

NCPA
Quarterly Journal

Vol. XV, No. 1 & 2, March & June 1986.



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Quarterly Journal

Volume XV

Nos. 1 & 2

March & June 1986

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Georg Lechner, till recently Director, Max Mueller Bhavan, Bombay, and at present Director, Goethe Institute, Paris.

Eugenio Barba, world-renowned theatre director and founder of Odin Theatre and International School of Theatre Anthropology, Holstebro, Denmark.

Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, well-known art critic and theatre expert.

N. Ramanathan, musicologist, Lecturer, Department of Indian Music, University of Madras.

Chitra Visweswaran, noted Bharata Natyam dancer.

Vamanrao Deshpande, musicologist, author of *Indian Musical Traditions* and *Maharashtra's Contribution to Music*.

T. M. P. Nedungadi, theatre expert.

Mohan Nadkarni, music critic, author of *Madhyavarti (Madhya Pradesh Ke Pandraha Sangeetakara)*.

Sarala Bhide, vocalist, lecturer, Department of Music, S. N. D. T. University, Bombay.

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Price: Rs. 20 India; £4.00 United Kingdom; \$ 10 U.S.A.

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East THEATRE ENCOUNTER West

17th to 25th January 1986
At the National Centre for the Performing Arts
Evening performances at the Tata Theatre &
the Experimental Theatre

East-West Theatre Encounter: Perspectives

Georg Lechner

The world as a stage, creation as *lila*, a playful idea of the gods, life as permanently enacted drama in which the actors assume a succession of masks in accordance with the law of their *karma*, theatre as reality revisited, reinterpreted, reflected upon, symbolised or dreamed about—these are all time-honoured notions, the older the more all-encompassing. Both the *Natyashastra* and Greek theatre embrace music, dance and literature as complementary media of expression; religion, fate and philosophy provide the great themes. In the West, both tragedy and comedy claim the stage from the beginning; in the East, tragedy, in the Greek sense, remains inconceivable. East and West seem to share their tears of joy rather than of sorrow.

At the turn of the second millenium, theatre is as many-splendoured a thing as modern life itself. Like the latter, it is going from challenge to challenge. From the old unity, it has split itself into many separate performing arts; it incorporates technology, defies cinema, 'behaves' political, moral or trans-cultural, goes regional, shocks, uplifts, cuts into the absurd, resigns, or simply entertains and makes money. But above all, it shares with modern life its deep-rooted crisis.

In the West, Brecht and Shaw, Beckett and Ionesco, Anouilh and Miller, Frisch and Duerrenmatt, O'Neill and Williams and a host of others join the world's evergreens from Shakespeare to Buechner and Molière, while others advocate the return to regional roots, as do Achternbusch and Kroetz in Germany.

In India, too, theatre is an authentic reflection of modern life and its crisis: old traditions like the Sanskrit theatre—*Shakuntala* notwithstanding—or classical dance theatre are either defunct or struggle for meaning and essence in a thoroughly changing world. The links with the past, either disrupted by colonial rule or under heavy attack from outside, make the search for contemporary theatre language only occasionally successful. Folk traditions are brought into play to advantage, as with Vijay Tendulkar, but are generally at a loss to treat burning contemporary issues adequately. Modern urban Indian theatre, therefore, imitates and recreates, mostly, rather than creates.

Meanwhile the East and the West encounter each other: Dance takes the lead with Maurice Béjart in the West and Sardono and Lin Hwai Min in the East. Theatre soon reflects the same trend: Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Brook look towards the East, India adapts Brecht. The dialogue is still in danger of reaching facile conclusions, or taking misunderstanding for real understanding; outward forms belie different deep structures. But the dialogue is on and while the specialisation and fragmentation in the arts continue, the drive towards unifying forces emerges, too. If theatre and life are existential twins, so are content and form.

The East-West Theatre Encounter should, therefore, at this point in time both reflect some of the great diversity and plurality of theatre forms today as well as the coming together in as yet limited areas. The approach should be performance-rather than theory-oriented. As one of the leading partners in the East-West theatre dialogue, Wolfram Mehring, said in his book, *Burnt Masks*, "Don't tell us what you think, but show us who you are through what you do". This has also been the working guideline for ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) and its founder-director Eugenio Barba.

17th to 25th January 1986



East THEATRE ENCOUNTER West

Organisers

Jamshed J. Bhabha

Trustee-in-Charge

National Centre for the Performing Arts

Georg Lechner

Director

Max Mueller Bhavan, Bombay

Participants

Satish Alekar is a playwright and director from Pune. Two of his plays received the Best Play of the Year Award in Maharashtra (*Mahanirvana* in 1975 and *Mahapur* in 1976). He has written two collections of one-act plays of which *Zulta Pool* received an award from the State Department of Education for the Best Collection of one-act plays. He is the Founder-Trustee and Vice-President of Theatre Academy, Pune, and the Assistant Director of the group's production *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

Suresh Awasthi, a noted theatre scholar, was formerly Secretary of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. He has been advisor, Asian Theatre, and member, Executive Board of the International Theatre Institute, Paris (UNESCO). The Tokyo University, where Dr. Awasthi was a visiting professor in 1982-83, has published his book, *Drama, the Gift of Gods*, dealing with traditional Indian theatre. He has written extensively on Indian theatre and allied arts and participated in several national and international theatre and dance seminars during the last 20 years. As a fellow of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, he is at present writing a book, *Theatre in Asia: A View from India*.

Eugenio Barba's initiation into theatre was under the directorship of Jerzy Grotowski. It was also during this three-year tenure that he came to be influenced by the power and imagery of the Kathakali form and the philosophy and rigorous discipline that go with its training. In 1966, he set up the Odin Theatre in Holstebro, Denmark. Twenty years of continuous activity in the field is reflected as much in the centre's nine productions as in its internal structure and wide spectrum of activities. This includes the founding of International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), a centre for trans-cultural theatrical exchange. Barba's writings have been published in various international journals and magazines. His book, *The Floating Islands*, is a collection of his observations on theatre.

Fritz Bennewitz has been drama director of the German National Theatre, Weimar, since 1960. He has a long-standing association with Indian theatre, having worked as a guest-director with several productions, predominantly Brecht, in New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Bangalore and Bhopal. He cooperated with Vijaya Mehta in staging *Mudrarakshasa*, *Shakuntala* and *Hayavadana* in Germany, in Weimar and Leipzig. He has 150 productions to his credit, and is the recipient of several awards, including the Kunstpreis and Nationalpreis of the German Democratic Republic.

Rustom Bharucha acted, directed and designed sound for theatre productions in Calcutta before leaving for the United States in 1977. He got his doctorate at the Yale School of Drama. While at Yale, he received the John Gassner Award for dramatic criticism and worked as an Associate Editor for Theatre. He has published extensively in various journals including *The Performing Arts Journal*, *The Brecht Yearbook*, *Asian Theatre Journal*. His book *Rehearsals of Revolution* (now in its second edition) was jointly published by the University of Hawaii Press and by Seagull Books in Calcutta. Currently a grantee of the American Institute of Indian Studies, he is working on an intercultural theatre project that will involve the staging of Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Request Concert* in nine Asian cities over a period of three years.

Jean-Claude Carrière's range of achievements distinguish him as a scenarist, script-writer, dramatist, novelist, essayist. His introduction to a film-career came through Pierre Etaix with whom he worked on two documentaries and seven feature films. Since then he has closely collaborated as a scenarist with filmmakers of calibre such as Bunuel, Louis Malle, Jean-Luc Godard, Andrezej Wajda, Nagisa Oshima. For the theatre, he wrote *Le Client* and *L'Aide Memoire*, adapted *Harold et Maud* for the Renault-Barrault Company and collaborated with Peter Brook on eight short plays. His latest work is a dramatic adaptation of the *Mahabharata*, the monumental epic poem of India. Premiered in 1985 under the direction of Peter Brook, the ground work for it was started as far back as ten years ago. The play, stretching over three evenings and performed in Avignon under the aegis of the Festival of India in France, has made theatre history.

Sekhar Chatterjee had his training in theatre under Utpal Dutt and Joan Littlewood, London. During the thirty years of his involvement with theatre, he has directed more than fifty plays, several among them by Brecht, a distinction that qualified him to represent India at the International Brecht Seminar in Hong Kong in 1981. His first feature film, *Vasundhara*, based on his own play, won the National Award as the best feature film in Bengali in the National Film Festival, 1984. He has been responsible for introducing F. X. Kroetz to Bengali theatre.

William B. Coutts, Theatre Director, Commonwealth Arts Festival.

P. L. Deshpande's many-faceted involvement with theatre and film include script-writing, acting and music direction. The phenomenon of one-man shows on the Marathi stage is to be attributed to him, the most noteworthy among them being *Batatyachi Chawl*. He established the Pu La Deshpande Foundation in 1966 to promote cultural and national activities. He has been honoured with many awards for his contribution. These include the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Padma Shri. He has a number of publications of plays, travelogues, humorous articles and sketches to his credit. Currently, he is the Honorary Director, National Centre for the Performing Arts.

Farrukh Dhondy studied English at Cambridge University before taking up a teaching career. He is well-known as a novelist, short-story writer and stage and TV playwright. His play *Romance Romance* won the Samuel Beckett Award for Best First TV play in 1983. He is one of the founder-members of Asian Cooperative Theatre, an independent cultural organisation of young British Asians. *Vigilantes*, his stage play, produced by this body, deals with the problems of Asian communities in England. Since 1984 Farrukh Dhondy has been one of the commissioning editors for multicultural programmes on Britain's TV Channel 4.

Walter Eysselinck is Professor of Theatre and Chairman, Department of Theatre and Drama, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Several publications of original plays, numerous contributions to theatre magazines and an impressive list of activities as producer and director speak for Dr. Eysselinck's broad and deep background in all phases of theatre. At present, he is a visiting professor and director of theatre at the American University in Cairo.

B. V. Karanth received his diploma in theatre from the National School of Drama, New Delhi. He trained in classical music under the guidance of Pandit Omkaranath Thakur. His early theatre career involved participation in nearly fifty productions of the Gubbi Theatre Company, the oldest in Karnataka. He has experimented a great deal with 'Yakshagana', a prominent folk-style of Karnataka. He was Director, National School of Drama (1977-81) and winner of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1976-77. He has won several national awards for his music direction in films, and the National Film Award for the direction of *Chomanadudi*. At present, he is director of Rang Mandal, the Drama Repertory Company of Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.

Girish Karnad studied the folk-theatre traditions of the Kannada-speaking areas for his project as Homi Bhabha fellow. His play, *Hayavadana*, written during the tenure of his fellowship (1970-72), was based upon the folk idiom he had studied, and won him the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya Award. He also received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1972. His early films *Samskara*, *Vamsavriksha* and *Kaadu*, with which he was associated as actor and director, won him national awards. He has written scripts and acted in several Hindi and Kannada films. Recently, he directed *Utsav*, a Hindi film produced by Shashi Kapoor and based on the classical Sanskrit play, *Mrichchhakatikam*.

Lamberto Lambertini lives and works in Naples. After several radio and TV plays, he directed his first theatrical production *La Jaconde* in 1978. He joined Peppe & Barra in 1981 to form a new company, with the aim of drawing on tradition, lore and popular performance, and reworking these materials into modern forms. Since then, the two have collaborated on four productions, and have toured quite extensively in Europe. He is also the author of two books: *Il principe di sansevero* and *Douze mois à Naples*.

Manuel Lütgenhorst began his theatrical career in 1968, in Germany, as a set, costume and lighting designer. He moved to New York in 1979. Among his New York credits are: work with Andre Serban at the Public Theatre, an Obie Award for his design of *Request Concert* and the design of *The Coronation of Poppea*. In 1980, he founded a theatre company. Currently, along with Rustom Bharucha, he is working on an intercultural theatre project which will involve the staging of Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Request Concert* in nine Asian cities, over a period of three years.

Wolfram Mehring left Germany for Paris in 1954 after traditional theatre studies. He continued studies in Philosophy and Literature at the University of Sorbonne, and became a student of Etienne Decroux. Soon he moved away from the intellectualism of western theatre and developed his unique concept of universal and transcultural theatre language, based on body and voice. "L'acteur total", the total actor, has become the centre of his attention. In 1960, he founded the Centre International de l'Acteur, which has established branches in Europe, Asia and Africa. Over the years, Wolfram Mehring has, either with his own company Le Théâtre de la Mandragore, founded in 1958, or as a guest-director, staged innumerable plays in Paris, West Germany, and all over the world. Among his favourite playwrights have been Georg Buechner, Shakespeare, Garcia Lorca, Sophocles, Plautus.

Vijaya Mehta, leading actress and director, was associated in the initial stage of her career with Vijay Tendulkar and Dr. Shriram Lagoo in the building of an active theatre group, Rangayan. She has played nearly ninety roles and directed several plays for the Marathi professional stage. She was for several years in charge of all the theatre training programmes in the state. Her directorial talent won her the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1975. Inspired by the classical Sanskrit drama and the folk tradition, she has in recent years directed *Shakuntala* in German, Marathi and Hindi, *Mrichchhakatika* in German and Marathi, and *Hayavadana* in Marathi. *Smriti Chitre*, the first film she directed, won the National Award for Best Director, and Best Regional Film.

Alyque Padamsee studied acting at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. His memorable roles include Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and King Berenger in Ionesco's *Exit the King*. He has to his credit fifty productions, mainly in English. These include *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Death of a Salesman* and, more recently, the musical, *Evita*. In 1982 he won the advertising 'Oscar' for his public service film, *The Story of Hope*, and in 1984, the 'Prix National' Award at the Cannes Film Festival, for his film on family planning.

Pearl Padamsee is an actress and a leading director and producer with the Theatre Group of Bombay. Having specialised in Improvisation and Child Drama at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, she has produced and directed several musicals for children, and teaches elocution and drama at four Bombay schools. Equally at home with effervescent comedies and serious plays, she has recently directed *Noises Off*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *The Measures Taken* and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. She will be a guest director at the University of Michigan Programme for the Festival of India taking place in the USA in February 1986.

K. N. Panikkar is the founder-director of the Tiruvarang Dramatic Troupe which works as the theatre unit of Sopanam, a registered Institute of Performing Arts & Research. His involvement in theatre has been inspired by folk and classical tradition. He has written 17 plays in Malayalam and translated English and Sanskrit plays—mainly Kalidasa's and Bhasa's—into Malayalam. He has presented his work through performances and workshops in many art festivals all over India and abroad. He produced two of his plays in Wisconsin, working with western actors. He is a member of the Executive Board of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, and the Kalidasa Akademi, Ujjain.

Jabbar Patel, a pediatrician by profession, developed a serious interest in theatre during his student days. Of his many well-known productions, *Ghashiram Kotwal* is considered a landmark in Indian theatre. He was honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1979 for his contribution to theatre. He has directed three films, all of which have won the President's Award for Best Regional Film and Best Director.

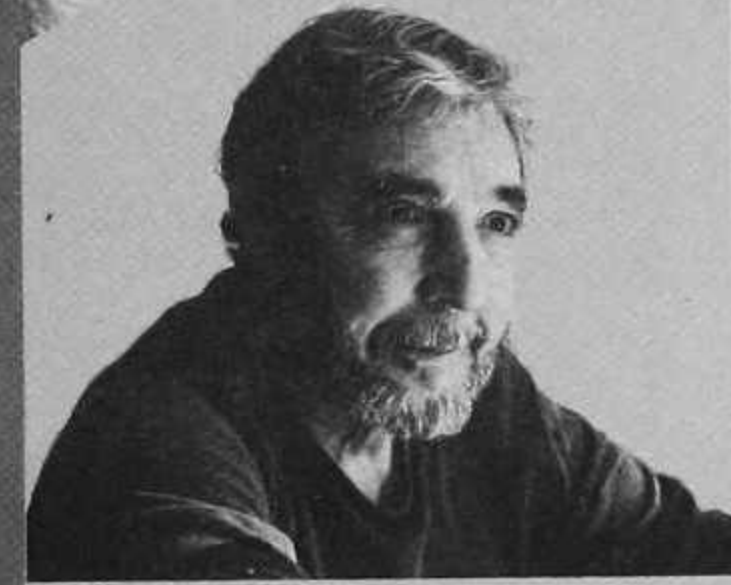
M. K. Raina graduated from the National School of Drama in 1970 with the Best Actor Award. Since then he has directed over seventy-five plays both by Indian and international classic playwrights. He has acted in about thirty plays, and worked with directors of international repute, like E. Alkazi, Karl Weber, Fritz Bennewitz. In 1980, he was awarded the Sanskriti Award for eminence in theatre. His play *Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein* won six of the seven awards of the Sahitya Kala Parishad, Delhi, in 1981. As an actor, he has worked with major Indian film directors. At present, he is acting in an Indo-French film directed by Mrinal Sen.

Alaknanda Samarth's involvement with theatre started in the 50's, when she appeared for four years in a succession of leading roles in E. Alkazi's Theatre Unit productions. She later studied theatre at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, London, and as a Wien International Scholar at Brandeis University, Massachusetts. Recently, she has directed Edward Bond's *The Bundle — Bhandam* in Malayalam, in Trichur, Kerala.

Meera Syal is a graduate of Manchester University. She is a member of the Asian Theatre Cooperative, co-founded by Farrukh Dhondy. Her performance in *One of Us* won for her the best solo performance award, and a share of the Yorkshire Television Award for "outstanding personal achievement".

Habib Tanvir is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, and was associated with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and British Drama League. After he returned to India, he joined the Indian People's Theatre Association. In 1954, he founded Delhi's first professional company, and, in 1959, Naya Theatre in Madhya Pradesh came into being. Since then, he has worked with the folk artistes of Chhatisgarh to produce *Charandas Chor*, *Mitti Ki Gadi* and other works. Journalist, actor, director, poet and playwright, he has been awarded numerous honours, including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Padma Shri and the Shikhar Samman. He has travelled widely throughout Europe, West Asia, the Far East and the USA, observing and studying theatrical traditions.

Ratan Thiyam had his training in theatre at the National School of Drama, from where he returned to Manipur to create a new mode, combining the values of modern theatre with Manipuri traditions. The Chorus Repertory Theatre, under his leadership, supports itself by running a fishery and a dairy farm, and rehearses in a hut studio. For most of its productions, Chorus goes back to popular folk-tales of the region, as Ratan Thiyam believes in the expressive charge of visuals drawn from his traditions. He tries to relate the traditional expressions, however, to the matrix of their original environment, before using them in his work.



East-West Theatre Encounter

Closed Sessions

[January 17-25, 1986, 9.30 a.m.-1.30 p.m., Little Theatre]

Friday, January 17.

Welcoming the participants, P. L. Deshpande, Honorary Director, National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) said: "Friends, welcome to all of you who have responded to our invitation to the East-West Theatre Encounter (EWTE). I wonder if Bombay has ever seen a gathering of such well-known national and international theatre personalities coming together to exchange ideas and compare notes about theatre. The brief biographical note about the participants, published in the booklet brought out on the occasion, reveals that each one of the participants has made a significant and different type of contribution to the theatre. Despite varying geographical, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, one common link binds all of us: the struggle to find out the meaning of theatre and a meaningful theatrical expression. In this struggle, I know you have not always met with what is commonly understood as success, but this has not frightened you away from this rather exacting and cruel art of theatre. There is nothing more tragic in the world of the performing arts than living on the memory of yesterday's success. It is a pleasure to find that all of you are working in the theatre of today. It is today and today's performance that matters most, and here is a gathering of theatre artistes who are going to discuss the present, the theatre of today, as they find it. It is a meeting of minds engaged in the pursuit of a common goal. This pursuit has given you the best reward that a person can hope for—a meaning and a purpose to life. I am sure that every one of us is looking forward to an exciting week ahead of us, or rather, 'nine days to drama' . . . full of speeches, dialogues, agreement, disagreement and, best of all, the theatre performances in the evenings.

"I must thank Dr. Lechner of the Max Mueller Bhavan (MMB) who is really the Host-in-Chief of this Encounter. Not only is he sharing the major financial burden (along with the other co-sponsors) but, by his dynamic leadership and sense of dedication to art in general and to the performing arts in particular, he has inspired all of us to make this venture feasible. Friends, I thank you all, on behalf of myself and my colleagues and, once again, I welcome you all to the Encounter."

Dr. Georg Lechner, Director, MMB: "Mr. Deshpande, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Consul-General of the Soviet Union, very dear respected invitees and participants, on behalf of the NCPA and its Trustee-in-Charge, Mr. J. J. Bhabha who, unfortunately, cannot be present here, and on behalf of the MMB, my own organisation, and all the co-sponsors—I welcome you all—particularly, the USSR delegates—and invite you to consider the work ahead of us.

"This EWTE is not to be seen in an isolated way, but as an ongoing and serious attempt to create a platform for a meaningful dialogue in various cultural fields—between east and west, north and south.

