if they were parts of an overall picture he has continued to draw on throughout his career.

In his Napoleonic plans for the future, there were also points of arrival which I doubt would have remained such. One of these is the project *Per farla finita con Oriente e Occidente. Leggende, viaggi e studi sul teatro eurasiatico* (To do away with East and West. Legends, travels and studies on Eurasian theatre). The East again, with which to finally settle accounts, after having reckoned with it for so long. Of the work, which was to be published in three volumes (*Legends, Travels, Studies*), Nicola wrote to the publisher: 'a compendium of all my little thoughts,' an unfinished work 'that will grow until I use up everything I have in my drawers.' Those drawers were also the ones from when, as a child, he watched his grandfather, Angelo Ferretti Torricelli, intent on compiling the index of Alessandro Volta's *Works* (the thirteen volumes of his writings), or helped him collect, analyse, and classify the herbs in the mountain meadows around the house where his mother's father lived. From his grandfather, Nicola had also learned 'the fundamentals of research: rigour and passion.'³⁴ And I would add also the 'ability to look at the world with the clear eye of a child was well accompanied by the tenacious diligence he knew how to put into all his activities, and the activities were many and varied and alternated daily without it ever being possible to distinguish which were *work* and which were *leisure*: the secret of an intellectually fruitful and happy life!'³⁵

To honour his memory, Nicola will edit and work hard to publish the second edition (712 densely packed pages) of the novel that his grandfather had published in 1963 and that he had read, at seventeen, during the summer holidays when the text was still in instalments (*I buoni Marcheschi*, 2020³⁶); and, in 2022, he will publish, in a novel, the story of his grandfather's father: *Insolita storia di Prospero Ferretti pittore*,³⁷ on which, moreover, he had not stopped working; on his computer, ready for print, is the second edition of the novel, which in his Napoleonic publishing programme appears as a 'finished book, to be retouched'. A short circuit that uncovers and sheds a different light on his highly personal and fruitful relationship with the East: his great-grandfather, Prospero Ferretti, a Garibaldian and painter, was the first in the family clan to be fascinated by Asian culture. *Ex Oriente lux*, the Latin motto used by scholars of Semitic studies and ancient Asian archaeology, served Nicola, and even before him, his ancestors, not only in the sense of the medieval formula that, with a play on words, seeks to extol the fruitfulness of Eastern civilizations (*ex Oriente lux, ex Occidente lex*). It served also – and I believe mostly – as a reference to the star of the Magi that rose in the East and, more profoundly, to the expression '*sol ex Oriente*', which dates back to the

27 Savarese 2003, 425-60.

28 Savarese 2004, 53-68.

29 Savarese 2008, 5-32.

30 Preface to Blasi 2019, 8-9.

31 Volume in preparation, as results from point 6 of the file *Napoleone. Programma editoriale*: '(6) *Fasti dei teatri romani. Memorie di illustri spettatori. Antologia in latino con testo a fronte* (con Vincenzo Blasi) – Materiali al completo – Libro impostato'.

32 Volume in preparation, as results from point 8 of the file *Napoleone. Programma editoriale*: '8) *Paradossi dei teatri romani. Novissima storia del teatro latino*. Progetto che nell'elenco risulta alla fase 2: *Materiali sistemati con Indice*.

33 Two works, in Savarese's editorial programme, are at the 'finished book in need of retouching' stage: the *Vocabolario teatrale in cinque lingue. Repertorio tecnico del linguaggio teatrale*, currently in progress at Cue Press, which Nicola had sent to Mattia Visani, editorial director, with this specification: 'Nicola Savarese, *Lessico teatrale in 5 lingue* (Theatre lexicon in 5 languages, Italian, French, English, German, Spanish): 'Over 900 terms; the work is finished. It's up to you how to publish it'; and the second edition of his *Insolita storia di Prospero Ferretti pittore*. In fact *Minima Orientalia*, which Nicola entrusted to me, was also in Phase 3 and was practically ready for print. It was just a matter of 'finishing touches'.

34 This is what he writes in the *Notanda* of the volume he edited of his maternal grandfather's novel (Ferretti Torricelli 2020).

35 Ferretti Torricelli 2020, 11 (text that Laura Ferretti Torricelli, Angelo's daughter, published for the first time ten years after her father's death in the *Annuario della Specola Cidnea per l'anno 1991*, 14-17).

36 Ferretti Torricelli 2020.

37 Savarese 2022.

pontificate of Pope Leone Magno (440-461), and which highlights the role of the East as a source of light and truth.

Along with childhood memories, Nicola had exhumed those drawers – renaming them *cassettini* in a diminutive of affection – at the beginning of his career as a self-employed researcher, to catalogue and organise the material for his dissertation thesis. These would become one of the secrets of his work method and, at the same time, the material form of his thought, the possibility of organising his ideas and giving them a concrete form. They would grow in number, beyond measure, arranged by topic and then by project, filled with references to books and studies by others, personal notes, translations, photographs of all kinds (that he called *figurine*), newspaper clippings, drawings, sketches, and material that who knows how much and how would still ‘speak’. A small archive that over time came to contain several tens of thousands of images; little drawers that he considered his ‘trusted friends’, because he found them ready for every request for help, ready, every time, to ‘step forward and help him find the path to the things he wanted to do, the books and lectures.’³⁸ Everyone, when they reach the top of the hill, must invent their own battle cry. I believe Savarese found it in the practice of the material culture of theatre, both in studying it and in practising it:

Watching the actors, making a montage, remembering the stories, cutting them, assembling the texts... was extremely enjoyable. Much more fun than doing research in the library, because I was a bookworm who suddenly discovered he was a wood squirrel. There was a difference, and I also found it in academic work, that is, in enjoying research through the conditions I had as when I was an actor, director, and literary advisor in a theatre group.³⁹

The meaning of my notes reverberates on those drawers, on Nicola’s eyes as a child, in which his grandfather and his *modus operandi* are reflected, and on those of Nicola as a scholar, whose way of seeing is a blend of passion, meticulousness, leisure, and work. To dwell on another of the epitaphs in the Brancion-en-Chalon cemetery: ‘Men have stars that are not the same. For some, those who travel, the stars are guides. For others, they are merely small lights.’⁴⁰

The stars that guided Nicola continue to guide our paths and will continue to guide the paths of many.

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Recurring Principles



Natsu Nakajima, ISTA 6, Bologna, Italy, 1990. Photo: Fiora Bemporad

For Natsu Nakajima

Abstract: Three articles are dedicated to Natsu Nakajima, a Japanese dancer who has participated in various ISTA sessions, representing butoh dance technique. Nourit Masson-Sékiné's article on Natsu Nakajima, and Eugenio Barba's text Words Hiding Love have both been published in Toward Heart of Dream, Collection and Document of Natsu Nakajima and Mutekisha Dance, Tokyo, 2024. Some words by Natsu herself complete this section.

Keywords: Butoh dance, Kazuo Ohno, Tatsumi Hijikata, Noguchi Setai

Nourit Masson-Sékiné Un été - au cœur de l'île

Elle revenait du Danemark où avait eu lieu l'événement ISTA à l'Odin Teatret d'Eugenio Barba. Son amie Katsuko Azuma, danseuse de Nihon Buyo y était invitée et Katsuko lui avait demandé de l'accompagner. Natsu ne dansait pas depuis plus de dix ans alors. Hijikata avait décidé qu'elle devait quitter Asbesto-kan, qu'elle était trop maline et qu'elle serait plus efficace pour le devenir de ses cabarets. Ce jour-là, Netta Plotski, une actrice polonaise d'Israël, de passage à Tokyo, m'a sommée de l'accompagner à un rendez-vous avec une certaine danseuse de butoh, Natsu Nakajima, rencontrée à l'Odin Teatret à Holstebro.

Notre rencontre en 1981 dans ce café a scellé nos destins à jamais. J'avais 24 ans, Natsu 37. Nous nous retrouvions régulièrement. Nous n'avions cessé de parler de l'histoire du butoh, du cabaret, de nos différences culturelles, de l'art – et de la vie tout simplement. Venue au Japon pour réaliser une exposition de « sculptures habillées » à Wacoal Art Space, je déplorais qu'elle ne dansât plus et l'incitait à retrouver sa danse intime, son butoh. Une évidence intuitive : elle devait se remettre à danser.

Alors, au printemps 1982, elle décida de reprendre les répétitions d'une ancienne production dirigée par Tatsumi Hijikata. Elle n'avait aucun lieu pour ses répétitions aussi, je lui proposais de commencer chez moi, dans mon petit appartement traditionnel à Nishi Azabu. Ses répétitions avec son unique danseuse, Lili Maezawa, ont donné lieu à la Première de *Niwa* – à mes yeux, son plus beau spectacle. Lizzie Slater, une journaliste anglaise férue de culture japonaise, est devenue son agent et ainsi des tournées dans le monde ont rapidement permis le développement de sa carrière.



203

Ce fut donc chez moi que tout démarra. J'étais curieuse, attentive et très émue, je me souviens. Mon souffle était suspendu à ses moindres gestes, comme si le temps de ma propre enfance s'était accroché à l'hameçon de sa danse. Toute entière j'étais prise par le mouvement imperceptible d'une bouche béante, étrangement engouffrée dans l'obscurité. J'étais captivée par les clignements d'yeux incessants – ni ceux d'un aveugle ni ceux d'un nourrisson. L'innocence montait comme la sève, où celui qui regarde n'est plus, et le regardé non plus. Un rayon de soleil réchauffe le tatami. Lili, toute recroquevillée sur ses jambes, glisse sur ses pieds, miraculeusement. Elle se déplace avec grâce et malice et Natsu ordonne. Les mots claquent, Lili sans résistance les poursuit et les happe par les orifices de sa peau. Un souvenir inoubliable.

