



FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL: INTERROGATING PERFORMANCE HISTORIES

HISTORY SYMPOSIUM AT THE ROYAL SWEDISH ACADEMY OF LETTERS
HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES, VILLAGATAN 3

AND

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE AND AESTHETICS, AUDITORIUM

NOVEMBER 22-24, 2018





From Local to Global: Interrogating Performance Histories

The year 2018 is declared the “European Year of Cultural Heritage”, a gratifying decision for institutions and researchers who devote their time to reflecting upon and bringing to life the common traces remaining from European cultures. At the same time, this declaration raises several questions from both overarching and detailed perspectives. Is it reasonable to speak about a common European cultural heritage, or is it rather a weaving together of many local and regional cultures? Do patterns exist in the narrative of the ‘European’ dimension, which we recognize also in national histories? Are there some dominant countries, whose cultural heritage has become emblematic of Europe’s history? And finally, in what ways has the view on European history affected the image of global history, and vice versa?

There are, of course, no easy and complete answers of these questions, but they cannot be ignored as only rhetorical musings. On the contrary, the research and the historical writing about local, regional, national, European, and global circumstances are closely interrelated. The histories of performing arts, as they are portrayed from different geographical perspectives, make an excellent example of how spatial and time-related phenomena re-appear in overarching narrative patterns as well as in singular turning points. Europe often acts as the primary gauge in these kinds of histories.

The coarse periodization of Ancient Times, the Middle Ages and Modern Time, is still ruling how different performance arts become described in history. Antiquity is the embracing concept used in southern Europe, whereas in the north the label ‘pre-history’ is used. The time of the beginning and ending of the Middle Ages are conceived differently in different countries; but as a conceptual pattern this period exists throughout all kinds of history writing. Even the concept of style, borrowed from art history, is understood to be universal; the Hellenistic, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, and Modern periods appear in every theatre history. Other epochs have national labels even though the time period is the same, for example the Swedish ‘Gustavian’ period, which in England is called ‘Georgian’, and in France ‘l’ancien régime’. Within art history, the same period is referred to as late baroque and rococo, whilst the contemporary intellectual movement of the period is called the Enlightenment. Do all these concepts characterize the European eighteenth century, or do they indicate certain national and regional differences? Is the domestic drama, introduced by Lessing and Diderot, a European innovation spreading fast to other languages, or is it a phenomenon that later historians have depicted as a dominant trend? Similar questions can be put to other epochs, for example to the so-called breakthrough of modern theatre around 1900. Do the new ideas spread out from a local center or do they appear simultaneously in different countries? Put in a different manner, is modernism a later construction embracing past events, which for their contemporaries were merely marginal occurrences? From a wider perspective, it is reasonable to ask whether this understanding of the modern theatre has colored also the theatre situations outside of Europe. In this context, it is possible to look at the introduction of European theatre for example to Japan, as well as the drama written in European

languages in French and English colonies. Through which means are European patterns molding local cultural and theatrical expressions and genres, and is there space left in the histories for the inclusion of native traditions?

It seems difficult to ignore the concept of the 'European', irrespective of how it is described, as normative and a land mark for the global as well as the local. A significant example in performance studies is the new Theatre Histories, published in 2006 (Routledge, with several later editions). In this text, national theatre developments are described as miniatures of European tendencies, and the non-European theatre tends to be exotic unless it adapted European patterns. This might be an unfair description of the authors' ambitions to write a global history, but at the same time the example reveals how strong the impact of the European cultural heritage is also among North-American researchers. In a similar mode, we can observe how national theatre histories strive to show how a European development is mirrored in the country's history. Every country had a (less famous) copy of Sarah Bernhardt during the late 19th century, every country had a person similar to Max Reinhardt introducing modern directing, and every country celebrates a native modern dance pioneer: an Isadora Duncan, Anna Behle, Mary Wigman or Maggie Gripenberg.

The aim of the symposium *From Local to Global: Interrogating Performance Histories*, is to investigate the possibilities for local and national histories to break away from the patterns described above. Can the analysis of a local situation, a specific context and singular artists' endeavours, offer contrasting images against the dominating historical patterns? Can local histories reshape the historical canon, and hence rearrange fixated thought patterns? How does local performance research deal critically with the idea of a common European cultural heritage? How can insights into processes such as colonization and migration throw light on the relations between the local and the global? Our aim is to study how local and national research projects in northern Europe can critically acclaim the idea of a European cultural heritage. At the same time, the relationship to this cultural heritage from a non-European perspective will be included.

In order to emphasize the weaving together of the local and regional with the 'European', as an overarching cultural heritage both inside and outside Europe's borders, we will invite theatre, dance and opera scholars from the Nordic countries and from the countries around the Baltic sea, to a discussion about existing and planned histories of the performing arts.

The symposium will take place between November 22nd and 24th, 2018. It will start with two invited keynote presentations, articulating a local and a global perspective respectively. During the second day, individual and collective projects are scheduled for shorter presentations. In the afternoon, we plan to visit two museums where local and global theatre and dance histories are publicly exhibited, Scenkonstmuseet and Dansmuseet. These visits will form the material for a discussion in the morning of the third day, followed by additional shorter individual presentations. The symposium will conclude with a third keynote presentation, and discussion and summary of questions concerning cultural heritage, Europe, and potential strategies for the creation of future performing arts' historiography.



Six Character in Search of an Author. Reykjavik 1926

Is There a One-Size-Fits-All Theatre Historiography?

Notes from the margin of Europe

Magnus Thor Thorbergsson

Keynote lecture at symposium "From Local to Global: Interrogating Performance Histories"
Stockholm, 22 November 2018

Introduction

Investigating modern theatre; or, more precisely, the representation of the process of becoming modern in narratives of theatre history, the focus on the relationship between local and global reveals a certain set of fundamental questions. How does theatre become modern? What criteria does a theatre need to fulfil to be considered eligible for the category of 'modern'? Does it need to have become professional? Does it have to have witnessed the birth of the modern director? Is it characterized by a certain kind of repertoire? Does it need to have a distinct modernist, or avant-garde movement, or elements of aesthetic experimentation? Furthermore, and more importantly when interrogating performance histories in relation to the local and the global: Are these criteria and this process of a universal nature? Is it the

same process, regardless of geography? Is there a one-size-fits-all theatre historiography when it comes to the narrative of modern theatre?

In the following, I would like to address some issues regarding a period we might be tempted to call the arrival of modern theatre in Iceland in the 1920s, how a couple of events of this period have been represented in theatre historiography, and to bring up a few challenges when it comes to investigating modern theatre on the periphery.

But I think I should start with a longing: the longing to belong.

The Longing to Belong

Throughout the year 2018, Iceland has been quite preoccupied with celebrating the centennial of the sovereignty of the nation, attained in 1918 after Iceland having been under foreign rule since 1262, first under Norway, but as a part of Denmark after the Kalmar Union in 1523. On 1 December 1918 the inhabitants of Reykjavik gathered in front of the ministry office to celebrate the newly gained status of Iceland as a sovereign state within the Danish kingdom. The celebrations were of a smaller scale than intended and had a rather sombre tone due to the impact of the Spanish Flu in the previous month, which had left around 250 dead and had a paralyzing effect on the small community of Reykjavik, which in the year 1918 had around 15.000 inhabitants. The reports of the celebrations in the Reykjavik newspapers made some issue of the behaviour of the audience participating in the event. The report in the daily paper *Morgunblaðið* wrote that the lack of an appropriate festive character of the event may largely have been caused by the flu, which could have explained the absence of a parade, the low attendance numbers and the awful performance of the brass band, “which was painful to observe.” But not everything the report condemned as bad audience conduct could be explained by the flu:

People behave thoughtlessly and lack dignity. Everybody knows that it is inappropriate to chat with one’s neighbour during speeches. Everybody knows that it is customary to take one’s hat off, when national anthems are played during public events. Everybody knows that one should not call out a tenfold hurrah for the king and those who are unable to count to nine should rather stay silent. Some might say that this is unimportant but that is a misunderstanding. The conduct of the people is the most important part in making a gathering ceremonious. Proper order and structure are as fundamental there as elsewhere.¹

The article also expresses contempt towards the behaviour of children during the festivities, which the author considers utterly inappropriate and suggests the use of police force to contain them. The report clearly advocates a certain conduct during official celebrations but it does more than that. The emphasis on “everybody knows” unmistakably shows that the Icelandic people were not ‘in the know’ when it came to civilized behaviour. Proper conduct should follow a prescribed role; it was not something that came naturally. It had to be learned.

The reports of the 1918 celebration of the country’s sovereignty reveal a central issue in the modern history of Iceland (one that I believe it shares with many smaller or marginal countries in the world): the importance of belonging to those countries seen as cultivated and the importance of the way the nation is perceived by others. Being considered one of the ‘educated’ or ‘cultivated’ nations was an

1 [Vilhjálmur Finsen], ‘Fullveldisdagurinn’ (1918), 1. My translation.

issue repeatedly raised in the public debate in Iceland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.² The geographical location of the ‘educated’ or ‘cultivated’ nations, however, may have been a little foggy; it clearly indicated Europe; one might say that the terms referred first and foremost to the German and French speaking parts of Europe, as well as England, and perhaps Denmark, Norway and Sweden. But although the term ‘cultivated nations’ may be considered to indicate actual nation states, it in fact has no concrete geographic referent, in a similar way that Dipesh Chakrabarty treats the terms “Europe” and “India” “as hyperreal terms in that they refer to certain figures of imagination whose geographical referents remain somewhat indeterminate.”³ The ‘cultivated nations’ to which Iceland longed to belong, are similar figures of imagination.

Parallel to the political sovereignty of Iceland, a discussion on the cultural sovereignty of the nation emerged, in which the demand for a national theatre was considered of vital importance. No sovereign nation that wanted to be considered educated and cultivated could claim legitimacy without a cultural institution such as a national theatre. Furthermore, institutions such as a National Theatre should operate in an appropriate way to fit the model. Despite having its roots in nineteenth-century cultural nationalism, this seems to indicate that subscribing to a notion of ‘European’ cultural traditions was considered of greater importance than cultivating a sense of national heritage. This is very clear in the Icelandic case. Following the Icelandic parliament’s decision in 1923 to fund the building of a National Theatre, the Reykjavik Theatre Company (RTC) attempted to fortify its position as a National Theatre in the making (it was generally seen as a stand-in for a National Theatre) not by emphasising local drama or subscribing to any sort of cultural nationalist tendencies, but by importing a repertoire of modern European drama and furthermore, by staging the first production of Shakespeare in Iceland.⁴

The first production of a Shakespeare play, *Twelfth Night*, premiered on 23 April 1926, was very well received, both by the public and in the press: “[t]he following Friday, when a play by the British bard is shown here for the first time, will presumably be written in golden letters in the history of theatre in Iceland.”⁵ In many similar press statements, Shakespeare represented a connection to a theatre tradition, an entrance ticket to a European cultural heritage, or even a partial membership to an exclusive club of culturally independent countries, legitimizing the status of the RTC as a national institution.

The reviews of the production repeatedly made references to theatres abroad, for example in stating that theatres all over the world challenged their capabilities in producing Shakespeare, indicating that Icelandic theatre had now also taken on the same challenge. A reviewer in the paper *Vísir* even noted that the audience at the premiere had changed from the time he first attended the theatre a quarter of a century earlier: “The audience was also different. Well-dressed gentlemen (in dinner jackets) and ladies in short, low cut silk dresses with modern bobbed hair – a theatre audience similar to an audience in theatres abroad.”⁶ The audience was in his view also performing its role correctly, dressing up as modern, urban citizens according to the latest fashion of the bourgeois middle class, following the standards of the cultivated nations and thereby stating the position of the Icelandic culture and the Icelandic people within the cultural context of ‘Europe’. Pulling the island closer to the continent.

2 See, for example, Ólafur Rastrick, *Háborgin*; and Magnus Thor Thorbergsson, *A Stage for the Nation*, 148–158.

3 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 27.

4 See further Magnus Thor Thorbergsson, ‘Being European’.

5 E, ‘Leikhúsið: Fyrsta Shakespeare-leiksýning hér á landi’ (1926), 2. My translation.

6 G[uðbrandur J][ónsson], ‘Leikhúsið: Þrettándakveld eftir Shakespeare’ (1926), 2. My translation.

The Mo(ve)ment of Modernism

This longing to fit in, to belong to the cultivated nations of ‘Europe’, is not only evident in particular events in the history of theatre Iceland but may also be said to dominate the way this history has been told, in Icelandic theatre historiography. In his book, *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues “that insofar as the academic discourse of history – that is, ‘history’ as a discourse produced at the institutional site of the university – is concerned, ‘Europe remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘Kenyan,’ and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations of a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’.”⁷ As Chakrabarty emphasises that ‘Europe’ is a hyperreal term – is an imagination in this sense – this imagined master narrative – of Enlightenment, modernity, civilization – that we call the ‘history of Europe’ serves as point of departure and model for countries outside of Europe. We do not need to go as far as India to see how this can be the case. Even in cases of countries that considers themselves within the geographical boundaries of Europe, albeit marginal, the ‘history of Europe’ is a paradigm, a blueprint for their own narratives of history. Asking whether modernism [is] a later construction embracing past events, the description of this seminar points out that “it is reasonable to ask whether this understanding of the modern theatre has coloured also the theatre situations outside of Europe.” I would argue, that “coloured” is an understatement. ‘European theatre history’ not only colours other narratives, it provides a template for these other narratives.

Before looking at a couple of examples how this manifests itself in the case of Icelandic modern theatre, a brief overview of the academic field of Icelandic theatre history is required. Research on Icelandic theatre history has not produced an abundance of publications. Three doctoral dissertations have been defended in the field, by Jón Viðar Jónsson, Sveinn Einarsson and myself, and a list of published academic books and peer-reviewed articles hardly fills a single page. Furthermore, the field has been very much dominated by a single voice. The majority of what has been published on Icelandic theatre history is written by one man: Sveinn Einarsson, whose work include a three-volume series on Icelandic theatre from early performative culture to 1960. In the third and most recent volume, published in 2017, a comment on the first couple of pages reveals the attempt to connect to European theatre history and to show how Icelandic theatre caught up with the outside world in the mid-1920s. Sveinn starts with drawing up a rough picture of ‘the world’ (or more precise: Europe) in the beginning of the twentieth century arising from the ruins of the first world war, calling for a re-evaluation of the arts. Sveinn notes that this re-evaluation was also to be seen in the repertoire of the Reykjavik Theatre Company: “Now Pirandello’s play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, is staged in Iðnó four years after the world premiere. That way, Icelandic theatre has moved closer to participation in European theatre history.”⁸ Sveinn is not the only one to emphasise the importance of this particular production in this regard. In one of the few books on Icelandic theatre history not written by Sveinn Einarsson, the centennial history of the Reykjavik Theatre Company published in 1997, the historians Þórunn Valdimarsdóttir and Eggert Þór Bernharðsson write as follows:

⁷ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 27.

⁸ Einarsson, *Íslensk leiklist III*, 16. My translation. It is worth mentioning that in the excitement of pulling Iceland closer to Europe, Sveinn actually shortens the time that passed between the premiere of *Six Characters in Rome* in 1921 to its Icelandic production from five years to four.

At that moment, Reykjavik was like a cosmopolitan city, and this performance and the fresh style of acting it produced expanded the expressive abilities of the actors, which was put into use in more plays that rebelled against realist representation in the following years. A small experimental theatre had emerged in the country; a cocoon that subsequently opened on occasion on the stage, characterized by a derivative of a hybrid form of expressionism, surrealism and futurism.⁹

Not only is it here claimed that through a single theatrical performance, the island has literally been pulled closer to Europe, and transforming the then 25000 inhabitant town of Reykjavik into a cosmopolitan city, this last quote in fact reveals exactly what issue is at stake: the marking of this particular event as a founding moment of avant-garde theatre in Iceland. The Reykjavik Theatre Company is here explicitly depicted as an experimental theatre, with its own hybrid form of expressionism, surrealism and futurism. Looking at the repertoire of the company, its style of acting, directing, the aesthetics of the productions, the relationship to the audience one must say: Nothing could, in fact, be further from the truth. The Reykjavik Theatre Company was a quite conventional semi-professional bourgeois theatre, performing a mixed repertoire of comedies, modern plays in translation, new Icelandic plays and occasional classics. Even though it has infrequently performed plays that show some novelty – some that may even be considered radical or experimental to some extent – it has never come close to anything that can be described as surrealism or futurism.