"When we started organising this EWTE, we were aware that we had to deal with two different traditions. Whether we refer to the great tradition of sacred ritual, mythological theatre in this country, whether it is the old forms of Sanskrit drama or the younger forms such as Kathakali or other forms of dance theatre, whether in Japan, or in Greece, the great masters—we mean the same tradition of a highly stylized technique, of an absolute devotion to the concept of a rigorous discipline. But it is also a tradition that we find very difficult to make our own . . . It was a tradition of a given time, and how much of it can be recreated and maybe made part of our own consciousness, is the big task before us. It can never be totally recreated. It was the expression of one time, of a wonderful past that we admire and respect, but it is not our time. The West meanwhile moved on from Greek drama and the Medieval Mystery plays, to Shakespeare in England, to the 'Commedia dell' Arte' or to the high-society court drama of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Then Europe moved on to the social drama of the nineteenth century. Later it branched out into so many movements of theatre in this century, from Brecht's Epic Theatre to other forms, the Theatre of the Absurd, Living Theatre . . . Stanislavsky, Grotowski, Peter Brook. So much is being done. So much life is going onto the stage and so many claims are being made for the stage to reflect back on life that we don't know anymore where to look for the theatre of this century. But, if at least part of theatre will continue to reflect society, life, and will not be something that will only concern individuals in their search for self-realisation—although that also theatre must be allowed to do and to be—then, I think, we have come to a threshold where the East and the West must together steer a spaceship, Earth, that is no longer on the old route. It seems that previously we were on a journey, and there was a captain, there was a chart and a destination somewhere out there. But he sharing the major financial burden (along with the other co-sponsors) but, by his dynamic leadership and sense of dedication I am not sure that this is true anymore. I think that we have lost the Captain, we have lost a good part of the charts. We do not know anymore, in our deepest thinking, whether there is even a destination and, if there is one, what it will be. 'The proper man. So how can we know what destination, what man will have? I think we may have become professional travellers, flying Dutchmen, perhaps with no destination. Perhaps, the journey is all we have, the journey together, the journey in the spaceship that has become totally different from the old ships. That is, it seems to me, the task ahead—whether you call it theatre as a reflection on life, or whether it is anything else. We have to do that journey, or part of it, together, or we won't know what it is all about. I wish, therefore, that we become living and alive witnesses of this journey, of this process, of this life All my best wishes for the journey together."

Vijaya Mehta: "I shall try to offer a capsule of my observations, almost like a confessional, tracing the changes in my attitude towards my work. In so doing I shall analyse again for myself, and get you to share my analysis of the way in which the West has influenced my work and in so doing helped me realise my Indianness, my Maharashtrianess, my ethnicity. I find that is a very important aspect of any encounter.

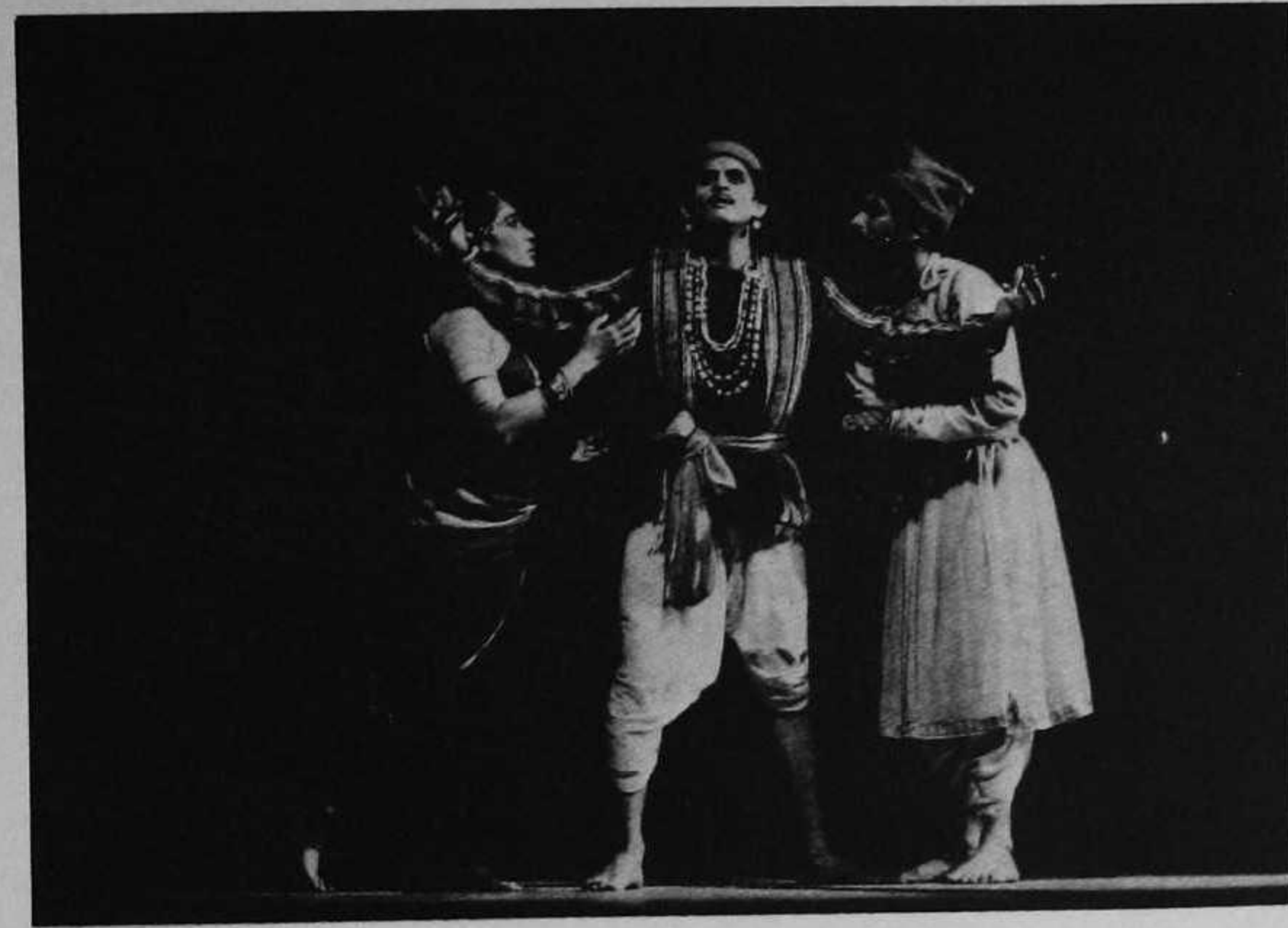
"There's a whole section of people in Bombay whose only language is English . . . but I was born in a family that hailed from a remote village in Maharashtra. These are the kind of people I work with, that's my workfield and I am very happy with that set-up . . . because, though I live in a metropolitan city and speak English, I still think in my own language, and that gives me a fantastic sense of belonging and rootedness.

"I was already a leading lady in the Marathi theatre in my teens when I met E. Alkazi. I was with him for three years during which I was trained in a totally British system of theatre. It did two things for me: it convinced me that my workfield had to be my own language theatre, but, at the same time, it offered a certain alienation from my own workfield . . . This way I could look at it and see for myself what I wanted to do with it. Then I started out on my own—ran my own ensemble for eleven years. To me, that's been the most creative period of my life, because all of us were together to understand what theatre meant to us, to life around us. We created a lot of actors and playwrights, who are now leading names in the Marathi theatre and in films. I saw the ensemble die a natural death almost fifteen years ago. And since then I turned a professional director-actress.

"After my ensemble disappeared, I went to England for three years with my husband. It was there that I encountered a situation where my personal need was to seek my own identity in a totally alien culture and to see in what way this identity was being reflected in my work . . . There, for the first time, I asked what I was doing that was Indian, in my theatre. I consciously started thinking about things that were Eastern as opposed to Western. It was then that I started thinking about folk theatre: 'Is it really theatre? What is it? I realised that perhaps in an event which takes place for ten hours a day, there are may be ten minutes of absolute dramatic potency. The rest is ritual. By its very nature it is repetitive. How can I, therefore, get to understand the very essence of what is theatre? It took some time and, surprisingly, I found a vehicle in Brecht. Here was a man reacting to the German theatre of his time, to the socio-economic situation at that time. He had written two plays which I could see perhaps as vehicles to experiment with the essence of folk theatre strengths, as I wanted to discover them. I worked on them, was very dissatisfied with what I had done . . . From the folk I went to the classical, but could not decipher it till I went to the *Natyashastra*. I thought to myself: Am I creating something which is a museum piece? The whole idea revolted me . . . I controlled myself . . . I am a person born in the 1930's and am looking at my classical traditions as I understand them . . . An urban mind living in Bombay in the 1980's and I have to do a classical play. How will I receive it? You will see this in a short piece my actors will demonstrate: an extract from *Shakuntala*.

"I walked into folk, I walked into classical but what I do is not folk, not classical . . . I am influenced by the folk, by the classical, and it gets reflected in my work.

"There is no intention to make a dead thing come alive . . . I have a tremendous curiosity which takes me to the roots, but I belong to the 'modern' . . . I don't believe in indulgence of the sort that makes theatre 'private' or in sensationalism, 'prettiness', dance, music, politics. I have not been able to understand the concept of political theatre . . . For me political theatre cannot exist . . .



A scene from *Hayavadana*

You are using theatre as a vehicle for something else. I am almost for a pure, religious approach towards theatre. As an individual, I like the lack of an attitude of negation. Questioning. Yes. But negation, no! Questioning already implies that you are questioning something out of curiosity and with reverence, and then denying it or defying it. But to negate is the easiest and most appealing thing for a performing art . . . You negate and you're a hero and that's what worries me . . . I could not negate till I had considered what was in the offing.

Vijaya Mehta then described the working of her theatre in Bombay . . . "I am finding it increasingly difficult to hold on to an ensemble because the lures are far too many for a young person . . . I find it very easy to work with people who are rooted somewhere or the other . . . I can relate to them and get them to provide me with a certain spontaneous naivete which I require for my work. This naivete holds things together and allows me to experiment . . . When I worked with German actors, I discovered how good my own actors are—not in comparison—but their strengths and their qualities . . . Of course, the fact remains that they are not formally trained . . . but I don't know whether an Indian actor, the rooted actor, can ever be trained in a formal way. Because his whole intuitive force is one of untrained abandon. You can give them perhaps a certain sense of objectivity but you cannot touch them. That is the material I basically draw on and I am finding it very difficult to hold on to them.

"I have never left the ring. I knew that I was accepted as a leading lady and actress (I have a lot of following in my own regional theatre). I do a lot of theatre that my people need and require. There are two things I do. One,

what convinces me has to be done and the other is that I always try to be in the ring. It doesn't mean that you lose your identity I think over the last 20 years I have created a genre of people who like to see my type of work, but that happens to be in the mainstream of Marathi theatre I believe in standing by and yet relating to my people—I don't want to be a classroom teacher with my ensemble working on various projects I am looking forward to being with you all, to get new things floating into me, so that once again I feel I am starting something new."

She then explained the genesis and design of *Shakuntala*. "To the German actors who said, 'You bring to us a form which is so strict,' I replied, 'Try and get used a little to the strictness of the grammar and you will get a tremendous sense of liberation.'" She then described her work on *Hayavadana*: 'rooted' but 'modern'.

* * *

Eugenio Barba: "No one can understand another culture. You can admire, be attracted, appreciate, be fascinated by it, yes. But understand, no. Paradoxically, all the great reformers of European theatre in the beginning of this century thought that they had understood what oriental theatre was, or, rather, the essence of certain oriental theatre forms. This misunderstanding has been one of the most fertile impulses in European theatre It was a typically ethnocentric view for Europeans They projected their visions, ways of thinking, values etc. on certain realities, which could not be judged by their vision.

"When Stanislavsky pointed to the Noh actor as the representative, as the finest example of how an actor should concentrate, he was projecting his own personal research, how every evening to achieve this rich, creative state, which was his own personal obsession, and stimulated all his research. When Meyerhold spoke about the theatricality of Kabuki, in reality he was projecting his own desire to make theatre not just a copy, merely realistic. But when he saw Kabuki theatre as showing a completely autonomous reality, he was just projecting his own vision. When Artaud in Paris was seeing Balinese theatre, he was also projecting his own desires—of how theatre should achieve an 'other' quality which, for him, should be a spiritual one. But he was also under the greatest misunderstanding when he spoke about the director in Balinese theatre as a sort of creator who decides on every action or every gesture or every step of an actor or a dancer. But we know that this doesn't exist in Balinese theatre. Similarly, when Brecht saw the Chinese actor Mei Lan Fang.

"All these misunderstandings have been extremely fertile for us in Europe, nevertheless. It has been a sort of help in teaching us the revolutionary way of approaching and leaving and transforming theatre—the ethical aspect of the theatre of which we hear today. This ethical dimension came from Stanislavsky . . . it is the invisible part of a culture.

"Why we cannot understand another culture is because we look at the visible part! Before the War, theatre personalities in the West had never been to the East. From their limited contact with Eastern theatre traditions, they had projected their own visions on these traditions—mainly in a struggle to move away from the traditional European theatre. After the War, this changed. Many

theatre people actually travelled to the East—not to find a confirmation for their theories, but to search for the invisible—what was, what existed, behind this unbelievable, fascinating, sensorial theatrical experience which we missed in the West.

"The actor's way of using the body is determined by three factors: the cultural background—where he's born, the social milieu he's brought up in, and his profession. What is the body technique of daily life as opposed to the body techniques of theatre? In the theatre I am using the body in a specific way, which dilates, expands my body energy and expands, dilates new perception. If there's no question of dilation, there's no building If I see a person repeating his daily body technique on the stage, as a spectator, I will not be fascinated. Too much technique kills the actor. As a director, I must help the actor go further. Can I find certain methods to help my actors?"

(His actors from Odin Teatret then demonstrated a scene showing a mother who had just lost her child.)

"To see is to interpret. Neither myself nor my actors had ever had any formal training in drama. So when we began training together we didn't know what to do. I had seen what Grotowski was doing—since I was with him for two years. Then I saw what his actors were beginning to do They had all finished formal training in theatre schools . . . so the training at the beginning was traditional training. Then, in 1963, I came to India. I didn't know much about theatre in India. I saw Alkazi's theatre which was very European. Then I went south and saw Kathakali, and it was a revelation. . . . I found that in all countries where poverty and misery exist, theatre comes across as a divine revelation



Eugenio Barba and Sanjukta Panigrahi

The actor really seduces me in these theatres. He conducts me to a point where the experience becomes reflection. This deeply impressed me. I had a dream that one day I would make my actors achieve this degree of suggestivity which is in the Kathakali actors I was not repeating the Kathakali exercises or the forms. That would have been a cul-de-sac. We've been working for years but only on exercises. Later, I understood that I had been working on energy, or how to build different patterns of behaviour which are organic and at the same time not like in everyday life . . . so that energy is dilated in the actor and, at once also the perception of the spectator is dilated. All these approaches were not psychological approaches. It was a break in our work in respect to the Western traditions that we were not working with psychologists. We were not working with intentions but with pure, apparently physical forms. But these exercises cannot be just physical exercises because training is not a physical factor; it is a mental factor. Training doesn't mean that you want to develop a certain ability. Ability in theatre is a handicap. It is important to achieve it. Once you've achieved it, it makes you its prisoner. With somersaults, for instance, you can do one, but if you keep on repeating it, the element of surprise, which is very essential, is no longer there. A Noh actor can only be a Noh actor. He cannot escape from it. The more you specialise, the more you risk being closed. So training is intended in order that exercise can achieve a certain quality of tension.

"Watching Japanese, Balinese actors rehearsing, I had the feeling that all this was very familiar. The style was different but I recognised something. I felt they belonged to the same blood group The pre-expressive or the biological level in theatre is what we call the 'presence'—the way an actor presents himself, so that you begin to feel the vibrations. If you begin with a codified form, you never begin with intentions . . . because you begin early and you don't explain. At the beginning, my actors were very gymnastic, very stiff. They arrived at the expressive oriental level after many, many years"

"It is possible to go to other cultures without being blinded by the visible! It is not the action which is dynamic but the connection between two actions.

"Incoherent coherence—once you find a point of departure then you have to be coherent. When you work with an actor, you can make him understand his own levels of energy—he can work on them, expand, compress or do anything with them.

"I am now concentrating on the *lasya* and *tandava* aspects in presentation.

"Today, I receive about 250,000 dollars from the state and they don't demand anything from me. But to arrive at this point was very difficult. When I finished training with Grotowski, nobody would hire me, because I had no diploma, and Grotowski was then totally unknown. So I started my own group. In 1964, group theatre was quite new in Europe. From the beginning we were outside the mainstream, and our exercises at that time were mainly gymnastic.

"A nurse in Holstebro saw a performance, liked it, and phoned the Mayor, who was newly-elected and wanted to begin with a cultural policy. He invited the troupe over to Holstebro. For the first time, after years of being neglected, I felt I was being taken into account. We had no money. . . so we invited theatre personalities for seminars and absorbed a lot. After ten years, the Minister of Culture in Denmark gave a small grant. Our status now is that of a theatre

school, for people preparing to go into group theatre; we have a publishing house which published Grotowski's best-seller *The Poor Theatre*. We also have a sociological research unit"

At this point there was another demonstration by actors of the Odin Teatret.

"You build on simultaneity, not only on a succession of actions like in Ibsen. You work with simultaneity and discontinuity. In Eastern theatre, this is very evident, for example, in Noh. In Germany, Henri Muller's plays are built on this."

Dr. Lechner: "While you are making new demands on the actor and on yourself, what logical demands do you make on the audience, the new spectator?"

Barba: "You must remember the invisible I had no audience in the beginning. So I couldn't make any demands We're making a particular type of theatre for a particular spectator There's no humour, it's bleak. Certain spectators want to meditate on their existential situation. In reality, we're very much personalised. Therefore, intimacy is very important. The maximum distance between actor and spectator should be four metres In each new society, theatre must be very small."

Saturday, January 18

Mr. P. L. Deshpande said, introducing Jabbar Patel and Satish Alekar, "These two young directors are responsible for the new turn taken by Marathi theatre after a kind of a long-drawn, traditional way of presenting plays. Their activity started much earlier, with a group called the Progressive Dramatic Association (PDA), which undertook the production of experimental plays on a non-professional basis. It was a great venture . . . later even the PDA got into a traditional rut, and one group separated and started out as Theatre Academy, Pune. It met with great success in its presentation of *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

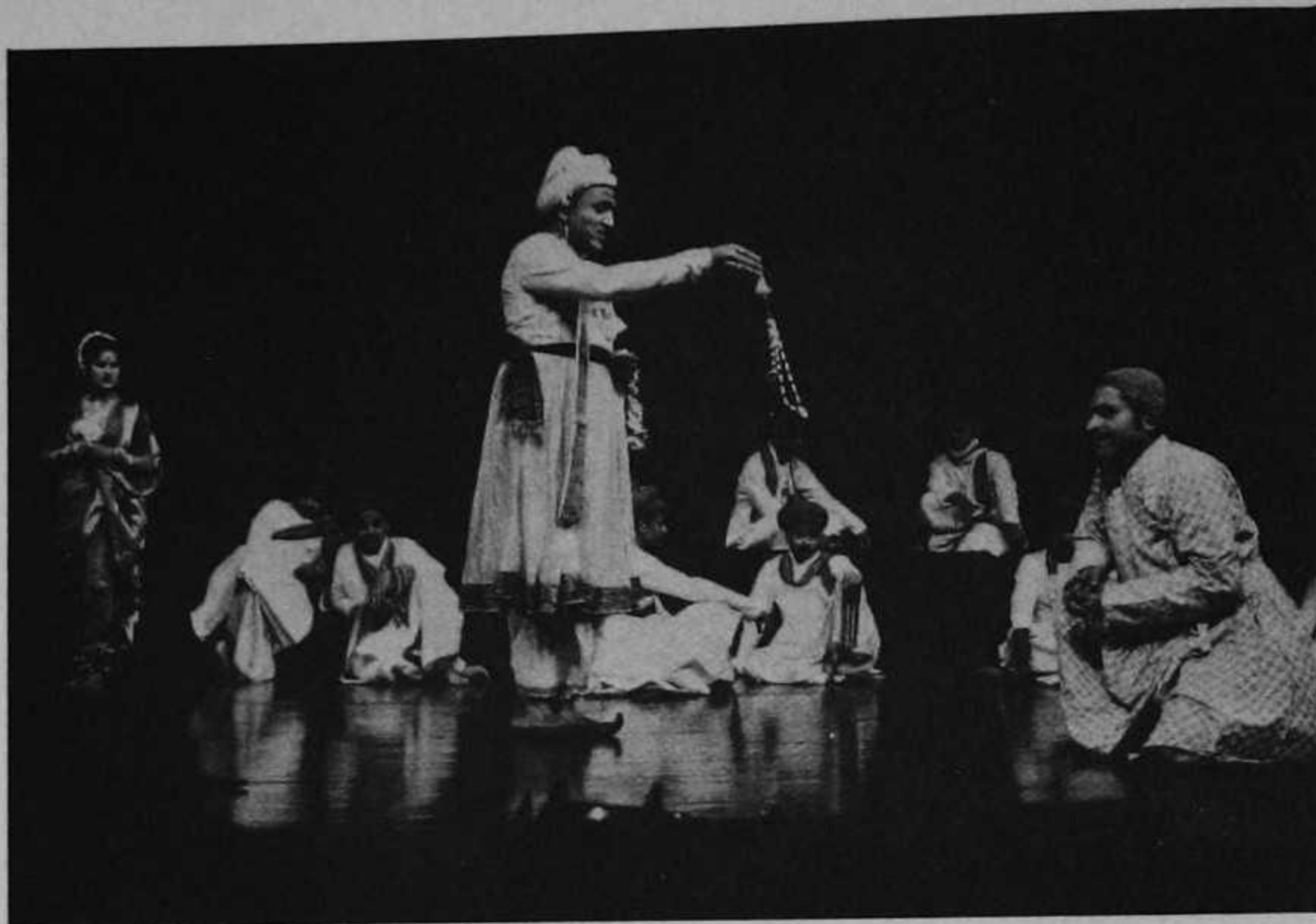
"Satish Alekar tried play-writing. His *Mahanirvana* can be described as the first 'black-humour' comedy in Marathi.