C'est à ce moment que m'est venu le concept de *zabuton dance*, le macro-monde dans le micro-monde. Nul intérêt d'occuper tout l'espace imparti pour déployer la danse. Je l'ai compris en regardant la danse de Natsu Nakajima. Natsu dit qu'il n'est pas utile de s'élancer et de bondir pour exprimer la verticalité : « Regarde comme je suis petite et vois comme le butoh, à ma guise, me permet de paraître démesurément grande. Avais-tu déjà remarqué que mes jambes sont arquées ? » C'était vrai ! L'espace vacant, entre ses genoux et ses chevilles, formait une corolle de tulipe. Malicieusement, elle me révèle son secret : « Tu ne l'avais jamais remarqué n'est-ce pas ? Eh bien, l'entraînement du butoh me permet d'apparaître comme je le veux ! Je peux tricher. C'est ainsi que je forme des danseuses pour le cabaret. Le corps peut être transcendé, il est un outil. Toutes les réalités peuvent y prendre forme. Nous autres, danseurs de butoh, connaissons bien notre corps. Pour nous, japonais, il serait ridicule de faire des sauts de biche, des pointes ou de lancer nos jambes très haut comme l'enseigne la danse classique. Nos jambes sont courtes, notre bassin est bas, nous avons l'air ridicule lorsque nous vous imitons. Nous avons dû trouver d'autres voies, d'autres techniques. L'Occident chrétien oriente toujours son mouvement vers le haut, cherchant une réponse dans le ciel. Nous, nous avons un centre de gravité bas dans le corps et puisons notre énergie de la terre. De plus, nous n'avons pas comme vous ce rapport hiérarchique et vertical au corps, nous ne pensons pas de façon duelle en termes de bien et de mal, de beau et de laid. Pour vous le froid c'est mal, le chaud c'est bien, mais pour nous l'entre deux crée les liens 'entre' chaque chose : entre le visible et le non visible, entre le monde des vivants et celui des morts pareillement. »

Je me rappelle ces échanges d'« étrangé-ité » qui m'initiaient au monde du Japon ancestral et au butoh. Elle me dit un jour, soudain – presque en riant, un peu gênée : « Je n'aurais jamais imaginé jusqu'à ce que je te connaisse qu'il me serait possible de devenir l'amie si intime d'une étrangère ! » J'ai ri aussi, je me souviens, mais plutôt de stupéfaction ! Comment ? Pourquoi ? Elle me répondit alors : « Ce qui est pour toi 'évident' ne l'est pas pour nous ! Nous autres japonais pensions que les blancs étaient des barbares ! Quand j'étais petite, lorsqu'une mère voulait rappeler à l'ordre un enfant désobéissant, elle le menaçait de le laisser emporter par le grand homme blanc. Nous vivions une réalité insulaire et même si le Japon n'est plus tout à fait le même aujourd'hui, nous resterons fondamentalement toujours différents ! »

Natsu était née à Sakhaline. Le nom de sa compagnie, Muteki-sha, que son maître Hijikata a initié en 1969, est un rappel à l'enfance, symbolisé par le son de la Corne de Brume du bateau qui l'a conduite en exil, vers l'âge de deux ans, à Tokyo puis à Akita où elle a grandi. C'est sans doute aussi ce sentiment commun, d'exil, qui nous rapprochait. Toutes deux toujours en attente d'un ailleurs et en questionnement constant, sur nos lieux de vie notamment. J'ai moi aussi traversé la mer en bateau à quatre ans pour la France, quittant mon enfance dans un kibboutz du désert en Israël où je suis née, avec le sentiment d'un paradis perdu à jamais.

Natsu au Japon devait financer toutes ses performances et avait besoin de moi pour imaginer ses costumes et penser les effets scénographiques à moindre coût. Pour toutes ses performances, j'étais appelée à être l'œil extérieur de la direction chorégraphique et à faire les photos qui assureraient la promotion de sa danse et de sa mémoire. Je contribuais à trouver parfois des musiques, dont *Libertango* de Piazzola qui a fait la mémorable finale de l'un de ses spectacles. J'ai réalisé avec complicité, pendant presque dix ans, des costumes que je nommais Costumes Scénographiques, parce qu'ils permettaient des effets scéniques sans devoir peser sur les coûts de production et de transports. En 2004, elle a organisé une rétrospective, *It's getting late*, au Japan Foundation Forum, pour inaugurer ses quarante ans de danse. À cette occasion, elle a fait ressurgir tous mes costumes, même ceux réalisés en fibre de papier quinze ans plus tôt pour La Mama à New York, précieusement conservés, rendant hommage à notre collaboration.

J'ai assisté à ses stages de nombreuses fois au fil de toutes ces années. Elle y enseignait toujours et encore la méthode à laquelle Hijikata l'avait initiée dans ses vingt ans. Les notations pour une dramaturgie de mouvements de mains : une longue pipe; se peigner; le menton sur la table; rouge à lèvres; mouvements des branches du cerisier en fleurs; couper une corde avec ses dents; étirer la corde; contour du visage; grand nez; le sourire de l'ogresse jusqu'aux cornes de l'Oni... Ses élèves apprenaient qu'il ne pouvait en aucun cas être question de l'imitation d'une forme extérieure dont le corps dépendrait, mais d'un processus successivement enclenché par l'évocation du langage, son intériorisation et son extériorisation :

« Un acteur ou un danseur à qui l'on dit 'assis' ou 'debout' n'en comprendra que l'injonction, mais s'il lui est dit 'debout : invité par la lueur de la lune' 'assis : sous le poids d'une pierre qui presse le sommet du crâne' alors la nuance s'installe dans le corps du danseur qui gravit l'échelle au fond du puits de sa chair. » C'est dire qu'une indication métaphorique permet d'atteindre toutes les strates du corps mental et de les nourrir d'un imaginaire pluri-sensoriel afin de recréer des liens entre les champs du visible et de l'invisible, de l'invisible rendu alors visible. Cette méthodologie subtile est d'autant plus complexe qu'elle met en jeu l'intelligence intrinsèque du danseur, ouverte sur l'inconscient, sur une mémoire intégrale, pour « parvenir à être mû plutôt qu'à bouger soi-même, pour ne pas devenir quelque chose mais devenir rien, un espace plein de vide. »

Discuter avec Natsu était précieux. Elle était capable de rationalité, de penser, d'élaborer ses idées dans le dialogue. Attentive et réactive aux mots et à leur poésie. Les échanges intellectuels et métaphysiques l'animaient et la nourrissaient. C'est aussi pourquoi, je pense, qu'elle a toujours trouvé plus d'écho à l'étranger qu'au Japon.

Natsu, qui m'avait présenté Kazuo Ohno lors d'un spectacle du Sankai Juku en février 1982, avait été son élève pendant un an, en attendant qu'Hijikata forme un cours qui inclut les femmes. Elle déplorait l'attachement que je vouais à Ohno. Elle n'avait de cesse de me répéter que c'est vers Hijikata que je devais aller, que c'était lui le théoricien et le génie de l'*ankoku butoh* (danse de l'obscurité). Elle avait certes raison, le mystère de cet homme m'intriguait et je suivais tout ce qu'il faisait, mais je lui expliquais que le monde d'Hijikata, cet *ankoku* que lui doit le butoh, m'est déjà très familier. Les discussions que nous avions sur le sujet suffisaient à nourrir mon imaginaire et mon entendement. Ma fidélité à Ohno, auquel mon livre *Shades of Darkness* rend hommage, était cruciale pour moi, question de loyauté.

Le monde du butoh était très exclusif et très « politique ». J'étais toujours avertie des intrigues, des enjeux et des remous de cette société particulière de la bouche de Natsu. Bénéficiant d'une magnifique hospitalité de la famille Ohno et du privilège de converser et d'échanger avec Kazuo avant les cours, j'apprenais dans la délicatesse à toucher les profondeurs de la solitude de la création. Aussi, j'invitais Natsu à revenir vers Ohno pour s'entraîner dans l'intériorité de sa danse sous son regard. L'être Ohno a, je pense, été déterminant pour répondre au sens qu'elle voulait donner à sa danse, notamment en relation avec l'âge, ses aspirations et ses capacités physiques. Mais aussi pour l'éducation de la danse des jeunes handicapés qu'elle suivait dans un Centre spécialisé. Son plus grand plaisir était d'enseigner et de monter des spectacles avec eux. Dès 1992, elle s'est particulièrement consacrée à ce projet. Eux seuls, avec naïveté et pureté, comprenaient, disaient-elle, l'essence du butoh. Ces créatifs enfantins la remplissaient de joie, elle les considérait comme ses propres enfants, elle avait l'impression d'aller, grâce à eux, au-delà du butoh.

Car danser faisait souffrir Natsu. Après *Niwa* elle ne voulait plus danser comme dans le passé : la mâchoire, la nuque, le dos, les genoux. Toute cette tension autour de ses performances était un calvaire et l'inquiétait. La musique de Fauré qu'elle a souvent utilisé lors de ses performances était, pour moi, évocatrice de son état d'esprit : langueur, lenteur, déroulé d'une couverture dans laquelle se blottir, souvent au sol, dans l'obscurité.

Pendant que je découvrais le chi-kong auquel je lui proposais de s'initier, Natsu a trouvé sa propre forme thérapeutique : le katsugen de Noguchi Setai. Mouvement libre et libérateur soutenu par le mouvement instinctif inconscient. Cette rencontre a été salvatrice pour elle, au point que les entraînements de Setai lors de ses stages se confondaient souvent avec l'enseignement du butoh.

La question de l'âge était récurrente depuis que je la connaissais : « Tu verras quand tu auras mon âge ! » me disait-elle souvent, alors qu'elle avait à peine quarante ans ! « Je vais arrêter la danse » était aussi un discours récurrent et me faisait sourire : une danseuse danse, enseigne chorégraphie, le temps n'existe pas ! « Oui mais » disait-elle, sachant pourtant très bien que c'était toute sa vie. « Je vais m'installer à l'étranger » était aussi un leitmotiv.

Quelques *gaijins* (étrangers), ici et là, venaient parfois à ses cours à Yotsuya. Les danseuses japonaises qu'elle formait la quittaient. « Je devrais fermer mon studio, qu'en penses-tu ? » me disait-elle lors de mes passages annuels à Tokyo. Préserver une relation de travail à l'ancienne avec des danseuses, comme avec Lili Maezawa, était devenu

impossible. Aucune ne voulait lui donner sa vie, sans conditions, sans être rémunérée, comme cela était fréquemment le cas dans le passé. Elle avait des favoris, quelques élues à son cœur, selon les périodes, qui l'aidaient pour sa communication et l'accompagnaient dans ses projets. Mais sans cesse elle se plaignait : « Nourit, le Japon a changé, cette génération ne comprend pas, n'est pas fiable, les jeunes n'ont pas comme nous le sens du dévouement. Je serais mieux à l'étranger. »

Partir ! Oui mais où ? Des longs voyages de travail, défrayée et rémunérée, ne suffit-il pas à relativiser ton sentiment de frustration au Japon ? Comment vivrais-tu hors du Japon, le paysage, la langue, les amis et la nourriture, t'imagines-tu pouvoir renoncer à tout cela dans ta vie quotidienne ? Les *sentō* (bains publics, souvent dans des sources thermales) et les soins qui te procurent tant de plaisir, les saisons et les traditions, la vie nocturne des *nomiya* (bars), les amis, ton frère... Une vie à laquelle Natsu était attachée. Elle le savait bien ! Ce n'était que rhétorique ! Et, de fait, elle ne s'est jamais installée ailleurs.

Elle s'est beaucoup attachée au Mexique au fil des ans. Elle venait d'y être invitée pour une tournée de stages de six semaines et m'invitait à me joindre à elle. Il fallait que je parte avec elle de Tokyo en janvier 2024, la Fondation du Japon payait mon billet, m'a-t-elle prévenue. Mais je n'ai pas pu. Alors nous avons fixé un rendez-vous pour le 3 mars, à quelques jours de son retour. Ensemble nous devions nous faire un *sentō*, avec ma fille qu'elle a vu naître et mes petits-enfants de passage à Tokyo.

L'annonce de sa mort, le jour de notre rendez-vous, a été un choc !