The question arises: What is the importance of defining an event as the founding moment of modernist or avant-garde theatre? And what gives *Six Characters in Search of an Author* such power that its production becomes such an event and manages to link Icelandic theatre with the history of theatre in Europe?

Of course, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* has generally been considered one of the canonical works of modern drama. The back cover of Jennifer Lorch's 2005 book on the play in the series *Plays in Production* talks about its "explosive premiere in Rome in 1921," and the first lines of her introduction read: "Six Characters in Search of an Author is now recognised as a classic of modernism; many would echo Felicity Firth's words, asserting that it is 'the major single subversive moment in the history of modern theatre'. In 1921 its story of family strife and sexual horror, set within the philosophical context of relativism, and its self-conscious form provided a double-pronged challenge: to bourgeois social values, and to the accepted mode of naturalist theatre-making."¹⁰ In relation to issues of the local and the global, however, the more interesting question is what happens after the alleged explosive premiere until the play was seen on the Icelandic stage? What kind of transformation does a play undertake by a movement in time and space? Does it retain or even bear traces of its explosiveness in a different setting? Is it still a challenge to bourgeois values?

One might also ask: is the 'explosiveness' of the play a historiographical construct? As Jennifer Lorch points out about the original Rome production in 1921, the premiere was described as a battle, continuing into the night in angry encounters on the street, but she furthermore notes that the "Teatro Valle

⁹ Þórunn E. Valdimarsdóttir and Eggert Þór Bernharðsson, *Leikfélag Reykjavíkur* (1997), 103–104. My translation.

¹⁰ Lorch, Pirandello: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, 1.

audiences were accustomed to tumultuous first nights” and that “the uproar [...] had been encouraged by young supporters of the avant-garde known as *sciacalli* (‘jackals’), who were opposed by the *parrucconi* (‘old fogies’).”¹¹ Lorch notes that because of this prepared uproar, it is quite difficult to gather an understanding of the audience’s reception and to answer the question what (if anything) in the production or the play that night actually disturbed the audience.

In research on avant-garde and experimental theatre, historians have often shown a tendency to celebrate such revolutionary events on the grounds of their cultural assumptions and preferences for moments of ‘breakthrough’. As Thomas Postlewait points out in his discussion of the famous 1896 *Ubu roi* premiere in Paris (which might also be considered for the title of ‘the major single subversive moment in the history of modern theatre’):

our histories and studies of the avant-garde arts feature each rebellious act, each shocked response, and each manifesto. The innovations and reactions are part of the heritage of modernism. The cultural achievements of the artists – their identities as modernists – depend in great measure upon the roles as rebels with a cause, a cause that provides us with a cultural context for the events we study.

Unlike the philistines, however, we are not shocked. We may even concur with the assaults on bourgeois values. Our refusal to be offended, as is demonstrated in our extensive commentary on *Ubu Roi*, makes us the rightful arbitrators of the significance and value of avant-garde art. As the custodians of the avant-garde events and their cultural history, we chart the development and triumphs of the modern arts over narrow-minded opposition.¹²

Representations of the performance of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by the Reykjavik Theatre Company in 1926 in narratives of theatre histories need to be considered in this context. By highlighting the performance and by emphasising the radicalism of staging the play, drawing an image of the perplexed audience, Icelandic theatre is included in the charting of the development of modernism. Icelandic theatre has a place on the map. The historiographical handling of the performance serves to prove that theatre in Iceland had in fact become modern, based on the premise that no national theatre history can be complete without a movement, or at least as in this case, a moment of modernism.

No doubt, the play was a novelty for early 1920s audiences, but it was also an international success. Following the Rome premiere in May 1921, the play opened in Milan in September and Turin in December, apparently receiving no uproar among the audiences there. In the following four years, the play was staged in at least fifteen countries, most famously in London and New York in 1922, in Paris 1923 directed by George Pitoëff, and in the direction of Max Reinhardt in Berlin 1924. In addition, the play was staged in Austria, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Yugoslavia, Japan and here in Sweden. In the spring of 1925 the play was staged at the Betty Nansen theatre in Copenhagen, which was, along with the Dagmar Theatre, clearly the key model for the Reykjavik Theatre Company in the 1920s when considering modern or contemporary drama. The majority of modern playwrights staged by the Reykjavik Theatre Company in the 1920s were frequently staged by these two Danish theatres during the period: Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, Galsworthy, Schnitzler, Bernstein...

¹¹ Ibid, 31.

¹² Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, 64.

As these two theatres have been considered the leading literary theatres of Denmark in the early 1920s, where new trends in modern drama were favoured,¹³ the Reykjavik Theatre Company, through its similar emphasis in repertoire, clearly placed itself and its audiences in the company of such modern literary theatres catering for an educated, cultivated middle-class audience, in the image of the aforementioned gentlemen in dinner jackets and ladies in low cut silk dresses: “an audience similar to audiences abroad”.

The production of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in Reykjavik in 1926 did not cause any uproar at all. The play was certainly hailed as a novelty, not least the fact that the curtain was up when the audience entered the theatre and some of the actors entered the stage through the auditorium. Reviews of the play production were rather favourable and discussed the meaning of the play in some depth. The sexual horror of the play cannot be seen to have been taken as an assault on bourgeois values, any more than the sexual frivolity of Arnold and Bach’s *The Spanish Fly*, which the company had premiered a month earlier. Rather than seeing this production as a founding moment of an Icelandic avant-garde, I would argue that along with the other modern plays the company adopted from the literary theatres of Copenhagen, it was simply another brick in creating an intellectual bourgeois theatre.

The Modern Director

A second indication of Icelandic theatre becoming ‘modern’ in the 1920s may be seen in the changed status of the director, who from the mid-1920s receives more attention in reviews and generally starts to gain a role of artistic responsibility in the productions of the Reykjavik Theatre Company. A clear signal of the increased importance of the director may also be seen in the fact that the name of the director does not appear in the playbills of the company until 1924. Before that it is not always completely clear who directed the productions or what his role exactly entailed. The arrival of Indriði Waage, who was assigned the position of director of the Reykjavik Theatre Company in 1925 has been marked as one of the important contributions to this process. The then 23-year-old Indriði Waage stepped in as a leading figure of a new generation of theatre artists in the mid-1920s and during his lifetime he became the most productive director in Icelandic theatre history. By the time of his death in 1963, Indriði Waage had directed around 90 theatre productions and played over 100 roles.¹⁴ In existing accounts of his contribution to Icelandic theatre, first and foremost by Sveinn Einarsson, he is usually claimed to have been strongly influenced by German theatre, which has established a certain reputation of Indriði as the being first modern Icelandic director. In a sense as the Icelandic Max Reinhardt.

There is no doubt that Indriði was a very important figure in the Icelandic theatre from the 1920s onwards and his position within the theatrical field clearly became very central. During the three seasons between 1925 and 1928 Indriði Waage directed every production of the RTC (fourteen premieres and four renewals of older productions) with only two exceptions. Already in Indriði’s first productions with the RTC he received quite a lot of praise for his directing. Reviews in all the three newspapers published in Reykjavik at the time mentioned his directing talent, and in an interesting way he is often placed in a European context. In a review of his production of Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* one

13 Kvam, Rask, and Wiingaard, ‘Det nye århundrede’, 97–110.

14 A somewhat incomplete list of Indriði Waage’s productions and roles is available on the website of the Icelandic Theatre Museum. See: Merkisdagur íslenskrar leiklistarsögu: Indriði Waage, <http://leikminjasafn.is/merkisdagar/indwaage.html>. Last visited on 5 November 2018.

of the papers stated: “It is not far-fetched to say that Indriði in many ways reminds much of the German ‘expressionist’ directors, which is no bad comparison.”¹⁵

This is not the only connection to German theatre that has been mentioned in relation to Indriði Waage. In almost every description, the connection to German expressionism and to Max Reinhardt is drawn, and in an article in the journal *Skírnir* in 1980 Sveinn Einarsson writes: “the confinements of realism were to him insufficient, for that he had drunk too much from the cup of expressionism and gotten too acquainted with the ‘*Retheatralisierung*’ or the re-sharpening of the expressive force of the theatre, which Reinhardt aimed at.”¹⁶ The image of Indriði Waage as the Icelandic Reinhardt is further developed in Sveinn’s recent third volume on Icelandic theatre.

The connection to German theatre in relation to Indriði Waage reveals the processes of creating an image of the modern director, which needs to subscribe to a certain model: the paradigm Reinhardt. As seen in the quote from Sveinn Einarsson mentioned above he comments that Indriði was influenced by Reinhardt’s ‘*Retheatralisierung*’, which was to be witnessed in his searching beyond the confinements of realism. Sveinn traces this influence back to Indriði’s visit to Berlin in 1922-23, which seems quite plausible with regard to Reinhardt’s dominating status in German theatre in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The problem is, however, that by 1922 Reinhardt was no longer in Berlin and not many of his productions were to be seen on the Berlin stages.

There is no doubt that Indriði Waage brought new methods into the Icelandic theatre and that his contribution is substantial when looking at the changed position of the director in Icelandic theatre in the mid-1920s. But seeing him as the Icelandic Max Reinhardt only obscures his actual contribution and only serves the purpose of fitting Icelandic theatre history into the pre-existing model (or at least imagined model) of modern European theatre.

The historiographical image of Indriði Waage as the first Icelandic modern director is not only supported by the connection to Max Reinhardt. It is also based on the repertoire of plays he directed, but in that regard, a closer look raises some interesting questions. Indriði is claimed to have introduced some key modern playwrights on the Icelandic stage, such as Schnitzler, Strindberg, Shaw, Galsworthy and Pirandello. It is true that he directed Galsworthy’s *Windows* in 1925 and Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in 1926, but the case of Shaw, Strindberg and Schnitzler is a bit more difficult. Bernard Shaw’s *Candida* was staged by the Reykjavik Theatre Company in February 1925, but directed by Kristján Albertsson, in a season when Indriði Waage did not play any part in the operations of the company. In the spring of 1924, the Reykjavik Theatre Company presented a double bill, featuring Schnitzler’s *Farewell Supper* from *Anatol* and Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*. Sveinn Einarsson claims that Indriði Waage probably made the decision for the company to stage these two plays and directed them as well, and on a list of productions directed by Indriði Waage on the website of Icelandic Theatre Museum, these two plays are listed as the first two.

15 Amicus, ‘Leikfélag Reykjavíkur og leikdómendur’ (1926), 2. My translation.

16 Sveinn Einarsson, ‘Um leikstjórn’ (1980), 18. My translation. Original italics

The problem is, however: there is nothing that supports that Indriði Waage actually directed these two plays or was involved in the decision to put them on the repertoire. The director is not named in the playbills, his name is not brought up in any reviews of the performance or in any personal documents of the participants and furthermore: in a later interview, Indriði Waage said that the first play he directed at the Reykjavik Theatre Company was the German farce Pension *Schöllner* by Carl Laufs, which premiered in November 1925, eighteen months after the Schnitzler/Strindberg production.

Why is it important to uphold the doubtful image that Indriði Waage's first directing assignment was a double bill featuring Schnitzler and Strindberg? I would argue that the answer lies in the historical power invested in these two playwrights as two giants and pioneers of modern drama. In completing the template of the modern director, *Miss Julie* is a much better fit than a German bedroom farce. The importance here lies in stating that modern Icelandic theatre did not miss its own birth of the modern director.

Towards a Locational Approach

Saying that Indriði Waage was the first modern director is not necessarily wrong. It is also not false to claim that the performance of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* shows an attempt to connect to the latest currents in modern drama. However, reading these events through a pre-given lens of 'European' modernism, trying to fit them into a Eurocentric template of a history of modern theatre, we run the risk of missing the dynamics of influence and cultural exchange in various locations. How do we approach questions of modern theatre if the aim is to avoid repeating pre-given models of 'European' theatre history?

Building on the already mentioned Chakrabarty's useful challenge to the notion of 'European history' as the template for other histories, I tend to subscribe to a more locational approach, in which the tendency is to look at the geography of modernism rather than seeing modernism as a certain period in cultural history (ca. 1890-1930). Limiting modernism to the period 1890-1930 ultimately also tends to limit modernism to certain geographical locations, that is: urban European centres such as Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna etc. in which preferably rebellious acts took place within the arts, sending shockwaves from the centres out to the peripheries.

A more locational approach acknowledges that the question of *when* – of the periodization of modern theatre – needs to be met with the question of space: *where* was modernism? *Which* modernism are we talking about? In what context does it appear? Looking at modernism from a geographical standpoint in this manner questions both the periodization of modernism as well as its geographical hierarchy of centre (or centres) and periphery. As an example of such a locational approach: In her arguments for a locational modernism, Susan Stanford Friedman criticizes the dominant Eurocentric attitude of modernist studies, and instead proposes a more multi-centric approach, placing the importance on networks, routes, and mobility of culture. Such an approach acknowledges that modernity is not everywhere the same, it does not arrive at the same time everywhere, and perhaps most importantly: its reception varies from location to location. Each place has its own sets of rules, its own cultural traditions and its own field of power in which the arrival of new trends, ideas and objects are contested and evaluated.

If we look again at the Icelandic context, we see that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, a group of intellectuals quite explicitly saw themselves as a kind of border control with the power to determine what trends, isms, and products were to be allowed to enter Icelandic culture and which should be barred from entry. As an example: by the time the first abstract paintings were exhibited in Reykjavik in 1925, a vivid debate on abstract art had already taken place in journals and magazines years before, even though some of the participants in the debate as well as many of the readers, had never seen an abstract painting. Several examples can also be found where modernist influences in Icelandic art was indigenized, by putting them in the context of Icelandic cultural traditions. Cubist elements are accepted by clearly referencing to folklore, for example in the case of Ásmundur Sveinsson's sculpture *Sæmundur on the seal* located in front of the University of Iceland; strong modern female characters in early twentieth-century Icelandic drama were 'neutralized' by seeing them as descendants of medieval saga heroines, rather than dealing with the contemporary issues they addressed.¹⁷

The temptation to fit local stories under a canonical notion of modernism (or any other period for that matter), to show how peripheric histories or counterhistories are in sync with the master narrative of 'Europe', how 'we' are not a backward, uncivilized, uncultivated and marginal people, misses out on the dynamics of exchange between local and global. In an attempt to understand modernism as an intersection of multiple and nonsynchronous temporalities, Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel propose the term 'Geomodernisms: "To emplace modernism in this way – to think, rather, in terms of interconnected modernisms – requires a rethinking of periodization, genealogies, affiliations, and forms. To some degree, this rethinking estranges the category of modernism itself."¹⁸ The challenge of such a locational approach when dealing with loaded concepts such as modernism and modernity, Doyle and Winkiel note "is to do three things at once: to acknowledge and excavate the histories [these terms] carry, to redefine and disrupt them by articulating counterhistories, and to resist their tendency to "absorb" and ultimately re-erase these other histories."¹⁹

Such an approach allows to see the first local 'modern' director, not as an indigenous (but minor) replica of Max Reinhardt, but as someone who might introduce modern theatre in the form of bourgeois bedroom farce. And it gives us a chance to look at how a play like *Six Characters in Search of an Author* undergoes a transformation over space and time when taking the route from Rome across Europe and over the sea to Reykjavik in a span of five years. What kind of baggage does it carry? How does it pass through customs (particularly if it's carrying explosives)? Has it brought any souvenirs from its travels? Through its relentless mobility, stop-over in various places, interactions with ever new locals, has it perhaps left some of its luggage behind and picked up something else?

References

Amicus. 'Leikfélag Reykjavíkur og leikdómendur'. *Vísir* 24 November 1926, 2–3.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008.