"Today, Jabbar Patel and Satish Alekar stand for all that is revolutionary, artistic and new in Marathi theatre, in particular, and Indian theatre in general."

Jabbar Patel: "We have a very big group now made up of actors who join us while they are still undergraduates. *Ghashiram Kotwal* was the cause of our starting this new group. There was so much controversy about the play that the Executive Committee of the PDA decided that it should be banned. All of us opted out and started a new group, the Theatre Academy. The play was first performed fourteen years ago and many of the original performers are still there.

"I have not undergone any kind of traditional training in theatre. Nobody in my family was involved with it. As a schoolboy, the smell of greasepaint and the warmth of the lights attracted me to the theatre, and here I am today—no one inspired me.

"Before *Ghashiram Kotwal*, we were into the naturalistic kind of theatre—Tendulkar gave us nine pages of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*. He had in mind the *Khele*, a folk form of the Konkan, with a human wall (or-curtain) of performers. In the villages, they do episodes from the *Ramayana* or other epics in this form.



A scene from *Ghashiram Kotwal*

From the curtain, suddenly, the performers come out and become characters. When they finish, they join the wall.

"Since I come from the rural area, the folk arts of Maharashtra have had a very deep impression on me. It is very difficult to pin-point the influence. *Ghashiram Kotwal* is a two-dimensional play. This human wall makes and breaks different compositions; so this folk-form has given me fluidity. There are no scenes. In this play, I broke off completely from my naturalistic style.

"Later we did P. L. Deshpande's *Teen Paishacha Tamasha* and more recently, *Padgham*."

Satish Alekar: "I am not a theoretician... it is very difficult for me to discuss something that I have written or something that we've done on stage. None of us have had any formal training in theatre. What we do have is a tremendous liking for theatre, and we enjoy repeated exposure to an audience. This interaction between us and the audience gives us the strength to go on.

"Since the Film and T.V. Institute of India and the National Film Archives are based in Pune, members of our group also get exposed to modern Indian and Western cinema.

"We have no establishment whatsoever; no office, no building, no permanent property. We work very informally but sincerely. It is very difficult to support oneself on the theatre. Our profits at the box office are ploughed back into our various theatre promotion activities. Subsidy for theatre from the Government is almost non-existent. Some help comes from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, when we stage shows in Delhi. The MMB helps us in Pune by co-sponsoring shows. But basically we have to find jobs to support our families.

"Our main aim is performance. Our group is performance-oriented. We perform in rural areas too, and this interaction is tremendous. The Theatre Academy is also engaged in various theatre promotion activities. Recently, we received a small subsidy from the Ford Foundation for a project to develop playwriting. In the first year, seven playwrights were invited to write plays. At the end of the year, they came to Pune, where each one read out his play in front of a distinguished audience. These scripts were then placed in a script bank. In the third year, four young directors will be invited to direct these new plays. Later, we will extend this to a district level. We also give travelling fellowships to young theatre workers."

Dr. Kumud Mehta explained the controversial aspects of *Ghashiram Kotwal*. "On the one hand, you will be seduced by the colour, the movement, the compositions, but one mustn't overlook the fact that there is a violent element in it, which is very much a part of Tendulkar's thinking. There is the portrayal of a decadent society, steeped in ritual and dissipation, corroded from within, and the British, with their superior technology, waiting to step in."

Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni: "Could you say something about your experiences while staging the English version of *Ghashiram Kotwal* off-Broadway?"

Satish Alekar: "I was invited to work as a consultant by the PAN-ASIA Repertory for the *Ghashiram Kotwal* project in English. My commitment was only till the dress rehearsal. I didn't see the performance. In any case, it is very difficult for me to react, seeing it in English. The lyrics have all been included. The actors are very sincere, and they've got the spirit of it. The best thing is that, for the first time, a professional group from outside India is being attracted to contemporary Indian theatre."

* * *

Alaknanda Samarth, in a discussion on the training of actors for the contemporary Indian Stage, examined aspects, choices and decisions faced on the way. Drawing from her varied experience with trainee-actors, she came to some conclusions which are applicable to most groups of actors, whether homogeneous in terms of language and background, or heterogeneous, such as those she worked with in New Delhi.

During the training sessions, she found that the word 'modern' was understood to mean 'realism' or 'naturalism', but that the actor's response to naturalism varied according to region or sensibility. The influence of *abhinaya*, as derived from traditional dance forms, and other recognisable links with traditional forms were marked, even in actors who had no formal background of these styles. In addition, in actors from Orissa and Kerala, the oral tradition exerted a strong and wholesome influence, encouraging a heightened feeling for language. Though the actor's intuition was sound, his faith in it wavered. Some shortcomings were observed in the incisive use of the spoken word in creating contemporary rhythms and anti-rhythms. Also, actresses occasionally suffered from different types of repression and stress. Lastly, group action on stage tended to be weak.

"Amongst the problems facing the actor today are the marked lines of demarcation between communication signs in theatre, cinema and television. The actor should be in a position to exercise his option and cross all thresholds.

if he chooses to. Can techniques born in a separate metaphysical context, in fact, be transvaluated? Can the actor be put in touch with himself through inter-cultural techniques, opening up his present in relation to his past? The actor's art has to do with making the unmanifest manifest, truthfully and convincingly. However, today's actor lacks conviction in the forms handled by the mainstream theatre. This split between the role he performs on stage and the reality he experiences, causes a certain bewilderment. Although the actor's changing self-consciousness distances him from a mythological interpretation of the world, the two worlds need not be mutually exclusive, nor destructive. To arrive at a realistic interpretation, the actor needs to strengthen his faith in himself, to scrutinize himself fearlessly, and to place himself in relation to his environment. The confidence gained by this examination and understanding of the nature of the outer and inner worlds, would lead to the emergence of his distinct identity as 'the Indian actor', drawing his life-force and energy from control of his body, just as the dancer had done in the past.

"Areas which overlap in Indian theatre, but which demand individual consideration, are as follows:

Narrative: Uniquely Indian, it provides an enriching, abundant source of material.

Emotion: An analysis of elements in this area included exercises on whether modernisation has to do with a sense of revolt, individuality, irony and ambiguity. What emerged was that the actor's sense of authenticity lay in different degrees of schizophrenia. He should perhaps be given the assurance that all emergent impulses are wholly Indian. If there are dislocations in the psyche, so also is there continuity. Once this is understood, the actor will create, challenge, subvert, preserve and grow, to reach new heights as a more complete actor.

Memory: In this area, the crucial factor was the realisation of the present as a memory of the past, and the body's memory of its links. Another vital aspect is that of collective memory as a shaping force of social character.

The Stereotype: The stereotype provides a mark of easy recognition and continuity for the audience, as representing and conforming to a known pattern of values in one set tradition. By contrast, there exists the fragmented individual—a product of discontinuity.

Voice and Language: Here, amongst the areas explored, were regional rootedness and the actor's freedom, national consciousness and language, dissociating language and gesture.

Lastly the teacher-student relationship, which was confrontational. An attempt was made to provoke responses in imagination and emotion, encouraging an unhindered response. An impartial interpretation of the work of each by all was encouraged, and the norms created in the process were observed.

In this way, all actor-participants felt free to emerge, through discussion, to a greater freedom, and a better understanding of themselves and their art in the context of the present day."

Eugenio Barba: "In a theatre school you are preparing students to go out and fit into any kind of role the market offers. In the United States, it's

Broadway. The same in Europe. Everywhere the market is a sort of big brother where actors are sold like cattle. There are only two possibilities: either you go into theatre school in order to become cattle, to sell, to earn, or you aspire for another type of theatre. If a theatre school was trying to produce actors for the future, no one would employ them. You cannot destroy the market. It's too strong. You have to decide if you want to step out of the mainstream of theatre.

"Peter Brook, despite his really extraordinary productions, has not really been changing Western theatre. It's two groups who are responsible for changing Western theatre art—Julian Beck, Judith Malina and Grotowski . . . They obliged us to take into consideration the 'invisible': Why are you doing theatre?"

Dr. Suresh Awasthi: "Actor training is a complex problem. Paradoxically, ours is a tradition where you can't think of an untrained dancer or musician performing on stage, but we've been performing with untrained actors for over a century. Today, the training given in drama schools is far behind in sensitivity, when you compare it with the work of some of the troupes in India. Theatre now is becoming very, very regional—which offers signs of hope. The work of the 1960's was labelled: 'the search for identity'; of the 1970's: 'the search for roots.' The regional groups are also evolving their own training methods which have primacy over rehearsals. This kind of training is taking place outside the confines of drama schools, and it is a very good thing."

Ratan Thiyam: "I was a student at the National School of Drama from 1970-74, when Alkazi was the director. The training was very western in technique. I was one of the earliest students from the Manipur region. When I returned to Manipur, I couldn't apply most of what I had learnt. Then I started working with Manipuri actors . . . We need good teachers who can understand the actors—who are prepared to 'encounter' the actors. The selection process in the National School of Drama is wrong. The student never comes up with the right qualifications or a good grounding of his own regional theatre."

Georg Lechner: "How can you have a National School of Drama when you have no national theatre but only very good regional theatres?"

Meera Syal was introduced by Farrukh Dhondy as "one of the most talented Asian actresses in Britain."

Meera Syal: "What I know about theatre could go onto the back of a postage stamp. I am a provincial in this company—a baby, in the sense that I've been in theatre for only two years. I don't belong to any theatrical tradition . . . I spent most of these two years trying to find some work . . . I can only talk of my experiences as a British-Asian actress and writer.

"In college, the syllabus was Eurocentric. We didn't study African or Asian theatre. After college I wrote to several repertory groups but didn't hear from any in reply. When I followed it up, I was told that at that moment they didn't have any roles for an Asian actress. It meant that my sphere of work was very limited. Where was my training ground? The mainstream theatre was almost impossible for me. There is now quite an argument in progress about integrated casting—which means that any actor can play any part, regardless of colour. But British directors rather underestimate their audience's intelligence. They

believe that as soon as a black face comes on stage, there has to be a reason for that face to be there. They're not there as performers, they're there to make a political statement about what it means to be a black and in Britain. So our art as a performer is always secondary to the political statement we are supposed to be making. The other avenue open to us is political theatre—with a small 'p'. This can range from theatre in education to actually left-wing groups. It's very good because they have a definite political stance. They don't particularly experiment with different forms . . . the politics comes first and the form is fitted round the politics. We're asked to play victims of racial attacks or trade-union leaders because that's a positive image. In other words, we're still asked to play roles that will in some way reflect a facet of the Asian experience. So again, that's limiting.

"I suppose the more lucrative area of work open to us at the moment includes the socio-realistic roles that are coming up in television. Even here the roles offered are limited. But at least they grudgingly accept us.

"If there's one burden the black actor has to bear in Britain, it's the continual expectation that he is there to make statements, to show people what we think about being black. Not to be, not to act—that's the great burden.

"Now black actors in Britain are getting together, forming their own groups, writing their own work. Our play *Vigilantes* was picketed by the more political members of the Asian community because they felt that it showed Asian men in a bad light . . . it didn't matter that it was the truth. I want the freedom to play classical roles, to play any role, regardless of my cultural background, and also to play roles that are written about my life in Britain . . . because as far as I am concerned there are a lot of stories to be told and I can't understand why this exploration which is going on inside our heads is not being represented dramatically.



A scene from *One of Us*

That's what the Asian Co-operative Theatre (ACT) is trying to do . . . One can't wait for the opportunities, one has to create one's own space in which to discover what one wants to say.

"There are many plays written by Black American and Caribbean writers. We have a language problem. Some of the finest Indian plays could be staged in Britain but we don't have access to good translations and the Indian forms are as alien to us as they are to the Britishers."

Then she explained the genesis of *One of Us*: "I haven't experimented with form because I have no experience yet—mine is more a theatre of reaction than a theatre of creation . . . We're a new generation—we're unique. It's only wise and hopeful that we bring forward some unique theatrical form to reflect that."

Asked whether the success of Ben Kingsley helped to further the cause of Asian actors in Britain, Meera Syal replied: "People like him or Sayeed Jaffrey, or Zia Mohiuddin are fantastic actors and should have been on the national theatre long ago, but, after *Gandhi*, they are definitely getting noticed."

She was also asked if the audience for their plays consisted largely of Asians. She replied that that depended on the area where they were playing. Dr. Suresh Awasthi said that his experience was that Asians did not go to see Asian performances.

Sunday, 19th January

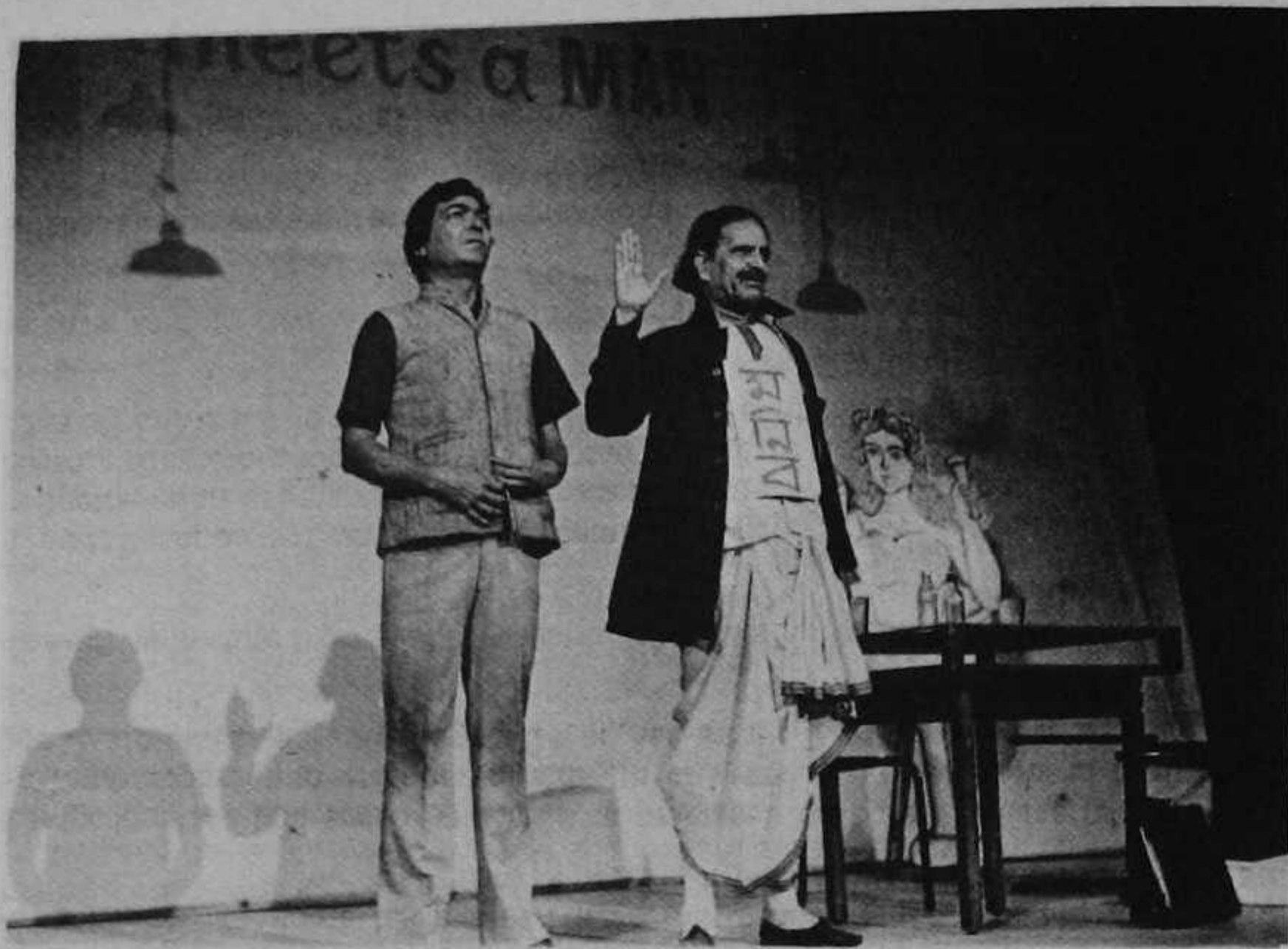
Dr. Georg Lechner introduced Sekhar Chatterjee as a director responsible for introducing Brecht and Franz Xaver Kroetz to Bengali audiences.

Sekhar Chatterjee: "As Peter Brook remarked, 'Brecht is the key figure of our times. All theatre work, at some point, starts or returns to his statements and achievements.'

"In West Bengal, Brecht's Marxist approach to social problems and his concern for the exploited breathed life back into the Left Theatre which had reached a dead end. In the sixties, it was facing tough competition from the folk theatre, or *Jatra*, and the commercial theatre. The *Jatra* repertoire began to include plays on political topics, and even Brechtian themes. In the seventies, after a spurt of enthusiasm for Brecht, whose name became synonymous with the Left Theatre, there was an equally sudden decrease of interest. This phenomenon needs some probing.

"The first time I took a Brecht play to a wider rural audience with *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*, they could not relate to the play, since its historical context was totally unfamiliar to them. With *Puntila*, I wanted to make the production as simple and comprehensible as possible, always keeping in mind Brechtian dialectics. To keep the class questions always in focus, I put two stickers under the jackets of Puntila and Matti—one reading 'the Master' and the other 'The Servant'. I made Puntila wear a cap, which resembled the one worn by our ruling party leaders, but with a different colour, symbolising religion.

"Brecht confronts Aristotelian drama theories, 'the theatre of events', with 'the theatre of story-telling'. He wants the ideas of struggle to be as interesting



A scene from Puntila

as the emotions of struggle. The spectator should leave the play with the seeds of a new intellectual conviction planted in him. Brecht achieved this by structuring his plays in such a way that the spectators could form their own conclusions. However, our audiences, unused to react in this way and shaped as they are by traditional forms of theatre, accept no more and no less than the intended message of the play. We directors, too, should avoid the needless intellectualizing of our productions. If the theatre is to be instructive, it must also amuse; and insofar as it is good theatre, it will afford pleasure. I realise that Brecht's laconic style, and particularly the songs, are difficult to translate. I think the right approach is to adapt Brecht to suit different people of different countries. Though this may seem sacrilegious, it is the only way to keep him 'in circulation'.

"As the central problem or message are as crucial as textual resemblance, the best solution is perhaps an adaptation which can reach the uninitiated masses in a familiar art form."

Rustom Bharucha said: "It is a tricky problem as to how one adapts Brecht. On the one hand, one could commercialise him, as many Bengali productions have done. I don't think you are advocating a commercial Brecht, but a popular Brecht. But that balance is very different. Audience response in Bengal is not very conducive to Brecht's theories. The energy of the *Jatra* or the other forms is more suited to Bengali audiences... We need Brecht... but how do we find the balance between being true to Brecht in our own way, in the Indian context, without succumbing to commercial pressures? Maybe *Puntila* will illuminate this."

Sekhar Chatterjee felt that the problem of commercialism was always there and it was not special to Brecht.

Asked which of Brecht's plays he considered most suited for adapting to Indian conditions, he replied: "*Bread Shop*. My production was very well received in the districts. It is our responsibility to make Brecht intelligible to our audiences. His theories of alienation, etc. are meant to make his work more accessible to people."

Rustom Bharucha: "The *Jatra* had two conventions that are intrinsically Brechtian: the *Juri* and the *Vivek*. *Juri*, the singers who interrupt the action with their comments, and the *Vivek* or commentator. Have you ever thought of using certain elements within the *Jatra* form to popularise Brecht? Why not turn to the *Jatra* and make the necessary adaptations?"

Dr. Georg Lechner felt one must decide how many spectators one wants to reach with Brecht: a few and remain pure, or the many, and be commercialised!

The participants from the USSR included Prof. I. G. Sharoev, Producer of the Stanislavsky Theatre, Mrs. M. A. Grenkova, Secretary of the Association of Theatrical Artists and Musicians, and Mr. V. Y. Shubovich, Head of the Board of Theatre Societies of the Ukraine.

Sharoev outlined the problems of contemporary theatre in Russia: "This kind of meeting is very useful for us, for we can exchange ideas, opinions and experiments in theatre. It is of importance not to search for those things which divide us but for those that are common. This helps to destroy the barriers of non-understanding, of non-knowledge. We consider art-theatre as a big stimulus in our complicated contemporary life... It has a great emotional influence on people and acts as the dynamism of change in their inner life."

"An artiste should be dedicated to humanity, peace and social progress. Theatre is creative work... There is the dual personality of the actor and the character he's representing. Theatre can be a dialogue with the spectator... and through the spectator with reality..."

He spoke of the influence of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and other Russian theatre personalities.

