VI ISTA
in Bologna, Italy, 28 June - 18 July 1990

Performance Techniques and Historiography

Organisers
Pietro Valenti, Centro Teatrale San Geminiano, Modena and Renzo Filippetti, Teatro Ridotto, Bologna, in collaboration with the University of Bologna and the Assessorato alla Cultura of Bologna.

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University of Bologna, Comune di Bologna, Assessorato alla Cultura, Consorzio Università-Città di Bologna, Ministero del Turismo e Spettacolo, Regione Emilia-Romagna, The Japan Foundation and The Saison Foundation.

PRESENTATION
An essential part of theatrical culture consists of the study of the performance practices of the past. The history of the theatre is not only a "reservoir of the past". It is also a "reservoir for the new" containing knowledge which from time to time makes it possible for us to transcend the present. This does not mean isolating oneself, but imagining other possibilities for the theatre. The history of the theatrical reforms of the twentieth century, in the West as well as in the East, shows the strong link of interdependence which connects the theatre of the past with new artistic creation.

On the other hand, historiographical understanding is often impeded by a lack of experience, by the absence of an empirical dimension, by the impossibility of overcoming the limits established for the spectator. Theatre scholars often come face to face with testimony without being in a position to testify. They run the risk of accumulating the deformations of memory, without possessing the means to correct them and to arrive at a living image of the meaning which theatre had in the past.

The link between theatre and written words is a fertile means of transmission and cultural growth. But it is often overbalanced in favour of books, and the memory of the living experience risks being dispersed in erudite pages devoid of context. Among the various forms of ethnocentrism which veil our vision is one which does not depend on geographical and cultural location but rather on the roles created by the theatrical relationship. It is that ethnocentrism which only considers the theatre from the point of view of the spectators and neglects the realm of the performers: the network of their relationships, knowledge and ways of thinking of which the performance is the fruit.

From this arises the vital importance of creating a time for common experience in which, preserving the specificity of various competences, the artists who embody particular traditions dialogue with scholars who take on the task of sharpening the instruments necessary for understanding the multiform reality of the theatre and its history. In such a confrontation, hypotheses, doubts and questions can be woven into a common research in which the distinction between practical and theoretical specialisation is temporarily dissolved. The purpose of this time for common experience is not the achievement of immediate and unitary results. It offers new points of departure and new stimuli for successive individual research on the part of both those who give life to the performance techniques and those engaged in passing on the memory.

Eugenio Barba
ARTISTIC STAFF

BALI
I Made Pasek Tempo, dancer, musician
Desak Made Suarti Laksmi, dancer, musician
Ni Ketut Suryatini, dancer, musician
Ni Nyoman Candri, dancer, singer
I Wayan Rai, dancer, musician
I Nyoman Catra, dancer, musician
Tjokorda Raka Tisnu, dancer, musician
Ida Bagus Nyoman Mas, dancer, musician
Tjokorda Istri Putra Padmini, dancer
I Wayan Berata, dancer, musician

INDIA
Sanjukta Panigrahi, dancer, Odissi
Raghunath Panigrahi, singer, musician
Hemant Kumar Das, musician
Gangadar Pradhan, musician
Nityanand Mohapatra, musician

JAPAN
Kanho Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Kanichi Hanayagi, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Senkai Azuma, dancer, Nihon Buyo
Naobumi Kojima, musician
Tomiro Wakayama, singer, musician

ODIN TEATRET
Roberta Carreri, actor
Jan Ferslev, actor, musician
Julia Varley, actor
Torgeir Wethal, actor
Frans Winther, musician

SPECIAL GUESTS
Lorenzo Arruga, Italy
Giuseppe Confessa, Italy/Bali
Ivan Hansen, Denmark
Natsu Nakajima, Japan

REPORT
During the ISTA session a one-day symposium (12 July) on "Theatre Anthropology: Ethos and Pre-Expressivity", led by Eugenio Barba, was held open to the public. It included work demonstrations by ISTA's artistic staff.
During the ISTA session a two-day symposium (13-14 July) on "Performing Techniques and Historiography" was held open to the public. Speakers: Fabrizio Cruciani (Italy), Frank Hoff (Canada), Santiago García (Colombia), Gerardo Guccini (Italy), Sanjukta Panigrahi (India), Patrice Pavis (France), Franco Ruffini
(Italy), Ferdinando Taviani (Italy), Julia Varley (Great Britain/Odin Teatret), Susanne Vill (Germany), Masao Yamaguchi (Japan).

ISTA presented 16 public performances by Balinese, Indian, Japanese ensembles and Odin Teatret, organised 2 barters and presented 1 Theatrum Mundi.

The following is an excerpt from the “Report on the 6th Public Session of ISTA” by Clive Barker, University of Warwick, Frank Hoff, University of Toronto, Jean-Marie Pradier, University of Paris 8, Franco Ruffini, University of Bologna and Masao Yamaguchi, University of Tokyo:

Daily schedule
05.45 - 06.45 Ulvetime (silent time);
06.00 - 06.00 Breakfast;
06.45 - 11.00 “The Crossing”;
11.00 - 12.00 “Ora et Labora” (individual and group work);
12.00 - 12.30 Lunch;
12.30 - 15.00 “Dream Therapy” (individual and group work);
15.00 - 16.30 “Citas”: lecture/demonstrations led by invited participants
17.00 - 18.30 “Nightingales and Owls”: lecture/demonstrations and research on voice techniques;
19.00 - 19.30 Dinner;
20.00 - 21.30 “Avatara”: meetings, lecture/demonstrations, analyses of performances.

The schedule for the second week was adjusted to the needs of the International Symposium which was held at the University of Bologna. The schedule included meetings and lecture/demonstrations open to visitors and public performances.

For the first time, all participants took an active part in the Theatrum Mundi. This performance, which took place on Sunday July 15, included a song composed during The Crossing and sung by participants. The Theatrum Mundi is a unique intercultural performance which, in this instance, involved more than fifty Asian and Western artists.

A library was set up in the Villa to which all were invited to contribute a book as well as at least one article of their own.

The Crossing
The experience of previous sessions demonstrated the value for all participants - actors, directors and intellectuals - of being placed in work situations different from those they regularly encounter in their professions.

The theatrical work called The Crossing was developed by the participants themselves who were divided into international and interdisciplinary cells. Each cell was asked by Eugenio Barba to:

1) determine an archetypical situation common to most cultures;
2) consider that the chosen situation must have dynamic value and become a scenic web which permits the process of going from one culture to another and from one perspective to another.

After a general meeting, the cells suggested ideas based on these directions following which each cell was asked to develop a scenario for the performance.

Once Sanjukta Panigrahi had chosen a scenario, “rehearsals” began.
Let's underline the essential points:
1. The introduction of music as a linking rather than an illustrative component in the collective work, as well as a poetic metaphor and accompaniment for each dramatic sequence. This musical work was realised by the Danish composer Ivan Hansen along with the Balinese, Indian, Japanese and European musicians.
2. The appeal to performers capable of thinking through actions (thinking in motion) and not to those who rely on verbalisation (thinking in concepts): artists formed through precise body techniques for whom imagination is not merely an abstract entity.
3. Each scene was elaborated then fixed through a combination of collective creation and the director's concern for thematic unity.
4. An ambiguity of meaning was created to compensate for the unavoidable shortcomings of the work. This ambiguity was supported by a strong final scene which offered an enigmatic synthesis of the whole.

Evaluation of the work
About thirty hours were devoted to an analysis of The Crossing. Each of the participants described the experience of creating the piece. This long period was very useful to distinguish different perceptions, subjective impressions, technical considerations, and professional opinions."