¹⁷ See Magnus Thor Thorbergsson, *A Stage for the Nation*, 193–202

¹⁸ Doyle and Winkiel, 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

- Doyle, Laura, and Laura A. Winkiel, eds. *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- E. 'Leikhúsið: Fyrsta Shakespeare-leiksýning hér á landi'. *Vísir* 21 April 1926, 2.
- Einarsson, Sveinn. 'Um leikstjórn: Erindi á aðalfundi Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags 17. desember 1979'. *Skírnir* 154. 1980, 5–23.
- Einarsson, Sveinn. *Íslensk leiklist III: 1920-1960*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 2016.
- G[uðbrandur] J[ónsson]. 'Leikhúsið: Þrettándakveld eftir Shakespeare'. *Vísir* 28 April 1926, 2.
- Kvam, Kela, Elin Rask, and Jytte Wiingaard. 'Det nye århundrede'. In *Dansk teaterhistorie 2: Folkets teater*, edited by Kela Kvam, Janne Risum, and Jytte Wiingaard, 72–122. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1992.
- Lorch, Jennifer. *Pirandello: Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Plays in Production. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Postlewait, Thomas. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Rastrick, Ólafur. Háborgin: *Menning, fagurfræði og pólitík í upphafi tuttugustu aldar*. Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2013.
- Thorbergsson, Magnus Thor. *A Stage for the Nation: Nation, class, identity and the shaping of a theatrical field in Iceland 1850-1930*. PhD-Thesis. Reykjavík: University of Iceland, 2017.
- Thorbergsson, Magnus Thor. 'Being European: Staging the nation in 1920s Icelandic theatre'. *Nordic Theatre Studies* 25. 2013, 22–33.
- Valdimarsdóttir, Þórunn and Eggert Þór Bernharðsson. *Leikfélag Reykjavíkur: Aldarsaga*. Reykjavík: Leikfélag Reykjavíkur/Mál og menning, 1997.
- [Vilhjálmur Finsen]. 'Fullveldisdagurinn'. *Morgunblaðið* 3 December 1918, 1.

Classics as Cultural Battleground: The Early Reception of Don Giovanni in Prague and Dresden

Magnus Tessing Schneider

Along with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is probably the most iconic and the most analysed work in the European theatrical repertoire, and also one of the most widely performed. It owes much of its cultural status to the fact that E. T. A. Hoffmann, in his fantasy piece "Don Giovanni: A Marvellous Adventure that Befell A Travelling Enthusiast" (1813), used this work to define the "classic" as a dramatic work that transcends time and space. He did so by subjecting it to an interpretation that became so influential that the iconic images of the work has come to depend on its hegemonic reading, while conflicting readings have attained the status of counter-interpretations. The Romantic interpretation depends on the emphasis that Hoffmann put on the supernatural apparition, the walking statue of the Commendatore, as an embodiment of a moral imperative to which Don Giovanni fails to respond adequately. It is to Hoffmann, therefore, that we owe the iconic image of Don Giovanni as an arrogant but fascinating individualist who is punished for his violation of the divine order.

The Romantic interpretation of *Don Giovanni* was part of an effort by German critics, translators and performers to claim Mozart's crowning achievement as a *German* opera. But the nationalist endeavour glossed over a more complex situation. After all, *Don Giovanni* is set to an Italian libretto, and it was written for an all-Italian cast. The fact that it was mostly performed in a free German adaptation that introduced a number of scenes drawn from the Kasperle tradition also contributed to the Germanizing of the opera. The re-contextualisation also involved a re-periodisation: at the hands of the German adapters and critics, the critical Enlightenment comedy was reimagined as an operatic counterpart to Goethe's *Faust*: a mythical Romantic tragedy animated by the medieval folk spirit that survives in puppet theatre, pantomime, Halloween farces and similar fairground entertainments.

The claiming of *Don Giovanni* by German nationalists was challenged, however, by the Italian baritone Luigi Bassi, the singer for whom Mozart had written the role in 1787. Bassi complicated the politically motivated narrative of *Don Giovanni* as a German work by his mere presence in Germany. Universally admired for his acting skills, he was exempt from the predominant view among German critics that Italian singers were poor actors, not sufficiently concerned with the true nature of the dramatic character and hence unable to do justice to Mozart's operas. His portrayal of Don Giovanni was admired by all who had seen him in the role, and even nationalists among the German critics and conductors recognised him as the principal authority on Mozart's intentions. At the time of his death in 1825, Bassi's name was inseparable from the role he had created. With regard to the Germanizing of the opera, the main problem was that his portrayal of Don Giovanni as a charming, humorous, gracious and essentially non-violent Spanish gentleman differed fundamentally from Hoffmann's Romantic conception of Don Giovanni as a demonic Faustian antihero. While awareness of this difference led some commentators to reject Hoffmann's reading and the performance traditions associated with it; others maintained after the singer's death that Bassi had given his blessing to the German Romantic conception.



Peer Gynt in Beijing 1983

Wei ziji jiu goule – To thyself be enough! *Peer Gynt* in Beijing 1983.
Christina Nygren

Compared to *A Doll's House*, which has been an all-time favorite of the Chinese stage, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* has undergone varying receptions in China. The Chinese have had an ambivalent attitude towards *Peer Gynt* for several reasons. According to traditional Chinese values, filial piety is considered the most important of all virtues. It is e.g. believed that a son should not abandon his duties toward his parents.

Peer's idea "to thyself be enough" has been considered unacceptable to the Chinese because a person is supposed to place the family and state before his self-interests. The values represented by *Peer Gynt* were seen too anti-social and anti-state. Furthermore, "to thyself be enough" was equated with "to be thy-selfish", consequently making the idea running counter to age-old Chinese values.

In the late 1970s, after the Cultural Revolution, a new reception of *Peer Gynt* began. Peer's adventures abroad were not seen as negative, but in line with China's new open-door policy that evolved gradually. Peer's final insistence on his "self" was hailed as an antidote to the collectivist identity practiced during the socialist regime.

The play was completely translated at the beginning of 1980s and performed for the first time in China by the Central Academy of Drama (*Zhongyang Xiju Xueyuan*) in 1983. The performance was widely acclaimed as an innovation of modern Chinese stage art. *Peer Gynt* was chosen as much for political reasons as for the content. By making the performance in a Norwegian style, as much as possible, they could take political liberties and refer all daring parts to Norwegian-ness, thereby standing free from the criticism from the censorship. For example, the trolls were many times seen as a symbol of The Gang of Four.

During this period, I was an exchange master student from Sweden at the Central Academy of Drama for two years (1982-84), together with one Japanese and six carefully chosen Chinese students, from different parts of the country. We were the first foreign students taking part in an organized study program. Though the political climate was still quite restricted at the time, we were allowed to move unusually free, in and outside of the school.

For my part, it turned out to be quite interesting as I got involved in this first production of *Peer Gynt*. The production was made with the students of directing, but also the student actors, instructed by the headmaster Xu Xiaozhong. Discussions and studies about Ibsen as well as the play *Peer Gynt* went on for months before the actual rehearsals took place. An initially important discussion was whether the play should be performed in a distanced (according to the Brecht tradition) or naturalist (according to the Stanislavskij tradition) way. It ended up in a conviction that the naturalist style would be the best, though the result became a mixture of both.

When I was called to participate in the first study-class on Ibsen and *Peer Gynt* (in Chinese *Pei'er Jinte*) I was totally unprepared but was soon caught up by the students' and the directors' excitement and enthusiasm. It was already decided to make it as much as possible to resemble Norway and Norwegian culture.

Being a Swede, they expected me to be instantly prepared to discuss the drama, Ibsen's intentions and background, the character's behavior and inner feelings as well as some, for them exotic and obscure figures like "troll", "Dovregubben" (The Dovre-Master or The Troll King) and "hobgoblins". For a Chinese at that time, there could be no actual differences between Sweden and Norway (but at least they did not mix up Sweden with Switzerland, which most people did at the time).

I sent for a Swedish translation of the drama, together with some fairytales about trolls, included drawings, to be more prepared. It should be mentioned that this was not an easy thing to do from China in the beginning of the 1980s, without internet, international telephone or fax. It could only be done via letters sent by surface mail (which could take a long time as they had to go through the ordinary censorship). But after a few weeks I got the much longed for books.

There were many questions and problems to solve for the Chinese. The text was cut down from 38 to 22 Acts, most of Peer's long monologues were left out. In addition to major difficulties with adaptations, there were some less important problems in understanding certain words and lines, like when Peer at the end of Act 2 is suffering from a hangover and says: "I give the world for a pickled herring!" After me



Peer Gynt and Mor Aase

spending quite some time trying to explain about "pickled herring", and why Peer probably felt he needed it so badly, they decided to just let Peer say: "I wish I had something to eat".

At some parts, the Chinese version was slightly vacillating between the original meaning of the text and something that could be better understood by a Chinese audience. For example, when Aase, Peer's mother, is crying over her son as a "lost lamb" (second Scene of Act 2). In the Chinese version, this became "*milehule*", commonly used when somebody lose their way, often because of darkness. Another example is when The Troll King convinces Peer to accept a tail to be fastened on him, the troll shows his content by saying "You've come to your senses" (in the Swedish translation "Nu var du en medgörlig gosse"), while the Chinese expressed it as "You are an intelligent boy". The Royal Hall of the King of the Trolls (Scene 6 of Act 2) showed to be one of the most time-consuming parts to find a good adaption for. The "troll" (in Chinese *shanyao* – mountain goblin) seemed, along with the function of the "button-moulder", the most difficult to understand.

The scene in the Royal Hall of the King of the Trolls was preceded by weeks of improvisations. The actors were given the task of creating "strange movements to unusual music", dressed in tails, ragamuffin-clothes and huge wigs. Expressions varied between dangerous, funny and imbecile. By looking at drawings and listening to fairytales, understanding came gradually – about details like how to move the tail, how to show only four fingers (as in some drawings the trolls were seen to have only four fingers on each hand). Furthermore, the fact that trolls are afraid of the sun and daylight because it could make them freeze to a statue. Ultimately the scene was presented in strong green light and with the trolls wearing pig heads, headband and dummy bellies.

By this the trolls were modified into a conception supposed to be understandable for the Chinese audience, as the Troll King, and the troll boys and girls resembled Pigsy (*Zhu Bajie*) in the famous story *Journey to the West*. In this context, Peer could easily be interpreted as and compared with, the Monkey King (*Sun Wukong*) in the same story. In traditional Chinese culture as well as in contemporary Chinese politics, the Monkey King has represented a heroic quality of supernatural power, half man and half animal, fighting against evil spirits.

A lengthy process was to choose a suitable accompanying music for the performance, as the Chinese audience of traditional plays is used to music having a considerable symbolic role for defining place, time and charac-

ters. All kinds of music were tried out; Grieg's Peer Gynt-music, Stravinskij, folk music, Chinese modern music, electronic music and disco music. Ultimately Scandinavian folk music, with, among others, a waltz in major key, played on accordion, was used. Disco music was used in the scenes where trolls appear, in the Cairo mad house scene (in Act 4), as well as now and then in the last act to underline critical passages.

The stage decorations were stylized and simple, minimized to the most essential features, thus resembling the traditional Chinese theatre. According to the quest for realism the costumes were copied from Scandinavian folk costumes. The hair became another problem. To create the fair and blond expressions it was solved by using yellow wigs or by bleaching the actors' hair (though this resulted in that they became red haired). Peer Gynt's hair was kept black – for what reason wasn't clear. The make-up was unnaturally strong, with thick black lines surrounding the eyes, supposed to make the eyes looking bigger. Shining blue dots at the inner corner of the eyes were explained to give the audience an impression that the actors' eyes were blue.

Quite a few influences from the traditional Chinese theatre could be seen. Already mentioned is the make-up that was stronger than usually in *huaaju*, the spoken theatre, sometimes more resembling some of the many different styles of the traditional Chinese theatre. Here, one example can be taken from the appearance of the button-molder, who in his last appearance of the play is changing his face color a couple of times. This is a well-known specialty of Chuanju, the regional local theatre of Sichuan, where a character can instantly change his face color by the *bianlian*, "change face", in order to show the audience that he is a fearful character. Several layers of thin masks were put on top of each other, each skillfully drawn off in an instant, not letting the audience see how it is done.

In short, the performance was well received, even though the intention to make it "Norwegian" turned away from the realistic setting and moved towards the abstract stage of traditional Chinese theatre, as exemplified here. Furthermore, the pigs/trolls dancing in the style of the Chinese Lion dance, and acrobatic features related to fighting scenes in the traditional theatre showed another side of China being "oneself enough".



The old Peer Gynt



Portrait of Jenny Lind

Transatlantic Strategies of “Swedishness” Diva Performances in the U.S. in the Nineteenth-Century Hélène Ohlsson

This contribution addresses nineteenth-century Swedish opera divas Jenny Lind (1820-1887) and Christina Nilsson (1843-1921) and their on- and off-stage performances in the United States. I touch upon three strands in my upcoming research: the diva position as a figurative queen, the divas’ strategies of performing so-called “Swedishness”, and the iconization of the Scandinavian look. The analysis is based on Tracy C. Davis’s notion of diva, the association and kinship between divas and queens according to Wayne Koestenbaum’s concept of diva codes, and Richard Dyer’s thesis of the inner glow of the white woman.¹

The newspapers in Sweden reported the fortunes the divas made on their tour, the expensive gifts they received from admirers and the glorious ways they were received by the audience. In the presentation I emphasize situations where Lind and Nilsson as celebrities took a so-called queenly position, for example as philanthropists and how this was reported by the press. I also show that Lind and Nilsson performed their “Swedishness” in different ways, for example singing Swedish folksongs and kissing the Swedish flag, but also by emphasizing their Nordic features. I would suggest that they thereby contributed to the iconization of the allure of the white blond heroine that would reign in Hollywood in the twentieth-century. Lind and Nilsson highlighted their Scandinavian looks by using what were, at least in the news reports, regarded as typical Swedish characteristics like simplicity, and so-called naturalness. I would suggest that the reports in the newspapers of the Swedish divas who toured America, contributed to the establishment of a Swedish identity.

¹ Tracy C. Davis, “From Diva to Drama Queen”, in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill & Hilary Poriss, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*, [1993], [new introduction by Tony Kushner], 1st Da Capo ed., New York: Da Capo, 2001; Richard Dyer, *White: essays on race and culture*, London: Routledge, 1997.

OUT AND AT HOME

Karen Vedel

Prompted by the keywords in the invitation to the symposium, the focus of my presentation is on the positioning of theatre dance in Denmark relative to a wider European context in the early and mid 1900s. The empirical grounds for my investigation is dance criticism authored by influential ballet critics Ove Jørgensen and Svend Kragh-Jacobsen.

The first of a series of feature length articles on dance written by classical philologist Ove Jørgensen was published in the journal *Tilskueren* [eng. The Spectator] in 1905, the same season that marked the centenary of the birth of August Bournonville. At the time the national Danish ballet was at a critical low point with very few performances and hardly any new choreographic works in the repertoire. In this piece Jørgensen provides a scathing critique of Isadora Duncan, whose dance he had seen in Berlin and who was now due to appear in Copenhagen. Jørgensen used the upcoming events of the centenary together with the performance of 'the American dilettante', as he called her, as an occasion to urge *Tilskueren's* readers to recognize the importance of Bournonville's legacy to no less than the well-being of the spiritual life of the nation.¹ To Jørgensen, the aesthetic filtering of Gaetano Vestris' French style through what he perceives as a decidedly Danish sentiment, seems the ideal manner of introducing foreign influences to the so-called Danish tradition. Suggesting that the French style had in fact been refined in the hands of the Danish ballet master, Jørgensen refers to the male dancer trained in the Bournonville style as the epitomy of a Dionysian and modernized masculinity. It is against this virile figure, he poses Isadora Duncan, her 'dancer of the future' and not least her dancing – which he perceives as - if not a slap in the face, then at least the diametrically opposite: the dancing of an under-educated, middle-aged woman, whose clumsy movements resemble those of a goose.² In short, a dancing underlined by aesthetic notions that to Jørgensen seem potentially lethal to the Danish tradition. His "Noblesse Oblige!" uttered in 1905 is thus a call to focus on the surviving repertoire of the national Danish ballet from the 19th century. He also recommends looking to the ballet's strongest male dancer-choreographer Hans Beck for new inspiration rather than to dance trends from the south of the border.³ Jørgensen's qualms about the trends from Europe echoes the ideological sentiments of the national conservatives, who strongly opposed the ideas of the Modern Breakthrough introduced by Georg Brandes through his reading of European authors.⁴ By projecting the art of ballet and the gendered dancing body into the cultural struggle, Jørgensen adds new dimensions to the political agenda of the educated elite - or, as I will argue with a concept that is central to Foucault's genealogical approach to history, to the *dispositif* through which the changing values at a European level of arts and culture came to be negotiated in a Danish context.