"Stanislavsky was deeply impressed by *yoga*, by the concentration it achieved." He added: "We have many experiments being staged now. Attention is being paid to the creation of small theatres. We have young dramatists called the New Wave in the Soviet theatre. In the various regions of the U.S.S.R., each region has its own theatre or theatres."

At this point there was a demonstration given by two of their artistes hailing from different parts of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Suresh Awasthi wanted to know whether there were any notes available for Tairov's production of *Shakuntala* in 1914.

The answer was: "There's a book written by Tairov himself and a good deal of information about the production. It is said that *Shakuntala* was one of his greatest productions."

Alaknanda Samarth wanted to know about various aspects of training in Russia.

The Soviet director replied that there were many institutes training actors. All have the same syllabus. Actors are trained for four years and directors for five years. Training is free for both categories and they are even given a stipend if they study well.

To a question about whether works from one language are translated into another within the various theatres in the Soviet Union, and if the classical works are translated and presented in other theatres, the representative from the Ukraine replied: "There are ninety theatres in the Ukraine province. They use both Russian and Ukrainian. All kinds of plays are translated and presented there. Festivals are held at which groups from other parts of the country are also invited. Plays by Western dramatists, too, are widely performed."

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This session was devoted largely to a discussion of *Request Concert*, staged by Alyque Padamsee on the previous day, and the project on the play, as planned by Rustom Bharucha and Manuel Lutgenhorst, both of whom "are encounters personified."

Rustom Bharucha: "We are in the process of working on it. We have been working on it for ten days and will continue to do so for three years. I saw a production of the play in New York four years ago. It was one of the most enthralling of theatre experiences. It starred Joan Mcintosh. It was a silent play but the gestures had a resonance of a kind which I had never seen in Western theatre before. The gestures operated on many, many levels—personal, public. A play not about a lonely woman, but about the world of a lonely woman. I realised that if the production had to be done in India, it would have to be done differently. The suicide—not as a melodramatic gesture, but as one of protest.

"Later, I met Manuel in New York at a friend's place. He wanted to do *Request Concert* in Tokyo, I wanted to do it in Calcutta. The aim is to adapt and stage the play in nine Asian cities over a period of three years, to create a production afresh in each city, and then, at the end of the three years, to have a simultaneous video presentation, during which each woman would react to the same thing but differently."

Manuel Lutgenhorst said: "English is a second language. So I became accustomed to using my ears and eyes mainly because the language was rather difficult. I am basically a theatre designer, but have now extended my career into writing and directing. I like *Request Concert* because I understood it even though it was in English."

Rustom Bharucha: "I was drawn to this play because it was silent. It liberates me. We are not travelling with a production because I don't like cultural tourism. We want to go to these places with the text and work with people from that city, so that we are not directing a play, but initiating it. We might also be engaged spectators.

"I have a great respect for differences and I am scared of unity. Unity is an abstraction for me. I think we have to work towards unity but through differences. I want to believe in these connections . . . but I don't want to assume they exist. I

want to look for them and examine the differences . . . not to alienate, but to respect and understand each other better.

Manuel Lutgenhorst: "I was strangely touched by yesterday's adaptation. When is a piece adapted and when is it merely inspired by another?"

"I saw only one or two similarities with the original—such as the title and the name of the author.

"Kroetz is showing how ritualised life is, and you don't even realise it. Yesterday's piece was very one-dimensional. It was just inspired by the original."

Rustom Bharucha: "The written text is not an imposition . . . it makes our creativity more dynamic."

The production roused different reactions among the participants.

Alyque Padamsee: "Loneliness in the West is more physical. I could see in Indian women a certain barrenness which I also found in Kroetz's play. Her only meaningful act comes at the end of the play. I admit I was more inspired by the play than intent on adapting it. I changed 'evening' to 'morning' in my production because I was trying to depict the Indian woman in her situation today. Her final act is the only significant action. Her suicide is both surprising and not surprising. What is surprising is that she does it at that time, but she would have done it at any time."

Kavita Nagpal: "I couldn't accept the idea of the battered woman. Also, there's an expression of resentment throughout the play which is perhaps not there in the original."



A scene from *Request Concert*

One participant wanted to know: "If you can't be faithful to a playwright, why do his play at all?"

D. G. Nadkarni said: "The play didn't move me at all—except for the good acting by Smita Patil."

Rustom Bharucha considered it an overwhelmingly naturalistic production and he didn't think that Kroetz was a naturalist.

Alyque Padamsee: "The detailing itself was part of the stylisation. Basically, I took Kroetz's play as a jumping-off point. What could I see in the play that had an Indian relevance? That was my main concern."

Manuel Lutgenhorst said that one should mention, in future productions of this play, that it is inspired by, and not adapted from, Kroetz.

Sekhar Chatterjee mentioned that Kroetz was adamant and rigid about changes made in his play during adaptations. He himself had done four of Kroetz's plays—*Request Concert*, *The Nest*, *Upper Austria*, *Neither Fish Nor Fowl*... Whenever you adapt, there are always problems. Shakespeare is done in so many ways... This kind of experimentation extends the boundaries of theatre and there should be no taboo against that."

Alyque Padamsee: "Is the director in theatre a re-creator or an interpreter? I believe in the director as creator."

Monday, January 20

Georg Lechner, introducing Jean-Claude Carrière, a close collaborator of Peter Brook on the *Mahabharata*, expressed the deep interest of all the participants in what happens to a great theatrical work of the East when it goes West.

Jean-Claude Carrière: "This is the first time I am in India without Peter Brook, so I feel like an orphan... It is difficult to talk about the show without the show... It is not totally finished yet. We are working on it still... We all live surrounded by walls. Some of them we know, like the walls between people and countries. Some of these walls are extremely difficult to break down because they are invisible; among them, the cultural walls are probably the hardest to pull down.

"The *Mahabharata* is totally unknown in Western countries—except maybe to specialists. We first encountered the *Mahabharata* in 1974; we were totally ignorant of it before. I have known Peter Brook for more than twenty years. When we first met in the 1960's, Peter was already one of the most brilliant directors in the theatre. In 1970, he gave up everything and got a subsidy from the French Government to stay in Paris. He decided to stop all celebrated activity and founded the International Centre of Theatre Research in Paris. He began working with unknown actors from all over the world, initially doing very strange exercises. I was curious about the work, so I used to go there once or twice a week. Then I began working with them... There is something in common between different cultures, including the attitudes, the gestures, the way of acting, of speaking, that could make a show in common possible. It was an attempt to get to something that could be common in human nature. At

that time we were groping in the dark. After three years, Peter Brook said: 'Enough of loneliness, of solitude.'

"At that time, we came across the Theatre Bouffe du Nord—an abandoned theatre in Paris. It was exactly what we were looking for. Our first production there was in September 1974—*Timon of Athens*. Then there was *The Ik* adapted from *The Mountain People* by Colin Turnbull.

"At that time, we met Philippe Lavastine, the Sanskrit scholar, and he told us stories from the *Mahabharata*. We felt that behind the situation of the *Bhagavad Geeta* lay a play. We asked, 'Would you tell us a little more about what is the situation? Who is this character? Why Arjuna? Who really is Arjuna? Why is Krishna driving Arjuna's chariot? Tell us this, because then we can see what dramatic material there is out of which we can, maybe, make a play.' After some sessions like this, Peter and I made a solemn decision that one day we would do it. But we would do it when it was ready. It would be as long as was necessary... I started meeting Lavastine and taking notes. I met him and other people for about a year, asking questions and writing notes. After more than a year, Peter asked me to write a play, from the stories, just to see if a play was possible. I wrote a play that was about two hundred pages long using a storyteller. The result was encouraging.

"We stopped working on the *Mahabharata* for a year... We did one show, which was another step, but in a totally different way. We worked on the setting and production of *The Conference of the Birds*. In January 1979, we were invited to the Festival at Avignon in July. We had six months to prepare and we had absolutely nothing... *The Conference of the Birds* is a Sufi poem written in the twelfth century by Fariduddin Attar, one of the finest Persian poets. It is an allegorical story about birds looking for a lost kingdom. Some of the actors knew the poem... and we had already done some exercises based on the theme of the birds. So in January, Peter asked me to write a play, a short play lasting one hour, fifteen minutes and based on it. And we did the play within six months. The response was fantastic. Behind the experience of the birds we kept thinking and dreaming about the *Mahabharata*. We had used Korean and Balinese masks in *The Conference of the Birds* and we realised that Western audiences were getting ready to receive something from the East. Not *India* in particular, but the *East*. We used oriental techniques in *The Conference of the Birds* but it was not located in a precise culture.

After that, we went to the *Mahabharata* epic itself—the poem. We didn't want it to be too literary or didactic... Peter Brook read it in English and I read it in French. We are lucky to have an almost complete translation in French. The *Bhagavad Geeta*, published in English in the eighteenth century, was immediately translated into French, before the French Revolution. In the nineteenth century, a Swiss national tried to translate the *Mahabharata* into French but it was not completed. In the mid-nineteenth century, an unknown French scholar decided to translate the complete *Mahabharata* into French. He didn't know how to sell it, but he sent out letters to libraries and received two hundred orders. He worked on the *Mahabharata* for more than twenty-five years but died before he could finish it. Then another friend took it up and he, too, died...

"What we called 'our great reading' took a year and a half. Separately at first, then together, we finished reading it, and compared the translations. We consulted Sanskrit scholars to find out the precise meaning of this or that phrase, and also what we should keep or not keep. After seven months, we already had a selection. I started looking for the French words I could use. If I introduced the word 'sin', I would bring Catholicism into the epic, and so on. I had to be very careful... I decided to use a few key Sanskrit words such as *dharma*, *mantra*, *kshatriya*, as I realised that no French equivalents could be found for them. I had to introduce new scenes, which were not in the original, to explain these words.

"I visited India several times with Peter Brook, and the musicians, costume designers, actors. We didn't know India before. We wanted to get in touch with all the Indian theatrical traditions in order to be able to represent them in the *Mahabharata* today. We were surprised to find that, in India, characters from the *Mahabharata* are still alive.

"Our last trip to India was in 1985. In the middle of the rehearsals we took our twenty-eight actors to India... From Bombay to Mangalore, to Udipi, to see the *Yakshagana*. The actors were directly plunged into the energy of the *Yakshagana*. Then we moved further south and travelled up the east coast. The first time we played the *Mahabharata* was in India—in a forest near Madurai. We visited two temples in the hills. Peter Brook sent all the actors off to listen to and absorb the sounds and atmosphere of an Indian forest. We had instructions to pick up any object that caught our fancy and bring it back... All these objects we put on the ground at the foot of the tree... and we started doing our different exercises... Peter asked us each to say a few words about India, making a sort of bouquet of words on India. All of a sudden a native woman came in, saw the scene, and lay down prostrate in front of the objects without saying a word, or looking at us. She was only interested in the fact that we had tried to make some kind of an offering. We were moved and kept silent. We then played the meeting between Shiva (Kirata) and Arjuna in the forest, and the people who passed by realised that we were performing the *Mahabharata*....

"We knew that we wanted to keep all the possible elements of the *Mahabharata*. We didn't want *à priori* to get rid of anything. Very often I was tempted to start the play and move directly into the action, but for some reason it didn't work... I realised that it was trying to impose a Western form upon an Indian story. It was not an easy thing to do. For a long time I hesitated between different beginnings. Then one night I had an image of the Madurai temple in the afternoon and a child walking... The idea of having a child, a young boy, in the story had never occurred to me before... I saw the boy coming, saw him meeting Vyasa, an old man, and I saw the old man asking him 'Can you write?' The boy says, 'No! Why?' The old man replied, 'Because I have composed a great poem. I have composed everything but have not written down anything... I need somebody to write down what I know.' The boy says, 'What is your poem about?' The old man replies, 'It's about you.' When I found this, I had found the play. In the original, too, I realised later, there is a boy (the grandson of Arjuna) who is told the whole story of the *Mahabharata* by Vaishampayan, a disciple of Vyasa. I thought I had invented the boy, but, in fact, it was coming secretly from the *Mahabharata*, but in a slightly

different way... When I found the relationship between Vyasa and the boy, I kept the boy for the whole play. Vyasa tells the boy, 'I am going to tell you why you are here and what happened to your family.' Then the family appears and the boy is constantly in contact with them and with his own long-dead ancestors. The relationship between Vyasa, the boy and Ganesha (who writes the play) is a triple relationship. There is also a secret contest between Vyasa, who is a man, and Ganesha, who is a god, about which one of the two invented the other one. That is a very strange triangle which gave me the three feet of the play. After eight or nine years of work on the *Mahabharata*, in one night I found it. That night I wrote twenty-five pages. We have made very few changes in the original draft. It took me about two years to write the whole play... We wanted as many cultures as possible to be involved in our *Mahabharata*. We wanted to develop our group of actors to add to the six or seven who were working with us, and who were already in *The Conference of the Birds*. We started looking all over the world for two years. I auditioned nearly four hundred actors myself, with Peter Brook watching. It was interesting not only to test the possibilities of the actors, but also the potentiality of the scenes. It was auditioning not only the actors but the lines, and Peter was watching both the play I was writing and the actors acting. I, too, was testing my own lines with actors unknown to me... trying to find out what works and what doesn't work.

"I already knew that the play, which was in three parts, would last eight to nine hours. I did a complete reading of the play on three different days to all the actors, myself playing all the characters... like a storyteller. Another purpose was to keep alive the vitality of the storytelling all the time, as in the poem. Vyasa was not talking to the audience directly in the play, as he does in the original. There is a go-between: the boy, linking the author and the audience. We had to recapture the mood of the original poem. Peter told the twenty-three actors and the five musicians that there is one storyteller with twenty-three mouths. The basic way of acting is that they are both acting and telling a story at the same time. This happens several times in the play.

"During the eight months of rehearsals, I continued working on the play with the actors... in the same way as I was writing when auditioning the actors. If there is a problem somewhere in the play, if the scene, the emotion is not right, the actor is the only one to feel it. Not even the writer or director can feel it. Peter Brook is always participating in the writing and I am always participating in the directing. There is no rupture and ours is a real collaboration. There is no need for an 'apartheid' between the actors and the director. Every day starts with about two hours of exercises—trying to establish something which is a way of being together. We know about one thousand exercises. After the first show in India, we played an hour of the beginning of the *Mahabharata* at the Lycée Montaigne before people who had never even heard of it before."

Georg Lechner: "We enjoyed your presentation because it followed the only style it could—the epic style."

Wolfram Mehring: "I saw two parts of the play in Frankfurt. I realised that it was unfinished—not in a negative sense but as something that one is always working on. This is the biggest success of the play. I got the impression that the cast of actors was not as strong as the direction or the adaptation.

The actors were not strong enough for us to forget the beautiful lines and direction."

Vijaya Mehta: "I saw it in July 1985 and it has not left me still. I made a marathon effort, because I felt it was my responsibility to share my experiences with Indian readers. So I made a few jottings. All I can say is that I was totally bowled over. An individual has the capacity to receive on various levels... for me, the *Mahabharata*, as I saw it, was such an experience, I can't define it clearly, except to say that what I received will always stay with me. The Asians, the Africans, the Balinese... can cope, with humour, beautifully... could it be because in their culture, their tradition, as in ours, the most profound statements are made in the most ordinary way? The total impact of the reverence, the faith with which it was done, means more to me than analysing."

Asked to elaborate on his technique as a writer, Carrière replied: "As a movie writer, I am used to writing anywhere. I don't need any special conditions to write... You have at a certain point to write with your actors, and then go back to your loneliness and work. The director and the writer are, in a very secret way, acting too. When you act a scene it's very easy to write it."

Carrière was asked to elaborate on what he meant when he said that characters in the epic are alive in India to this day.

Carrière: "I was born in a country which has no myth. Till now the myths of India are alive... that is what I meant when I said the characters from the *Mahabharata* are still alive today. I will never forget what an Indian lady told me by way of explanation: a woman carries a baby for nine months which then has a lifetime of about eighty or ninety years. The *Mahabharata* was in conception for seven or eight centuries. You can imagine how long it is going to be alive."

Dr. Lechner said that it would be interesting to see how an Indian audience reacts to the *Mahabharata* when it comes to India, perhaps in 1987. He felt that a myth was also a religious reality for many Indians, the way it can't be for Western audiences.

Kavita Nagpal remarked that there was an Indian flavour to the costumes. Elements of Indian traditions were used. But she was happy to see that there was no attempt to 'Indianise' it.

Introducing Habib Tanvir, Dr. Suresh Awasthi said, "In 1954, he staged *Agra Bazar*, based on the life and works of the famous Urdu poet Nazir, of Agra. Prior to that, no playscript had been constructed in this manner—with a mix of folk and urban actors. This play was a kind of shock to traditionalists, like a fresh breeze. After four years, he did *Mrichchhakatikam* (The Toy Cart) in the *Nautanki* style. Again it shocked the critics. In 1958, Sanskrit drama was still considered the concern of historians, sociologists, not of theatre people. But Habib, by desecrating the classics, made them meaningful for us. He played a very vital pioneering role in putting theatre back into the *Natyashastra* tradition."



A scene from Charandas Chor

Habib Tanvir: "I worked for about eight years in the Indian People's Theatre Association before going abroad. I founded the Naya Theatre in Delhi in 1979. There is something in theatre which doesn't leave hold of me... I am with you on the limitless possibilities of theatre. We believe in authenticity. Given the anti-British sentiments of our younger days, we came to hate imitation. We derived inspiration from Stanislavsky, Chekov, Gorki, Tolstoy, and many of my colleagues and critics in Delhi, I find, are stuck where Ibsen was. This is not to say that Ibsen is limited but to get stuck with him is equally limiting. We passed through a very confused time in which we were not clear about whether we had or had not achieved freedom. This political phase had a cultural result. When it was clear that we had indeed won freedom, we began to realise that there are forces inside the house, inside the country, within ourselves and inside society which are inimical to the interests of the majority of the people..."

"I find that those who are not educated in the formal sense, but truly educated in another sense, have a cultural continuity. They have open, receptive minds. They can imbibe such a lot, express, bring it all out. This is what the folk actor and the rural actor in many regions can do."

"It is often forgotten how fundamentally German Brecht is: his music, his colloquialisms, his language are all deeply connected with his and the country's past. It is that kind of authenticity which we have come to respect in theatre. This is 'authenticity'—being yourself first and foremost. Elitist interests, big monopoly interests are promoting culture. Now we want them to help us. We would like to lap up whatever they give us and, yet, boo at them. We feel not necessarily bound to respect them. But there is a contradiction here. When you take something, you fool yourself by suggesting that you may still be yourself;

you are, to that extent, losing ground. So it is a very delicate balance. Those who give all those awards, the pats on the back, feel that they may be able to suppress that most authentic voice! When people talk of folk theatre and its limitations, its inability to express adequately the contemporary situation, one wonders what is contemporary. Contemporary to whom and in relation to what? I find the villagers in India absolutely full of both dead stagnation and absolute creativity. Their ethos and their history are entirely different from the background of those living in towns and the friction between the two is what engages my mind.

"What is it in Greek theatre, in Shakespeare or in Molière that remains open to interpretation even today? What is authenticity and who can claim to be authentic?"

Dr. Lechner: "The 'element of surprise' in theatre has a very different meaning in the Indian context. The epic character of Indian theatre means that basic assumptions are clear and stories are explained in ever-new detail. There is no surprise in that sense. Our playwrights have a new surprise every minute. How do you react to this as an Indian?"

Habib Tanvir: "I find the meaning of the word 'surprise' as it is used here, very foreign to me... the 'surprise' you are talking about is a Western notion. I get a great surprise in the *Mahabharata*, particularly when one finds Duryodhana in Paradise at the end, because he is consistent in denying even a small piece of land to the Pandavas."

M. K. Raina: "When you talk of the élitist influence on culture, do you mean to say that encounters such as these between the East and the West, too, have such an element in them?"

Habib Tanvir: "I feel this élitist influence exists in India... I have been watching some people going right down the drain under the influence of patronage."

Tuesday, January 21

Dr. Lechner described Fritz Bennewitz as 'a living encounter' between GDR and India. He has realised 'encounter' projects with Vijaya Mehta and with B. V. Karanth.

Fritz Bennewitz: "Brechtian style—all talk of this kills the director's own style. There is a concept of Brecht but nothing like a Brechtian style..."

"One should strive to be as close to Brecht as possible but, at the same time, to create an indigenous product... In an Indian production, the play springs out of the music. In our productions, the music is external. You cannot transplant forms as though they are leaves of trees. The forms are the trees themselves, and if they don't yield results, it may be because they are barren or because we are barren."

B. V. Karanth explained the work of the Rang Mandal. "In our repertory most of the actors are not really trained as the National School of Drama students are. For me, folk theatre is not folk theatre or a separate entity, and I have never felt the contradictions between village and city life."

"I presented Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Insaf ka Ghera)* in Hindi, because I felt it was very near to an Indian situation."



A scene from *Insaf Ka Ghera*

"Now when trying to bring *Pandvani* on the stage, music should not be decorative, but interpretative."

M. K. Raina: "Has the Rang Mandal succeeded in regenerating the theatre movement in Madhya Pradesh, or in presenting the work of any new playwrights in the State?"

B. V. Karanth: "We did conduct a workshop for playwrights in Bhopal, but it was not a very successful experiment."

Dr. Lechner asked Fritz Bennewitz about the problems he faced when he adapted *Shakuntala* and *Hayavadana* for East German audiences. How did his actors react to the productions?