Des larmes ont coulé, sans arrêt, des larmes coulent encore à l'évocation de son nom. Des larmes couleront toujours de n'avoir pu la saluer avant son dernier départ – une tristesse infinie. Le butoh est orphelin aujourd'hui me disait-elle, il l'est plus encore pour moi après sa disparition. Et en même temps, je trouve extraordinaire et suis véritablement heureuse qu'elle soit morte à Mexico, dans un contexte de danse, entourée d'élèves, d'amis et de reconnaissance – et non seule, dans son appartement à Tokyo comme ce fut le cas de certaines de nos amies. Elle aura finalement réussi à réaliser son rêve de vie à l'étranger – une vie sans retour.

Eugenio Barba

Words Hiding Love

Love has many faces and one of them is friendship, a particular feeling of belonging, sharing and intimacy. Such a bond united me to Natsu.

Natsu appeared in my life one day in Volterra, Italy, in 1981 where I was leading a two-month session of the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA). She knew prof. Moriaki Watanabe and Katsuko Azuma who were collaborating with me and wished to greet them there. Consequently, Natsu spent several days with us following the intense work programme that started at six in the morning and ended late in the night.

Natsu interacted with the numerous Asian and Western artists participating in the ISTA: the Indian dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi and the composer and musician Ragunath Panigrahi, the artistic family of the Balinese master I Wayan Tempo, Jerzy Grotowski and Dario Fo, and especially her friend Moriaki Watanabe and the Japanese ensemble led by Katsuko Azuma, an expert in what at that time was called buyo kabuki.

Natsu and I met daily and exchanged a few words during the concentrated daily programme. A deep bond was established during those short contacts. Natsu became acquainted with my approach to theatre anthropology, and she continued to follow my research to such a point that she translated into Japanese the main book on this field written by Nicola Savarese and me, *The Secret Art of the Performer*, which was then published by Parco in 1988.

In 1983, I spent two months in Tokyo. There Natsu introduced me to her friend and teacher, Tatsumi Hijikata, and she took me to Kazuo Ohno's house in Yokohama where the old sorcerer gave free lessons to his old and new pupils. Natsu and I used to go for long walks together. She showed me her secret places in Tokyo which she enjoyed visiting alone: small, beautiful gardens suffocated by skyscrapers, a temple in the periphery close to an antiques bookshop, an astonishing silent street in the noisy Shibuya. We walked while she told me about her beginnings in butoh, about Hijikata and Ohno's extraordinary feats and struggles, and together we went to all butoh performances being shown. But most importantly, in a poetical way, she introduced me to her inner world and way of thinking and feeling, from which sprang the technical principles of her dance.

Every year, from 1983 until 2000, I would work two or three weeks in Tokyo to prepare a new ISTA session with the Japanese artists who would participate. I spent much of my time with Natsu. She participated in two ISTA sessions, giving demonstrations and performances, in Bologna (Italy) in 1990 and in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 1996.

Deep friendship is a bond that can defy distance. Natsu and I wrote regularly to each other describing and commenting our projects and feats. She sent me videos and photographs that moved me, and as music, sweet memories would arise.

I met her unexpectedly in Mexico City in February 2024. We were happy as we sat one beside the other eating lunch together with a few friends. She told me that she was travelling to stay with another common friend, the dancer Lola Lince, in Guanajuato. Her eyes smiled as a lake of serenity. A few days later I was told she had passed away. I did not feel a deep sorrow because I knew she was dancing until her last day. I also know that I will soon meet her again.



Natsu Nakajima and Eugenio Barba, Mexico City, 2024. Photo: Stefano Di Buduo

Natsu Nakajima

Kokoro: Mind-Heart-Spirit

Emotions, feelings, sensations, responsiveness

A long time ago Kazuo Ohno warned me that “in theatre, emotion is a weapon. But, in both traditional dance and butoh, you shouldn’t expose your emotions too easily”.

For theatre, which focuses on humans and human relationships, it is fine to say that expressing emotion is a lifeline without which theatre would not be possible. But in butoh we dance with ‘the nameless body’ and the emotions we express are human and raw. What’s more, because displaying emotion is a very powerful act, often whilst we are displaying emotions, the body is neglected and naked.

In Hijikata Tatsumi’s butoh-fu dance, we make many facial expressions. This can be a danger, as when those who dance butoh abroad mimic facial expressions. Because ‘face’ is directly linked to ‘emotion’, if you express through your face without training, you will end up exaggerating emotions. When I think of facial expressions, I am immediately reminded of Ashikawa Yoko, an excellent dancer, who treated her face as just one part of the body and trained it the same as when moving her limbs. Even when she made faces, she was able to move quickly from A to B, dryly, without letting her emotions drag her down.

However, when I say that butoh expression is dry, mechanical or inorganic, I would also say – as Kazuo Ohno did – that there are metaphorical expressions such as ‘a man like iron’ or ‘silence like water’ which rather than being expressed in a visual and figurative way as in German expressionism, should be felt. I think you need to feel a ‘man like iron’ and imagine the ‘silence like water’ with your body, in order to become them. Because the sensations, responsiveness and feelings that are happening in the body are working sufficiently, they are not at all inorganic expression, but they are moist and watery.

The ‘feeling of dancing’ is becoming more and more important to me as I get older. Recently I’ve been muttering to myself increasingly that it isn’t enough to simply have the ‘feeling of dancing’. Without a dancing *kokoro*, dance can be neither born nor established.

Karada, body, emptiness

When he was old, the late Jaques Mayol lived on the Boso Peninsula, where he dove into the sea and practiced Zen meditation. As a few of the best divers have said, when you reach a depth of about 100 metres, “it is as if you are melting away; you feel as if you are



Natsu Nakajima with Jerzy Grotowski and Kazuo Ohno with his family, *Tradition and Founders of Traditions*, Odin Teatret’s 30th anniversary, Holstebro, Denmark, 1994. Photo: Fiora Bemporad

a part of the ocean; it is extremely quiet, and you feel yourself expanding”.

Dance includes the same feeling and the state of-being that Mayol described: this is equal with DANCE itself! Although not always in the same way, I have experienced something like this several times whilst dancing. Mayol said that “diving, even though it is a competition, is a way to learn about yourself, to learn about nature, to expand and yourself”. He also said, “the body becomes empty, and mindless, and full of joy, and free”. I think this fits with what Kazuo Ohno said, that “if there is a macro-cosmos, the body is a micro-cosmos”. When the body reaches a deep place, it enters a kind of *zanmai-kyo*, a state of deep concentration achieved through meditation, and then everything is alright. We can forgive everything. Whatever we do seems natural; this is what we call to be free! What is technique? Don’t do this; don’t do that! It might be another mirror of a complex opposite of ecstasy!

The late Shuntaro Matsuyama, an Indian philosopher, once taught me what is known in Indian philosophy as *alayashiki*, the deepest region of the body called the unconscious, which is probably what Noguchi Seitai’s *katsugen* exercise, also known as unconsciousness exercise, is about, as well as *zazen* (zen meditation), yoga, and so on. It is said that the *alayashiki* is a realm that remains even after the death of the body, but the oldest memories of mankind, such as the *jomon* mind, which is the DNA of the ancient layers of our body-mind, also belong to it. But even that DNA is in danger now...

News



Kanichi Hanayagi in *Theatrum Mundi*, ISTA 9, 1995, Umeå, Sweden. Photo: Bernd Uhlig

Francesco Ceraolo Contemporary perspectives: Third Theatre, archives, directing (Italy)

An International Performative and Educational Conference entitled “Contemporary Perspectives – Third Theatre, Archives, Directing” took place in Lecce, Italy, 4-7 November 2024 organised by the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Salento in collaboration with the Puglia Region’s Polo Biblio-Museale, Fondazione Barba Varley, and LAFLIS - Living Archive Floating Islands, on the occasion of Odin Teatret’s 60th anniversary.

Odin Teatret and some of the most prominent personalities from group theatre in Europe and Latin America – Théâtre du Soleil (France), Teatro La Candelaria (Colombia), Yuyachkani (Peru) – and many artists and scholars gathered in Lecce for performances, screenings, lectures and meetings that are moments of reflection on the history and meaning of Odin Teatret’s experience. Particular attention was paid to its performances since the 1990s, on current developments in theatre anthropology and the Third Theatre and on the research on theatre archives starting from LAFLIS – Living Archive Floating Islands.

The volume *Prospettive contemporanee. Terzo Teatro, Archivi, Regia – Atti del Convegno Internazionale in occasione dei 60 anni dell’Odin Teatret* with the proceedings of the 2024 conference, will be published by Cue Press and presented in 2026 in Lecce. The volume includes the papers by scholars and artists who participated in the Conference and introductions by Francesco Ceraolo, Simona Scattina, Eugenio Barba (*Reflections on Collective Creation. The Academy as a Sympoietic Group*) and Julia Varley (*Third Theatre: Groups and Networks in the Practice of Autonomy*).

Authors in the order of the publication’s contents: Franco Perrelli, Lorenzo Mango, Marco De Marinis, Raimondo Guarino, Francesca Romana Rietti and Samantha Marenzi, Mimma Valentino, Patrizia Pertuso, Gabriele Sofia, Annalucia Cudazzo, Jacques Arpin, Alice Williams, Raffaella Di Tizio, Lorenzo Donati, Francesca D’Ippolito, Ian Watson, Dario Tomasello, Gregorio Amicuzi and Emilio Genazzini and Marco Luciano and Luca Vonella, Chris Torch, Viviana Bovino, Arianna Frattali, Stefano Scipioni and Valentina Valentini, Maria Giovanna Mancini and Francesca Zanella, Desirée Sabatini, Aldo Roma, Roberto Pellerey, Jean-Marie Pradier, Selene D’Agostino, Manuela Filomena Ottaviani, Monica Cristini, Bianca Mastrominico, Simona Scattina, Simone Dragone, Doriana Giudice, Simona Turturro, Brizia Minerva, Leonardo Mancini, Maria Chiara Provenzano, Chiara Crupi, Salvatore Margiotta, David Zinder, Zofia Dworakowska, Josephine Calvo, Maria Shevtsova, Kathrine Winkelhorn, Erik Exe Christoffersen, Frank Camilleri, Annelis Kuhlmann and Adam Ledger, Lluís Masgrau, Valentina Venturini, Giuseppe Amoruso.

Sarimé Alvarez

Mis vidas en el tercer teatro (Mexico)

El libro de Eugenio Barba, a cargo de Lluís Masgrau, traducido por Ana Woolf y Rina Skeel, publicado por Paso de Gato y la Universidad Iberoamericana, México, fue presentado el 8 octubre 2024 con la presencia del autor, Eberto García Abreu, Sarimé Álvarez y Salvador Lemis. Es la primera edición del libro en Español.

Lluís Masgrau señala en el prólogo de *Mis vidas en el Tercer Teatro* que es una autobiografía profesional que intenta recrear la propia búsqueda del sentido. A través de innumerables metáforas, el libro apunta constantemente a la realidad esencial de un teatro que busca trascenderse a sí mismo. Éste es el hilo rojo que cose el libro: la tensión entre el teatro y el anhelo de trascenderlo.