Used in relation to specific historical processes, Foucault discusses the term among other texts in *Histoire de la Sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976), where it is deployed to show sexuality not as a pre-existing phenomenon but rather as a contingent notion emerging from a continual change of concepts and

1 Jørgensen 1905: 347

2 Jørgensen 1905: 346

3 Opcit: 304

4 Georg Brandes' lecture series at Copenhagen University in 1871 entitled *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature* initiated a cultural political movement that included writers and dramatists such as Henrik Ibsen and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.

institutions.⁵ Elaborating on the concept, he characterizes the elements of the *dispositif* as “an absolutely heterogeneous assembly which involves discourses, institutions, architectural structures, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific enunciations, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions, in short: as much the said as the unsaid. [...] (W)ith the term *dispositive*, I understand a type of formation which in a certain historical moment had as its essential function to respond to an emergency. The *dispositive* therefore has an eminently strategic function...”⁶ And one, it should be added, that is inscribed in economies of power at a larger scale.⁷ Thus, according to need at a particular time in history, the *dispositive* arranges the relation between the elements in order to, at least momentarily, determine the orientation of their force.

My brief reading of Jørgensen poses his dance criticism in *Tilskueren* as a discourse integral to the *dispositive* through which the relation between so-called Danish and international (or modern) values in arts and culture was articulated and circulated in the early 1900s. It also shows the resistance to the Modern Breakthrough in a Danish context being extended beyond literature to the corporeal aesthetics of theatre dance. Last but not least, it also indicated the extent to which it was informed by the politics of The Royal Danish Theatre and the perception of its heritage as being in need of being shielded from outside influences. The ballet authority’s alert to an art form in imminent danger of extinction from a non-art (or an infinitely lesser-art) form of dance was imparted with renewed strength after Duncan’s Copenhagen performances in 1906.

In a discussion on the term’s methodological implications, Bussolini notes how “the concept helps to account for the difference between historical time periods while also accounting for a substantial overlap of objects, means, and discourses”.⁸ Thus, rather than substitute one another in a succession of different *dispositives*, the close observation over time of selected social practices - such as sexuality or theatre dance inscribed as they are in discourses, norms and institutions – in their relation to power, will reveal something about historical change.⁹

Tracking Jørgensen’s positioning of the Danish ballet institution relative to ballet styles from outside of Denmark over the following decades shows subtle shifts. Two such instances are seen in his extended reviews of the guest performances of Anna Pavlova with dancers from the Maryinski Theatre in 1908¹⁰ and Michail Fokine and Vera Fokina in 1918. While the strong technique of the Russian ballet convinced Jørgensen to recognize the visitors’ dance as art, he remained critical of Fokine’s choreography, which he found to be inferior and less future-oriented than the works conceived by Bournonville. In the end, however, it was his recommendation that the national theatre should engage Fokine.¹¹

On this note I move fast forward to look more closely into the writing of the somewhat younger Svend

5 Foucault 1976: 129. Quoted in Bussolini 2010: 88

6 Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. III, quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos’è un dispositivo?* (Roma: Note-tempo, 2006), 3-4. Here from Bussolini 2010: 91.

7 Bussolini 2010: 87

8 Bussolini 2010: 89

9 Bussolini 2010: 90

10 Jørgensen 1906: 165

11 Jørgensen 19018: 166

Kragh-Jacobsen (1909 – 1984), whose first pieces on theatre and ballet overlap with Jørgensen’s last writings in the 1930s. I am focusing on Kragh-Jacobsen’s writings in the decade following the end of the WWII and the German occupation of Denmark, when a re-ignited interest in the ballet under Harald Lander’s ballet mastership was met by equally motivated dance artists, eager to perform. It was also met by Kragh-Jacobsen, by now an established ballet critic, who stimulated the public interest not only with his reviews in the daily *Berlingske Tidende*, but also with the publication of no less than eight books on theatre dance in the years between 1945 and 1955. My reading of key titles from this list suggests that by now the juxtaposition of art and not-art, found to be at the heart of the dispositive that had regulated the position of the so-called Danish ballet relative to international developments before 1920, had receded somewhat into the background. In fact, Kragh-Jacobsen was significantly more convinced about the abilities of the Danish tradition to withstand erosion from foreign forces and even thought selected international influences might benefit the company.

In *Ballettens Blomstring Ude og Hjemme* (1945) [eng. *The Ballet’s Bloom Out and at Home*], the author fairly balances – not *ille* and *iste* – but ‘ude’ [eng. out] and ‘hjemme’ [eng. at home]. Stating his intent to “...encapsulate the essence of the developments that have taken place *in the ballet* in a little more than a generation”¹², in the first book, Kragh-Jacobsen renders the ‘new ideas’ centering on Diaghileff and the reformed Russian Ballet with separate chapters on key artists such as Pavlova, Fokin, Massine, Balanchine and Lifar. In the second half of the book, he goes on to show how these new ideas have “thrived and been developed in Denmark *alongside* our own Bournonville’s classical traditions and on the basis of the French school, his golden heritage to the Danish ballet”.¹³ Dedicated to the national ballet this second part has chapters on contemporary Danish choreographers, first and foremost then ballet master Harald Lander but also shorter chapters on Nini Theilade, Børge Ralov as well as soloists such as Elna Lassen, Ulla Poulsen and Margot Lander. While Kragh-Jacobsen is aligned with Jørgensen in his homage to Bournonville, he has a much more enthusiastic outlook on European ballet that refutes the categorical dismissal by his older colleague. Kragh-Jacobsen even goes so far as to name it a tragic mistake that the Royal Danish Theatre in 1918 did not invite Fokin to choreograph Danish dancers during his stay of 18 months in Denmark in the years 1918-19.¹⁴

In the preface to the Danish translation of Isadora Duncan’s *My Life, Mit Liv* (1949), Kragh-Jacobsen shares new knowledge about European dance trends with the growing ballet audience in Denmark. Assigning a key role to Duncan in the grand narrative of the so-called ‘free dance’ in Europe, the text shows the critic’s familiarity with the more recent developments on the continent as he suggests that without Duncan, “there would be no Mary Wigman, no sisters Wiesenthal, no Rudolph von Laban, no Harald Kreutzberg and no Kurt Jooss”.¹⁵ Kragh-Jacobsen also notes the recent re-inscription of Duncan in the American history of ‘free dance’ and names two of his dance critic peers from North America, John Martin and Winthrop Palmer.¹⁶ These references suggest that he may well have read Martin’s *The Modern Dance* (1933), *Introduction to the Dance* (1939) and/or *The Dance* (1945) as well the lesser

12 Kragh-Jacobsen, 1945:8 (my translation)

13 ibid

14 Kragh-Jacobsen 1945: 80

15 Kragh-Jacobsen 1949: 7 (my translation)

16 Opcit: 9

known Winthrop Palmer's *Theatrical dancing in America* also published in 1945.

Following through on what convincingly reads as a commitment to open up the relations between Denmark and the larger dance community, Kragh-Jacobsen played an active role in the first international ballet festival in Copenhagen in the summer of 1951. Intended for tourists, the expanded program was published in both Danish and English, featuring an article on the history of the Royal Danish Theatre by theatre historian, professor Torben Krogh next to a piece by Kragh-Jacobsen on the history of the Royal Danish Ballet. Kragh-Jacobsen also authored the expanded captions to the 21 works in the festival program, which - in addition to ballets in the repertoire from Russian choreographers Petipa, Fokin and Massine - exemplified the history of the Danish ballet with works by Galeotti (1), Bournonville (3), Lander (6) as well as individual works by contemporary dancer-choreographers from within and outside The Royal Danish Theatre.¹⁷

After another, well received international festival in Copenhagen there followed international tours to Paris and London, which quickly gained the Royal Danish Ballet a name as something unique on the world stage. This is, at least, the claim made by Kragh-Jacobsen in his book *Balletten 1945 – 52* (1953), a part of a book series on Danish culture since 1945, and the last of my examples.

Given the then recent history of Europe, it is noteworthy, but perhaps not surprising, that the book has no mention of German choreographers Kurt Jooss and Harald Kreutzberg whose guest performances in Denmark Kragh-Jacobsen had reviewed both before and after the war. It is also striking that not even the 1947 International Choreographic Competition in Copenhagen organized by Archives Internationales de la Danse made it into his account. Nor did the performances by African American dance artists such as Josephine Baker, Louis Douglas, Talley Beatty and Katherine Dunham or Berto Pasuka's Ballets Nègres, all of which he had also reviewed in the intermittent years.¹⁸ Thus, in spite of Jacobsen's international outlook, the book suggests a hierarchy between a European ballet tradition and other dance forms, that is not too far from Jørgensen's distinction between art and not art. Carried into the 1950s from the earlier dispositive is also the hegemonic position of the Royal Danish Ballet as an institution that is helped along by dance critics who formulate or help formulate the developmental strategies for the company with Jørgensen casting himself in the role of the saviour of the tradition of the 19th century and Kragh Jacobsen acting as an Ambassador who paves the way for the ballet's international break-through.

The kind of local dance historiography presented in my contribution, where the historical object has been reconstructed to tracking dance criticism, hardly reshapes the historical canon in terms of an understanding of the positioning of the local vis à vis the global. It does, however, point to the contingent relation between theatre and theatre dance on the one hand and the wider historical context of discourses, institutions and politics both at a national and an international level. In more specific terms, it suggests how the relationship between the dispositives of art-vs-not-art, out-and-at-home is a constant negotiation that shifts between rejection and invitation, resistance and welcoming. When it is one, when it is another or a whole third dispositive that tends to be determined by the interaction of forces, than it links

¹⁷ Kragh-Jacobsen 1950 (unpaginated)

¹⁸ Discussed in Vedel 2008

theatre dance as an art form to other economies of power.

References:

Bussolini, Jeffrey. 2010: "What is a dispositive?". *Foucault Studies*, No. 10, pp 85-107

Jørgensen, Ove. 1905: "Ballettens Kunst". *Tilskueren. Maanedsskrift for litteratur, kunst, samfundsspørgsmål og almenfattelige videnskabelige skildringer*. København: Gyldendal

Jørgensen, Ove. 1906: "Duncan kontra Bournonville". *Tilskueren. Maanedsskrift for litteratur, kunst, samfundsspørgsmål og almenfattelige videnskabelige skildringer*. København: Gyldendal

Jørgensen, Ove. 1918: "Fokin kontra Bournonville". *Tilskueren. Tilskueren. Maanedsskrift for litteratur, kunst, samfundsspørgsmål og almenfattelige videnskabelige skildringer*. København: Gyldendal

Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend. 1945: *Ballettens Blomstring Ude og Hjemme*. København: Rasmus Navers Forlag

Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend. 1949: "Forord". Duncan, Isadora: *Mit Liv*. København: Nyt Nordisk Forlag

Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend. 1950: *Den Kongelige Danske Ballet Sæson 1950-51*. København: Det Kongelige Teater

Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend. 1951: *Balletten i dag. The Royal Danish Ballet To-day*. København: Beck

Kragh-Jacobsen, Svend. 1953: *Balletten 1945 – 52*. København: Areté

Vedel, Karen. 2008: *En anden dans. Moderne scenisk dans i Danmark 1900 – 1975*. København: Multivers Academic

Annabella Skagen

Kotzebue in Trondheim: Continental Ideals and Local Identity During the Napoleonic Wars

Introduction

This paper was originally held during the conference *From Local to Global: Interrogating Performance Histories* in Stockholm 2018, and focuses on the staging of August von Kotzebue's plays in Trondheim from 1803 to 1814, with regards to European influences on the formation of local and national identity. These years saw great political changes taking place in Norway, with the involvement in the Napoleonic Wars from 1807, and in 1814 the separation from Denmark, a Norwegian constitution, and a new union with Sweden.

The points I will be making in this paper are based on the findings in my PhD thesis, which offers a more thorough discussion of the plays and of the underlying empirical and theoretical framework.¹ References to facts concerning the Trondheim theatres and productions can also be found here.

My dissertation dealt with theatrical practices of the inhabitants of the Danish-Norwegian town of Trondheim between the years of 1790–1814. This period opens a field of perspectives including absolutism; Enlightenment-inspired, democratic, and revolutionary trends; Danish-Norwegian state patriotism and Norwegian national patriotism, which were played out in the relations between monarch and people; nobility, bourgeoisie, and farmers; state and family. This complex field may be understood through various identity-forming discourses which the theatre helped establish and circulate.² The main empirical contribution rested on a series of analyses of the period's theatrical events by means of the repertory, which frequently addresses questions related to societal structures and bourgeois identity. These questions were part of the identity-forming discourses and practices that were circulated and performed within the theatrical activities in Trondheim.

Norway on the outskirts of Europe

During the years between 1380 and 1814, the kingdom of Norway was ruled by the Danish crown, with Copenhagen as the centre of power. Norway was divided into several administrative regions, and each region's local town administration reported directly to Copenhagen.³ Norway was thinly populated, with large geographical distances and harsh climatic conditions making travel a challenging enterprise. The nation could in many ways be regarded as being on the European outskirts, on the side-line of the major events and cultural circulations of the Continent.

1 Skagen, Annabella. *Fra grevens gård til Prinsens gate: Teater i Trondhjem 1790–1814*. PhD thesis. NTNU. 2015.

2 My understanding of these discourses is based on, among others, the following works: Damsholt, Tine. *Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerdyd: Patriotisk diskurs og militære reformer i Danmark i sidste del av 1700-tallet*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2000. Glenthøj, Rasmus. *Skilsmissen: Dansk og norsk identitet før og efter 1814*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2012. Wiles, David. *Theatre and Citizenship: The History of a Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

3 Njåstad, Magne. "Stiftsstedene: de regionale politiske sentra". In *Riket og regionene: Grunnlovens regionale forutsetninger og konsekvenser*, eds. Ida Bull and Jakob Maliks. 175–202. Trondheim: Akademika, 2014.

In the years around 1800, practically every Norwegian town of a certain size had its own bourgeois, or *borgerlig*, theatre house, usually run by amateurs and seating a few hundred patrons. A previously common view of the Norwegian dramatic societies in 20th century scholarly writing, was that they were primarily “a fashion item from abroad, and an entertaining and piquant party game.”⁴ This view might seem a good match for the conception of a provincial population in the European outskirts, far away from where the “real” action was.

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, however, the inhabitants of the Norwegian outskirts took on the roles of historical agents. In the aftermath of the war, a host of locally elected Norwegian civil servants gathered to create a new Norwegian constitution in a bid for the nation’s political independence.⁵ The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 might be considered one of the earliest cases of Enlightenment ideas given solid political form. The impact on the country’s development was profound and irrevocable, and contributed towards the development of modern European democracy.

In the small Norwegian towns, the social circles of merchants, civil servants and their families making up the dramatic societies and theatre audiences, would often also be part of the circles where political ideas were discussed and eventually set into action.⁶ This makes it relevant to consider the local theatrical activities in Norway as part of the circulation of ideas that contributed to the political events of 1814.⁷

Theatre in Trondheim 1803–1814

In early 19th century Norway, Trondheim was the northernmost of the administrative town centres, with a population of approximately 10.000 inhabitants. While it was customary for Norwegian towns of a certain size to have a theatre house in this period, Trondheim was somewhat unusual in boasting two theatrical stages from the year 1803 on.⁸ One of the stages belonged to The United Dramatic Society (*Det forenede dramatiske Selskab*) which consisted of local amateur performers, typical of most provincial, bourgeois theatres.

The other theatre, known as The Public Theatre (*Det offentlige Theater*), had semi-professional performers, mainly artisans and people performing various types of paid services. What the two theatres had in common, was that all the performers were locals, who did not have acting as their primary occupation, and who performed in front of an audience consisting of their fellow towns-

4 “en motesak kommet fra utlandet, og en morsom og pikant selskapslek”. Ansteinsson, Eli. “1803: et merkeår i norsk teaterhistorie”. *Trondhjemske samlinger*. Rekke 3, vol. 2, no. 4 (1967): 281.

5 A general overview of the historical developments concerning the creation of the 1814 Constitution is given in Feldbæk, Ole. *Nærhed og adskillelse 1720–1814. Danmark-Norge 1380–1814*. Vol. IV, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1998.

6 Bull, Ida. “Politisk kultur i stiftsbyene: erfaringer med borgernes medbestemmelse”. In *Riket og regionene: Grunnlovens regionale forutsetninger og konsekvenser*, eds. Ida Bull and Jakob Maliks. 134–174. Trondheim: Akademika, 2014.