Fritz Bennewitz: "My job in this venture was that of a consultant. The concept of *Shakuntala* changes under European conditions. Initially, it is mainly the exotic quality of the production which attracts the audience... Later they get involved in the story. An Indian audience would never clap after the traditional *puja* is done. A German audience applauds with tremendous enthusiasm. It is an ongoing process."

Jabbar Patel: "Uptil now, most of the Indian plays you have staged there have been classical plays. I want to know whether there is any presentation in your country of modern Indian theatre."

Fritz Bennewitz: "My first step was to introduce classical plays to our audiences. Later, when I tried bringing over contemporary Indian plays, I did

not get a single play. As a substitute, we did Tagore's *Post-Box*. We are searching now for a genuine contemporary Indian theme... not just plays. I would like my Indian friends to help me find it."

Jabbar Patel: "It is high time that one turned one's attention to contemporary Indian and world theatre, because, during the last ten years, exchange has been merely confined to classics. Now we would like to see something new and contemporary from your country and hope you do the same with contemporary Indian theatre in your country."

Girish Karnad: "What is relevant to Indians may not necessarily be relevant, to your audiences and vice versa."

"Of some of your experiences and insights gained while producing Brecht in India, have you been able to introduce them back into the GDR productions?"

Fritz Bennewitz: "The experience has become part of my identity and I can't separate it from the play itself..."

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This session was devoted to an Open Forum on *Brecht—Reception in India*.

Panelists: P. L. Deshpande, Georg Lechner, Fritz Bennewitz, Sekhar Chatterjee, M. K. Raina.

Dr. Lechner introduced the subject. "A great humanist, Brecht challenges us in a deeper way. As a student of philosophy, I consider Brecht to be the one man contributing to the question of what man finally would be in the future. His main approach to everything is to doubt..."

Farrukh Dhondy: "When I see Brecht in Britain, it seems to me that Brecht is hitting politically at much larger and eternal political verities: the judges are wrong... the poor are good, sometimes bad, the rich are nasty, the soldiers behave in an indisciplined way, the government is usually corrupt, and so on. The truths are being transmitted to an audience which already knows them."

"I wonder whether there is any way to make a Brecht production or, for that matter, a production of any play from outside the borders of India, more specific to the very circumstances... naming names etc."

Fritz Bennewitz: "Brecht doesn't just make political statements. If the government is corrupt, his plays try to show why it is so, or they challenge you to ask—'Why?' I think it is much more subtle."

Girish Karnad: "*Arturo Ui*—in ten years, everyone in India will understand the play much better."

M. K. Raina related his experience while staging *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the villages of the north.

Sekhar Chatterjee: "The *Jatra* form, I found, has succeeded in bringing characters such as Lenin etc. to life for the masses. Most traditional plays have failed to do this."

P. L. Deshpande: "I feel that *Arturo Ui*, for instance, could be done in the open-air *Jatra* style without any problems whatsoever."

K. N. Panikkar: "I feel most of our audiences do not understand Brecht because of the structure, the format... I could not understand *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for years, so I took it upon myself to break up the structure entirely into a narrative... I had the Grusha story and the Azdak story going on simultaneously on the stage... I found that I understood the play better and so did the audience. I wonder how far this is possible?"

Fritz Bennewitz: "I feel it depends on the audience... I would never do it, not because I am afraid of committing a sacrilege against Brecht."

Eugenio Barba: "Political plays don't exist. Only the context makes a play political or otherwise. *Waiting for Godot* is not a political play... but once, in America, students were arrested for performing *Waiting for Godot*."

Fritz Bennewitz: "*Puntilla*... I think one has to know where, in the play, to find the system that is corrupt and not just the man... *Puntilla* is a man of epic dimensions."

Habib Tanvir: "In Karanth's presentation of *Insaf Ka Ghera* there are subtler forms of suppression of the people. The use of the Bundeli dialect in the play by urban actors is not only an aesthetic offence because of the manner in which the dialect is spoken, but it also smacks of a subtle form of exploitation of the rest of the tribals... because they are getting alienated from their culture."

M. K. Raina: "The same things happen when handicrafts from villages come to the cities and are commercialised... that, too, is a form of exploitation."

P. L. Deshpande: "When I read the *Three Penny Opera*, I could see my *tamasha*, my metropolitan culture, the underworld, the goondas... and I thought I could present it as it was to my people. Brecht's plays are so very near to our *tamasha*, that there is a sense of liberation when you are doing the play. There, too, we encountered opposition from the Brecht *pandit*-s."

"I felt a close affinity with the people represented in the play... I also gave more accent on the political implications of the play. The audience felt that Brecht had written a Marathi play—it didn't give the impression of being a translation. The presentation was criticised because it was entertaining... I don't find anything wrong with this, because Brecht himself has said 'a play has to be playful.'"

Dr. Lechner: "The theatre of Brecht in Germany is a different theatre, it's a new theatre. Are you anywhere near developing a new theatre after Brecht in India? Personally, I don't see much evidence of it... yet."

Fritz Bennewitz: "These experiments by various directors represent, in fact, steps in just this direction."

Girish Karnad: "Two things need to be differentiated: the impact of Brecht's productions, and the influence of Brecht. In the 1960's, when we were first initiated into Brecht, our misunderstanding of him was very important, in that it gave rise to productions such as *Hayavadana* and *Jo Kumaraswami*."

M. K. Raina: "Brecht's 'invasion' of India, I think, has come to an end... a new generation of writers, directors and actors is coming to the fore. We need a new consciousness among human beings."

Habib Tanvir: "I think the consumer society needs a set-up of competent directors, actors, theatres—even somewhat radical theatre—and I feel we are supporting this in a silent way."

Georg Lechner: "I think that's why we discussed Brecht in the first place . . . perhaps, Brecht has an answer to this question—maybe not a concrete one—but a hidden answer."

Wednesday, January 22

Dr. Georg Lechner introduced Girish Karnad and said that he was there in his capacity as a contemporary playwright.

Girish Karnad: "It's a truism that whatever a playwright wants to say, he should convey through his plays. The historical context in which we were writing (those of us who were writing after the post-independence era) was very important.

"When I was twenty-two years old, I got a scholarship to go abroad . . . a choice like that was fraught with tensions in the family. While preparing to leave, I suddenly found myself writing a play . . . I was surprised, because I wanted to be a poet. I had prepared to write in English but I found myself writing in Kannada. While the myth was Indian, in form, it was inspired by Anouilh's *Antigone*.

"I found that, while many Indian playwrights derive their material from their mythology and traditions, for the form, they often turn to Western models. Modern Indian theatre started only a hundred years ago in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

"The Parsi theatre of those days has been swallowed by the Hindi commercial film. When I started writing, the 'Parsi' tradition in Karnataka had died down, leaving just a few decadent plays. The socio-realistic plays of the early 20's and 30's were created by playwrights who turned to Western society.

"In the case of *Hayavadana*, the idea for the play was born out of a conversation which I had with B. V. Karanth, regarding the use of masks. I told him the story of Mann's *The Transposed Heads* and said it would be a good idea for a film. He said: 'No, it would make a marvellous play.' That started me thinking about the endless possibilities of the theme. The use of masks was not a stylistic device, but a genuine case of transposed heads, and what better way was there to begin?

"There is a difference in the way in which masks are used in the East and in the West. In the West, mask and face are always contrasted. In traditional Indian theatre, the mask is only the face writ large. It is a kind of expansion of the characteristics for the stage.

"I was tremendously excited by the possibilities of folk theatre. The rich textures of Indian folk forms made possible the use of various technical devices Most of the people who used these forms initially have now gone back to the three-walled living room . . . it has been a sort of indulgence.

"The question of form is not only related to the content but also to the question of commitment, of how to make it relevant to one's audience.

"Some of us contemporary playwrights are still searching, unsuccessfully, for a relevant form, and that is why some of us have turned to films."

Suresh Awasthi: "I think people are still writing plays—only maybe they are moving in different directions. Richer plays and a greater variety are now to be seen."

M. K. Raina: "We can't wait for a playwright to write a play. We now have groups writing plays."

W. Eysselinck: "What features would you like to see in theatre traditions in order to encourage young playwrights? We seem to think a play happens but, in fact, it is carefully nurtured . . . what kind of forum do we have now? I am sorry but, for our playwrights, there is no theatre, no national theatre."

B. V. Karanth: "Raina's statement is very true. We can't afford to wait for a playwright to write a play during which all our theatre activities will cease."

Girish Karnad: "For almost one thousand years since Sanskrit drama died, India had no major playwright."

Farrukh Dhondy: "Talking about the redundancy of a playwright, in the U.K. and in Europe, at least, I think there is a definite consciousness in the minds of the audience about the difference in plays written by a playwright and those created by a collection of people. I find that it is only a play written by a playwright, and dialectically rehearsed with the group and rewritten, that can extend argumentative, logical, dialectical theatre . . . Other kinds of plays seem to be stuck within the consensus of thinking of a group of people. A playwright's play is capable of telling the audience something new. The collective's play reinforces what they already know and makes visible what was perhaps on the tips of their tongues."

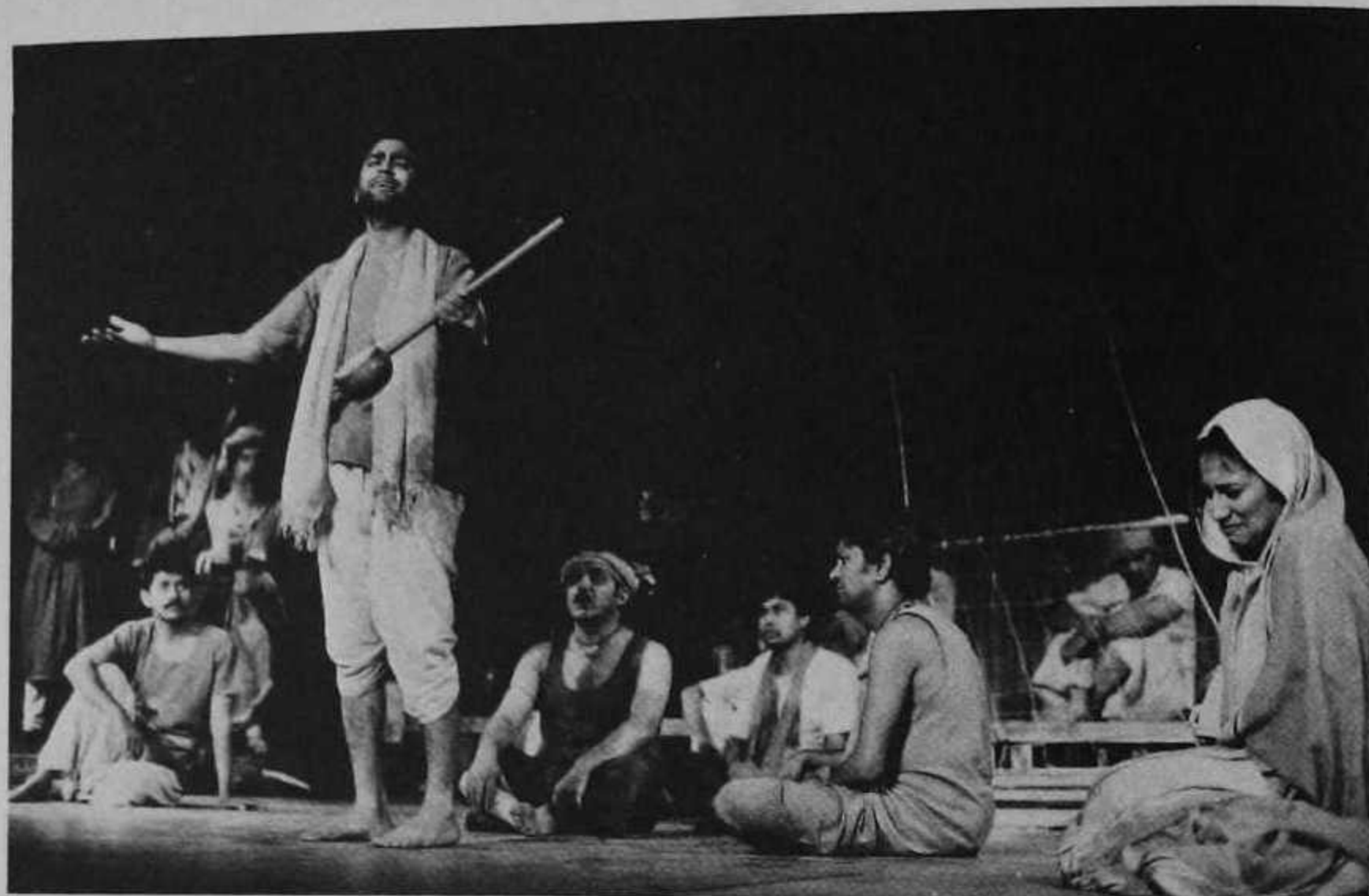
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M. K. Raina: "I was interested in theatre right from my school days, and received a state scholarship to the National School of Drama (NSD). I had not read any plays before. At the NSD I didn't understand what was happening. Then I acted in Shanta Gandhi's *Jasma Odan* which, I think, was my first exposure to traditional Indian theatre.

"While studying, I began to wonder about the relevance of the plays we were studying. I was introduced to Brecht by Carl Weber. That was the time of Bangladesh and Vietnam. Our small group did street plays mainly in protest. After I finished studying at the NSD, I wanted to return to Kashmir, my home state . . . which then, as now, was in a state of turmoil . . . I am still confused about my problems . . . am still searching . . .

"I did theatre workshops in Delhi for a while . . . staged *Lower Depths* which was liked . . . got assignments from various universities. The more empty space I have, the better I enjoy working in it. My concept of theatre is that one should be able to perform anywhere, in any costumes and with minimum props.

"I will not accept the heavy tradition of centuries . . . I will use it as a device, but not only as a form. Whatever experiments I have seen have merely been in the nature of decorative devices.



A scene from Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein

"Urban theatre people often use folk elements in their plays but without paying any attention to their genesis or other aspects . . . To me this is the worst form of exploitation.

"There are two ways for a contemporary, urban theatre worker to interact with tradition: (1) Enter the milieu of the form, totally immersing oneself into the lives of the people, eating, living and working with them and attempting to reach the soul of their expression and thus understand the basis of their cultural expression. An example of this is the work of Habib Tanvir. (2) Someone in an urban environment, with a different rhythm but with a serious interest in theatre, can use the traditional forms only as devices, perhaps to turn them inside out. The majority of us belong to this category.

"If a traditional form fails to survive the test of time, it should be allowed to die."

Thursday, January 23

Meera Syal introduced Farrukh Dhondy. She first heard of him through his short stories. Later, he became a sort of spokesman for the Asian community in Britain.

Farrukh Dhondy: "It is sometimes argued that Indians came to Britain because there was a colonial connection, that they looked upon Britain as the land of Shakespeare and so on. It is an appealing argument until you think about the Gulf. If one looks at it from that perspective, it is very clear that the second half of the twentieth century has become most significantly the era of international mobility of working classes. The Indians, Bangla Deshis and Pakistanis, who went to

Britain, did so because they thought they would have a better living. And also, in all these ex-colonial countries, there has been a fundamental failure of the nationalist ideal. The nationalist promises did not come true, and consequently there has been a mass migration. After the Second World War, Britain turned labour-intensive without the labour to fulfil the intensity, and in that way invited the influx of people. (I am saying all this simply to tell you about whom we speak when we talk about Asian culture in Britain.) For several years, from the beginning of that migration, which we can put down as taking place from the late 50's into the 60's, there was precious little that one could call transplanted or generated Black culture in Britain. The reason was simple. People were busy earning a living. The initial dream they may have had of getting back to their home country remained an ideal. The following generation, the Black Britons, to my mind, is one of the most exciting generations.

"In the 60's, you could find some kind of hark-back culture to the countries of their origin. The community occasions formed the nucleus of the nostalgic culture. There were folk forms, there were classical forms, but there was no modern contemporaneous form, because contemporaneous form in Britain—very generally speaking—is used for two purposes: either to assert a high culture, or for a progressive examination of what is going on today. Gradually, as the exploration of the contemporary became the chief form of art, one began asking the Asians: what is your contemporary art, why are you not using art forms to forge an extra language of dialectic within and among yourselves? The kitchen-sink plays, *Look Back in Anger* being the central focus, happened at the same time as migration took place, and coincided with the assertion of meritocracy against the Establishment.

"Obviously, it is in this tradition that the new generation of Asians had to begin to work. The British expected us to say who we are, why we are, what we want, how we are going to sort out this extremely difficult settlement into a society which was, by and large, alien to the parents, but becoming more and more familiar to the children. There were sociologists and university departments doing surveys on the immigrants. Apart from that, there rose in the Black communities the voice of militant journalism. This happened in the late 60's. An audience for a multi-cultural literature existed before the work existed—it didn't have to fight to create its audience. Social circumstances and the tradition of enquiry in liberal Britain had created an environment in which teachers, social workers and audience alike were clamouring for something that would not be sociology or journalese, but would be a literary weapon in the understanding of the new community. The purpose from the publishers' point of view was to try and explain Blacks to Whites. The Asians of the new generation were creating all manner of conditions within the institutions of Britain. There was a certain amount of upheaval in the schools as a new dictum was born, that something of their culture should be reflected in the school curriculum. Now what was the culture of the school? Was it the national culture of India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, the West Indies, or were they making, through the conditions of their settlement, a new culture right there? Obviously, the second is the correct answer. Militant journalism didn't quite get at it. I think every one or two books in the last ten years tried to get at the culture of that settlement. The young generation was not producing their own stories. As far as theatre went, there was absolutely none of it except within the groups that supported militant journalism. We said to ourselves, we must

use more than the lecture form, more than the pamphlet form. The origins of Black Drama in Britain are extremely humble—an improvised form, without script, an extension of a dialogue that we might have had amongst ourselves, with a simple message about the problems faced by the Blacks. This was in order to get across to the older generation, who may not have read a pamphlet or wished to get involved with 'trouble-makers', but would go and see a play. It was when the present generation of British Asians came out of school that they began to demand equality with white meritocrats. They were measuring themselves against the British generation. Let me give you one example of the path which the drama movement took, that of the Black Theatre Co-operative, a West Indian co-operative of young actors. It was thanks to Mustafa Muthuna, a Trinidadian, and his authentic theatre of Black folk-form on the stage, that Black culture went white so to speak: it won a new audience. My own entry into theatre was facilitated by this.

"Through the late 60's and 70's, there grew in Britain what is known as a fringe theatre, which began to do plays which were not done by any established theatre which had funding. It was inspired by Living Theatre and the like from Europe. Being themselves a deprived group among the meritocrats, the white fringe began incorporating some Black material and inviting some Black actors. But they were given very incidental and minor roles and the Black actors found it necessary to operate by themselves. Also, when the white fringe incorporated Black material, it had one peculiarity: that of looking at Blacks from their own point of view, in the sense that the Blacks were made to say to them just what they wanted to hear from them.

"The funding of cultural activity became central to the rise of a new Black cultural class—actually a very small sub-section—who have fought their way by complaining about racism with fairly powerful positions. Fringe became the boss, racism became the chief leverage instrument. I was one of those trying to cast a few bombs into this. . . .

"I thought that the function of theatre for the Black and Asian community would be, first of all, to try and examine which is the rising class within us, what is it that we are doing with our dialogue with the community, the host community. Last year I wrote *Vigilantes* based on this situation—we must use theatre as a weapon to discuss it amongst ourselves."

Dr. Suresh Awasthi, introducing K. N. Panikkar, said: "In the 1960's we used the expression 'quest for identity' and in the 1970's 'search for roots.' Most of us don't understand the new theatre and what it implies—it is part of a whole process of cultural decolonisation. In theatre, the dislocation was very, very violent. . . . The concern with the text has finally restored the primacy of the actor in theatre—after nearly one century."

K. N. Panikkar: "I would like to communicate with you through the theatre idiom—the actor in the theatre is the creator.

"My approach to the Sanskrit texts is purely theatrical—in *Shakuntala*, I made the hunt of the deer seem to be the hunt of Shakuntala.

"My troupe will now demonstrate some *Chari-s*—which are the alphabets of my theatre work—with which we have experimented in our plays."

He also demonstrated some *Kalari* exercises and some scenes from *Karnabharam*.

P. L. Deshpande asked whether if the play was done in Malayalam, K. N. Panikkar would use the same techniques.

K. N. Panikkar: "I have translated the play into Malayalam using the purely theatrical aspects but it is not as strong or effective."

K. N. Panikkar explained that the actors received traditional training in *Kalari* and then came to Sopanam.

. . . .

W. Eysselinck was introduced by Dr. Georg Lechner as "one who tries to instil life into the theatre in the university. He is also a playwright."

W. Eysselinck: "For the past ten years I have been mainly involved in theatre training in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. I have concentrated on 'actor training.' My approach, from my education onwards, to the different countries where I have worked, my alternating, (after beginning as an actor) between directing and writing, is a very eclectic one. There is a philosophy in theatre that I embrace—pluralism in theatre. It is an essential and meaningful notion where I am concerned.

"In the 1950's, I founded a theatre group in Ghent—the first to do Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov etc. My work has gone back and forth, in equal measure, between my directing the classics and doing new work. . . . be it premieres of adaptations or of original works. Working with playwrights producing new plays is a very interesting facet of my work. John Gassner was a great influence on me.