Hafedh Khalifa

Théâtre au Sahara (Tunisia)

Afin de contribuer à la paix civile et sociale, de mettre fin à l'isolement culturel et de soutenir le tourisme culturel dans les régions désertiques du sud tunisien, l'Association du Festival International de Théâtre au Sahara, pour sa sixième édition, a le plaisir et l'honneur de collaborer avec Eugenio Barba, Julia Varley et Jean-Marie Pradier pour un atelier de formation sur l'anthropologie théâtrale.

Les activités se déroulent dans le village de El Golaa, dans la province de Kébili, en Tunisie, du 29 avril au 03 mai 2026. Le festival accueillera 30 pays de différents continents, sept ateliers de formation internationaux, un symposium scientifique international et un camp de théâtre gratuit pour tous les jeunes amateurs de théâtre.

Le festival a pour objectif de créer un climat social et civique en brisant l'isolement culturel des zones désertiques. Il contribue ainsi de manière significative à la promotion de la paix civile et sociale dans les villages de nos régions du Sahara tunisien, grâce à ses spectacles et ateliers de formation, tout en offrant un soutien et un accompagnement à tous les créateurs. La région souhaite renforcer les partenariats culturels en soutenant la coexistence pacifique entre les habitants de toutes nos régions désertiques.

Le festival ne se limite pas aux représentations théâtrales ; il s'attache également à créer un réseau de jeunes et de femmes en leur offrant la possibilité de s'exprimer librement et de pratiquer des activités que leur entourage pourrait juger inacceptables ou interdites par les coutumes et les traditions. Le festival est un investissement dans le potentiel humain de villages désertiques oubliés, des villages englués dans des systèmes sociaux et des barrières étouffantes.

Susana Frank

Seminario Paradojas de la Presencia (Mexico)

El seminario en línea **Paradojas de la Presencia**, organizado por Benjamin Mayer de 17, Instituto de Estudios Críticos, y Susana Frank del Teatro Laboratorio La Rueca, se realizó entre el 31 de julio al 11 de septiembre 2025, todos los jueves de 12 a 2.30 PM.

En el seminario se reflexionó sobre asuntos que atañen al misterio mismo de la existencia, en y más allá de las artes escénicas, hoy como en todos los tiempos. Ocho pensadores y creadores contemporáneos de los siglos XX y XXI de México y del mundo fueron convocados a compartir una reflexión para posteriormente abrirse a un diálogo extendido con los participantes, desde su visión, su praxis, su poética y su legado. A partir de estos temas libremente elegidos, la aspiración era a que se revelen algunos destellos que nos ayuden a seguir creando y caminando, a repensar el cuerpo y la presencia, piezas claves que dan sentido a la escena.

La presencia en sí misma es un acto. Sus prácticas son personales, íntimas, políticas, sociales, espirituales, rituales, artísticas. La presencia es resistencia porque la vida cotidiana tiende a ausentarse de la presencia. La presencia antecede a lo que queremos expresar y es lo que verdaderamente *nos dice*. El cuerpo presente son también nuestras emociones, sueños, imaginarios, la voz y la palabra. No hay presencia sin el otro: la presencia no es, si no es colectiva.

En tiempos aciagos, los desaparecidos son cuerpos ausentes muy presentes en nuestras vidas. No hay manera de encontrarlos, sus presencias son inciertas, aunque es precisamente su ausencia la única certeza.

¿Qué es lo vivo hoy? Los cuerpos vivos atravesados por la luz, proyectan sombra. En la oscuridad no hay sombra. La danza, el teatro, la performance, la música, la improvisación, la ópera, el circo, el teatro de calle, las instalaciones interactivas y las obras inmersivas son, todas, artes vivas. Involucran la presencia en vivo de público y artistas. Hoy la creación expande constantemente los límites del arte y la vida. La presencia migra de lo real a lo imaginario, intangible y virtual, como de lo humano a lo no humano. Mucho surge y mucho ha existido desde siempre: paradojas.

Fue un ciclo de conferencias magistrales, video en vivo con:

Eugenio Barba (Odin Teatret, Dinamarca), *Ikki-ikki: presencia que seduce*, Jueves 7 de agosto 2025. Eugenio Barba abordó las siguientes cuestiones en su conferencia, utilizando ejemplos de diferentes tradiciones y culturas teatrales: ¿Por qué un actor o un bailarín debe aprender a estar “presente” cuando se enfrenta a los espectadores en una situación de actuación organizada? ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre nuestra presencia privada, personal y social y la de un actor que interpreta un papel? ¿Consiste el aprendizaje de un actor en una intensificación de su comportamiento para estimular la percepción del espectador? ¿Qué proceso técnico implica esa “intensificación”? ¿Sería la técnica del actor la capacidad de intensificar su presencia personal y saber adaptarla al objetivo que se plantea un espectáculo: producir una experiencia sensorial y mental en el espectador?

Ewa Wójciak (Teatr Osmego Dnia, Polonia), *Presencia y rebeldía*, Jueves 14 de agosto 2025. Esta conferencia partió de una pregunta íntima y política: ¿Por qué hacer teatro hoy? ¿Desde dónde y para quién? La ponente compartió su recorrido, no desde el deseo de actuar, sino desde la necesidad de hablar de su mundo, de la injusticia, del poder y de quienes no tienen voz. A lo largo de la sesión, se abordó el sentido del trabajo colectivo en la escena, la posibilidad de construir comunidad, y el papel del compromiso en las artes vivas. A través de fragmentos de espectáculos en los que ha participado, se ilustró lo que significa una actitud comprometida en la creación escénica.

Patricia Ariza (Colombia), *La presencia irreductible en el teatro*, Jueves 21 de agosto 2025. Esta conferencia trató de indagar en una disciplina que trabaja para preparar la presencia de manera deliberada y poética: de preguntarse, desde ahí, qué significa la presencia frente a otra presencia voluntaria, como es el público, y qué significa la ausencia de las artes vivas de la presencia, como lo que sucedió en la cuarentena. También pasó a ver la presencia negada, que es la sociedad que se niega a ver la presencia de los y las diferentes.

Jorge Dubatti (Argentina), *Las artes conviviales, tecnoviviales, liminales y la presencia*, Jueves 28 de agosto 2025. A partir de la distinción entre cultura convivial, tecnovivial y liminal (entre convivio y tecnovivio), se reflexionó sobre el pluralismo de las artes en la contemporaneidad desde ocho ángulos centrales: acontecimiento, experiencia, praxis, tecnología, política, lenguaje, epistemología y pedagogía. Se establecieron relaciones y diferencias de las artes conviviales, tecnoviviales y liminales con el fenómeno de la(s) presencia(s).

Luis de Tavira (México), *El teatro entre la actualidad de la pérdida y la pérdida de actualidad*, Jueves 4 de septiembre 2025. En esta presentación se reflexionó en torno al teatro como una forma peculiar y privilegiada de producir una verdad, especial revelación, particularísima significación, porque persigue, en su propio hacer, la conversión de algo en otro. Prodigiosa realización cuya consistencia escandalizó a Platón: otorgamiento del ser a lo que no lo tiene, *poiesis*, donde unas cosas son otras, si, al tiempo que siendo, no son; no siendo, son lo que dicen. Irrupción de lo ausente a la presencia como *aletheia*, como verdad, como significado, como revelación, como reconocimiento, como vivencia, mientras se vive e imprime su particular huella mnémica en el tejido nervioso de aquel que así se la apropia.

Diana Taylor (Estados Unidos), *La sonrisa de Zuckerberg, o la presencia en la era de las tecnologías digitales*, Jueves 11 de septiembre 2025. La conferencia se basó en reflexiones anteriores sobre el papel de lo digital en relación con el archivo y el repertorio como modos de transmisión, para argumentar que la IA y la RA no solo coexisten con ellos, sino que podrían alterarlos profundamente. A pesar del enorme poder y velocidad de los archivos y bases de datos digitales, pueden resultar profundamente antiarchivísticos. La reproducción instantánea de la información separa ahora fácilmente el “qué” del “cómo” lo sabemos, lo que hace imposible su autenticación o verificación. La transmisión “en directo”, de cuerpo a cuerpo, también se ve radicalmente alterada por las tecnologías digitales que simulan la presencia. “Sentirse realmente presente con otra persona” -como declaró Mark Zuckerberg-

“es el sueño final de las redes sociales”. Zuckerberg reconoce que la mayor parte de la comunicación se produce a través de la expresión corporal y no del lenguaje, y desea que su avatar “pueda expresar mejor cómo me siento que lo que puedo hacer físicamente”. Ahora hemos cerrado el círculo en la usurpación de lo “vivo” por la simulación. Zuckerberg aspira a crear un avatar, una representación, que pueda codificarse para simular una emoción que él, en su presencia encarnada, no puede expresar. El avatar -la idea/concepto/simulación de Zuckerberg- espera que pueda hacerlo más humano. ¿Estamos siendo conducidos de nuevo a la caverna de Platón?

Viviana Bovino (España), *La presencia: de la sala, al grupo, a la comunidad*, Jueves 18 de septiembre 2025. Durante el encuentro, se habló de la conexión entre el entrenamiento en la sala y su reflejo en la vida de los grupos de teatro y en las acciones propiciadas en las comunidades. Se conversó y examinó algunos ejemplos concretos y un proyecto desarrollado en los últimos dos años por LIRT, junto con tres importantes grupos.

Julia Varley (Dinamarca), *La presencia de las mujeres en el teatro: cómo estar listas para tomar riesgos y producir cambios*, Jueves 25 de septiembre 2025. En la presentación, se conversó sobre una breve historia de la red The Magdalena Project y de Transit Festival. Se abordó cómo la ponente aprendió a pensar con los pies como actriz y cómo esta experiencia continúa siendo su apoyo para escribir, hablar y dirigir. Se presentó el ejemplo de un ejercicio fuera de equilibrio que le permitió comprender por qué las mujeres en teatro eligen trabajar en la periferia. Se exploró cómo su presencia se desarrolla en lo pequeño, lejos de los centros de poder, y cómo, por ello, han entrenado su capacidad de resistencia.

Luca Ruzza

Next phase (Italy)

LAFLIS-Living Archive Floating Islands

Accessibility is not just entry: it is participation. A Living Archive doesn't just preserve, it activates; it makes content readable, traversable, and interpretable by anyone, regardless of age, language, physical, or cognitive abilities. The experience isn't designed for 'ideal visitors', but for real bodies, different times, and different sensibilities.

Accessibility thus becomes a cultural device: not a technical rule, but an act of 'democracy' of the gaze, where everyone can orient themselves, choose, touch, listen, understand, and stay. An installation archive doesn't just exhibit documents; it activates them. It transforms traces into experience, materials into presence, preservation into relationship.

Accessibility thus becomes a living device: it doesn't simplify, it doesn't reduce, it doesn't 'adapt'. It amplifies. Because a cultural site is truly public only when it excludes no one.



Red Room, LAFLIS, Lecce, Italy. Photo: Luca Ruzza

I am attaching visions and words, images and work plans to provide an overview of this wild project. Many of us are working on it: Gaia Casadei, Jan Smith, Marco Inguscio, Natan A. Ruzza (Open Control System, who is coordinating the entire technological aspect), Zeno M. Ruzza, Daniela Dispoto, Diana Ciufu, and Claudio De Benedictis for the sound.