7 Anette Storli Andersen discusses how the activities of the Dramatic Society in Christiania contributed to the members’ practical-political competence. She makes a connection between the patriotic formation of such societies and the development of the will and ability to execute good citizenship, and to the creation of the 1814 Constitution. Andersen, Anette Storli. “Teatret og Riksforsamlingen i 1814”. In *Politisk kompetanse: Grunnlovas borgar 1814–2014*, ed. Nils Rune Langeland. 280–303. Oslo: Pax forlag, 2014.

8 For a thorough examination of the history of these institutions, see Jensson, Liv. *Teaterliv i Trondhjem 1800–1835: De dramatiske selskapers tid*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1965.

people. Both theatres seem to have opened in 1803.

If we look at the playbills of the two theatres after 1816 (when the United Dramatic Society started advertising their performances), both seem to have put on much the same repertory, consisting of bourgeois drama, *Singspiels* or comedies.⁹ Between the years of 1803 and 1814, 97 identified plays were produced on the Trondheim stages by the town's inhabitants. The large majority of the productions were based on translated, foreign plays. Just as elsewhere in Europe, no other playwright's name featured more frequently than that of the productive and popular August von Kotzebue (1761–1819). As many as 26 of the 97 plays produced in the period were written by Kotzebue; more than a quarter of the total known repertory.

Kotzebue is known for his ability to write well-constructed plays within a wide variety of styles. More than anything, he appealed to a European audience's interest in sentiment and in the presentation of recognizable, bourgeois life. The Norwegian theatre historian Øyvind Anker summed up Kotzebue's role in the Norwegian theatre repertories as:

Undemanding entertainment with a sound bourgeois and not too pressing morale, a touch of up-to-date freethinking, a touch of frivolity, a few crass attacks on everything smacking of convenience, punishment to the criminals, rewards to the virtuous, lost children finding their way back home in the most curious manner, young love breaking free from the bars of society [...] all of it served up in artful dialogue.¹⁰

Through my own study of the repertory staged in Trondheim between 1803 and 1814, I came to the conclusion that Anker's readings did not take into account the political and ideological aspects of Kotzebue's plays. Although certainly entertaining and full of lost children finding their way back home, Kotzebue's plays in many cases contain Enlightenment-inspired ideas concerning questions of moral and social equality, citizenship and politics.

Still, how relevant would these plays seem to the local Trondheim theatrical community? While Kotzebue's plays were Continental in origin and outlook, they were produced and watched by the Trondheim citizens, in the context of daily Trondheim life. This makes it relevant to ask what kind of influence these theatrical practices might have exerted on the mentality of performers and audiences. In what way might European impulses and ideas have found recognition in, and contributed to, local experience and imagination? What kind of influence might the production of Kotzebue's plays in Trondheim have exerted on the construction of local and national identity, including the potential for political action?

⁹ Only a few of the plays staged by The United Dramatic Society prior to 1816 have been identified. This means all the plays presented here were performed at the Public Theatre during the period in question (although one particular production was made by a group of amateurs, of which several were probably members of the Society). It is unknown whether some of these plays might also have been staged by The United Dramatic Society before 1816, though several were performed by them after this year.

¹⁰ "Unverpflichtende Unterhaltung mit einer gut bürgerlichen nicht zu aufdringlichen Moralisierung, ein bißchen Freisinn im Geist der Zeit, ein bißchen Frivolität, bisweilen schroffe Angriffe auf alles was von Convenienz schmeckte, Bestrafung der Schurken, Belohnung der Tugendhaften, verschwundene Kinder, die auf den seltsamsten Wegen zur Heimat zurückfanden, junge Liebe, die ihren Weg quer durch die Schranken der Gesellschaft brach [...]; alles in einem gut gedrehten Dialog serviert." Anker, Øyvind. "August von Kotzebue auf der Norwegischen Bühne". *Maske und Kothurn* 10 (1964): 518.

Several of Kotzebue plays seem relevant to assess in this context. While the allotted timeframe during the conference limited the number of plays presented to four, here I have included two more. The events unfolding on the stage are regarded in the context of their Trondheim productions. The purpose of the investigation has been to look into how the European ideas and role-models presented might have influenced the formation of a local and national bourgeois identity in Trondheim. I will give a short sketch of the contents and the primary dramatic conflicts or theme within each play, emphasizing the characters' social backgrounds and environment, as well as some political tendencies and aesthetical traits, to investigate how these might have been perceived and negotiated within the historical contexts of the Trondheim performances.

***The Corsicans (Die Corsen, 1799)*¹¹**

This play was staged as the opening performance at the Public Theatre in December of 1803, and at the theatre of the United Dramatic Society in 1816.

Typical of Kotzebue's Shakespeare-influenced style, this play includes a wide range of moods – suspense, sentiment and comedy. The stage directions are typically very detailed – indicating an acting style leaning towards a psychological, individualized, and natural ideal. This naturalness was also reflected in the events unfolding on stage. As the play opened, the audience would be able to see the life of a family of rank unfolding in a familiar, home-like manner; conversing over the breakfast table, reading the papers, tending to the baby. A largely bourgeois audience would have been able to see themselves ideally reflected, within a gilded frame, so to speak.

The head of the household – the Count – is a loving father as well as a faithful civil servant to the state of Hungary. The count represents an enlightened, proto-democratic vision of the citizen or *citoyen* – the burgher in his political capacity.¹² The role of the Count, the self-contained civil servant, might have served as a relevant frame of reference for the large portion of the performers and audiences who were themselves civil servants, and for their family members. The fact that the Count may also be perceived as emotionally vulnerable – a feeling human being, genuinely concerned for the welfare of his family – underlines the potential for identification, typical for the characters in Kotzebue's plays that were staged in Trondheim.

The Count is of a democratic conviction, and demonstrably respectful of his own tenants, whom he treats as fellows, rather than subjects. He also defends a cosmopolitical viewpoint and is skeptical to what he calls “national pride”.¹³ This puts him in opposition to his potential antagonist – an old-fashioned, aristocratic Corsican war hero and political refugee who has for years been residing incognito as a caretaker on the Count's estate. The Corsican's true identity is revealed as the play unfolds. His significance is not only political – he also turns out to be the long-lost father of the Count's own daughter-in-law.

¹¹ Kotzebue, August von. *Korsikanerne: Skuespil i fire Akter*. Translated by Hans Georg Gotfridt Schwarz. Copenhagen: Seidelin, 1800. All translations of play titles from Danish into English are mine, regardless of what might be the corresponding English translation of the period, with the notable exception of *Lovers' Vows*.

¹² For a discussion of the concept of the citizen, see for instance Damsholt, *Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerdyd*, 81.

¹³ “Fordømte Nationalstolthed!” Kotzebue, *Korsikanerne*, 9.

Kotzebue provides a happy solution. Mutual respect makes it possible for the two gentlemen – and political paradigms – to co-exist, while the Corsican’s son – now himself proved to be a nobleman – can unite with the Count’s own daughter in marriage.

Many of Kotzebue’s bourgeois dramas take as their starting-point the German context of the time. The civil servant constitutes a version of the figure of the *burgher*, or citizen, positioned between his office, his prince and his family. It is my assumption that the German principality, as it is presented in Kotzebue’s (as well as August Iffland’s) plays, constituted a conceptual political framework sufficiently similar to the Danish absolute monarchy for the local audiences to identify with.

I see the relationship between the Corsican and the Count as a negotiation between an established loyalist and monarchist order with a new, more democratic one. While no real political solution is offered in the play, I would like to suggest that the subject was likely to have been perceived as highly relevant in 1803 Norway. While still living under the rule of Danish absolute monarchy, Enlightenment-inspired ideas were already circulating in Trondheim. This is visible from several sources, not least the local newspaper, *Trondhjems borgerlige skoles allene priviligerede Adressecontoirs Efterretninger*, which had for the latter parts of the 1790s been edited by the politically progressive Matthias Conrad Peterson (1761–1833).¹⁴

The presentation of Corsica is of particular interest: a small, isolated country with a glorious past, suppressed for centuries by foreign invaders, now looking to regain its freedom. From the point of view of budding Norwegian nationalism, Corsica’s outer resemblance to Norway’s situation probably did not go unnoticed and might have added to the potential for political identification. The fact that the play appears unresolved on the matter of nationalism versus cosmopolitanism, may have made the treatment of this topic no less relevant to the Trondheim theatre community, whether in 1803 or 1816, when Norway had been forced to enter into a new union with Sweden.

The Visit, or, The Desire to Shine (Der Besuch, oder die Sucht zu glänzen, 1801)¹⁵

This play was performed at the Public Theatre in 1804, and then again in 1806, which indicates it was a success. It was also staged at the theatre of the United Dramatic Society in 1816.

In this comedy, another nobleman and his family are presented as ideals of bourgeois prudence, honouring the family tradition of a quiet life on their forest estate as keepers of the Prince’s woods. The wife and daughter of the house do not care for outer finery, but make their own clothes, tend to the sick, and cook for the family. The nobleman himself upholds the value of work and of a modest, yet hospitable, way of life. The simple lifestyle of the woodland-dwellers serves to underline this family’s inner nobility. The ideals of prudence and diligence, however, are recognizably bourgeois. In other words, the bourgeois ideal might be seen to be universal, relevant to humans of all ranks.

¹⁴ Ringvej, Mona Renate. “Trykkefriheten i 1814: det opplyste eneveldets demokratiske arv”. *Historisk tidsskrift*, no. 1 (2014): 67–93.

¹⁵ Kotzebue, August von. *Besøget eller Lyst til at glimre: Comedie i fire Acter*. Translated by Niels Thorup Bruun. Copenhagen: E.M. Cohen, 1802.

This ideal family is juxtaposed with the aptly named neighbouring family of Baron Schaubrodt – Showbread – who comes to visit them. The Schaubrodts’ superficial and ridiculous ostentatiousness serve to underline the other family’s honest and sympathetic simplicity.

The play bears certain similarities to that of *The Corsicans*. Both the noble forest-keeper and his son feel happier in the company of their own tenants than with their supposed peers, the Schaubrodts. The master insists that they dispense with the formalities and simply greet each other as *Neighbour*.¹⁶ And when the tenant family turns out to be of noble lineage, all impediments towards happy marital unions can be safely put away. As with the *The Corsicans*, the conclusion is an idyllic one, dissolving the social conflicts experienced by the characters.

The image of a simple life in close proximity to nature was already a well-established Norwegian national archetype.¹⁷ I would suggest that the Trondheim families, themselves literally surrounded by woodland, and living far removed from the glory of Copenhagen and the court, might have been reassured by this play of their own moral worth and bourgeois identity. A visitor to Trondheim in 1804, underlined in his diary the tasteful simplicity he met everywhere among the Trondheim burghers.¹⁸ His observations strengthen my assumptions that the theatre audiences could easily have identified with the forest keepers’ way of life.

The Epigram (Das Epigram, 1801)¹⁹

This comedy was performed at the Public Theatre in 1807 and 1813. While both productions took place on the stage of the Public Theatre, the 1807 performance was a private performance. The actors were all local amateurs from the higher social circles, and the spectators received personal invitations. The 1813 performance took place during the Napoleonic Wars as a public fundraising event, instigated by the visiting professional actor from the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, Hans Christian Knudsen (1763–1816).

This is the only one of the plays I will be discussing where all the main characters concerned are strictly bourgeois, civil servants to a rather remote Prince. The events unfold in the home of a high-ranking civil servant and his family. The play accentuates the developments in the world of theatre during the last part of the eighteenth century, with an emphasis on the opposition of the satirical versus the sentimental, in life as well as in art.

This opposition is reflected in Kotzebue’s characteristic meta-use of the theatre. The old comic tradition of the Harlequin character is juxtaposed to the current romantic, or sentimental, theatrical style. There are also several other examples of plays where Kotzebue makes the theatre itself a theme. This enabled the audience to mirror themselves and their own understanding of this art form in Kotzebue’s characters. By 1807, the new, sentimental style of theatre would have been quite recognizable and readily accepted

¹⁶ “i Morgen siger vi kort og godt: Nabo!” Kotzebue, *Besøget*, 44–45.

¹⁷ Glentehøj, *Skilsmissen*, 237.

¹⁸ Pram, Christen. *Kopibøger fra reiser i Norge 1804–06*. Oslo: Norske kunst- og kulturhistoriske museer, 1964, 52–53.

¹⁹ Kotzebue, August von. *Epigrammet: Comedie i fire Akter*. Translated by Niels Thorup Bruun. Copenhagen: Arntzen og Hartier, 1802.

by the Trondheim bourgeois theatrical community. Although sentiment proves victorious as events in the play unfold, the subject is treated with a certain double edge; the loss of the old style is viewed with a certain regret, and the new does not entirely escape ridicule. The latter is demonstrated on stage as the heroine, Caroline, is taunted by her stepmother for wearing a “romantic, sentimental gown”, with roses in her hair and on her dress, as if she was to go to the stage to play the parts of the heroines.²⁰

The opposition between satire and sentiment was also reflected in the main character; a young man on a quest for personal happiness and his proper role in society. His own use of misguided satire once led to his being chased away from home and stripped of his social standing. Through personal diligence and the acceptance of the value of true sentiment and sincerity, he ultimately regains his civilian and family status. His own recognition of this significance is expressed in the following climactic line:

The Mother has recognized the Son – the Prince has received the Citizen – the torn bonds have been re-tied – my Heart no longer beats in a loveless void – I am a Son! I am a Citizen!²¹

In short, the hero has succeeded in the ultimate task: establishing his bourgeois identity, both as a private man, or *homme*, and as a citizen, *citoyen*.

The Slanderers (Die Verläumder, 1796)²²

This play was performed at the Public Theatre for the first time in 1806, and then again in 1811, when the effects of the Napoleonic Wars were beginning to be felt by the population.

The play centers on a happily married couple, where husband and wife come from different social strata. While the wife is from the aristocracy, the husband is a civil servant and also a foreigner, from Switzerland. Through the dialogue, the audience learns that the wife agreed to marry the honourable burgher to escape an unwanted marriage to a nobleman of ill repute, although she has come to dearly love her husband.

When a pair of scheming evil-doers from the court aim to seduce his young wife, this causes Othello-like jealousy and suspicion in the husband. The situation is made worse by the fact that the Prince does not pay attention to his subjects, as he is much too occupied with his own amusements to bother himself with their concerns. He is not himself above seducing other men’s wives, and no help may be expected from the sovereign.

The play makes dramatic use of different national types, who are imbued with different political meanings. In the end, the couple’s saviour is an English nobleman who became tired of court life and emigrated. He represents a new type of Enlightenment-inspired gentleman, originating from a politically more liberal country with a constitutional monarchy, seen as a model by many dissidents of absolute monarchy. When the play was produced in 1811, British ships were in fact forming a blockade of Norway, hindering the crucial shipments of grain from Denmark. It is hard to say what effect this might have had on the

20 “[lade dig] engagere ved Skuepladsen til at spille Heltinde-Roller”. Kotzebue, *Epigrammet*, 191.

21 “Moderen har erkjendt Sønnen – Fyrsten har modtaget Borgeren – alle hin sønderrevne Baand ere igien knyttede – mit Hierte banker ikke længer i et ømhedsstomt Rum – jeg er Søn! jeg er Borger!” Ibid., 215.

22 Kotzebue, August von. *Skumlerne: Skuespil i 5 Akter*. Copenhagen: J.F. Morthorstes Enke, 1797.

reception of the English nobleman. However, there are other examples of “enemies” being presented as worthy gentlemen on the stage during the war.²³ Having left his own country, the Englishman might also have taken on the air of the cosmopolite, rather than the accidental enemy.

Of even greater interest as a national type is the husband himself. As a born Swiss, he is also understood to be a republican, defending Enlightenment views. This puts him in political opposition to the Prince, even as he is portrayed as a loyal servant to the State. The national character of the Swiss, the fresh and honest, unspoiled mountain-dweller, was frequently understood as a twin to the Norwegian national character:

The image of the free, Norwegian farmer had clear parallels to the description of the Swiss farmer and the simple life which was the object of romantic worship throughout Europe. Within the Danish-Norwegian state, the free-born farmers were described as “Our own Swiss”²⁴.

For the Trondheim theatre-goers and performers, then, the Swiss main character with his republican viewpoints might have formed a mirror-image with which they could easily identify.