"I spent a couple of years directing plays for the Belgian National Television when TV dramas were just adapting stage plays. I continued to work in theatre. Then I ran an Arts Centre and a theatre in Sussex and value this experience very much because I really believe that a theatre must be more than just four walls in which plays are presented. . . . I really feel strongly that a theatre must become a centre for a community by doing more than just presenting plays, by doing more than just being alive at least for the public for the few hours when plays are presented. It must be an inviting space. . . . If I stress diversity, I mean structured diversity; then, indeed, the training programme must be such that an audience is constantly challenged. . . . If a mainstream theatre is to be relevant, to remain alive for society, it must remain in touch with the work that is done in alternate theatres, with work that is done by inspiring people in theatre laboratories. . . . I like 'live' audiences in the theatre.

"After seven years in England, I returned to the U.S. for a year; then I accepted an invitation to run the Royal Flemish Theatre which I had earlier turned down. . . . Later, I resumed theatre training work in the U.S.A.

"Theatre education in America is a veritable industry. . . . every university has a Theatre Department, a Theatre Programme and many of them claim to be

professional training programmes though very few are . . . Carnegie Mellon (Pittsburgh, U.S.A.) is perhaps an outstanding example of a conservatory programme on an undergraduate level. It also has advanced courses in playwriting, design and direction. The University of Michigan has a generalist approach to theatre—leading to a B.A. degree in theatre.

“Although I am deeply committed to theatre training, I am also aware of its limitations. In England, where I was working for many years, a whole generation of actors questioned the notion of professional theatre training . . . I believe that, in certain cases, an actor need not go through a training programme. I do believe, however, that an actor should have an education, a background . . .

“I am interested in training people for the regional repertory theatre. This is very important. If ever there is to be a national theatre in U.S.A., it will have to be a regional theatre. Regional theatre in America is now facing horrendous financial problems. Theatre is a public service and I want to orient my work to that kind of theatre.

“We have to remind ourselves that the best theatre programme may not be the best for every actor. In fact, it may be confusing for some actors. We cannot create talent where there isn't any, but we can certainly create an environment where a talent can grow, blossom . . .

“The Yale Theatre programme is one of the finest and most comprehensive. Theatre is like an implacable lover: the more you give, the more it expects.

“An educated actor—one who has an active intellectual curiosity—is a pleasure to work with. A team must consist of practising professionals, because if a teacher loses his living relation to his art, he merely becomes a teacher. It is important for the students, too, because it changes a student's perception of the teacher and his relation to him.

“Research in theatre, too, is a roundabout way of adding new dimensions to an actor's capacities.”

Meera Syal: “I wonder if ‘integrated casting’ is reflected in your training programmes?”

W. Eysselinck: “The problem of Black Theatre and society in the U.S.A. is agonisingly similar. More and more Blacks, I find, stay away from theatre programmes that are not Black-oriented. Very, very few Black people are joining. Some universities have a special programme in Black Theatre; but I find that disappointing.

“We tried in every way to recruit Black actors and to cast them in our productions, irrespective of colour. They play a rich diversity of roles in our university productions. But when they go out into the theatre world they again find their choice of roles limited.”

M. K. Raina: “Do any of your programmes study the Indian traditional forms and make live productions on that basis?”

W. Eysselinck: “Very few. There are some small companies which are devoted to this.”

Friday, January 24

Dr. Georg Lechner introduced Ratan Thiyam.

Ratan Thiyam: “I will introduce my repertory rather than myself . . . It's to my repertory that the whole credit goes.

“The Chorus Repertory Theatre (CRT) is situated very close to the Burmese border. It was established in 1976 by some of my colleagues. After my graduation from the NSD, my interest in theatre has always been as a professional. I joined the Navy and escaped from it within ten days. I started writing, but it was not easy to make it a source of living. Manipuri is spoken only by a few lakh people, and the royalty was very meagre.

“I was the only earning member (Rs. 200/- per month) of the CRT initially. In 1977, I got a grant of Rs. 2,500/- from the Sangeet Natak Akademi and from then on the State Akademi began helping. Living on theatre was not possible and the kind of theatre we wanted to do was not welcome. It was rejected. Now, people react very positively to our productions.

“We've always wanted to make the CRT self-sufficient. The grants are not enough. From 1979 onwards we have started paying our actors. We have got two ponds for fisheries, we have poultry and other farms. We live like a family where we also work for the theatre . . . we have a cyclical rotational system with the actors.

“From this year onwards, we have started a one-year apprenticeship course for students selected very carefully from the younger generation of theatre workers. We have four of them now. We give them Rs. 200/- per month. They know we have no money but we are trying to give them something. They are selected not as good trained actors, but by asking them: ‘Really do you want to work in theatre?’ If they said, ‘Yes’, then it's okay. We have got lighting properties which we hire out and thereby earn some money.

“This training is not only of actors but of an organisation. In India, it is very difficult to organise people.

“Most of our training deals with martial arts and other forms around the area. It is important to understand the flexible quality of martial arts. It is not only an ‘offence and defence’ sort of thing. It is not just the skill or technique which is important in wielding the *thanta* (spear). But it carries both rhythm and spiritual depth, including flexibility . . . an actor must also have control . . .

“There are two layers of a performance—one is communication from an outer level, the other from an inner level. Manipur has a strong martial arts tradition and I thought it is a very good idea for actors to go through this.

Then he explained the play *Chakravyuha*—it's a military formation which has a cosmic quality.

“In India, we can't afford to specialise in any one aspect of theatre. We have tried to find out ways to avoid the bitterness arising out of such specialisation in a company.

“I want to communicate to the people . . . I already have a weapon in the older traditional devices of my theatre.”

Georg Lechner: "Where are the rhythms of modern warfare?"

Ratan Thiyam: "Rhythm is very important—you can break an opponent who is out of rhythm . . . it's the content that decides what to do, how to do."

Lamberto Lambertini: "It is quite impossible to speak about one's own theatre. We work every day; we try to invent a show in a communal family atmosphere with all its advantages and disadvantages." He introduced the members of the group and they did demonstrations of the musical techniques they employed.

Ileana Citaristi: "A member of your troupe said he never trained, just followed what he was told to do."

Lamberto Lambertini: "A large part of our show is based on the vaudeville tradition. We present a sequence of episodes but there is no script as such. Sometimes there is a hidden story which, perhaps, our Neapolitan audience understands. The actors improvise their parts but gradually the whole thing comes together."

Georg Lechner: "You said you work in a family tradition. Is that still quite normal in Italy for your kind of theatre?"

Lamberto Lambertini: "No, not now. In the Naples area, there is a tradition of family nuclei, with other people joining in to make theatre . . . but I wouldn't say this is characteristic of theatre in Italy, in general. I use the word 'family' rather loosely. There is a very close relationship between the Neapolitan actor and his audience, who feels that the actor is 'one of us'."

Then the actors gave a demonstration of a song.



A scene from *Peppe & Barra*

William B. Coutts, Theatre Director, Commonwealth Arts Festival, spoke about the Edinburgh Arts Festival (EAF) and the Commonwealth Arts Festival (CAF).

"The EAF encompasses almost every type of performance. It was started in 1947 as part of a move by the British Government to establish relations with other countries through culture. Today, the needs of the festival are very different—the EAF has evolved organically over the years and it is really six festivals. There is the Main Festival and the Fringe Festival. Almost one thousand companies feature in the Fringe Festival. The EAF has been a seminal influence on the arts in Britain . . .

"The CAF is attached to the Commonwealth Games—it is a one-off event. My responsibility is directly related to the theatre programme. It is a very good opportunity to respect the interests of various people. It is sad to see that not much pioneering theatre work is being done in most of the Commonwealth countries. Finance is still a major obstacle in bringing foreign troupes to Britain . . . but the amount spent on foreign work in Britain is minimal—compared to the vast sums spent on presenting local work. Only two Indian theatre groups have been featured during the last ten years—Naya Theatre and Theatre Academy, Pune. I am a great believer in international work.

"The late 60's saw a great explosion in the Fringe Theatre. Most of these groups have now moved on into the establishment theatre in Britain which is almost an industry. It is a very sad thing that, outside the Festival, people rarely patronise the theatre."

Georg Lechner: "Does the EAF have a workshop-type format?"

William B. Coutts: "Sadly, no . . . Mainly because there isn't a large public for it."

Georg Lechner: "Do you give visiting groups the opportunity to perform elsewhere in Britain?"

William B. Coutts: "Yes . . . it is arranged so that they can tour and perform around the country."

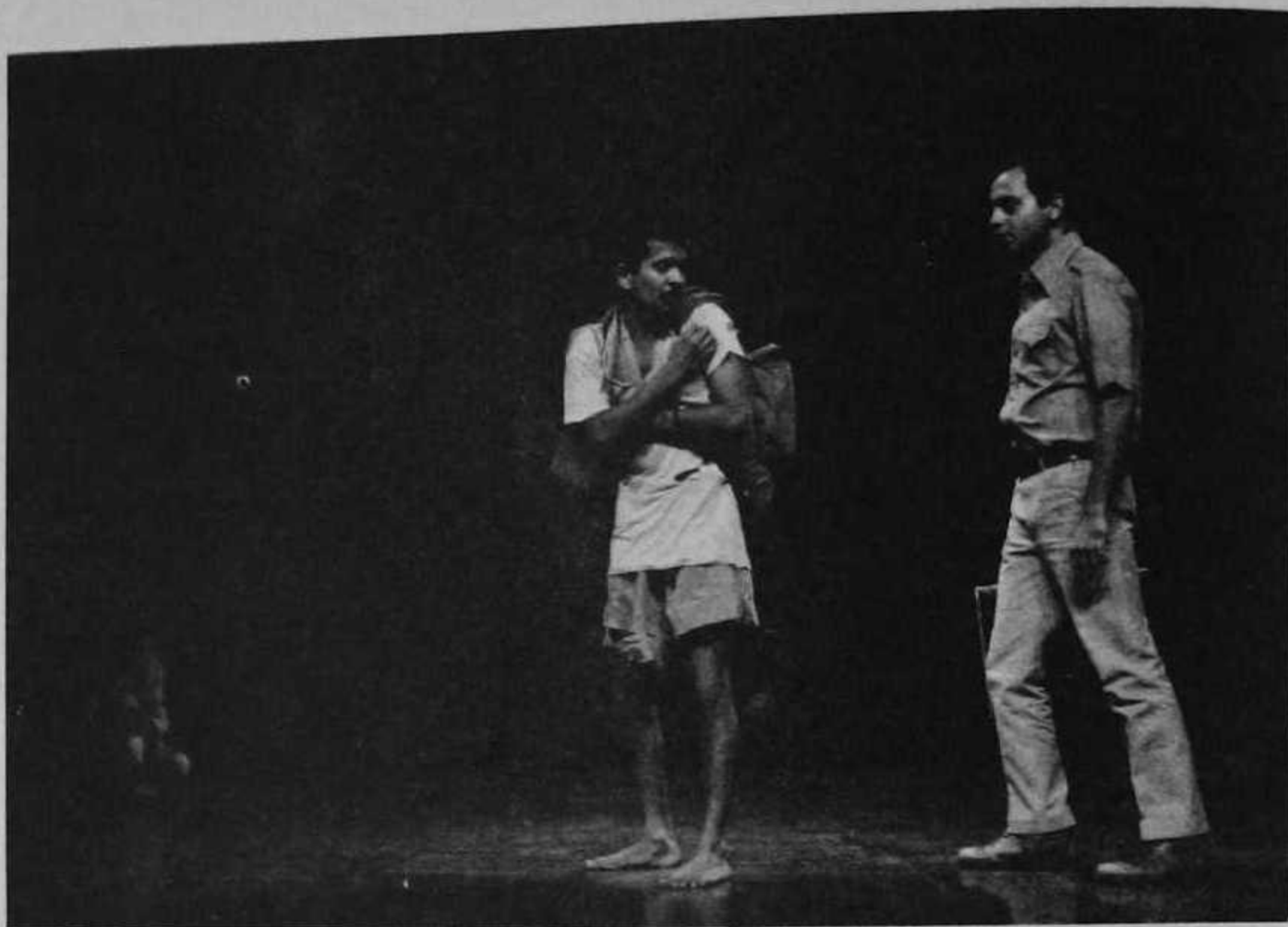
Saturday, January 25

Dr. Georg Lechner introduced Wolfram Mehring and thanked him for working on the production *The Exception and the Rule*.

Wolfram Mehring: "I think I will speak about my experience in Europe and in Asia and how they can come together. From the beginning my aim was to find a trans-cultural actor and human being.

"I deplore the tendency to use pieces from various folk forms in theatre productions without really understanding the evolution behind these forms. In Asia, Europeans merely collect . . . but if you really want to understand, you must practice . . . live there and work repeatedly on the same exercise.

"The general trend is to act from the neck upwards as if the body doesn't exist. Now, at last, people are realising that the body, too, can be beautiful . . . I was thrilled by the semantics of the body.



A scene from *Exception and the Rule*

"We tried to forget our techniques and what did we discover? The silence . . . the silence in Asia is very different from the silence in Europe and until you understand it, it won't make sense."

Georg Lechner: "What is the total actor?"

Wolfram Mehring: "The total actor is not one who knows acrobatics, the Commedia dell'Arte; he has a consciousness, he knows where are his centres . . ."

M. K. Raina: "What is this consciousness? Is it consciousness of politics or what?"

Wolfram Mehring: "Consciousness is not knowledge; it is a kind of understanding. In staging *The Exception and the Rule*, I wanted to prove that Indian actors are as good, if not better than European actors. To produce it in fifteen days was a challenge."

Eugenio Barba: "Consciousness is a very difficult concept to explain."

Wolfram Mehring: "You go through the details to the spirit . . . to find the rhythm of life in everything."

His actors then spoke about their experience of working with him. They were asked if they felt that language came in the way of expression, whether it was an impediment to reality.

Wolfram Mehring: "Each culture goes its own way through its language."

The Concluding Session:

Eugenio Barba: "All Indian actors talk of 'emotion', whereas if a European actor were to show emotion, I would be crazy . . . what the actor experiences is one thing, what the spectator experiences is another. In the theatre, the actor makes us forget his literality and gives us hallucinations."

Farrukh Dhondy: "One very refreshing aspect of this Encounter was that I heard, mostly from Western colleagues, philosophical disquisitions on the psycho-social nature of theatre. It was refreshing because in Britain you don't get that at all. It is a cliché to say that the British are anti-theoretical, but it is also true."

"What you get in theatre conferences in Britain is an argument about money—who is giving what or not giving to whom. From the Indian participants at the Encounter, on the other hand, one did not get more than hints about the funding of theatre projects . . . It's as if there was a big mystery surrounding this problem."

Habib Tanvir: "There are government subsidies, grants from the Ministry. Also, grants from State Governments, from the Central and State Sangeet Natak Akademies. There is public patronage."

M. K. Raina elaborated further on the funding system in India: Several repertories were getting grants. Also, there was some funding for specific theatre projects. But there are people on their own steam and that is the only relevant theatre activity in this country. "We are cutting down on production costs; new methodologies and new production techniques are evolving because of the economic needs of production. Since last year, the Ford Foundation has been giving grants to special cultural projects."

P. L. Deshpande described the funding sources in Maharashtra. There are two streams of theatre here: (1) The commercial theatre . . . its advantage is it keeps theatre alive (2) Amateur groups . . . they are active but not financially viable. The Annual Drama Competition of the State Government helps encourage theatre activity, and industrialists also sponsor plays and other activities.

As the session drew to a close, Dr. Lechner remarked, "One shares an experience only because one shares it. What we experienced was possible only because of the tremendous help and co-operation we have received from all at the NCPA and MMB."

"It's fitting that the Encounter should end with theatre performances and not with a Closed Session: *Chakravyuha* will be staged in the afternoon in the Experimental Theatre, *Romancero* in the Tata Theatre in the evening, and at night there will be the enactment of *Moon and Darkness* in the Experimental Theatre."

In his concluding speech, P. L. Deshpande said, "This Encounter was one of the most refreshing experiences in my life . . . Never have I found theatre viewed from so many different angles. So many varieties of experience were narrated and contemplated here. There is a Sanskrit verse which speaks of gods visiting the earth. To complete the appointed task, the plea is always for them to return. We share the same sentiment."

Public Performances

	Experimental Theatre	Tata Theatre
Fri. 17	<i>Hayavadana</i> Dir: Vijaya Mehta 6.30 p.m.	
Sat. 18	<i>Request Concert</i> Dir: Alyque Padamsee 5.30 p.m.	<i>Ghashiram Kotwal</i> Dir: Jabbar Patel 7 p.m.
	Street Theatre 1 p.m.	
Sun. 19	<i>Puntila</i> Dir: Sekhar Chatterjee 7.30 p.m.	<i>Wait for the Dawn</i> <i>Puputan</i> Dir: Eugenio Barba 4 p.m.
Mon. 20	—	<i>Insaf Ka Ghera</i> Dir: Fritz Bennewitz 6.30 p.m.
Tue. 21	<i>Marriage with God</i> Dir: Eugenio Barba 5.30 p.m.	
	<i>The Nest</i> Dir: Sekhar Chatterjee 7.30 p.m.	
Wed. 22	<i>One of Us</i> Dir: Jacqui Shapiro 5.30 p.m.	<i>Charandas Chor</i> Dir: Habib Tanvir 7.30 p.m.
Thu. 23	<i>Ottayan</i> Dir: K. N. Panikkar 5.30 p.m.	<i>Peppe & Barra</i> A musical scherzo in two acts Dir: Lamberto Lambertini 7.30 p.m.
Fri. 24	<i>Kabira Khada</i> <i>Bazaar Mein</i> Dir: M. K. Raina 5.30 p.m.	<i>Exception & the Rule</i> Dir: Wolfram Mehring 7.30 p.m.
Sat. 25	<i>Chakravyuha</i> Dir: Ratan Thiyam 4 p.m.	<i>Romancero</i> Dir: Eugenio Barba 7.30 p.m.
	<i>Moon & Darkness</i> Dir: Eugenio Barba 9 p.m.	
	Street Theatre 4.30 p.m.	

"My body belongs to me, but not the space around it. Each movement violates the purity of the space. This awareness makes us tremble with the responsibility of our gestures."

Wolfram Mehring

"One can work for years behind a door with the word 'Theatre' written on it. All that you do requires a meaning so that your work seems justified. But what happens when the door and its sign is knocked down?"

Eugenio Barba

"Contrary to the rules of the traditional theatre, the stage must become the place where man puts off his masks."

Wolfram Mehring

"If the morals of the society become asocial, then art must develop its own (artistic) morals and become amoral towards all the rest."

Bertolt Brecht

"For our defeats prove nothing but that there are too few of us who fight injustice, and from the onlookers we expect at least that they be ashamed."

Bertolt Brecht

"The Living Theatre are in search of a meaning in their lives, and in a sense even if there were no audience they would still have to perform because the theatrical event is the climax and the centre of their lives. In the Living Theatre three needs become one: it exists for the sake of performing; it earns its living through performing; and its performances contain the most intense and intimate moments of its collective life."

Peter Brook

East-West Theatre Encounter: In Retrospect

Georg Lechner

This report is being written in Paris, thousands of miles away from the actual venue of the Encounter, and three weeks after the curtain closed on Kattrin's mute love poem, unforgettably enacted by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, the last performance of the Encounter. The distance in time and place acts as a special focus, no doubt.

The overruling impression that remains is the obviously unlimited potential of the meeting of minds and, hence, of such Encounters. I have personally found many of the contributions and their juxtaposition within such a short period so stimulating that the few that were short of my expectations fell by the side. The harvest was rich, a credit to the farmers.

Many things stood out:

Eugenio Barba's impeccable record of presence, from the first to the last minute of the Encounter, closed sessions included. His actors' vision of a committed, individualized approach to theatre, combined with a complete openness towards working in a company; the unfaltering dedication to their art over the decades; Barba's own unique commitment to theatre, regardless of applause; his sheer passion tempered by intelligence and organisational prudence and skill.

Wolfram Mehring's courageous production of a Brecht play within two weeks and against manifold odds, . . . A man representing the epic of a European in search of a larger cultural identity, a personified, dramatic poem in transcultural experience. It tells the story of a young German who, disillusioned over the dawn of the "economic miracle" after the dusk of European Civilization during the Second World War, sets out for Paris in the fifties and still remains unsatisfied. He then embraces Japan, probes India and sounds Africa over two long decades of mind and body search.

Ratan Thiyam, and the unbroken vitality of the Manipuri performance of *Chakravayuha*. All forty company members were in top form, despite six days of travelling, all the way from Imphal, embodying an outburst of theatrical talent and a demonstration of the unity of art and life. Back home, in the hills of Manipur, Ratan sold poultry to ensure the train tickets.

An imaginative music score, unsparing criticism of alleged historical evidence on a revered hero, and a good share of cynicism, a bold blend of old and new theatre-styles and a record-breaking thirteen years of uninterrupted success with the same performing team—such are the credentials of *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the most impressive single production of recent Indian theatre.

Jean-Claude Carrière's epic account of the genesis of Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* production sized up effortlessly the eight years of study and cautious, gradual approach, the many years of rehearsal, nine-hour marathon performances, full houses for a running period of five months sold out within hours of opening.