We are working on the accessibility for one of the most important archives of the 20th century, the Living Archive of Eugenio Barba, Odin Teatret and Third Theatre. We ask ourselves a simple question: the inhabitant of the future, a child now attending elementary school... how does he translate the menhirs of our installations? What do Torgeir Wethal's typewriter from *Brecht's Ashes*, Else Marie Laudvik's tallit or Julia Varley's tunic and banner from *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus*, the egg from *Ferai*, the skewered Bible from *Kaspariana*, Iben Nagel Rasmussen's slippers, say? These are artifacts, traces in the sand, that only experts and eyewitnesses recognise. But at the same time, they are shared heritage. They are the heritage of humanity because they were shared, generated relationships and stories, and arrived to the Bernardini Library in Lecce, battered and saved. They are exhibited in an intelligible order or in an ordered chaos that requires access. They require an emotional 'access' capable of activating body and soul, memory and future, with unexpected and recognisable connections.

We have worked on the three main spaces, the White Room dedicated to Eugenio Barba, the Black room dedicated to Odin Teatret and the Red Room dedicated to Third Theatre.

In the White Room, we have completed Eugenio Barba's altar (with accessories) and the stories of his extraordinary life, inserting two small monitors and one large one. We are preparing multimedia content management system to be assembled and video files by Claudio Coloberti. A new sound system with directional sound speakers and a new lighting system are to be assembled with an installation of two red guides.

In the Black Room, graphic designed signposts with explanations are to be printed and assembled. Video clips of the performances will be positioned on monitors.

In the Red Room, the red petals are to be completed and posters hung. A projection system will visualise a mapping of theatre groups from all over the world along the entire length of the room with the addition of a laser video projector. The Balinese boat lighting and the Magdalena Project installation by Helen Varley Jamieson are to be completed.

Julia Varley Odin Home (Denmark)

In July 2025, Odin Teatret organised the second Odin Home, nine days of training, performances, films, barters and theatre anthropology led by Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret's actors.

The Odin Home is an occasion to become personally acquainted with the history, the practice and the members of one of the oldest theatre groups in Europe. At the same time, it is a 9-day working residence devised for only 50 participants.

The intensive programme started early in the morning and ended in the evening with performances, work demonstrations and films. The working seances dealt theoretically and practically with the evolution of the training and of the actor/dancer's dramaturgy



Group photo, Odin Home, Brogården Kulturvæksthus, Ringkøbing, Denmark, 2025. Photo: Brogården Archive

at Odin Teatret. Eugenio Barba clarified the principles of theatre anthropology as well as those of his work as a director. Julia Varley commented upon the Magdalena Project (a network of women in theatre) and her Festival Transit. There was occasions for “barter”, exchanges in the community through cultural expressions, professional knowledge, discussions and personal dialogues.

The Odin Home is organised in collaboration with Brogården Kulturvæksthus (an artist in residency space) and Teatret OM (Regional Theatre in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality), and is supported by the Municipality of Ringkøbing-Skjern (Denmark). It took place at Brogården’s historical building where participants and the teaching staff lived together, at the local Gymnasium, the Kristne Gymnasium and Teatret OM.

The interest in theatre anthropology is testified by the quantity of applications from Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, USA. Out of hundreds of applications, 47 participants were selected together with invited guests from Taiwan and Denmark.

The third Odin Home is programmed for July 2026.

Pino Di Buduo FLIPT (Italy)

Teatro Potlach, directed by Pino Di Buduo in collaboration with the ISTA directed by Eugenio Barba, organised FLIPT – Intercultural Festival Laboratory of Theatrical Practices from 12 to 22 June 2025, with masterclasses, international performances, workshops and international meetings. Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley were present 13-15 June working on the theme of Improvisation: An Actor’s Tool, Creative Method, and Discovery Process. The viola player of La Scala, Danilo Rossi participated in the classes and demonstrations comparing the experience and terminology used in classical music with that of theatre anthropology.

Claudio De Maglio conducted a workshop dedicated to the study of masks and character construction in Commedia dell’Arte (15–17 June). From 16 to 20 June, Pino Di Buduo led a site-specific workshop focused on the creation of the performance *Invisible Cities*. Valerio Longo directed *Spiritual Body Experience* (18–20 June), an experiential dance workshop culminating in a site-specific performance.

The festival featured more than thirty performances from Italy and eighteen countries worldwide. The festival concluded with *Invisible Cities*, a major site-specific performance directed by Pino Di Buduo, involving all festival participants and unfolding along a route through the historical city centre, with the participation of over 150 artists.

Andrea Porcheddu Venice Biennale (Italy)

The International Theatre Festival La Biennale di Venezia was held in Venice from 31 of May to 15 June 2025. Its artistic director, Willem Dafoe, gave the title “Theatre is Body – Body is Poetry” to the festival and wrote a mission statement:

I am an actor.

My idea is not to present a retrospective of contemporary world theater but rather an inquiry into the essence of theater and the presence of the body. At a time in history when we rely more and more on artificial intelligence, I want to focus on the element of human endurance: the intelligence of the body.

Theater is body.

I would like to create the possibility of knowledge through the presence. Through exploring the possibility of the body and the interaction between bodies.

To draw the perimeter of this investigation, I thought I would invite directors, actors, dancers, sound designers, playwrights... and ask them to work on a project that contemplates the same indication: for all the presence of the body.

I might decide to choose a text, a place, an action to deliver to the artist’s body by mapping its field of action. The idea is not to support statements or give instructions but to raise questions that do not necessarily have answers.

To question the role of the artist’s body in theater.

To explore the form, the precision, the discipline of theatrical action that is always identical and at the same time unrepeatable. For me this is the beauty of the theater rite.

The idea is to investigate in the severity of the stage, in a space without necessary identity, the form of gesture that admits of no imitation.

The mystery of the body contains within itself the irreproducibility of theatrical action.

The body is present.

A mute figure can recite a text.

Theater as a form of knowledge where the presence of the actor dialogues with the presence of the audience. Without the spectator’s body, the actor’s action does not exist.

The social political function of theater: a ritual that gathers people into an instantaneous community that materializes for a given event.

Body is Poetry

The word poetry comes from the Greek *poeio* meaning to make, to produce.

The word actor comes from Latin meaning one who acts, who does. Poetry therefore is a thing made by someone who does things. Poetry raises questions. Literature tries to give answers.

I do not say that the text is not important, but it is important just because it

passes through the body, because it affects it. The words in the essence of the body leave a trace that strikes the space, the universe.

The body is wise: if you give it a verse, it returns it filtered through the complex organicity of the body.

The body is the beating heart of theater.

As R.M. Rilke wrote: the first line of a poem is given by God, while all the rest is hard labor of man. The actor's body represents the driving impulse of that first line of poetry. Precisely because we cannot control it, it comes directly from God and the celebration of living things.

On the 5th of June a meeting was held to remember the Biennale of 1975 and reflect on the changes which have occurred since in the theatre landscape. The guests invited to speak, representing the experiences of the Living Theater, Jerzy Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium, Odin Teatret and Luca Ronconi, were Valentina Alferj, Eugenio Barba, Satyamo Hernandez, Toby Marshall, Thomas Richards, Giorgio Sangati, Richard Schechner, Sandra Toffolatti, Chris Torch, and Julia Varley.

To prepare the meeting I wrote the following letter to the speakers:

Cari amici Care amiche

On behalf of the director Willem Dafoe, I thank you again for your availability to take part in the Open-Meeting. As you know, the programme of the Biennale Teatro 2025 is linked to the historic edition of 1975, directed by Luca Ronconi, an edition that saw you as protagonist (The Performance Group intervened in 1974, and our friend Satyamo, Chris, Toby were in the Living Theater).

The meeting will be held in Sala delle Colonne, at Ca' Giustinian, The Biennale building close to San Marco, and will start at 3pm. We have about two hours.

The starting theme will be the Mission Statement written by Willem Dafoe (which you should have received), so I would like to take the "Theatrical and poetic body" of the Actor as a starting point, that is, the theme of the interpretative technique of the actor-performer.

I would also like to talk about the 1975 edition, not as a '*bellissima nostalgia*' but as a moment in which many creative energies intertwined in Venice and were, from that moment on, a driving force for development, research, innovation (or even error and failure!). What has changed 50 years later? What remains of that research?

I foresee an open, dynamic meeting, made of dialogue and not monologues, almost a Q&A between us. I think we could start with a first round, giving each person a short speech of about 5 minutes (I will use a stopwatch!) and then I would like the voices to mix, to multiply.

I don't think I will ask for interventions from the audience, which will also be made up of workshop participants and university students: for this reason I would like the meeting to open the festival in the spirit not only of remembrance and memory, but of the desire to live the present looking to the future, to the new generations of men and women of theatre. Among the speakers there are also two younger artists: the director Giorgio Sangati, who was Luca Ronconi's Assistant, and the actress Sandra Toffolatti, who performed in some of Ronconi's shows. In their workshop they investigate the

"ronconian method" and I'm happy that they are able to bear witness to the enormous work of this Italian Master.

Finally, to close the meeting, I would like to screen an unpublished interview with Judith Malina, conducted by Satyamo Hernandez: I think it is nice to remember the enthusiasm, beauty, and strength of the founder of the Living Theater. Just as I'd like to screen archive images from 75 (but let's see if it is possible).

Of course this is only a first e-meeting between us, I am available for any questions, doubts, clarifications.

Looking forward to meet you in Venice!

Un caro abbraccio

Andrea Porcheddu

Odin Teatret was invited to La Biennale with their most recent production *Hamlet's Clouds* and to give a three-day masterclass directed by Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret's actors for a group of international participants. The title of the masterclass was "Odin Teatret as an example of theatre laboratory". The first day was dedicated to the birth and evolution of physical and vocal training and the actor's dramaturgy. The second day was dedicated to the creative process and the development of a performance, to the director's dramaturgy and the technical symbiosis with the actor and relationships and responsibilities in a theatre group. The third day was dedicated to theatre outside theatre, to theatre in the community.



Andrea Porcheddu, Eugenio Barba and Willem Dafoe after Odin Teatret's performance *Hamlet's Clouds*, Venice Biennale, Italy, 2025. Photo: Patrizia Pertuso

Giovanna Manola

Hamlet's Clouds (Italia)

Apuntes de una observadora de nubes

¿A dónde nos llevan las nubes? Si dialogamos con ellas, podríamos encontrarnos en medio de una tormenta e, inmediatamente después, experimentar el sosiego de un despejado cielo de primavera. Parafraseando las palabras de Julia Varley, figura emblemática del Odin Teatret, las nubes nos llevan al contraste, a la antítesis, a la posibilidad del encuentro simultáneo de realidades opuestas. Y en eso reside también la magia del teatro.

Hamlet's Clouds de Odin Teatret, escrito y dirigido por Eugenio Barba, nace en un momento particular de la trayectoria existencial del grupo teatral, en una fase de cambio debida a circunstancias que Barba y Varley explicitan en la presentación que acompaña el texto de la obra.