As events unfold, the couple’s adversaries are found out, and the husband realizes his mistake in distrusting his wife. Although the play ends happily, this could be construed as a cover-up of a critique of those in power. The state still holds a latent future threat to the Swiss republican, even after he is reconciled with his wife, as it is pointed out that “the Prince is no friend of civil rights”.²⁵

This disheartening image of the Prince might have resonated with the theatrical community in Trondheim, especially during the 1811 performance. At this time, many Norwegians were beginning to worry they were themselves living under the rule of an increasingly distant, possibly even indifferent, King. With the war came a shortage of goods, especially the vital supplies of grain. Some felt Norway was being abandoned. A gradual dissatisfaction with Danish rule renewed an interest in alternative political solutions.²⁶

Lovers’ Vows (Das Kind der Liebe, 1791)²⁷

The last play to be investigated in this paper was performed at the Public Theatre in 1805, and again as a benefit performance in 1813. This is the play which was made famous in the English-speaking world in Elizabeth Inchbald’s adaptation, treated in Jane Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey* (completed in 1803, published in 1817). Although very popular on the amateur stages in Denmark and Norway, *Lovers’ Vows* was never staged by The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Norwegian theatre historian Svein Gladsø has argued this might have been for political reasons.²⁸

23 An example is the noble Swedish officer and prisoner of war who is introduced in the patriotic occasional piece *Kield Stub*, which was performed by The United Dramatic Society as a charity performance in Trondheim in 1810.

24 “Billedet af den frie, norske bonde havde klare paralleller til beskrivelserne af den schweiziske bonde og det enkle liv, der var genstand for en sværmerisk dyrkelse i resten af Europa. I den dansk-norske stat talte man om odelsbonden som ’vores Schweizere’”. Glenthøj, *Skilsmissen*, 243.

25 “ingen Ven av Borgerrettigheder”. Kotzebue, *Skumlerne*, 23.

26 Mykland, Knut. *Fra Søgaden til Strandgaten: 1807–1880: Trondheims historie 997–1997. Vol. III*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1996, 55–61.

27 Kotzebue, August von. *Elskovs Barn: Et Skuespil i 5 Optog*. Translated by C.F.H. Copenhagen: Hegelunds Forlag, 1791.

28 Gladsø, Svein. “Das Kind der Liebe: En fabel for opprørske piker eller angrende menn?”. In *Lidenskap eller levebrød*, eds. Ellen Karoline Gjervan, Svein Gladsø and Randi M. Selvik. 257–286. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015.

Lover's Vows is a tale of sexual sin and redemption, of social class and prejudice. The French Revolution is explicitly referred to, and the latent threat of violence held up as a warning to old privilege and injustice.²⁹ Three shocking topics – the threat of revolution, marital *mesalliance* and sexual seduction – were all brought onto the Trondheim stage in this play.

In this play, a Baron is forced to literally face his past sins, as he is confronted with the girl he seduced and carelessly left twenty years ago. She is now middle-aged (for all practical purposes, old), sick and reduced to begging. His illegitimate son, denied the benefits of an education, a name, and an inheritance, fights ferociously for her life and honor, to the point where he is temporarily put in prison for attempted robbery. While imprisoned, the young man fearlessly defends his moral right to do everything in his power to save his mother. His arguments seem grounded in Enlightenment ideas of natural right and in the ideals of equality upheld in the French Revolution.³⁰

Svein Gladsø has pointed out that the critique of society's injustice that forms part of the young man's argument is never actually resolved or negated in the play.³¹ When he is revealed to be the Baron's illegitimate son, this barely serves as glazing over the explosive force embedded in the justification of attack and robbery. The Baron is ultimately convinced by his young vicar – herr Ehrmann, a man of honour – to stand by his old promise of marriage, so the mother of his son may recover her honor. This is not as much a question of the Baron performing his duty, as of him accepting her human status and her dignity – old, sick, and poor as she is. The first words exchanged between them is not his proposal, but her forgiveness. In this way, she redeems him as much as he might redeem her. The marriage on stage of an older, fallen woman of the people to a wealthy nobleman was in itself no small revolution.

The marital *mesalliance* is then repeated, as the Baron is now able to allow his daughter to marry the vicar, whom she loves, although he is a commoner. Ehrmann makes the point that rank does not matter in questions of what is right. Nobility is not in itself a guarantee of noble behavior or moral privilege. Morality is *universal*. Ehrmann goes so far as to ask: "Should not friendship have that in common with love, that it makes the estates equal?"³² Although Ehrmann refers to personal relations, the play's revolutionary backdrop would remind the audience that it was not only through private relationships the estates might achieve equality.

In *Lover's Vows*, the problems facing the characters are all overcome, not by surprising disclosures, but by the exchange of social prejudice for moral action, which is available to both nobleman and commoner. The distinct dimension of social critique took as its foundation a sense of bourgeois identity and a universal bourgeois morale. Through the critique of privileged behavior – economic suppression and libertinism – bourgeois morale was also given a political dimension. In 1813, this was a message that might have struck home, especially in circles where loyalty was wearing thin after six

29 "De har dog hørt om Revolutionen?" ("I assume you have heard of the Revolution?") Kotzebue, *Elskovs Barn*, 76.

30 Ibid., 70–71.

31 Gladsø, "Das Kind der Liebe", 272.

32 "Skulde Venskab ikke have det tilfælles med Kierlighed, at den gjør Stænderne lige?" Kotzebue, *Elskovs Barn*, 74.

years of war with social unrest and a shortage of food supplies.

Discussion

The repertory of the Trondheim theatrical stages in the years leading up to 1814 bears witness that many of the political ideas associated with the American and French Revolutions had been presented and embodied on the local theatre stages in Norway. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Norwegian civil servants and merchants were ready to take political action. Local representatives were appointed all over the country to form a national assembly, which succeeded in the legislation of a new Norwegian constitution, significantly influenced by Enlightenment thought.

This ability to act politically, locally as well as nationally, should be seen in the light of how ideas from the Enlightenment, including ideas of bourgeois identity, nationality and politics, were circulated in Norwegian society in the long eighteenth century. These ideas were not only presented in newspapers, and literature, but also given solid form through the reading, production and watching of plays.

Norwegian towns constituted local communities with a roughly equal social standing opposite to the central rule of Copenhagen. It is therefore hard to separate a Norwegian national identity as something distinct from a local, Trondheim identity. I regard Trondheim as one of several locations in which a simultaneously *local-national* identity emerged in the years preceding 1814. Ideas of national identity were experienced, tested and expressed within local practices and local social frameworks including the formation of knowledge, artistic production and daily life.

Cosmopolitical or European impulses negotiated in the theatre contributed to the formation of a local-national bourgeois identity, based simultaneously on a sense of similarity as well as differentiation from the rest of Europe. Even though Danish translators would often make certain adjustments, the dramatic texts presented would generally mirror Continental trends and ideas. The reading and staging of these plays were important ways for the inhabitants of the provincial towns to take part in the larger European discourse, both with regards to aesthetics and political ideology. Simultaneously, the Continental, sometimes global, issues touched upon in the theatre might also have been interpreted within a local-national framework, resulting in the themes and topics of the plays being locally appropriated.

Enlightenment-inspired ideas of democracy and social equality were part of the European impulses circulated in the theatre. Imbued in the theatre's image of the modern burgher was the ability to take active part in society as *citoyen*. One manifestation of this image might be found within the processes which culminated with the creation of the Norwegian Constitution in 1814.

References

- Andersen, Anette Storli. "Teatret og Riksforsamlingen i 1814." In *Politisk kompetanse: Grunnlovas borger 1814–2014*, ed. Nils Rune Langeland. 280–303. Oslo: Pax forlag, 2014.
- Anker, Øyvind. "August von Kotzebue auf der Norwegischen Bühne." *Maske und Kothurn* 10 (1964): 514–520.
- Ansteinsson, Eli. "1803: et merkeår i norsk teaterhistorie". *Trondhjemske samlinger*. Rekke 3, vol. 2, no. 4 (1967): 278–297.
- Bull, Ida. "Politisk kultur i stiftsbyene: erfaringer med borgernes medbestemmelse." In *Riket og regionene: Grunnlovens regionale forutsetninger og konsekvenser*, eds. Ida Bull and Jakob Maliks. 134–174. Trondheim: Akademika, 2014.
- Damsholt, Tine. *Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerdyd: Patriotisk diskurs og militære reformer i Danmark i sidste del av 1700-tallet*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2000.
- Feldbæk, Ole. *Nærhed og adskillelse 1720–1814. Danmark-Norge 1380–1814. Vol. IV*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1998.
- Gladsø, Svein. "Das Kind der Liebe: En fabel for opprørske piker eller angrende menn?". In *Lidenskap eller levebrød*, eds. Ellen Karoline Gjervan, Svein Gladsø and Randi M. Selvik. 257–286. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015.
- Glenthøj, Rasmus. *Skilsmissen: Dansk og norsk identitet før og efter 1814*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2012.
- Jensson, Liv. *Teaterliv i Trondhjem 1800–1835: De dramatiske selskapers tid*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 1965.
- Kotzebue, August von. *Besøget eller Lyst til at glimre: Comedie i fire Acter*. Translated by Niels Thorup Bruun. Copenhagen: E.M. Cohen, 1802.
- . *Elskovs Barn: Et Skuespil i 5 Optoge*. Translated by C.F.H. Copenhagen: Hegelunds Forlag, 1791.
- . *Epigrammet: Comedie i fire Akter*. Translated by Niels Thorup Bruun. Copenhagen: Arntzen og Hartier, 1802.
- . *Korsikanerne: Skuespil i fire Akter*. Translated by Hans Georg Gotfridt Schwarz. Copenhagen: Seidelin, 1800.
- . *Skumlerne: Skuespil i 5 Akter*. Copenhagen: J.F. Morthorstes Enke, 1797.
- Mykland, Knut. *Fra Søgaden til Strandgaten: 1807–1880: Trondheims historie 997–1997. Vol. III*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1996.
- Njåstad, Magne. "Stiftsstedene: de regionale politiske sentra." In *Riket og regionene: Grunnlovens regionale forutsetninger og konsekvenser*, eds. Ida Bull and Jakob Maliks. 175–202. Trondheim: Akademika, 2014.
- Pram, Christen. *Kopibøker fra reiser i Norge 1804–06*. Oslo: Norske kunst- og kulturhistoriske museer, 1964.
- Ringvej, Mona Renate. "Trykkefriheten i 1814: det opplyste eneveldets demokratiske arv". *Historisk tidsskrift*, no. 1 (2014): 67–93.
- Skagen, Annabella. *Fra grevens gård til Prinsens gate: Teater i Trondhjem 1790–1814*. PhD thesis. NTNU. 2015.
- Weinwich, Niels Henrich. *Kield Stub, Sognepræst paa Ullensager: En dramatiseret Historie i tvende Handlinger tagne af Fædrelandets Historie Aar 1645*. Copenhagen: Brummers Forlag, 1808.
- Wiles, David. *Theatre and Citizenship: The History of a Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Anneli Saro

Becoming Estonian, European, Western and Nordic in Estonian Theatre and Theatre Historiography

In this contribution, two questions will be discussed: how is the notion of Europe, Western and Nordic, respectively, reflected and how is it constructed in Estonian theatre and theatre historiography? To delimit the rather broad scope of material, I compare different approaches in two monographs on Estonian theatre history: Artur Adson's *Theatre Book* (1958) and Jaak Rähesoo's *Estonian Theatre I* (2011). Adson (1889-1977) was a prolific theatre critic for more than two decades who fled to Sweden at the end of World War II. His book is written in exile and is predominately based on his experiences as a theatre critic. Jaak Rähesoo (1941) is a translator, theatre critic and essayist, who has written a comprehensive overview of Estonian theatre, both in Estonian and in English.

As indicated in the title, the article is divided into four sections, each exploring the genesis and development of one notion (Estonian, European, Western, Nordic) during a particular historical period. The concept of 'becoming' employed here is an amalgam of the notion used in various works by Gilles Deleuze or in works written in collaboration with Félix Guattari. In his book *Difference and Repetition* (1997: 89), Deleuze defines becoming as "the projection of an ideal self in the image of the act" which is most appropriate for the current case study, or at least to start the discussion. Since he differentiates between 'becoming' as creative process and identity, on one side, and representation and history, on the other, the notion of becoming seems to revitalize also the practice of historiography. First, theatre as an ephemeral art form is in constant becoming through particular acts (a production is realized in performances, a theatre institution in productions, etc.). Second, this becoming might aim at an ideal as a sense of direction or maybe even several ones as virtual possibilities that could be partly realized in particular acts. Claire Colebrook explains Deleuzian transversal becoming as "not a becoming that is grounded in a being and which simply unfolds itself through time, but a becoming that changes with each new encounter." (Colebrook 2002: 37) This statement is applicable also on the notions of Estonian, European, Western and Nordic, which are ambiguous, variable and partly overlapping constructions that depend on new encounters and changing socio-cultural contexts.

Becoming Estonian

To begin with, the genesis and the notions of Estonian theatre should be explained. The first known theatre performance on Estonian territory, "The Woman of Andros" by Terence was performed in Latin by students of the Tallinn City School in 1529. After a period of touring companies and the rise of local amateur theatre groups, the first permanent professional theatre, the Reval City Theatre, was established in Tallinn in 1809. This theatre gave performances predominantly in German, sometimes also in Russian and Estonian, but the spectators were mostly representing the German-speaking upper or middle classes. Finally in 1870, the first performance by Estonian amateur actors was given for Estonian audiences in the Estonian society Vanemuine. Estonian-language theatre was born in the framework of a movement of national awakening and as a copy of local German theatres, but their genetic affinity was publicly denied. Thus, also the attribute 'Estonian' theatre is sometimes used as a geographical unit (written with capital

E) and sometimes as a linguistic or national indication (written with minuscule e). The self-consciousness of Estonians was rising when in 1906 two Estonian-language amateur theatres turned professional.

The tension between German- and Estonian-language theatres in Estonia reflected and represented the tension between different social classes, but also the tension between a big old self-conscious culture, on the one hand, and a small young culture striving for self-determination, on the other hand. Some uncertainty related to this issue can be detected in the books of Adson and Rähesoo. Adson states that when theatre in old and big [Western European? – A. S.] countries have served aesthetic, ethical or a coterie's interests, then in Estonia as a small and young country, the main motive of theatre has been the increase of national awareness, and aesthetic motives accompanied the national ones only later on. (Adson 1958: 7) Typically, he handles the German-language theatre implicitly as a pre-history of the theatre in Estonian language and the activities of the main institution of German theatre, the Reval City Theatre (1809-1939) is squeezed into one page. (Adson 1958: 36-37) In Rähesoo's book, much more attention is bestowed upon the German-language theatre in Estonia in number of lines, but his evaluation is compassionless when stating that the main merit of the Baltic-German theatre was to inspire and set up a paragon to Estonian and Latvian theatre that had a much wider base in society. German theatre in the Baltics mediated quite properly repertoire, styles, habits and organisational principles of European theatre to Estonia's indigenous people. (Rähesoo 2011: 38)

The disappearance of the significant Other, the German-language theatre, at the start of World War II did not mean that the identity of Estonian theatre was complete. On the contrary, discussions about authenticity and originality of the national theatre continued. The sources of authenticity have been found in original Estonian-language plays and adaptations of Estonian literature, in stage directing, in national psychological verisimilitude and the quality of Estonian actors, but also in the mental recognition and domesticizing interpretations of audiences. (Saro, Pappel 2008: 130-137) Defining one's 'own' always takes place through the Other who might be entirely different or recognizably similar.

Becoming European

In the beginning of the 20th century, when Estonian theatre makers were exploring the national quaintness of theatre and were striving for professionalism, the notion of Europe as an imaginary ideal was introduced. The self-awareness of Estonians as a nation had been rising considerably and now it was time to become also European. This Europeisation was conducted under the slogan of the group of young artists and intellectuals who called the movement Young Estonia (1905-1915): "More culture! More European culture! Let us remain Estonians, but let us become Europeans too!" Since Germans had ruled Estonian territory for more than 700 years and Estonian culture was modelled according to German paragons, becoming European meant for the Young Estonians to diminish German and Russian influences and to become familiar with French and Scandinavian modernist culture. For them, Europe did not include the whole continent but rather the Western and Northern parts of it.