Brook's and Carrière's careful research into appropriate Western forms of rendering the great Indian epic generated its own reflections on the Brecht reception



Street Theatre

in India that was also widely under review during the Encounter. Fritz Bennewitz proved most inspiring in his account of Brecht's humanism and its demands on any adaptation.

Then there were those memorable stage moments: the thief in *Charandas Chor* sailing on and off stage; the Neapolitan brand of histrionics of Peppe; Sekhar Chatterjee's drawn out and seemingly never-ending errands to and from the swimming pool in Kroetz's *The Nest*; Meera Syal's verbal tour de force in *One of Us*; the fall of a nine-foot high 'stilt' creature, frightening the soul out of people during the street performance; the decadent Nana's elusive "nahi" in *Ghashiram*; Judge Azdak's exit in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Insaaf ka Ghera)*, exhorting the audience to look after the betterment of the world themselves rather than rely on him; the computerized court proceedings in *The Exception and the Rule*; Toni Cots' mastery of Balinese movements in *Puputan* (memorial date of the Dutch massacre in Bali in 1905).

Theatre and life, life and theatre, who would disentangle the two?

The Encounter's attempt to strike a balance between theory and practice, dream and reality, action and reflection. The daily closed sessions provided scope for the latter.

The themes that were most often discussed by Indian theatre experts were:

- The interplay between genuine folk traditions and their translation into urban theatre languages of today (the examples are numerous, but some stand out like *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Hayavadana*, *Insaaf Ka Ghera*, *Charandas Chor*);

- The modernization of classical theatre and related questions of authenticity and contemporary relevance: *Shakuntala*, *Ottayan* and, to an extent, *Chakravyuha* being models to discuss;
- Problems and aspects of adaptation of Western plays, notably of Brecht, with his incomparably dense style, that is often too easily sacrificed in order to facilitate understanding and accommodate audiences. Ersatz-Brecht or Brecht is really the question here;
- Farrukh Dhondy and Meera Syal eloquently scanned the limited possibilities open to an Asian, "Black" actor/actress to integrate him or herself in the present situation in the UK, rather than remain an ethnic commodity, only fit for certain roles;
- Special attention was reserved for the problematic role of the contemporary Indian playwright—Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Satish Alekar having been the invitees of the Encounter—perched as he is between the Western proscenium stage and the open-air performance styles of yore.

Western participants, on their part, were strongly concerned with the overrationalisation and fragmentation of modern Western thinking that has given birth to a theatre of specialisation and borrowed effects, devoid of a coherent, holistic world-view.

Transcultural theatre and the "total actor", as encouraged and developed by Peter Brook, Wolfram Mehring or Eugenio Barba, with their blending of art and life, were, therefore, considered valid alternative models functioning outside the established and institutionalised theatre circuits, but challenging them, all the same, with their new concepts.

Both East and West were open to new forms of training and theatre education, but demanded a minimum of financial support by society and governments for free experimentation, with no strings attached, to ensure professionalism of a high and internationally competitive standard.

In theatre, while answers can only be prepared off-stage, they must forever be found onstage—and so they were. Theatre thrived during those nine days of the Encounter—and even where it failed to impress, it taught its lessons. Even while the Encounter closed and the stage was preparing for the next performance, we hear Katrin's words as they echo in us while the lights go out:

Remember me as I am now, remember me young and beautiful, keep this image in your soul, forever, and I shall never grow old . . .

The Way of Refusal

Eugenio Barba

The theatre's body-in-life has three vital organs.

The first is the organ of the skeleton and the spinal column, the organ of biology. It is the body technique which is a departure from the automatisms and conditionings of daily life. It is the organ whose respiration reveals the actor's *bios* on a pre-expressive level, before the actor attempts to express anything. We can study and analyze this organ, consciously develop it, pass on knowledge of it to others.

The second organ is that of u-topia, of non-place. It resides in the viscera and in the brain's right hemisphere. It is the super-ego which the presence of a master or masters has imbued us with during the transition from daily technique to extra-daily technique of the theatre. It is the meaning, the value, the categorical imperative which we, individually, give to our profession. This organ's respiration causes technique to melt and raises it to a social and spiritual dimension. It is the ethos of the theatre, without which any technique is nothing but gymnastics, physical exercise, division instead of unity. We can consciously investigate this organ as well, protect it, transplant it.

The third organ is elusive. It is the irrational and secret temperature which renders our actions incandescent. It could be called 'talent'. I know it under another form: a personal tension which is projected towards an objective which coalesces and evanesces: the unity of oppositions, the conjunction of polarities. This organ is part of our personal destiny. If we do not have it, no one can 'teach' it to us.

The development of only one of these organs leads to a disfunction: a frozen, inorganic theatre, even if well-made, or a theatre which proclaims values not incarnated in its actors.

The following pages deal with the body-in-life: with biology and u-topia.

. . . .

In 1938, in Moscow, a celebration was held to mark the fortieth anniversary of Constantin Sergievitch Stanislavski's Art Theatre. Even Joseph Stalin, the First Secretary of the Communist Party, was present. Toast after toast, speech after speech: each orator, standing, emphasized Joseph Stalin's importance for the growth of culture in the Soviet Union. Each speaker, standing, thanked the First Secretary for the auspicious conditions which he had created for the theatre, for the impressive results of the new era which he had initiated. At the end of the evening, Constantin Sergievitch Stanislavski raised his glass and proposed that they drink to the memory of Sasha Morosov, the wealthy merchant who had first financed the Art Theatre in the early days. All eyes turned to Stalin, who smiled benignly . . . and raised his glass. Everyone followed suit.

Thirty years before, when Poland had been partitioned and a part of the country was annexed to Tzarist Russia, Stanislavski was invited to Warsaw. The most

important figures in Polish theatre were waiting for him at the station. Among them was Juliusz Osterwa, the greatest director of the time. The Poles greeted Stanislavski in Russian, but he answered them in French: "Dear friends, let us speak in a language which we all love".

I often think about Stanislavski. As a man of the theatre and as an individual who always knew how to maintain his dignity vis-à-vis his era and his profession. He has left us an example of how to coexist with the First Secretary, with the general in black glasses, with the state which one opposes. He showed us how one can lead one's own revolt against the thought and the situation which one refuses, without allowing oneself to be trapped by indignation and thus becoming the easy prey of those who are stronger than us.

To work with theatre can become not the profession of a point of view, but the example of incarnated vision. The theatre can become the instrument which multiplies and prolongs the individual will to refuse.

But what is theatre? If I try to reduce this word to something tangible, what I discover are men and women, human beings who have joined together. Theatre is a particular relationship in an elected context. First between people who gather together in order to create something, and then later between the creation made by this group and their public. Why and how are the individual paths joined? What are the material conditions—whether chosen or imposed from the outside—which determine their daily work? What are the rules which one respects, the norms which one considers vital, the ambitions and dreams, the means which are put to work to give them life, justice, the clear and simple justice which manifests itself in their daily activity?

Here are the secret sources which nourish the results and which situate them in one context rather than another, in a street or in a church, in an outlying school or in a municipal theatre, for an audience of sixty or six hundred. And at the moment of truth, in this privileged context, in this 'elected' relationship, all the theories disappear, all the proposals and good intentions vanish. Only the actor is left. In the moment of truth, when the actor confronts the public, only if his presence seizes us and hurls us into lucid reflection, into an experience different from the quotidian, only then does *the theatre exist because the actor exists*, not theory, not technique, not aesthetics, not ideology.

But in order to arrive at this 'existence', an obligatory bridge must be crossed: a technique, that is, a particular use of the body.

To Be and To Seem

How can one *exist*, how can one radiate that *science bios* which makes the actor's presence vibrate and which deepens the relationship with the audience?

Once again, I confront Stanislavski and I question him. But the dead send our words back to us, and so Stanislavski speaks to me, because everything that he did, everything that he created, he did and created for me, because I am his son, because we are all his sons. Western theatre men did not descend from the apes; they descend from Stanislavski.

I ask myself; What was his father like? How did he become what he became, thereby influencing history? I am not satisfied with theories and known facts. I want

to dig down to the deepest nucleus, to what made him restless, to what was unique about him. His hidden wounds, his personal obsessions. His secret motor. But what obsessions did he have, this rich textile factory owner who dabbled in amateur theatre and then at the age of thirty-five decided to devote himself completely to the profession by founding the Art Theatre? Why does one make such a decision at that age? What intimate necessities, what imperious desires demand this existential reversal, including even changing one's name?

He seeks *truth* on the stage, as total sincerity, as authentic vitality. The actor must not 'seem' to be the character he is representing. He must 'be' what he represents. Here is the key word: to *be*, to become unity, individual, *in-dividus*, non-divided. He hated the 'theatre' in theatre, the mechanical signs of absent feeling. In his own words: "The theatre is my enemy." Just as the actor was his enemy: the actor showed something on the outside which he did not feel on the inside. He wanted to reach the creative state in which the actor is animated by a total concentration of his entire moral and physical nature.

His results, and the way in which he achieved them, are *his* search. He bequeathed to me, to all of us, the question: how to achieve this total concentration of our moral, spiritual, and physical nature? Once again: how to *be*, how to become *in-dividual*, by and in the theatre?

At the beginning of the century, Stanislavski is already famous, but he is dissatisfied. He leaves the theatre, his co-workers, the honour and the security, and retreats to a little Finnish village, there to brood over his obsession: how to reach the creative state every night, how not to lie to the audience, how to give the maximum, the best of oneself. At the end of a long sombre winter in Finland, he returns to Moscow with the embryo of the 'system', the famous 'magic if'.

Through the bloodless words which make up the opaque and anonymous surface of theories, in the depths of the 'system', the exercises and directions, one catches a glimpse of a man struggling with his restlessness, trying to trap it, to give it his answer and to translate this answer into action.

If I am influenced by Stanislavski, it is not because his theories—that is, his answers—have affected me. Rather, it is because I have inherited from him certain obsessions: how does one preserve one's dignity in life and in the theatre, when one opposes not only one's own demons, but also the dark and tangible forces which are on the outside? And how to *be*, to attain the unity of all that one is, in each action that one carries out, with each word that one utters—and not only in the 'elected' context of theatre?

Body Techniques and Acculturation

I do not feel tied to a physical place, to a nation as a geographical entity or as a receptacle of traditions. But to a particular country; the 'country of speed'. This country, which is identifiable neither in the landscape I happen to be passing through nor in the people around me, has nothing to do with space, or physical places. I can stay in Holstebro, this little town in Jutland, for months, and yet live and travel in speed, in another dimension. I can be somewhere else and at the same time be in the very heart of this country.

If I live in the 'country of speed', if this country really exists, if it is not just a suggestive phrase, where is it? It is very near me, it surrounds me, and is the centre: it is my body. My body is my country. The only place where I always *am*. No matter where I go, to Montreal or to Tokyo, to Holstebro, Bogota, or New York, I am always at home, always in my country. I am never a foreigner, never in exile, if I am not separated from my body.

I say 'body': that part of the soul which our five senses can perceive, that part of the vital breath, the *pneuma*, the *ruach*, of the total me, of the mystery of the potentialities of the life which I incarnate. The body not as an instrument, something which one must train, must force to make expressive. This body-country expresses itself *in spite of itself* and its life must be protected against the violence which we have internalized through living in this civilization where rupture, sudden change, revolution fascinate us, as opposed to organic growth, slow and laborious.

* * *

Someone comes and says to me: "I have seen how your actors work, I have seen your performances. There is something alive in them which makes me say, 'I want to work in this direction. Guide me.'"

He has confidence in me, he is ready to follow me. No matter what I say. Because he knows that, perhaps, he will attain this quality of presence, of 'life'. He wants to be an actor in order to rediscover his country, not to possess a technique, but to possess himself. This transition is a process which engages one totally, down to one's deepest roots—because one must change one's culture, one's physical nature.

Being born into a particular society, into a particular era, a specific milieu, each one of us has been acculturated. This has to do not only with a mental acculturation but also with a corporal acculturation. Throughout our childhood and adolescence, a process of innervation—a special way that our nervous system has of acting on our organs—crystallizes into patterns of behaviour, conditionings. Thus a way of conducting oneself, of reacting, of using one's physical dynamic, is determined, which makes it immediately possible to distinguish a Chinese from a Japanese or a Frenchman from a German. One can speak of different body cultures, different body techniques.

The term *body techniques* was coined by the French ethnologist, Marcel Mauss. He uses it to refer to the ways in which men, society by society, know how to use their bodies. He has outlined a classification of this use of the body, according to sex and age: how a child or an old man crouches, the way a man punches, the way a woman punches. He has analysed birthing and obstetric techniques (whether the child is delivered with the mother standing, crouched, lying . . .), ways in which children are carried (for several months, or for two or three years, on the mother's back or to one side, clinging or not), sleep and rest (the distinction between people who sit and people who crouch). There are people in Africa who rest while standing, like flamingoes, sometimes by leaning on a stick. Or running and dancing techniques, body care, how people dry themselves, cough, spit, eat (with the fingers, with or without a knife), drink (from a spring or from a stream). Right up to the particular body techniques of 'communication with God'.

This use of the body, the daily technique, is absorbed without reflection, without being chosen. It is our corporal culture, but it is really acculturation. If one

wishes to look for a unique and individual culture, for one's own 'country', one must get rid of the conditionings, the reflexes, in which one is entangled. This transition makes it possible for us to discover our own possibilities.

Natural/Artificial

Daily technique, the result of acculturation, consists of a complex of stereotypes, of automatic behaviour models. That which we call spontaneity is conditioned reflex, reactions which we execute unconsciously. The more one carries out certain actions, without the least difficulty, the more one is at ease, the more one can direct one's attention to something else. If one dances the tango well—without having to concentrate on the steps—this dance then bursts forth like a spontaneous reaction, and it will give the impression of being free, easy to repeat. One could even discuss arduous theological questions, dancing all the while, smoke a cigarette without letting the ash fall and follow the movements of another couple out of the corner of one's eye.

Here is the trap: that which we call spontaneity is nothing more than conditioned reflex, automatism which ensnare us and from which we cannot disentangle ourselves. If one wishes to free oneself from these automatisms, if one wishes to 'de-culture' oneself, one must fight against spontaneity, against the 'natural'. One must invent a method, initiate a process which breaks the automatisms and thus turn towards something which is opposed to that which is natural: something artificial.

All the theatrical traditions, in the Occident as well as in the Orient, have developed procedures which 'de-culture' the actor, that is, make him lose his natural behaviour on the stage. They have substituted extra-daily techniques for daily technique. When the Noh actor begins working in the family group as a child, he learns to walk by sliding his feet along the ground without lifting them, thus not respecting the 'natural' way of walking. It is not a question of a professional formation, but of a *deformation*, of renouncement of the functional, habitual way of walking.

This is exactly the same process followed in Europe by an adolescent who undertakes a career as a classical dancer. He begins his professional formation with a *deformation*; the basic positions, the posture and the steps which are diametrically opposed to daily posture and steps.

All the theatrical traditions which have developed rules for the actor's dynamic behaviour—what one calls codification—have had as their goal the surpassing of the natural, of spontaneity, thus of automatism. They have constructed a new muscular tonicity: a 'dilated body'. All these traditions share the same principle—a deformation of the natural—even if they achieve different results. We call these results styles.

It is interesting to consider two forms which belong to the same civilization: Noh and Kabuki. The two forms are both very unlike the way the Japanese behave in daily sociality. But Noh and Kabuki have nothing in common as far as the 'style', the results of the technique, is concerned. Noh technique is based on a tension which restrains emotional manifestations or explosions of vitality. Kabuki technique is based on hyperbolic tensions, dynamic exaggeration. These two styles seem to

come from two different planets. In fact, the social strata from which they emerged were like two different planets in the heart of the same nation. There is more stylistic affinity between certain characters in the Balinese Topeng and Noh than between Noh and Kabuki. In both the former cases, there are kings, warriors, and ministers, who are presented with behaviour in accordance with their social rank.

But hidden behind these considerations from comparative theatre history lies a basic principle of theatre anthropology. The procedures used to achieve the *scenic bios* of the Noh or Kabuki actor, the Topeng or classical ballet dancer, are inspired by the same vision: the death of one's own body and the culture which has moulded it, while rediscovering, through new tensions, a 'dilated body', 'dilated' by the capacity it has to radiate life and enthrall the audience.

This vision of transcendental resonance comprises material and physical aspects. The death of one's body is brought about by learning to use the body in a different way: by re-learning how to stand following another balance axis and to move according to rules which deny those of daily behaviour. One leaves the 'natural', the daily technique which one has absorbed from childhood, and acquires a new, extra-daily technique: that of classical ballet or of the Thai Khon, of Decroux mime or Indian Kathakali. This transition reveals the actor and creates a *scenic bios*, a new, unsought-for expressivity perceptible to the audience.

This is, however, also a new acculturation, a specialization in a particular technique, a colonization which is imposed from the outside. It is not the culture of my unique body, of my own 'country'. Is it possible, as individuals and as men of the theatre, to nourish a continuous process which, at the same time as it releases our conditionings, automatisms and the mannerisms of our biographies, brings us to a new body culture? A personal technique capable, both in and out of the theatre, of waking and guiding the flux of our life-energies and of making them perceptible to those who observe us?

The Singing Stones

There is a security which is the result of inertia, of entropy, and there is a security which is the result of the dynamic relationship between opposing forces, between tensions which confront each other. There is the security of the pile of stones scattered on the ground. And there is the security of the pile of stones which through the force of oppositions reaches upwards, thus becoming architecture.

Architecture helps us to visualize this quality of oppositions, of tensions which are pulsation itself, the heart of everything which is alive. The basic components of cathedrals are stones whose weight destines them to tumble to the ground. Suddenly these stones seem weightless, airborne, as if they had a spinal column which pushed them upwards, with an intensity, a singing, rising, flying voice. This is the secret of architecture, but also of the actor's life: the transformation of weight and inertia into flying energy, by means of the play of oppositions. Theatre, like architecture, is knowing how to discover this quality of tensions and to shape them into actions.

Søren Kierkegaard noticed with respect to the Danish actress Louise Heiberg that every tension can act in a double way: it can reveal the effort behind it, but, on the other hand, it can hide it and even transform it into lightness. This

lightness has its invisible foundations in the effort of a tension, but the tension is not perceived, not even supposed, by the audience. Only the lightness is manifested.

Kierkegaard's observation captures the secret of the actor's life, the mutation of weight into energy, the continuous bursting forth of microdynamisms, the incessant and varied alternation of tensions which are not rigid, blind, or inert and which do not freeze that which is alive, but rather reaffirm it and make it evident through continuous discontinuity.

All methodology of theatrical practice attempts to create a new architecture of tensions in the actor's body, that is, a new tonicity.

This can be achieved according to processes which start from the corporal in order to condition the mental. This is the case in the Oriental traditions, in European classical ballet, in Decroux mime, in the training developed by Odin Theatre. It is a process which results in the creation not of a fictitious character, but a *body-in-life*.

Or, this architecture of tensions can be achieved by a mental process which conditions the physical. Imagining oneself as a blond, pale, ethereal Ophelia, or a dark, vigorous Ophelia, shaken like a tree by burning passions, determines the life of the actor's body, the quality of tensions which will flow through it and the dynamic architecture which will be built.

In the first case, a rigorous training dictates a new physical behaviour and a specific way of being present through the body, before the character is 'interpreted'. One begins by changing the habitual posture which maintains our physical security, that state of energetic limbo towards which our forces and energies are oriented. The aim of this training is a drastic alteration of the balance of our daily technique, the way of standing, of directing the eyes, of moving in space. Exactly like new-born babies, we learn to make *ex-novo* use of our elementary body functions.

From the Peking Opera actor who on his very first day learns to walk according to *fei-cha*, literally, 'flying-feet', to the classical ballet dancer who 'glides' on point, or the Noh actor whose gait, characterized by the fact that the feet never leave the floor, is called *suri-ashi*, 'licking feet'.

This training transforms the actor into a dynamic, pre-expressive receptacle of tensions ready to become expressive action for the audience. The architecture of tensions, which transforms weight and inertia into lightness and strength, and which is different from the tensions of daily technique, is brought out by the training. This is even more evident in immobility. With the Oriental actor as with the Decroux mime, immobility is dynamic, as opposed to static.

In exactly the same way that the actor—on the level of the story he is telling or on the level of meaning—cannot limit himself to presenting only himself, to being literal, auto-referential, in relation to what he is doing, so his physical presence cannot consist of his weight and his 'spontaneity'. His presence must create, on the pre-expressive level, a resonance of airy lightness or massive weight, that is, a resonance of dynamics, of forces in conflict, in opposition. Because tension and drama are synonymous.

The Way of Refusal

It is by means of this network of tensions that the quality of energy, the luminosity, this transparency which seems to restore the unity of the spiritual and

the corporal, the masculine and the feminine, rest and movement, is manifested in the actor. And at the root of this elusive experience lies a process which is easily commensurable: an alteration of posture, a change of balance. It is not a question of talent, or originality, or of wanting to express. In classical ballet, as in the traditional Oriental forms, the performers begin training when they are children, and are not chosen because of talent. They learn another use of the body, mechanically, an extra-daily technique which is based on a change of the center of gravity, making it possible for the play of oppositions and tensions, which is the body-in-life, to be perceived.