Su estreno tuvo lugar el 10 de octubre de 2024 en la Ciudad de México. Yo he podido vivir la experiencia única de asistir a su puesta en escena italiana en Roma, en ocasión del festival “I volti dell’arte performativa” en el Spazio Rossellini donde se representó del 22 al 26 de octubre de 2025, seguida por unas charlas muy interesantes con el director y los actores sobre temas queridos al grupo.

Incontables son las interpretaciones de la tragedia de Shakespeare, autor que amo y venero, y que me ha acercado al teatro. Los clásicos - en particular los que resultan eternamente modernos por sus temas y por los acontecimientos humanos e históricos que ponen en escena - vuelven con frecuencia a las manos de los teatreros que en ellos se reflejan, como el público de la obra obligado a reflejarse en el libro-espejo que pasa frente a los espectadores. De ellos surge una lectura actual y personal.

El mismo Bardo (Julia Varley) conduce al espectador por la historia del príncipe de Dinamarca quien, por un lado, es el *alter-ego* de Hamnet, su hijo muerto a los once años, y, por otro, el estereotipo del hijo universal, víctima de la herencia paterna. Según la tradición vikinga, de hecho, la venganza por la muerte del padre era una obligación del hijo, y en la obra esta se impone con rabia por el fantasma del difunto padre (Else Marie Laukvik), omnipresente, agobiante con sus lamentos y gritos a lo largo de la pieza. Es un presagio fúnebre que se interpone entre los dos jóvenes enamorados, Amleto (Jacob Nielsen) y Ofelia (Antonia Cezara Cioază), perturbando la armonía despreocupada, las risas, los bailes, la inocencia.

Todos somos afectados por la vida de quienes nos precedieron y por nuestros ancestros, tal como subraya Barba y tal como estudian los recientes métodos terapéuticos que buscan descubrir heridas y patologías del presente derivadas de experiencias familiares pasadas. Lo trágico ocurre cuando el pasado exige la violencia como medio para saciar la rabia y la sed de venganza. ¿Qué futuro se les deja, entonces, a los jóvenes? ¿Qué herencia transmitimos a nuestros hijos?

A estas preguntas, explicitadas en las proyecciones iniciales, se suman otras en mi mente mientras observo a los personajes en el escenario. ¿Para qué sirve la memoria si vale para reavivar la violencia con el fin de afirmar nuestra existencia en el presente? Poco después, en las pantallas laterales que delimitan el “espacio río” - como lo define Barba- aparecen imágenes de niños soldados: resulta chocante y aterrador el contraste entre esas sonrisas infantiles junto a las armas, la inocencia de esos niños que, como Amleto, han crecido bajo el deber de la defensa violenta y del ataque armado.

Mientras tanto, el escenario se anima con unas coreografías armónicas que reconstruyen la trama conocida de la tragedia shakespeariana, aunque en esta versión se hace más patente la referencia a la culpabilidad de la madre Gertrude (Rina Skeel), otra Lady Macbeth en su gesto de lavarse las manos ensangrentadas. Su culpa está al mismo nivel de la de Claudio (Ulrik Skeel), hermano del difunto rey, con quien es cómplice del homicidio. Ambos celebran, ríen, viven su pasión sexual sobre la tumba del monarca, cuyo objeto símbolo, una manta, se transforma en lecho nupcial.

La sangre y la muerte, provocadas por ese primer crimen y perpetuada por Amleto, empujado por los celos y la furia del padre difunto, se hacen simbólicamente físicas a través de elementos escénicos de color rojo: el hilo con el que Gertrude y Claudio envuelven al rey, el pañuelo que reciben de Shakespeare quienes se separan de su cuerpo físico, la manta que abraza a Amleto y Ofelia, cuya muerte se convierte en símbolo del fracaso de la generación de los padres.

Con su lenguaje personal y emocional - coincido con Julia Varley en definirlo, en algunos casos, como “femenino” -, Barba crea una obra poética, simbólica e inmersiva. Al entrar en el teatro, me dirijo a mi asiento, en una de las dos “orillas” paralelas del escenario rectangular central, acompañada por el mismo director. Comparto, a corta distancia, lo que ocurre en la escena con los actores. Me llegan con fuerza las emociones, los lamentos, los sonidos, la música de los violines, los murmullos, el cansancio de los intérpretes y, al mismo tiempo, las reacciones y los micromovimientos de esa otra parte de la “humanidad” que sigue el espectáculo frente a mí y que se convierte en parte activa de la puesta en escena.

Me sorprende mirando, de vez en cuando, al director Eugenio Barba, sentado al otro lado del “río”, observando sus ojos y sus expresiones en los momentos más tensos e impactantes. Sin duda, también él se convierte en parte de la obra, uno de los silenciosos convidados a este ritual teatral.

Pienso, entonces, en su visión del teatro como conquista de una presencia: el derecho de poder decir, de hablar a un espectador que, al mismo tiempo que se vuelve testigo de acontecimientos ajenos, dialoga con una parte secreta de sí mismo. En este diálogo, yo escucho resonar las campanadas del peligro actual y presente: el peligro del odio y la rabia descontrolada, de la venganza, de la violencia que genera nueva violencia. Hoy arrastramos en nuestra conciencia los lechos funerarios de miles de niños sin infancia, de jóvenes sin futuro, tal como lo hace Shakespeare que, cargando finalmente con el peso de la pequeña cuna - como al principio de la puesta en escena- , cierra de forma circular la obra.

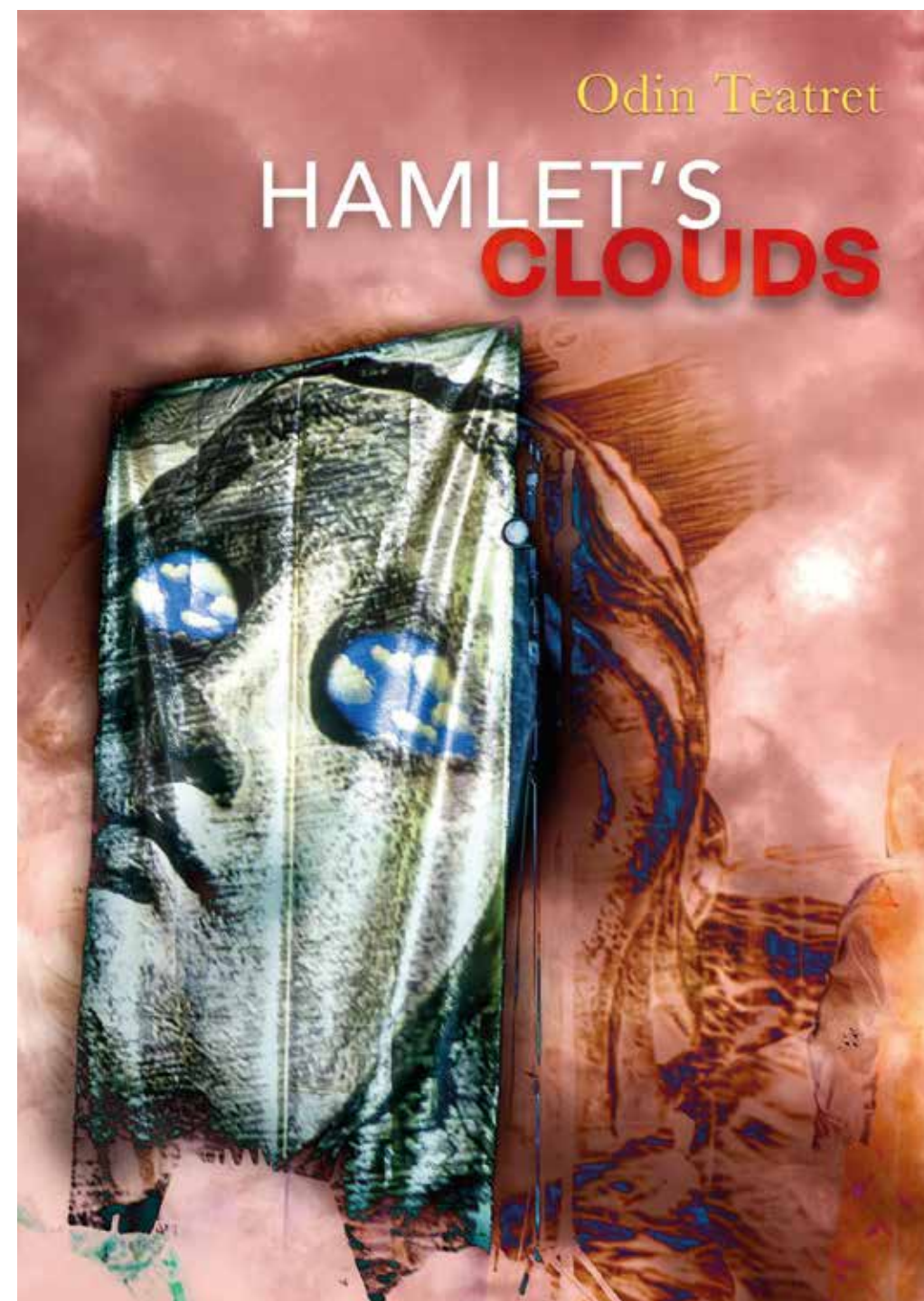
Hemos perdido nuestra inocencia, enlazados por las cuerdas del instinto, las mismas que en la escena se convierten en la cama de la reina adúltera, en el campo de batalla y

en las aguas mortíferas de Ofelia. Llevamos en las manos el cuchillo con el que seguimos matando y, mientras cometemos crímenes, nos destruimos a nosotros mismos y a nuestra descendencia.

Qué suerte poder ver todo esto en el escenario, como en una bola de cristal que me muestra el futuro: su acto me libera, aunque sea parcialmente, de una herencia que decido rechazar. Julia Varley, la mujer-gurú de pelo blanco, vestida con su ropa india, me da la clave final para leer lo que he visto el día 26 de octubre, durante la conferencia que tuvo lugar al día siguiente.

La verdadera arma es la belleza, en su significado más amplio. El teatro, como el arte en general, genera belleza porque nos permite entrar en una respiración diferente, más íntima y reflexiva, distinta de la acción inmediata y violenta que suele ser respuesta a las fechorías del mundo. La belleza crece desde la tierra, desde nuestros pies, y se expande por nuestro cuerpo hasta alcanzar nuestras extremidades, tal como lo vemos en el teatro del Odín, donde cada movimiento se hace acción, se convierte en voluntad cargada de significado; donde cada palabra, en uno de los diversos idiomas, supera el sentido común y se enriquece gracias a su significante; donde cada sonido conlleva y sugiere una emoción, y cada objeto asume un valor simbólico. Ese vestuario colorido y brillante, por ejemplo, que aparentemente fue escogido por pura necesidad entre lo que los actores poseían, se ensambla para crear un juego estético y experiencial en consonancia con la obra.