In the foreword of his book, Adson also claims that he has evaluated Estonian theatre critically and in a broader scope, comparing it with productions seen in Russia and Western Europe (Adson 1958: 5). And

in the end, he predicts that, if World War II would not have disrupted the development, Estonian theatre would have risen to the level of European theatre. (Adson 1958) Accordingly, European theatre has been a paragon and a gage not only for Estonian theatre makers who also often visited German, Austrian and French theatres in the first half of the 20th century but also for theatre critics. Estonian theatres were eager to borrow new plays from Europe and were trying to copy the modernist styles (symbolism, impressionism, expressionism) in the first part of the 1920s, but recession put an end to the experimentations because theatres relied heavily on ticket sales. One should be aware that copying famous productions or theatre makers was in fashion at that time and was also often publicly exposed in the media and in other para-texts of productions.

Rähesoo has compared the intentions of Young Estonians to enrich Estonian culture with French and Scandinavian modernist influences with a kaleidoscope – relatively free combinations of broad external influences. They seemed to believe that one's own can appear only in other (foreign) contexts, and the more of such contexts, the more multifaceted the outcome. (Rähesoo 2006: 2399-2400) In his monograph, Rähesoo continuously draws parallels between domestic and European theatre. He concludes that although Estonia was still one of the poorest countries in Europe at the end of the first republic (1918-1940), its cultural scene in the broad sense had become quite similar to the closest neighbours in Scandinavia. (Rähesoo 2006: 2402, Rähesoo 2011: 124)

III Becoming Western

A new era started in the history of Estonia in 1940 when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union and World War II swept over the territory of Estonia several times. At the end of the war, the world was divided by the Iron Curtain into the East and the West. The Iron Curtain as a metaphor was if not the outcome but clearly the aim of Soviet politics to block the Soviet Union and its satellite states physically and mentally from so called capitalist countries. Thus, Europe was split into the East and the West but Western countries included also Scandinavia and Northern America. As a result, people in the Soviet Union were convinced that all interesting and novel phenomena came from the West. Rähesoo also stresses that despite of all kind of searches for alternative pathways, the dominance (or void) of Western culture continued also in Soviet Estonia and this created a difference from other Soviet republics. (Rähesoo 2011: 359)

Nevertheless, the theatre scene changed considerably, step by step, after the end of the war. The Soviet regime set up many restrictions such as the composition of the repertoire. Despite of the fact that no official record has been found about the issue, every theatre director of the Soviet era knew that a theatre's activities are measured according to the principle that Estonian and Western drama/literature both can form maximum of one third of the repertoire and Soviet works should represent at least a third of the repertoire. In general, modernist texts and styles – labelled as formalism – were disallowed in the Soviet Union and due to that, modernism and Western became almost synonyms. For example, existentialist and absurd drama was prohibited and because of that the productions of Beckett's "Krapp's last tape" (1967) and "Waiting for Godot" (1976) in Estonia were extraordinary events on the Soviet theatre scene

and became monuments of cultural resistance. The Western texts performed on the Soviet stages had to be critical towards capitalism or bourgeois lifestyle, but the criticism and repressed admiration of the West remained attractive and made the object of criticism even more tempting.

The official style of Soviet theatre was socialist realism that had been transformed into plain, psychological or playful realism after the death of Stalin in 1953. The major aesthetic breakthrough in Soviet Estonian theatre happened as late as in the end of the 1960s and was connected to the fight for modernism. The Estonian theatre's renewal brought the following (post)modernist features to the fore: physicality, irrationality, symbolism, composition of different texts, etc. In other arts, the offspring of modernism has been connected also to the historical legacy of the 1930s but the ephemeral performing arts could hardly have such a long term influence; thus the theatre renewal was caused either by creative spirits of the era or by foreign influences. If the latter, then rather by the Western than Eastern European influences. Rähesoo states that when artistic developments are in question, the notion of West includes also some countries from the Eastern bloc. For example, the new theatre aesthetic in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia belonged rather to the West than to the East. (Rähesoo 2011: 353-354) The initiators of the theatre renewal, Evald Hermaküla and Jaan Tooming, could read Polish and Czech theatre journals with the help of Russian as another Slavic language, but only in 1971 an Estonian delegation saw Jerzy Grotowski's *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. Thus contacts with Eastern European theatre were either mediated or realized with delay. Nevertheless, Rähesoo (2011: 355) believes that the primal sensation of the theatre renewal – pain and anger inclining to hysteria – can be easily connected to the political events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and to the aftermath in the whole Soviet bloc, i.e. to the reduction of political freedom.

When conceptualizing Estonian cultural history, Rähesoo has highlighted two driving forces: “From the beginning, two main strategies of Estonian culture have been – striving for certain originality, on the one hand, and catching up with older and more developed (Western) cultures in ‘tiger’s leaps’, on the other hand”, (Rähesoo 2011: 444). Rapid synchronisation with the West in the field of theatre took place in the beginning of the 1920s, on the threshold of the 1960s and 1970s and on the threshold of the 1980s and 1990s. All these three periods are characterized by a sudden increase of political freedom and (post) modernisation in arts. Estonia became independent again in 1991 and the following transition period has been called a return to the pre-occupation republic or to the Western World (see for example the influential collection of articles “Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition”, 1997).

Becoming Nordic or Boreal

From the first treatises on Estonian theatre until the last ones, the following questions have been discussed: should we include native performative traditions in Estonian theatre history or not, and is there anything common between them?

Adson (1958: 11-20) describes old folk traditions like weddings and St. Martin's day customs as Estonian proto or primordial theatre and a pre-history of European theatre tradition. Also folk dances deserve a lot of attention in his book (Adson 1958: 21-28, 203-205), contrary to the contemporary approach to exclude folk dance from theatre field, if it is not performed in the framework of theatre. Rähesoo (2011: 15) declares

that Estonian folk traditions and European theatre as an imported commodity have nothing in common and leaves native traditions out from pre-history. Nevertheless, he admits that interest in folklore became evident in Estonian theatre in the 1930s and 1970s. I would add that the same tendencies were sporadically evident also in the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century – some theatre makers have been working with folklore with the aim to discover the potential of indigenous theatre.

The central idea was to embrace the different experimentations that derived their inspiration from the ethnic heritage as boreal theatre. The idea of boreal, i.e. northern cultures and mentality, was elaborated by the Estonian theologian Uku Masing in his writings from the 1930s until the 1980s. The concept of boreality is based on the comprehension that the indigenous natural environment plays a substantial role in modelling human perception, language and ways of conceptualization. Masing opposes the Indo-German attitude with the boreal attitude, which is inherent to Nordic people: Finno-Ugric people (Fins, Estonians, Saamis, Karelian, etc.), peoples in Eastern Siberia, Inuits and indigenous peoples in North America. All these people share a similar natural environment – forest or sea-side in the temperate zone, with low variability in terrain and a constantly sounding murmur. This soundscape has given rise to monotonic melodies and rhythms as well as repetitious motives and phrases in Estonian folk songs. (Masing 1993: 164) It has also been speculated that boreal people concentrate on the present moment, on descriptions of static situations and feelings – linear causality and movement towards progress is irrelevant for them. (Masing 1993: 53)

In the 1970s, the search for indigenous Estonian culture, including theatre, was related to Finno-Ugric bedrock that took people back to the distant and speculative past. (Rähesoo 2011: 358) Since the works of Masing were banned in Soviet Estonia, the term of boreality was publicly used only since the end of 1980s, but he had a strong influence on Jaan Tooming's semi-religious productions (Rähesoo 2011: 384). In Estonian contemporary theatre criticism the word 'boreal theatre' is used as a self-evident concept. However, it is not sufficiently clarified what qualities the boreal theatre possesses – the term is used for describing both ritual-like performances that rely on folkloric material, as well as postmodern performances that make use of new media. It seems that boreal theatre cannot be distinguished by formal qualities but rather by a certain perception of the world.

Conclusion: From Kotzebue to the Theatre NO99

One might wonder whether Estonian theatre in the course of different becomings has arrived somewhere? Hereby at least two occasions can be highlighted where Estonian and European theatre histories have overlapped.

In 1783, August von Kotzebue, German playwright and public servant of the Russian Empire, was appointed to the position of assessor in the Estonian city of Reval (Tallinn). Here he established the first stable amateur theatre and a bit later the first stable professional theatre. Kotzebue lived in Estonia several shorter and longer periods and wrote here some of his most famous plays: *Menschenhass und Reue* (Misanthropy and Repentance, in England and USA know as *The Stranger*, 1789), *Adelheid von Wulfingen* (1789) and *Die Indianer in England* (*The Indians in England*, 1790). Plays written in Estonia were performed first in Tallinn and only after that in Berlin or Paris. Kotzebue was a well-known author

in Europe, Russia and North America and his immense popularity has been compared to Molière's. Kotzebue is the first occasion when Estonian and European theatre histories overlap.

In 2017, the Estonian avant-garde theatre NO99 was awarded the Europe Theatre Prize for new 'theatrical realities'. The instructions for the European Theatre Prize state that it should highlight theatre makers and companies that have contributed to the development and innovation of contemporary performing arts in Europe. It is also significant that the award was given to a theatre, not to a director, because directors Tiit Ojasoo and Ene-Liis Semper have been working in collaboration with the ensemble of actors of the theatre.

For Estonian theatre makers, European/Western theatre has been an imaginary representation of a majority culture, "a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it [minority – A. S.]" (Guattari; Deleuze 2004: 116). As Guattari and Deleuze (2004: 117) state, the majority is never becoming, all becoming is minoritarian; the minority strives for a potential, creative and created becoming. The aim of Estonian theatre has never been the becoming of majoritarians, but rather the sharing of a similar genetical code with European/Western theatre that would enable to communicate with others (communication necessitates a common language or interests) and to create its own autonomous, heterogeneous identity at the same time (communication is mostly based on difference). Thus, small theatre cultures in their variations and creative potentials are eternally becoming.

References:

- Adson, Artur 1958, *Teatri-raamat. Ajalugu ja isiklikke kogemusi*, Stockholm: Vaba Eesti.
- Colebrook, Claire 2002, *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge: London and New York.
- Guattari, Félix; Deleuze, Gilles 2004, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London – New York: continuum.
- Deleuze, Gilles 1997, *Difference and Repetition*, London: Athlone.
- Masing, Uku 1993, *Vaatlusi maailmale teoloogi seisukohalt*, Tartu: Ilmamaa.
- Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition*, ed. by Marju Lauristin, Peeter Vihalemm, Karl Erik Rosengren, Lennart Weibull, Tartu: Tartu University Press, 1997.
- Rähesoo, Jaak 2011, *Eesti teater. Ülevaateos. 1. Üldareng. "Vanemuine". "Estonia"*, Tallinn: Eesti Teatriliit.
- Rähesoo, Jaak 2006, "Omajuur ja kaleidoskoop: Kaks teatrimudelit", *Akadeemia*, No. 11, pp. 2391-2406.
- Saro, Anneli; Pappel, Kristel 2008, "Eesti teater: oma ja võõras", *Rahvuskultuur ja tema teised. Collegium litterarum 22*, Tallinn: Underi ja Tuglase Kirjanduskeskus, pp. 125-140.

Beyond the Mainstream Narrative? Researching the second wave of independent theatre in Sweden

Erik Mattsson

How can the research of independent theatre offer “contrasting images against the dominating historical patterns”? How can it tell a history “beyond the mainstream narrative”?¹ The history of independent theatre is a different story compared to the more canonized institutional theatre, and as such it may offer contrasting images. It can, for example, contrast and complete the understanding of how aesthetic impulses travel between geographic regions and how they change and adapt when they meet different cultural, financial and ideological contexts. But the history of independent theatre is also partly a story about ‘other things’, with other focal points and perspectives. In this article, I will suggest a few of these other things that come with the study of independent theatre, with particular focus on the second wave of groups.

Independent theatre in Sweden – first and second wave

As in many other countries, the history of independent theatre in Sweden begins in the 1960s.² The first groups started in 1965 and in the following years several new groups were established. The independent theatre was highly politicized from the outset. One of the first groups, Narren (The Jester), writes in their yearly report in 1969: “What is most essential to Narrens Verkstad is that we cannot see theatre as an end in itself, but as a means, among others, to raise public opinion in favor of what we see as necessary changes of our society [...]”.³ Of particular importance was the collaborative association Teatercentrum (Theatre Centre). Its predecessor was founded in 1968 under the name Aktionsgruppen för socialistiska teaterarbetare (The action group for socialist theatre workers). In 1969 it was reshaped into Teatercentrum and by the early 1970s, the association consisted of approximately 50 independent theatre groups.⁴ The association quickly grew into a power player on the field of theatre in Sweden. In the 1970s, the label ‘fri grupp’ (‘independent group’) was more or less equivalent to being a member of Teatercentrum.⁵ Although there were constant discussions on ideology and political strategy, Teatercentrum was always considered leftwing, at least during its first 15 years.

By the mid-1970s, Teatercentrum had grown into a large and influential organization, a kind of alternative establishment. It had political and financial impact (on cultural policy and the dissemination of state support) as well as a more discursive impact (through the formation of a politicized definition of ‘independent group’).

When a new generation of theatre workers founded their own groups around 1976-77, e.g. Teater Schahrazad, Jordcirkus and Eldteatern, and started working outside of Teatercentrum, this was quite a remarkable

1 Quotes from the description and program of this symposia.

2 “Independent theatre” is the term I use to label theatre groups that exist outside the large institutions. “Free theatre” is another term sometimes used. The independent theatre groups are in many ways the equivalent to the off-off scene in US or the fringe or alternative theatre in the UK.

3 *Narrenövningar för teatergrupper och andra skapande kollektiv*, ed. Maud Backéus, Stockholm, Gidlund, 1971, p. 121, my translation.

4 Stefan Johansson, “Istället för de fria gruppernas historia”, *Entré*, nr. 5, 1975.

5 Pistolteatern (The Gun Theatre) and Institutet för scenkonst (Institute for scenic art) are two examples of the few groups that were not members of Teatercentrum during these years.

thing. From 1976 to 1981, these groups constituted a kind of alternative to the alternative – less radical or at least less distinctive when it came to ideology, but the more radical in their work methods and aesthetics. This is what could be called the second wave of independent theatre in Sweden.⁶ Other, more descriptive labels of these groups include ‘physical theatre’, ‘theatre of emotions’ or, perhaps most common, ‘the third theatre’, coined by Eugenio Barba of the Denmark-based Odinteatret.⁷

Before discussing what the study of independent theatre can bring to theatre history, I would like to briefly present three of the most influential groups of the second wave.

Teater Schahrazad (Theatre Schahrazad)

Today maybe most known as the theatre group into which pop-artist Robyn was born, Teater Schahrazad was formed in 1976 by a group of young theatre workers, with newly educated director Wilhelm Carlsson as central figure.⁸ Judging from the archive of Teater Schahrazad, they seem to have been a well-structured group. A constituting meeting was held on December 18, 1976, where detailed minutes were taken, and statutes laid down. The group was founded as an association, whose purpose was “to develop theatre as an art form and to find new possibilities for the theatre to function in the society among people”.⁹

During its first years, Schahrazad staged their own original works, in theatres but also as street performances. Later, they did successful productions of classics such as Faust and Macbeth. Schahrazad worked according to the laboratory method, spending a lot of time with physical training and exploring various acting methods. To educate themselves, but also to give impulses to the theatrical field at large, Schahrazad organized international symposiums on themes such as Indian theatre, Meyerhold and Stanislavsky, they invited speakers like Richard Schechner and Eugenio Barba, and they also arranged a number of international theatre festivals. During their decadelong existence, Schahrazad stubbornly remained outside of Teatercentrum and put quite some time and energy into criticizing the established theatre field.

Eldteatern (The Fire Theatre)

Eldteatern consisted of only three people. One of them had seen *Apocalypsis cum figuris* by Jerzy Grotowski in Poland in the early 1970s, without knowing anything about Grotowski. Inspired by that performance, Eldteatern was founded in 1976. According to the members of the group, they borrowed isolated cottages in the southern part of Sweden, where they trained 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, for

6 To my knowledge, the term was first used by Gunnar Bäck (Gunnar Bäck, *Ord och kött: till teaterns fenomenologi med Larssons och Kyrklunds Medea*, Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993).

