VISTA
in Salento, Italy, 1 - 14 September 1987

The Actor's Tradition and the Spectator's Identity

Organisers
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Financed by
Regione Puglia, Provincia di Lecce, Consorzio per il Teatro Pubblico Pugliese, Camera di Commercio di Lecce, Comune di Lecce and Comune di Copertino.

PRESENTATION

THE ACTOR'S TRADITION AND THE SPECTATOR'S IDENTITY
ISTA has reached its fifth public session. The relationship between on-going research and the outstanding moments of the public sessions of recent years has evolved towards an ever increasing concentration. At the beginning it was a question of courses of several weeks' duration in which actors and directors came face to face with the technical foundations of various theatrical traditions, carried out dramaturgical projects and trained.

There was, however, another tendency: that of a wide-ranging exploration of performing techniques, brought about by the various Asian and western masters who form the permanent staff of ISTA. Many questions came out of these sessions and with them some tentative answers. We questioned ourselves as to the existence of certain constant principles; as to the analogies between physical and mental processes; as to the possibility of identifying a lowest common denominator between the various processes of the actor or the director, the playwright or the spectator.

This tendency has prevailed. Today, ISTA's public sessions are the opportunity to make the jump from theory to practice, from abstract ideas to tangible action, from the simplicity of rational hypotheses to the complexity of experience. All of this is achieved through the participation of actors, directors, scholars, specialists in various disciplines and, above all, as a result of the contribution of Sanjukta Panigrahi and Katsuko Azuma, both of whom are delving deep into their own tradition in search of a transcultural dimension of their knowledge.

Although ISTA represents the convergence of results from years of research, its public sessions are not simply a display of conclusions. Although interwoven with spectacular elements, they are not performances. At times they appear to present the lack of order characteristic of vagabondage; this is necessary in order to perceive in a new light something which we believed we were already familiar with.

We have moved from the subject of the performer's pre-expressivity to that of the bipolarity of his/her energy (Animus/Anima); from the state of physical pre-expressivity we have passed to questioning the mental one. Moving from the analysis of the way the actor models the spectator's attention, we have reached the subject of the 'peripetias of the meaning' which characterises the creative process and the
confrontation between the actor's own historical or personal traditions and the identity of the spectator. It is this that will be the theme of the Salento ISTA.

This is the second time that ISTA’s public sessions will have taken place in Italy. From August to October 1981 in Volterra the work was almost monastic in quality, shut off from the outside world. In September 1987 ISTA’s activity will take place out in the open, in the streets and squares of Salento.

Neither the differences, the difficulty in understanding, nor the shock of unfamiliar sights bring about a loss of cultural vitality. They are not an obstacle but a stimulus. They do not dampen the flame of interest but fan it. It is uniformity which dulls the mind. It is seeing the same old things and experiencing the same old celebrative emotions that fail to arouse new questions.

Salento ISTA will have to create the arena in which the energy born of the diversity between the cultural identity of the spectators and the performing traditions of the actors can be felt. The result of diverse traditions will be situated in different contexts among spectators of quite different cultural backgrounds but capable of exchange. It will not be prior knowledge that will encourage this encounter, but the sense of diversity.

The elements that allow a cohesion between actors and spectators able to overcome the differences in their cultural backgrounds, are to be found in the level of pre-expressivity of the theatrical composition. There are moments in which the spectators cannot grasp what is going on, cannot follow the details of the plot that is being played out or danced before them. They recognise, on the other hand, signs of hard work and dedication, and the existence of a tradition. Even if actors and spectators do not have points of reference in common, they are drawn together by a common rhythm, by a physical and mental "dance of energies".

This complex process will be examined in a number of contexts, both with spectators who are used to so-called "cultured" performances and with spectators among whom the models of popular culture are still alive.

A number of experiences, both spontaneous and deliberately planned as moments of "barter" show quite clearly that situations of this type are not only possible but have frequently occurred in both the recent and past history of theatre; a history based on travelling companies performing in lands where the actors' culture and traditions are not necessarily those of their audience.

Salento ISTA intends to observe closely what happens in such cases. It will mean observing how the sense of the performance is transformed while passing from the actor's tradition to the personal translation of the spectator rooted in a different tradition.

We shall set out, in a sort of open-air itinerant laboratory and under experimental conditions, to identify in its dilated and extreme form that very inconsistency between the actor's and the spectator's vision which is common to a greater or a lesser degree to all theatrical relations.

Eugenio Barba
ARTISTIC STAFF

BALI
I Made Bandem, dancer, musician
I Made Pasek Tempo, dancer, musician
Swasthi Widjaja Bandem, dancer
Desak Made Suardi Laksmi, dancer, musician
Ni Ketut Suryatini, dancer, musician
Ni Nyoman Candri, dancer, singer
I Wayan Rai, dancer, musician
I Nyoman Catra, dancer, musician
I Ketut Kodi, dancer, musician
Tjokorda Raka Tisnu, dancer musician

JAPAN
Katzuko Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Haruchiho Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Kanichi Hanayagi, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Shizuko Kineya, musician
Takae Koyama, musician, singer

ODIN TEATRET
Lena Bjerregaard, actor
César Brie, actor
Roberta Carreri, actor
Jan Ferslev, actor, musician
Richard Fowler, actor
Naira Gonzales, actor
Iben Nagel Rasmussen, actor

INDIA
Sanjukta Panigrahi, dancer, Odissi
Raghunath Panigrahi, singer, musician
Hemant Kumar Das, musician
Mohini Mohan Patnik, musician
Gangadar Pradhan, musician