La conclusión de la obra nos devuelve el contraste: el baile alegre del reparto que saluda al público es perturbado por el fantasma que, alejándose, grita su dolor por la muerte del hijo. La trama shakesperiana se transforma en un recorrido sensorial y simbólico cargado de colores y sonidos que evocan la locura, la histeria, la culpa, el dolor y, sobre todo, la pérdida de la inocencia. El hijo se ve obligado a perpetrar la violencia en el prójimo y en sí mismo: reflejo del presente histórico en el que se hace urgente interrumpir un circuito perverso del que debemos salir para alcanzar una madurez como seres humanos.



Letters

Wei Arianne Wang (China)

Paris, 14 December 2025



From Odin Teatret's performance *Hamlet's Clouds*. Photo: Stefano Di Buduo

Dear Mr. Eugenio Barba,

I am a young theatre director from Chengdu, working and researching the craft of theatre in the UK, China, and France. At the beginning of my directing training at drama school, I had the opportunity to see your work *Itsi Bitsi* live. It became the starting point of my wish to learn from you. Beyond visiting Odin Teatret to observe your work, I have repeatedly returned to two of your books: *Burning the House – On Directing and Dramaturgy* and *The Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*.

After graduating from Shanghai Theatre Academy, I created my first work, *Commemoration: Blow! Blow the Kite!*. The work began in the spring of 2020. Trapped at home in South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic, I collected accounts of individual experiences through various media channels and rewrote them. In the autumn, after a workshop-audition in Chengdu, I chose four actors who were in need of theatre. After two months of rehearsal, *Kite!* was presented in January 2021 in a space that had formerly been a factory. The performance lasts eighty-five minutes and is spoken in the dialect of Chengdu rather than standard Mandarin. At the end of the performance, the actors disappear onto the rooftop terrace, with neither ending nor curtain call. From its creation, this piece carried my ideals of theatre, many aspects of which reflect your working principles developed in theatre anthropology, such as 'score', 'extra-daily', 'dramaturgy', and 'composition'. I will begin by describing how we created our scores.

First, I proposed a single action-word: flying a kite. Each actor, working within their own space in the rehearsal room, reconstructed – through individual memory – a sequence of actions related to flying a kite. I invited them to repeat the sequence until it could be presented three times identically. As you describe with *ikebana* – cutting the flower in order to present it – the actors, at this stage, were also 'cutting' fragments of action, transforming them into material that could be presented. They were compelled to confront what was trivial and indistinct, training both body and mind to plant a series of action-anchors in order to create material that was concrete and tangible.

I then began selecting actions with 'performative' potential: actions close to imbalance, asymmetrical, deformable, and non-convergent with what preceded them. In this process of selection – which was also a process of deletion – being a director was like practising *ikebana*: cutting, discarding, temporarily setting aside. At this point, actors and I collaboratively constructed an initial outline of a score.

They then repeated this sequence. Through repetition, each action unit was washed of meaning and became an 'empty' movement. Once a movement could be repeated with precision, it became available for reshaping. The sequence therefore formally became a primary score.

Next, we began to adjust and experiment. Our first focus was clarity: each action unit needed a precise beginning and end, and the end of one action had to become the beginning of the next – head and tail connected, generation and dissolution uninterrupted. We then experimented with changes in speed, displacement, and intensity. At times, I asked actors to modify their centre of gravity – for example, transforming an action performed on the full sole of the foot into one supported only by the toes, thus creating a state of ‘luxurious balance’. Through these kaleidoscopic experiments, actions that were originally daily acquired extra-daily potential. In this process, the actors explored the infinite possibilities contained within the material. The primary score thus became a physical score.

As the director’s intervention intensified, I began introducing new theatrical materials: I added a sound track I intended to use, asking the actors to present the physical score either in synchrony with, or in counterpoint to, its rhythm; I also asked actors to hold a prop (a doll-horse’s head), or to put on a costume (a white cotton nightdress) and present the score; at other times, they executed the score while delivering a memorised text, in ways comparable to working with a piece of music. At this stage, the physical score, combined with other theatrical materials, formed what I call a theatrical score.

Elaborating these three types of scores is a process of composition – placing things together, arranging, positioning, orchestrating. Adjusting the internal structure of a theatrical score and then organising multiple theatrical scores into the overall movement of a performance, are essentially acts of ‘cutting’ and ‘presenting’: a director’s ikebana for creating a rhythmised form that carries propositions of meaning within its flow.

These processes also resemble a series of precise montage experiments for acting upon the nervous system. Between the actor’s body (including the voice), props, costumes, light, and sound, countless intertextual relations emerged. Expected and unexpected meanings burst across the work room like popping candy, and I could only rely on intuition to make decisions at the most minute level, selecting the option most likely to pluck the spectator’s strings of sensation.

This ambition was partially achieved through actors’ extra-daily actions. In transforming the daily into the extra-daily, we were hunting for a renewed attitude towards executing a seemingly ‘banal’ action. For example, two actors played rock-paper-scissors using the most laborious actions possible: deep squats in the lower body; the upper body’s centre of gravity pulled back to the point of falling, then thrust forward like a spinning wheel as the arms were thrown out; the arms carving the widest possible arc in the air; hand out with the density of wrestling – as if carrying the weight of fate while playing this game (in fact, they were playing hide-and-seek with death).

Such extra-daily action units naturally demand an actor to be full of intention and willingness in execution – becoming the eagle which is about to take off from its cliff: with a clear target, filled with sats, 100% ready. As a result, actors no longer move in a ‘greyed-out’ manner. In this sense, I believe that the point of the extra-daily is not only about conveying a vivifying strength but also to act as a tunnel, a slide, a trapdoor, through which the spectator is led towards concealed meanings.

The stimulation of the senses also occurred through other theatrical materials. For instance, as an actor’s arm descended, the theatre fell into complete darkness. The

spectators’ senses were set free: while listening to the actor search for his missing neighbour, they lifted their gaze towards the windows high in the walls of the old factory, through which the night seeped in – the real night of Chengdu; that they were sitting here was real. Then, at the end of the performance, an actor used a lighter to ignite a fuse hanging above his head. Everyone in the theatre watched the small flame flicker as it climbed upward, anxiously following its fragile movement until it ignited a colourful paper house suspended at the centre of the space. In silence, we listened to the sound of the house being consumed, to the paper ash dropping onto the ground, smelled the burning, and felt the wave of heat rising towards our faces. The presence of the senses offers a form of truth that precedes rational understanding, and it reaches us at the pre-expressive level.

I would also like to highlight the concrete foundation of the entire work: repetition. In the process of composition, the repetition of a physical score helped wash away the conventional meanings, the slippage between sign and referent, as well as the bodily habits domesticated and fabricated by society and by one’s personal history. Through repetition, a score becomes a form with blank spaces. Therefore, each evening becomes a process of ‘charging’ the form with spirit: I, the actors, and the spectators may infuse it with our respective inner images. The performance becomes a ritual, in which each participant associates, prays, and encounters their own hopes or fears.

Repetition was also present in our daily discipline in the work room. Through repeatedly starting and ending work on time every day, repeatedly cleaning the floor on our knees, and repeatedly practising, we cultivated a humble attitude towards our work. When a score had been repeated for hundreds or thousands of times, we learnt to persist and to trust in the repetition. We were aware that theatre is a craft – gongfu, a capacity, a quality; that we can become, at once, musical note, instrument, and instrumentalist; that we may accomplish what at first appears impossible; and that we have the power to create a space of freedom in which to live. This reminds me of several contemporary Chinese artists I have followed in recent years: Dong Feng, who repeatedly creates apples; Gu Xiaoping, who repeatedly draws lines using an ancient ink-flicking technique; and Peng Wei, who patiently traces pavilion rooftops stroke by stroke.

These are my current reflections on the craft. I am continuing the experiment of burning the house, and my apprenticeship continues.

With wishes for invincible flames,

Wei Arianne Wang

About the authors

Sarimé Alvarez (Cuba/Mexico) is a researcher specialist in theatre anthropology, theatre director, with extensive experience as a playwright, university professor, and cultural manager. She trained in Cuba, Mexico and Denmark, with more than twenty years of practice in research, pedagogy, and artistic creation connected to Odin Teatret and the Latin American theatre scene. In Cuba she was an actor with Teatro Buendía directed by Flora Lauten. In Mexico she founded Talabot Teatro in Cuernavaca.

Eugenio Barba (Italy/Denmark) created Odin Teatret in 1964 in Oslo, Norway, and in 1966 moved with it as a theatre laboratory to Holstebro, Denmark. In 1980 he founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA). He has directed 79 productions with Odin Teatret and the intercultural Ensemble Theatrum Mundi. Author of twenty-four books; his latest publication, in collaboration with Nicola Savarese, is *The Five Continents of Theatre. Facts and Legends of the Material Culture of the Actor* (Brill/Sense, 2019). He is the recipient of honorary doctorates from fifteen universities.

Francesco Ceraolo (Italy) is Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at Salento University. His main areas of research are philosophy and theory of theatre, musical theatre and the relations between theatre and cinema. Amongst others, he is the author of the monographs: *Corpo, rito, parola. Il teatro di Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Cue Press, 2025), *Il teatro contemporaneo. Presente e futuro dell'arte scenica* (Il Mulino, 2022), *Teorie dell'evento. Alain Badiou e il pensiero dello spettacolo* (ed., Milan, 2017), *Cinema, Thought, Life. Conversations with Fata Morgana* (eds., Cosenza, 2016). In 2015 he was awarded the prestigious prize "Arthur Rubinstein - A Life in Music" for best scholarship by Fondazione Teatro La Fenice. He is member of the scientific committee of the journals *Biblioteca teatrale*, *Il castello di Elsinore*, *Mantichora*.

Pino Di Buduo (Italy), born in Rome, graduated in Philosophy at Rome La Sapienza University. In 1976 he founded the Teatro Potlach in Fara Sabina (Italy) with Daniela Regnoli, where he still now works actively as artistic director. He created interdisciplinary and multimedia artistic project *Città Invisibili* on the theme of the city and the memory of the place. He organises seminars, practical workshops for young actors and directors; collaborates with many Italian and International

Universities such as La Sapienza, Roma Tre, Federal University of Salvador de Bahia and Porto Alegre in Brazil.

Priscilla Duarte (Brazil) is an actress, physical and vocal coach, and costume designer at Teatro Diadokai since 1996; a doctoral candidate in Arts, specialising in Performing Arts, with scholarships for the research project "The Art of the Actor in Maturity". She holds a master's degree in arts with a scholarship for the dissertation "Actor Training: From the Body as Instrument to the Body as Experience"; and a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts (UNIRIO - 1987). She was an actress at Teatro tascabile di Bergamo (Italy) from 1989 to 1994, and a collaborating actress from 2003 to 2007. From 2010 to 2012, she was a substitute professor of Body Expression at UFOP (MG).

Susana Frank (Mexico) is a theatre director and teacher of arts education, specialising in performing arts pedagogy. Born in Mexico City in 1954, she graduated from the University Centre for Theatre Studies. In 1978, she attended the International Group Theatre Encounter in Ayacucho, Peru, and in 1980, she co-founded the Teatro Laboratorio La Rueda company with Aline Menassé, which has been active for 45 years. Since 1988, she has directed more than 35 plays. She is a member of the National System of Art Creators and has twice received a grant. She currently directs the Art and Disability project.