7 Barba’s article on the third theatre was originally published in 1976 (for a reprint, see Eugenio Barba, *Theatre. Solitude, Craft, Revolt*, Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999). Apart from Barba and Jerzy Grotowski, the most important source of inspiration for the second wave of groups was probably Ingmar Lindh and his Institutet för scenkonst.

8 Carlsson was indeed the central figure, especially during the first years. At times, it is even doubtful if the company could be called a company. In a letter to Barba, Carlsson seems to see the company as interchangeable with himself, hoping that “this is the last time I am forced to start over from the beginning again with new actors, no money, no space.” (Letter from Wilhelm Carlsson to Eugenio Barba, dated Stockholm 1980-01-13, Teater Schahrazads arkiv, F1:1 Korrespondens 1976-1982, Teaterarkivet, Stockholm).

9 ”Stadgar gällande för den ideella föreningen Schahrazad – Tusen och en Natt av Teater”, Teater Schahrazads arkiv, A1, Teaterarkivet, Stockholm.

two years – before making their first production.¹⁰ Eldteatern mostly performed indoors, but they also took part in street-events, such as the ritualistic mass-performance in Gothenburg in May 1977, *Mass-spektakel mot kärnkraft* (Mass-spectacle against nuclear power). Their most acclaimed production was called *Uppståndelsen* (The Resurrection), a physical piece about the Russian revolution in 1917. Among other characters, it included ‘the wounded revolutionary’, who stumbled across the stage in bloody bandages reciting Charles Baudelaire’s poem “Enivrez-vous” (“Get drunk”). Eldteatern called the piece ‘a-political’ which of course was a provocation directed against the established leftwing theatre groups and the radical leftwing parties. It should also be noted that the production was performed in Gothenburg, a city whose radical left at the time was dominated by a Stalinist association.

Jordcirkus (Earthcirkus)

Jordcirkus was established in consequence of the Stockholm version of the *Mass-spektakel mot kärnkraft* in May 1977. The group was Sweden’s most successful and important street theatre company during the 1980s, and they have been called the grand fathers and mothers of new circus in Sweden.¹¹ They did street performances, indoor performances and longer culture projects in suburbs. Jordcirkus sought to activate people, to break the passivizing consumerist attitude that they saw as the dominating trend in society. In their productions and projects, they touched upon issues of ecology and gender and not seldom questions of authority, power and idealism. Jordcirkus called themselves an international “action-collective” and lived and worked together. The members came from many different countries and from various theatre traditions: puppet theatre, mime, street theatre, activism, etc. The American Chris Torch, who had been a member of the Living Theatre, was a kind of informal leader of the collective. Ideologically, the group was leftist, but not Marxist(-Leninist) like many of the first wave groups, rather anarcho-syndicalist with an ecological and pacifist edge. The group toured a lot, mostly in Europe but also to the US, and they performed their pieces in several languages. In contrast to Teater Schahrazad, both Jordcirkus and Eldteatern became members of Teatercentrum in 1981.¹²

Independent theatre and general theatre history

To return to the questions posed in the beginning, how does the study of independent theatre differ from a general theatre history, that focuses more on institutions? I would like to suggest three perspectives that are of importance when researching the history of independent theatre.

Social perspective

For many of the independent groups, theatre was not just an artform, but also a way of living. This is particularly clear when studying the so called ‘third theatre’. Influenced by the ideas of a laboratory theatre practice, many of the groups went to the countryside to hide away from public life. There are plenty of stories about intense nights in isolated cottages, with hard work and training, hour after hour.¹³ This also meant that private and professional life were intertwined. In the archival material, I stumble across traces of love affairs and photos of children, and when I do interviews, people mumble about break-ups and divorces. And I hear stories about giant pikes caught on early mornings.

¹³ Interview with the former members of Eldteatern. See also Wilhelm Carlsson, ”Avant-gardet och den fria svenska teatern - en orättvis betraktelse”, *Entré*, no. 4-5, 1984.

On a related note, the actual practice of research of independent groups can lead the researcher into social and thus ethical situations. When interviewing the former members of the groups in their home environment, and talking to them not only about art works and about the production of art, but also about the social dynamic of the group, I find myself in a research situation that differs a lot from the anonymity in the darkness of the theatre auditorium (i.e. when doing performance analysis). Researching the contemporary history of independent theatre thus means to be methodologically and ethically closer to ethnography and some disciplines within social sciences than to the distanced reading of an artwork common in aesthetic disciplines.



As a researcher, I could of course decide to ignore these aspects and focus solely on the public performances of the groups. But then I would also overlook what the groups themselves saw as central in their enterprise, namely to not only do alternative theatre pieces, but also to organize their life in alternate ways. With the words of Jordcirkus, to live and to work together means to “take a stand

*Ulf Skogsén and Robert Jacobsson, mid-1970s.
Photo: unknown*

for a different way of living than the one that is dominant today”.¹⁴ Politics is thus not only about ideological messages on stage or about political dimensions of aesthetic form, but also about how to organize one’s life. And from this perspective, even pike fishing might be seen as being part of a political project.

International perspective

A second point to be made is the relation to the international arena. Institutional theatres are usually aimed at a geographical community – e.g. national theatres, regional theatres, city theatres. They also mainly work for a language community, such as Swedish, and are thereby connected to questions of national or local identity.¹⁵ This can be compared to the independent groups, for which the international perspective (in a number of meanings) has been central from the beginning.

Most of the groups of the first wave were interested in the international arena from a political perspective. In the vein of 1968, internationalization meant international solidarity with third world states and independence movements. The themes of the productions were mostly national, but sometimes international, for example Narren’s productions *Flickan i Havanna* (The Girl in Havanna) and *Valparaiso -70*. Some of the 14 ”Jordcirkus: Teatern som livsprojekt”, no date, probably early 1980s, Jordcirkus arkiv, F1:1.

¹⁵ See for example *National theatres in a changing Europe*, ed. Steve Wilmer, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

groups occasionally toured outside of Sweden, but they mainly performed for a Swedish audience. In contrast, for the second wave of groups the international arena was a market, where they could perform, and a sphere for aesthetic exchange and impulses. Jordcirkus toured extensively, at times being more known abroad than in Sweden. Eldteatern also toured in Europe, for example to Germany and Italy. Schahrazad toured less than the other groups, but they organized a line of international events in Sweden to increase the influx of aesthetic impulses.

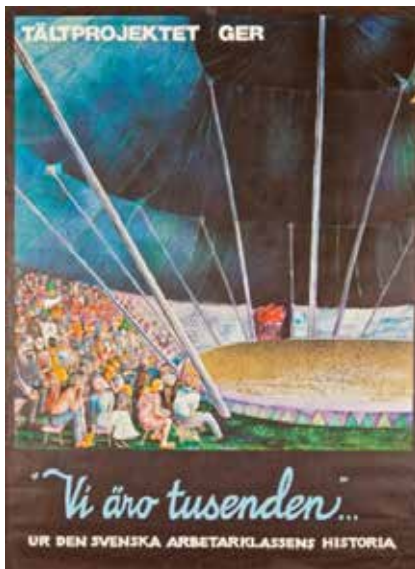
Doing intercultural exchange, touring and networking, creating and performing theatre for international audiences – these are some aspects of internationalization that come up when studying independent theatre. The history of independent theatre is a history where people, groups and ideas move quickly across borders.

Societal perspective

If we compare with institutions, which are often placed center stage in general theatre history, independent theatre groups respond quicker to societal changes and public debates. Independent groups have greater possibilities of working in close connection with social movements (parties, organizations, associations) and to connect to political issues that are relevant at the moment. Needless to say, this is a lot harder for institutions, which, as public institutions, are most often tied to various kinds of policy documents.

Both waves of independent groups worked in proximity with social movements. The first wave of groups belonged to the same sphere as the radical left – the most obvious example being the closeness between Fria Proteatern and the Maoist party SKP (Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti, Communist Party of Sweden).¹⁶ The second wave had closer ties to the ‘new social movements’ such as the environmental and the pacifist movement.

¹⁶ See Johan Bergman, *Kulturfolk eller folkkultur?: 1968, kulturarbetarna och demokratin*, Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2010.



Poster for "Vi äro tusenden..." (1977) by Aja Eriksson. Poster for *Eko-positivet – Mass-spektakel mot kärnkraft* (1977) by Mats Ekman.

Both these posters are from May 1977, the point in history when the first wave peaked, and the second wave started to make its mark. The poster on the left is from a large joint project made by some of the first wave groups. *Vi äro tusenden...* (We are thousands...), also called *Tältprojektet* (The Tent Project), was a touring performance about the history of the Swedish labor movement. On top, in white, it says "The Tent Project gives/performs". In the image, we see a large audience and an empty circus ring. The poster on the right is from the Stockholm version of *Mass-spektakel mot kärnkraft* (Mass-spectacle against nuclear power). The image shows an ecological future where people seem happy and eco-conscious. The text in white says, "Anyone can join...". Thus, we have spectators on the first poster and participants on the second, passivity and spectatorship versus activity and participation. By juxtaposing these posters, the different ideological underpinnings of the first and second wave of independent groups can be elucidated. Within the research on social movements there has been a long discussion about the so called 'new social movements', e.g. movements dealing with issues of gender, sexuality and ecology.¹⁷ While these movements started to surface in the late 1960s, it was mainly in the 1970s that they gathered strength and importance. Against the new social movements, which to a large extent focus on questions of identity, researchers have placed the 'old' movements, revolving around issues of class, economy, distribution of wealth and such-like topics. Apart from the divergencies in topics, the 'old' and 'new' movements also differ with regards to organizational structure. While the 'old' movements often are organized hierarchically – e.g. as an association with a board – the 'new' movements prefer flatter and more decentralized structures.¹⁸ The posters above can exemplify this division, between the idea that a political message is to be received by the audience, on the one hand, and the vision of equal participation, on the other hand.

¹⁷ For an early overview of the research on 'new social movements', see *New social movements: from ideology to identity*, Eds. Enrique Laraña et al, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994. For a more contemporary and nuanced account of the analytical distinction between 'old' and 'new' social movements, see Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani, *Social movements: an introduction* 2. ed. Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2006.

¹⁸ It can be noticed that Teater Schahrazad, with its detailed statutes, seems to belong to the 'old' when it comes to organization. A potential field of research in connection to this is the strong Swedish tradition of 'föreningar' (associations) and how this tradition has been handled within the sphere of independent theatre.

This can serve as a brief illustration of how the study of independent theatre can elucidate the interplay between social movements and the cultural sphere. Compared to the less flexible institutions, independent groups can function as a more sensitive litmus test to largescale ideological and discursive changes.

Conclusion

To conclude, independent theatre is a history “beyond the mainstream narrative”. It is a history of theatre as a social activity, as political activism and as something deeply international. And thereby, it differs from a more general theatre history which tends to focus on (national) art and its institutional production.

Bibliography

Barba, Eugenio, *Theatre. Solitude, Craft, Revolt*, Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999

Bergman, Johan, *Kulturfolk eller folkkultur?: 1968, kulturarbetarna och demokratin*, Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2010

Bäck, Gunnar, *Ord och kött: till teaterns fenomenologi med Larssons och Kyrklunds Medea*, Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1993

Carlsson, Wilhelm, ”Avant-gardet och den fria svenska teatern - en orättvis betraktelse”, *Entré*, no. 4-5, 1984

Damkjaer, Camilla & Muukkonen, Kiki, “Fragments of the History of Contemporary Circus in Sweden, 1990-2010”, *Contemporary Circus: Introduction to the Art Form*, ed. Tomi Purovaara, Stockholm: ST-UTS, 2011

Della Porta, Donatella & Diani, Mario, *Social movements: an introduction*. 2. ed. Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2006

Johansson, Stefan, “Istället för de fria gruppernas historia”, *Entré*, no. 5, 1975

Narrenövningar för teatergrupper och andra skapande kollektiv, ed. Maud Backéus, Stockholm, Gidlund: 1971

National theatres in a changing Europe, ed. Steve Wilmer, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

New social movements: from ideology to identity, Eds. Enrique Laraña et al, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994

Other sources

Interview with Marika Lagercrantz (former member of Jordcirkus), Bagarmossen, October 22, 2018

Interview with Robert Jacobsson, Pita Skogsén and Ulf Skogsén (former members of Eldteatern), Tokalynga teaterakademi, October 27, 2018

Jordcirkus arkiv, Teaterarkivet, Stockholm

Personal archives of the former members of Eldteatern, accessed at Tokalynga teaterakademi, Tokalynga Teatercentrums arkiv, Teaterarkivet, Stockholm

Teater Schahrazads arkiv, Teaterarkivet, Stockholm

Schedule

Thursday 22 November, 2018

Venue: The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Villagatan 3

- 15:30–16:30** Introduction: Karin Helander (The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities) and Lena Hamnergren (Stockholm University)
- 16:30–17:00** Keynote 1: Nic Leonhardt (Munich) – Iste – Ille. Here and There. What and Where is Europe in a Global History of Theatre?
- 17:15–18:15** Keynote 2: Magnus Thorbergsson (Reykjavik) – Is there a One-Size-For-All Theatre Historiography? Notes from the Margin of Europe
- 18:30** Dinner at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities

Friday 23 November, 2018

Venue: The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Villagatan 3

- 09:00–10:30** .1 Theme 1: Europe: Transnational Perspectives
- Magnus Tessing Schneider (Stockholm) - Classics as Cultural Battleground: The early reception of Don Giovanni in Prague and Dresden
 - Christina Nygren (Stockholm) – Wei ziju goule: To thyself be enough! Peer Gynt in Beijing 1983.
 - Hélène Ohlsson (Stockholm) - Transatlantic Strategies of “Swedishness”: Diva Performances in the U.S. in the Nineteenth Century
- 11:00–12:30** Theme 2: Nations: Local Perspectives in Global Contexts
- Karen Vedel (Copenhagen) - The Critical Appraisal of Theatre Dance in Denmark around 1950 seen in the Context of Post-war Europe
 - Annabella Skagen (Trondheim) - Kotzebue in Trondheim – Continental Ideas and Local Identity During the Napoleonic Wars.
 - Anneli Saro (Tartu) - Becoming Estonian, European, Western, and Nordic in Estonian Theatre and Theatre Historiography.
- 12:30–14:00** Lunch and travel to museums
- 14:00–18:00** Visit to Dansmuseet and Scenkonstmuseet

Saturday 24 November, 2018

Venue: Stockholm University, Department for Culture and Aesthetics, Auditorium

- 09:30–10:30** Discussion on visits to the museums
- 11:00–12:30** Theme 3: Regions: Beyond the Mainstream Narrative?
- Jan Lazardzig (Berlin) – Sustaining Theatre? The case of Audiovisual Collections
 - Erik Mattsson (Stockholm) - On the Interplay Between the Social and the Cultural: New Social Movements and Independent Theatre in Sweden in the late 1970s.
 - Tiina Rosenberg (Stockholm) - Revisiting the Archive of one’s own: Temporality and Identity Politics in Theatre History Writing.
- 12:30–13:15** Lunch
- 13:15–14:15** Keynote 3: Matthias Warstat (Berlin): Theatre History in Post-Migrant ‘Nations’
- 14:15–15:00** Concluding discussion

Participants

Karin Helander (Stockholm)
Lena Hammergren (Stockholm)
Willmar Sauter (Stockholm)
Nic Leonhardt (Munich)
Magnus Thorbergsson (Reykjavik)
Tiina Rosenberg (Stockholm)
Magnus Tessing Schneider (Stockholm)
Christina Nygren (Stockholm)
Hélène Ohlsson (Stockholm)
Karen Vedel (Copenhagen)
Annabella Skagen (Trondheim)
Anneli Saro (Tartu)
Eva-Sofi Ernstell (Stockholm)
Rikard Hoogland (Stockholm)

Meike Wagner (Stockholm)
Jan Lazardzig (Berlin)
Erik Mattsson (Stockholm)
Hanna Korsberg (Helsinki)
Johanna Laakonen (Helsinki)
Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen (Stockholm)
Ingrid Redbark-Wallander (PhD, Stockholm)
Daria Skjoldager-Nielsen (PhD, Stockholm)
Leo Marko (PhD, Stockholm)
Petra Dotlacilova (PhD, Stockholm)
Josefine Löfblad (PhD, Stockholm)
Matthias Warstat (Berlin)
Pirkko Koski (Helsinki)
Ellinor Lidén (PhD, Stockholm)