Ricardo Gomes (Brazil) has a PHD in Theatre and Performance (2007) at the La Sapienza Rome University and a Master in Theatre (2000) and Bachelor in Performing Arts-Acting (1987) at the University of Rio de Janeiro. He has worked as an actor and director in several countries of America, Europe and Asia, taking part in many international festivals. He worked at Teatro tascabile di Bergamo from 1989 to 1994 and as collaborator from 2003 to 2007. Since 1996 he is a founder, member and artistic director of Teatro Diadokai. Since 2008, he is Associate Professor at UFOP - Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (Federal University of Ouro Preto). Since 2014, he is a professor of UFOP's Programa de Pós-graduação em Artes Cênicas.

Alice Guimarães (Brazil/Bolivia) is an actress, director, researcher, theatre educator. She graduated in Performing Arts from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil). Resident in Bolivia and a member of Teatro de Los Andes since 1998, she has participated in fourteen of the group's productions and leads residency and other workshops in Bolivia and abroad on physical and vocal training, improvisation, and stage direction.

Kirsten Hastrup (Denmark) is emeritus professor in anthropology at Copenhagen University. She holds a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Copenhagen in 1973, with minors in sociology and archaeology, a D.Phil. from Oxford University in 1980, and a Dr. scient. soc. from the University of Copenhagen in 1990. She has written several books and articles with a special focus on Iceland and ethnographic methods. She was president of the Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in the period 2008-2016.

Nitis Jacon (Brazil) was a psychiatrist, doctor, theatre director and producer, and politically engaged. She gave an international name to FILO, the theatre festival in her hometown Londrina, Brazil, and she managed to organise the only ISTA session in Latin America in 1994. Nitis insisted that a Brazilian performing tradition should be represented at the ISTA session in Londrina.

Hafedh Khalifa (Tunisia/Italy) is a Tunisian theatre director and actor residing in Italy, born in 1971. He participated in many Italian theatre productions with directors such as Giancarlo Cobelli, and has several television and film participations. He established a theatre production company called Des 2 Rives, which has produced many plays, most notably *The Epic of Khadraa*. He is co-director of the International Festival Théâtre au Sahara.

Giovanna Manola (Italy) is a PhD candidate in Humanities (Theatre and Memory) at Carlos III University of Madrid and has a master's degree in Literary and Theatrical Research from UNED in Madrid. Giovanna Manola has a Bachelor's degree in European Languages and Cultures from the University of Catania and is a high school teacher of Spanish Language and Literature in Italy. From 2013 to 2016, she was a theatre teacher and director of Spanish-language theatre workshops for DISUM at the University of Catania.

Enrico Masseroli (Italy) is a performer, director and musician. He studied literature at Milan University, and worked as an actor with Teatro tascabile di Bergamo from 1973 to 1982. In 1987, with Ludovico A. Muratori, he founded the international theatre ensemble The Pirate Ship. He arrived in Bali in 1978 and since then he has studied Balinese dance-theatre with I Made Djimat. He currently performs baris, jauk and the mask dance topeng, also giving lectures and writing articles about these forms. In 2010 he founded the Gamelan Gong Cenik, a small orchestra with original Balinese instruments.

Nourit Masson-Sékiné (France) is a writer, painter, and photographer. Her work is both multidisciplinary and multicultural in character. From France and then to Japan, North and South America and elsewhere, Nourit calls on us to uncover pictures and scenes of life through her paintings, photographs, installations, stage costumes and writings. She has a particular interest in butoh, an avant-garde Japanese dance which took form in the second half of the 20th century.

Natsu Nakajima (Japan) was a Japanese dancer, choreographer and teacher, known for being one of the first female butoh dancers. In 1962 she entered the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio. Unlike her mentor and long-time collaborator Tatsumi Hijikata, Natsu toured extensively outside of Japan. In 1969 she founded the Muteki-sha dance group, and became a leading figure for dance in Japan. On 3 March 2024, Nakajima died aged 80 in Mexico City.

Diego Pallecchia (Italy/Japan) is an Associate Professor at Kyoto Sangyo University, where he teaches and conducts research on noh theatre practice and reception. He is formally trained in noh within the Kongō school tradition and holds certification as an instructor (*shihan*). He is a member of the International Noh Institute and co-director of Discover Noh in Kyoto. His most recent publications include *Noh: Japanese Classical Dance-Drama* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2025), co-authored with Nakao Kaoru, and *A Companion to Nō and Kyōgen Theatre* (Brill, 2024), which he co-edited with other Japanese and international scholars.

Géza Pintér-Németh (Hungary) studied at Pécs University, graduating in 2010. He has worked with several street theatre companies in Germany and in Italy from 2008 to 2016. He is a theoretical and practical researcher of the intercultural aspect of theatre events in rural areas. In this field he has managed Erasmus and Creative Europe projects since 2016. He has been doing a DLA program at the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Budapest (SZFE) since 2023.

Andrea Porcheddu (Italy) is a theatre critic, dramaturg and university professor. Recently appointed dramaturg at the National Theatre of Genoa, Porcheddu brings criticism inside the institution, championing the role of “critical actions.” With a degree in Philosophy of Law, he settled into the theatre very early, at first as a director, then writing. He taught Methodology of Criticism at the Rome Sapienza University. In 2025 he organised a workshop at the Venice Biennale with educator and critic Roberta Ferraresi.

Ralf Räufer (Germany/Australia) was born in 1960 in Aachen, West-Germany. He studied acting in West-Berlin from 1981 to 1985, and received a scholarship for his research on Meyerhold's biomechanics. He worked as an actor, theatre maker and acting teacher in Europe till 2002. Since 2003 Ralf teaches at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) as course-coordinator in Contemporary Performance. In 2010, he received a PhD in Performing Arts at WAAPA for his practise led research. Beside teaching in theatre and performance he has acted, devised, directed in Germany, the UK, Japan, Malaysia, India, and Australia.

Luca Ruzza (Italy) is an architect who teaches Virtual Scenography at Rome La Sapienza University. In the 1980s he founded the Open Lab Company, an experimentation/production centre for performance and theatre architecture. A scholar of human perception, Luca Ruzza combines productive activity with intense research. He is a designer of theatre venues, including Nuovo Teatro in Formia, Teatro Ruotalibera in Rome, Teatro Potlach in Fara Sabina, Nuovo Teatro Abeliano in Bari, and Cantieri Teatrali Koreja in Lecce (winner of the Golden Ticket/ETI). He has curated numerous installations for his OpenLab Company and is author of publications on theatre space and virtual stage design.

Chris Torch (USA/Italy) is an independent cultural expert, project designer and policy consultant. Born in the USA, he came to Europe as an actor with the Living Theater. He transferred to Stockholm (Sweden) and formed the theatre collective Jordcirkus (1977-1993) and later was named artistic director for the ensemble Shikasta at Riksteatern. In 1996, he founded Intercult, a production unit focused on culture, ideas and arts, based in Stockholm, Sweden. He served as Artistic Director until 2017. Presently he is engaged as President of Fondazione Nuovo Teatro Verdi (Brindisi, Italy). He also serves as artistic director for SEAS Too, a European collaboration focusing on port cities.

Julia Varley (UK/Denmark) since 1976 is actress at Odin Teatret. Since 1990 she has been involved in the conception and organisation of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology). She is active in The Magdalena Project, a network of women in contemporary theatre of which is a founding member. She directs Transit International Festival and is on the editorial board of *The Open Page*, a journal devoted to women's work in theatre. Author of numerous articles and essays and has published five books, among which *Stones of Water. Notes of an Odin Actress* (Routledge 2011).

Valentina Venturini (Italy) teaches Performing Arts at Roma Tre University. Her studies focus on the Cunto and the Puppet Theatre; theatre in prison and in social settings; Neapolitan theatre between the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Her books include *Raffaele Viviani. La compagnia, Napoli e l'Europa* (Bulzoni, 2008), *Nato e cresciuto tra i pupi* (Editoriale Scientifica, 2017), *Il teatro di Gaetano Greco* (Editoriale Scientifica, 2018). She is a member of the editorial board of *Teatro e Storia*; with Mirella Schino, she directs the series "Memorie di teatro" (Bulzoni); and is co-director of the series "Studiteatrali" (Editoriale scientifica) and "Destini incrociati" (Edizioni NuoveCatarsi).

Wei Arianne Wang (China/France) is a theatre director from Chengdu, working and researching the craft of theatre in the UK, China, and France. Born in Chengdu, she grew up in England, and is now based in Paris. She is a theatre composer, kun opera actress, and afro-dancehall dancer, composing with physical scores, pre-expression, and theatre montage where intimacy dances the tango with politics.

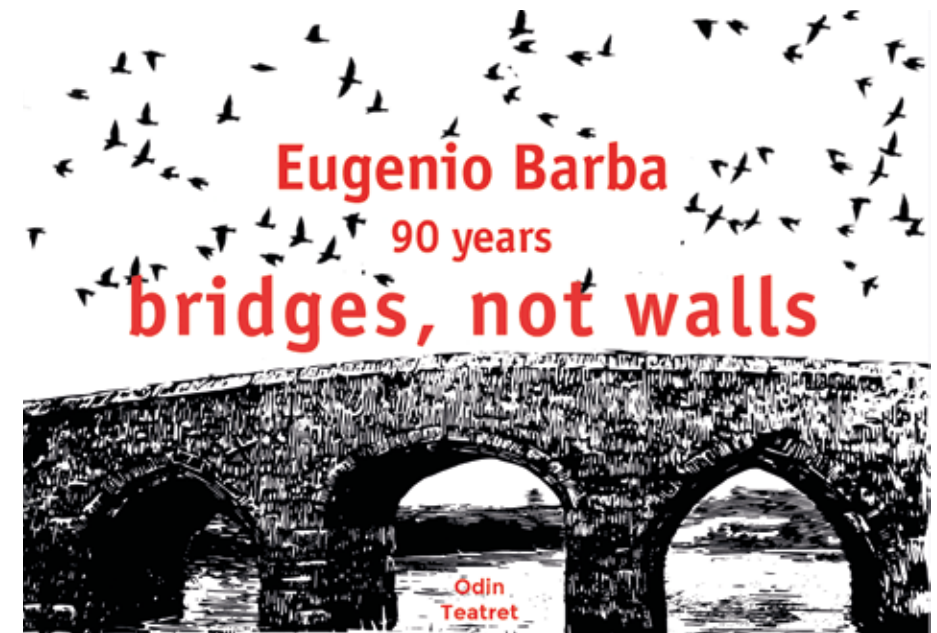
Cristina Wistari (Italy/Bali) was a performer who lived in Bali, studying classical Balinese dance for thirty years. In 1993 she started the Gambuh Project with the aim of preserving the most ancient dance form in Bali. She regularly performed Gambuh and Topeng in the temple festivals in Bali as well as leading workshops and performing abroad. In 2000 she published the book *Gambuh*. Cristina first came to an ISTA in 1995 collaborating closely until her death in 2008.

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"Points of Contact"

2026



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