Here then is a theatrical vision in which the actor, in order to show the 'life' of his body on the stage, must kill his 'spontaneous' life. He must locate another center of gravity which causes him to pass from the natural to the artificial. This deformation, however, leaves the territory of collective acculturation and enters the territory of a new body culture.

This new body culture risks becoming a limitation, a veritable prison of new stereotypes which obscure the manifestation of our life, exactly as the former culture, which was left behind, has done. One says of an actor: 'He has no technique'. By this one means that he uses quotidian automatisms. When one says, 'He has too much technique', one means that his 'life' is suffocated by automatisms, by the particular ways of using the body according to a specific technique.

The actor's *scenic bios* emerges in the transition from one culture to another, from one 'country' to another. The danger lies in stopping in one of these territories. Stanislavski was opposed to clichés, to mannerisms, the 'pumping up', the 'emplois' which characterized the work of the actors of his time. For him, the transition was from the theatrical territory (the 'theatre' which he hated) towards the natural, towards the truth. He had chosen the way of refusal.

The search for our *bios*, for our own 'country', our body-in-life, follows the way of refusal. It is the search for a way to be in continuous transition, for a way to avoid planting oneself in what one has accumulated, to avoid capitalizing on abilities and thoughts or settling into a specialized corporal territory. It is not the search for a technique which forms or deforms the actor in order to re-form him. It is the search for a personal technique which is a refusal of all techniques which specialize. A personal technique which is capable of modelling our energies without letting us become frozen in this modelling. It is the search for one's own temperature.

There is a security which is the result of inertia and there is a security which is the result of the dynamic relationship of forms in tension. It is the difference between ice and water. The chemical composition is identical. In ice, however, the molecules are arrested, whereas in water they are moving. The internal temperature, the personal motor, determines if a technique freezes or if it remains dynamic. It is this internal temperature, this personal motor, which must be searched for behind the actions and choices of people in the theatre. For Stanislavski, the motor was his obsession not 'to be' creative. To find out how to reach the maximum of his possibilities, each night, face to face with the audience. The 'system' is the result of this internal temperature, this necessity.

Personally, I think that my motor is my choice to be an emigrant, my indifference to national ties. The only territory into which I sink my roots is the

"country of speed", that tangible and inscrutable dimension which is myself as a physical presence, as a unity of soul-body-spirit, perceptible to others through their five senses. For me the theatre is the ephemeral bridge which in 'elected' contexts links me to another: to the actor, to the public. It is the interweaving of one solitude with another by means of an activity which obliges a total concentration of my entire physical and mental nature. The theatre is the fortress on the mountain, visible and impregnable, which permits me to be sociable while following the way of refusal.

Earlier I mentioned the young person who came and said: "I have seen your performances and I have seen your actors. I want to go in that direction. Let me work with you". In order to stay with me, he will first have to invent a self-discipline: he can leave when he likes, no one will stop him. To make himself autonomous, independent of me, and of the model which has inspired him, he will be obliged to enter into the first stage of the way of refusal—by accepting.

It is paradoxical, reversed work, it is the way of opposites. His persona—the natural and the spontaneous—is the obstacle which he must annihilate, not through words or intentions, but through daily actions—the famous training—the continuous repetition of which obliges him to search for a personal meaning for what he does.

The training consists of a series of situations or actions often fixed in advance: the exercises. But it is the temperature which determines whether or not an exercise remains merely gymnastics, a mechanical muscular action. In the training, the seeds of all life and growth lie in a tension. This is a tension between an objective factor—a self-discipline, certain exercises or processes which help us escape from the automatisms of our acculturation, and a subjective factor—the internal temperature, the personal motor, the necessity unique to each actor, which melts all technique.

The tension crystallizes the quality of the work, the relationships with one's colleagues, with the physical and social space, whether one accepts it such as it is in inert security or whether one tries to discover the potentialities, the multiple relationships, the situations which go beyond professional life. The balance of this tension between objective and subjective factors decides the duration of the work in a group. This balance is one of the secret sources I spoke of at the beginning, those secret sources which nourish the results and which situate the actor and the group he works with in one context rather than another, on both the individual level and the social level.

The First Action

Katsuko Azuma is one of my collaborators in ISTA, the International School of Theatre Anthropology. She is a master of Buyo, classical Japanese dance. Once a week, in Tokyo, she goes to *her* master—from whom she has inherited her name—to dance and to receive comments. When she arrives, the first thing she does is wash the floor, which is already exemplarily clean.

I look at Katsuko, this forty-five year old, internationally recognized master, who herself has a school and students. I see her execute again the first action of the first day of her apprenticeship. It is the eternal return, the confrontation with the start of the long road which has led all the way to her becoming a master



herself. And she has not forgotten the first act, which she knows to give herself to without false modesty or wounded vanity, as an expression of loyalty to certain values. For a master is he who remains consistent and loyal to certain values of which he knows he is the trustee, values he wants to keep alive and pass on. I look at Katsuko and I think: the actor must affirm with the brain's right hemisphere that he is *EVERYTHING*, and feel with the brain's left hemisphere that he is *NOTHING*. And make this tension vibrate in each and every action—physical and vocal—on the stage.

One must not forget one's origins: oneself as a child. Perhaps this will make what I mean when I speak of the personal motor, the internal temperature, more understandable.

Meyerhold claimed that he hired an actor only if he could recognize in the adult in front of him the child the adult had been. Because losing the child means losing the dreams and the revolt. Adults have lost the dreams and the revolt. And in so doing, they cooperate, consciously or not, with the generals in black glasses, with the First Secretaries.

What counts is the motor. Sometimes one has goodwill, but not a strong motor. And the motor is always inside us, not outside. It is not an idea, a person. If one is lucky, one meets someone who began before us and who will push us to discover, to animate, our own motor. I happen to meet actors, often from cultures very distant from mine, and feel very close to them. The way they behave, the way they speak about their work, as well as what they don't mention, makes me intuit that they have gone through an experience equivalent to mine: that the origins, their first days, have been marked by a *relationship*.

There is an apprenticeship *period* and there is an apprenticeship **relationship**. The former has to do with a theatre school, with many teachers—following schedules which follow the rhythm of watches—teaching a multiplicity of subjects. And there is an apprenticeship relationship in which one single person stands in front of us in order to transform us into an individual, to make us find our 'country'. It is a relationship which is nourished by love. But love is not only sweet harmony. It is also sudden aversion, resistance, surrender, and the desire to free oneself, the sensation of suffocating and the willingness to give oneself, totally, without defense. Love is everything that is not lukewarm. Love is tension.

One must learn from the master something other than what the master wants to teach. But it is his voice which leads one to the way of refusal. One must know how to have a dialogue with one's master, whose voice blends with those of the dead, who answer us with *our own* words.

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Adivasi Kala Mahotsava, Anandvan, February 1-4, 1986

From the 1st to the 4th of February, the Indian National Theatre's Research Centre for the Performing Folk Arts organised a festival of Adivasi folk arts, in Baba Amte's Anandvan at Varora, Dist. Chandrapur. It was held in collaboration with the local Maharogi Seva Samiti and received aid from Hindustan Lever.

The inauguration of the festival coincided with the first day of the Mitramelava, which is annually held on the 1st and 2nd of February by friends and inmates of Anandvan. A big stage on a college playground was decorated by Vishnu Chinchalkar with rustic motifs, plants and earthen pots. Every night, troupes from Maharashtra's distant Adivasi areas sang and danced on this stage, using their traditional instruments, and presenting items steeped in the folk-lore of their regions. In the mornings, there were symposia on subjects related to Adivasi life and culture, while the afternoons were devoted to demonstrations.

From Thane district, the Adivasis brought such quaint and interesting musical instruments as *Thali*, *Dera* and *Tur*. The Warlis from this region use brass vessels or gourds as instruments, which they play with quiet rhythms. Set off against these were dances like *Kahalyacha Naach*, *Morga Naach*, *Gauri Naach* and *Dhol Naach*. The *dhol* is a big percussion instrument usually played by shepherds. The dance, based on the deep sound and the regal rhythm of the *dhol*, was immensely exciting. From Nasik came such items as *Bhovada*, *Dahaka* and *Madal*. The last is an instrument which produces intriguing sounds; the preceding items comprised frenzied dances.

On the subsequent night, we had another interesting item called *Ghusadi* from Nanded. The village of Kinwat, from where the Adivasi performers had come, is on the border of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The Kolam Adivasis perform the *Ghusadi* dance by way of prayer to Devi Renuka. *Ghusadi* is the tribe's *pujari*. He holds a *dandar* in his hand and protects the tribe. He wears a headgear made up of shining peacock-feathers and his whole body is covered in lime. The dance seemed physically quite taxing.

Another Adivasi deity is Pesipen or Mahadev. In the dance woven round Pesipen, liberal use is made of masks. There is also a *Waghdev* who is "possessed", who gets himself wildly whipped.

The Adivasi dancers dance with a mounting rhythm. The climax finds them in a speedy whirl, so there is not much difference between this state and that of getting "possessed".

From Dhule came, on the third night, the *Bhilla Naach*. Here, too, there were masks and headgear of peacock-feathers. Many Adivasi dancers, especially the women, made appropriate use of anklets with *ghungroo*-s. Like the *dhol*, the flute is also an expertly used instrument. In the Bhil dance there is also an interesting dramatic element. Here it was the depiction of a colourful wedding ceremony.

In the *Tipri* dance of the Bhils, a wooden tiger is treated as a deity. A rustically-oriented Indradev also features in this item. *Gof* from Pune showed many-



coloured ribbons being skilfully woven and unravelled by a number of players. Finally, we came to the *Dandar* of Amaravati, again a powerful item, combining religious ritual with stylised dancing.

In the symposia, scholars presented papers or lectured on such subjects as the art and life of Maharashtra's Adivasis, their social perspectives and economic development, the deities of the Madias of Bhramaragadh, the dance forms of Kinwat, and anthropological studies of Warlis and Madias. The discussions were lively, supplemented both by performances and demonstrations.

The four-day Mahotsava was supervised for the INT by Ashokji Paranjape, Director of its Research Centre, and by Dr. Vikas and Smt. Sadhana Amte, in the absence of Baba Amte himself from Anandvan.

—D.G.N.

Seminar on Ritualistic Theatre, Udupi, February 22-26, 1986

The Regional Resources Centre for the Folk Performing Arts in Udupi (Director: K. S. Haridasa Bhat) organised, from February 22 to 26, a national seminar on "The Ritualistic Theatre of Coastal Karnataka". Dr. D. P. Pattanayak, Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, inaugurated the seminar.

The full spectrum of subjects related to the ritualistic theatre of Coastal Karnataka was covered in the papers read at the seminar, the demonstrations and performances on site and in the Muddana *mantapa*, the venue of the seminar. The subjects covered included Bhuta worship, Nagamandala and Teyyam (of Kerala); oracles and rituals; lesser known folk rituals of Tulu Nadu (the South Kannada region where Tulu is spoken); and ritualistic performances of other areas. Scholars from all over the country as well as from foreign countries read papers and participated in the lively discussions.

How far the rural performances are ritual and how far they are a performance proved to be one of the intriguing points debated during the seminar. Late at night, the delegates visited the villages of Pangal and Kaup (near Udupi) to witness the ritualistic performances of Dakke Bali, Nagamandala and Kalkuda-Kalluri Kola. Performances in the *mantapa* included such folk forms as Teyyam and Padayani.

One feature of these rituals which was stressed by many speakers, and which was borne out in the demonstrations and performances, was the close, centuries-old interaction between such neighbouring regions as Karnataka and Kerala.

The seminar and the performances were a logical extension of the ten-day Yakshagana Festival held by the Regional Resources Centre some years ago and helped to broaden the perspective of all the delegates.

—D. N.

International ISTA Congress, Holstebro, Denmark, September 17-22, 1986

The International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) is organising an International Congress which will analyse the female role as it is represented in the theatres of various cultures.

The Congress, which will be held in Holstebro, Denmark, from September 17-22, 1986, will consist of theoretical explanations, practical demonstrations and fragments of performances, as well as whole performances by male and female impersonators from Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese and Western theatre traditions.

The Congress has both a didactic and anthropological perspective, seeking to focus particularly on the actor's 'presence' and on theatrical extra technique as opposed to daily technique.

Among the invited guests are Katsuko Azuma and her ensemble, Buyo Kabuki, Tokyo; Kanichi Hanayagi, Onnagata Kabuki, female impersonator, Tokyo; Kelucharan Mahapatra and Sanjukta Panigrahi and her ensemble, Odissi Classical Dance, India; Sankaran Namboodiri, Kathakali, female impersonator, India; Swasthi Widjaja and I Made Bandem, Balinese dance-drama, Denpasar; Franca Rame, La Comune, Milan, Italy; Sonja Kehler, East Berlin, GDR; Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, Holstebro.

The proceedings will be conducted in English and French and nearly one hundred and fifty participants are expected to attend. The fee per participant is Dkr. 2,000/- (including meals) and the last date for receiving applications (with curriculum vitae) is July 31, 1986. Applications are to be sent to the following address:

International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA),
Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium,
Box 1283,
DK-7500 Holstebro,
Denmark.

In ISTA, "theatre anthropology" refers to the study of man's behaviour in a theatrical situation, in which he crosses over from a daily body technique to an extra-daily body technique.

To investigate the different ways in which the feminine role is represented on stage, means going to the centre of the triangle formed by the three poles of physical behaviour, mental behaviour and social behaviour. We are at the heart of the actor's work.

In traditional oriental theatre, feminine roles are often played by men, as in the classical Japanese Noh theatre, in Kabuki theatre with its onnaga, and in Indian Kathakali. There are also cases in which women play male roles. In all these Oriental theatres, the distinction and dialectic between sex and temperament is physically evident. The same parts can be interpreted in two different and opposite ways: one strong, vigorous, *kras*, *tandava*, or (in Western terms) 'virile', the other soft, delicate *manis*, *lasya*, or 'feminine'. In actual fact, both the 'feminine' and 'masculine' characters can be interpreted as vigorous and soft. It is the actor, not the tradition, who decides.

Whereas in the Occident, in general, the playing of masculine and feminine roles conforms to the models of social behaviour, in the Orient, scenic models and acting patterns are created which depart from those of daily life. For instance, women warriors only existed in the theatrical realities of China and Japan.

In Oriental theatre, women can manifest that vigorous and strong temperament which is denied them in daily life and which, in the Occident, is typical of heroines like Lady Macbeth or Medea, who are considered abnormal.

Throughout the four days of the Congress, a *living book* made up of demonstrations and performances, given by various interpreters of female roles, will be developed around the most complex and suggestive themes in theatrical culture. Through the confrontation between Orient and Occident, it will be possible to penetrate the tensions and contradictions which concern not only artists, but all social beings.

Obituaries

Pandit Mohanrao Kallianpurkar

Pandit Mohanrao Kallianpurkar, the distinguished Kathak guru, died in Hubli on December 1, 1985. Groomed by veterans like Shambhu Maharaj, Achhan Maharaj, Pandit Sundar Prasad, he contributed to the enrichment of Kathak through his accomplishments as a dancer, choreographer, scholar and teacher. Forty years ago he devised a comprehensive curriculum for instruction in Kathak; and his ballets (*Shakuntalam*, *Malati Madhavam*, *Meghdootam*) won great acclaim. He was the recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Kathak (1962) and of several other honours. Till four years ago he was associated with the National Centre for the Performing Arts as Professor Emeritus.

Nikhil Banerjee

The untimely death, on 27th January, of the sitar maestro, Nikhil Banerjee, is a grievous loss to Hindustani classical music. Born in Calcutta in 1931, he received his early training from his father, the late Pandit Jitendra Nath. Later he studied under Kumar Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury and Ustad Allauddin Khan and received guidance from Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. When he was still in his twenties, he emerged as a brilliant virtuoso and, in course of time, developed the *gayaki ang*, with a serene and introspective quality in the *alap* and innovative techniques in the faster *tan* passages. His concerts attracted appreciative audiences all over the world. He was Professor of Music at the Ali Akbar College of Music in Calcutta and at the American Society for Eastern Arts in Berkeley, California. In 1974, he received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Classical Music.

Nayana Jhaveri

The sudden death, on February 7, 1986, of Nayana Jhaveri, the distinguished exponent of Manipuri dance, was mourned by art lovers all over India. In association with her teacher, Guru Bipin Singh, she played an active role in the evolution of this dance form in recent times. For three decades, she devoted herself to the teaching, creative production and performance of Manipuri dance forms and to research in its tradition. She and her sisters helped to bring the tradition of Manipuri dance from the temples of Manipur to metropolitan centres like Bombay, thus making it accessible to audiences in India and abroad. Her services in this field earned recognition when she was honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1978 and the Gujarat State Academy Award in 1981.

Rukmini Devi Arundale

With Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale's death in Madras, on February 24, 1986, an important chapter in the revival of Indian classical dance drew to a close. Inspired by the great ballerina, Anna Pavlova, and moved by the *Sadir* dance of the *devdasi-s*, she embarked on a dance career, determined to create a vibrant and pure form of Bharata Natyam and imbue it with devotional fervour. Herself trained by the veteran Guru Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, she undertook, through the founding of Kalakshetra, to rear students in a spirit of total dedication to the traditional arts. This unique institution could bring under one roof such giants in the field of culture as Tiger Varadachariar, Mysore Vasudevachariar and M. D. Ramnathan. The Kurvanji dance-dramas it produced became well-known for the thoroughness and scholarship which went into their preparation. Rukmini Devi's pivotal role in the enhancement of the cultural life of the country found recognition in the many honours conferred on her which included the Padma Bhushan, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1957), the Kalidas Samman (1984) and honorary doctorates from the Banaras Hindu University and the Wayne University, U.S.A.

Henri Cartier-Bresson Exhibition of Photographs

Tata Theatre, January 4-31, 1986.

The Cartier-Bresson exhibition of one hundred and fifty-six photographs in the Foyer of the NCPA's Tata Theatre was viewed by thousands of citizens during the course of its display, from 4th to 31st January 1986. Sent to India by the International Centre of Photography, New York, and made possible by a grant from the American Express Foundation, the exhibition was a heart-warming and thought-provoking collection to start the New Year with.

Black and white photography has the quality of things that we describe, metaphorically, as being seen "in black and white". Shorn of the rainbow colours of life's illusory experiences, it goes straight to the core. At least, this is how I responded, albeit after many viewings, each one tending to reach into a deeper understanding of the artist's purpose or design.

The first photograph that springs to mind is one expressing joy, pure and irresponsible, as only a child's eyes can reveal. A young Paris urchin marches jauntily out of the photograph, a bottle, larger than himself (there's the joke), tucked under each arm, a look of mixed sauciness and pride on his face. Trailing behind him are his peers, and it's clear that he is king, by unanimous consent. If the photographer had not fully enjoyed the fun of the scene, a moment in life would have been lost. Is it possible to "catch a ray of sunshine in your hand"? After seeing this exhibition, one would hesitate to deny this as quite impossible.

Another striking photograph features an old spinster, or widow, snoozing on a park bench with a newspaper on her head. The writing on the paper which is legible, and intended to be so, reminds us that grave matters are at stake in politics and public affairs. But would you think its owner cares, at her age and with the perspective that her eighty-odd years have given her? Surrounded by drifting autumn leaves, impervious to the rise and fall of empires, she is like a monument in an ocean of change. Her attitude, unspoken, implied, is a wry commentary on the transitory nature of power. Seasons pass, governments fall, royalty's crown itself may tumble, but there will always be little old men and women, sunning themselves on park benches. A reassurance, for some, that "God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world", even if Pippa has aged a little.

A particularly suggestive impression of life, and the leaving of it, was entitled "Who? Where? How?". On the cobbled pavement of a city, we are not informed which, an almost commonplace street-scene occurs—two men unload a heavy box from the back-door of a parked delivery van. Houses, all alike, line the street. The basement windows, half-hidden from daylight, remind us that this is, perhaps, London. The box, though empty, cannot be mistaken, due to its shape—elongated, wedge-shaped: a coffin. A man or woman's life has just ended behind those closed doors. In spite of our situation as viewers in a gallery, we are involved: Who was it? Will there be mourners, we wonder, or was he or she an old retired person who lived in isolation? How long ago did it happen? When were the undertakers informed and by whom? How did it happen? Due to sickness, accident or suicide? Hosts of ghostly doubts and misgivings crowd our minds as we move on, trying to quieten our consciences, just as we would have done in a similar situation in real life. It is



Rue Mouffetard, Paris 1954

indeed nothing short of a miracle when a photograph, inanimate, acting on only one of the five senses, can bring us so near to a confrontation with our innermost self.

I had a particularly subjective response to four photographs, placed one beside the other, and wondered if similar associations sprang to other minds as well. This quartet seemed to pay homage to great masters of the past, of the Impressionist School of Painting, in particular. "La Seine, France", with the river in the background,



Brie, France, June 1968

and bathers lounging on the grass in the foreground, could have been inspired by "Bathers" by Renoir. "The Swing", by the same artist, was surely present in Cartier-Bresson's portrait of a young girl, standing on a swing, being pushed up into the air by a young man. "By the Marne River" was also reminiscent of a Renoir canvas. Yet another, depicting a bridge on the River Seine, could be a Corot, reproduced without the delicate colouring, so close is its affinity to that artist's work.

Perhaps other scenes and portraits recalled other great paintings to other viewers—just another dimension to the genius of the man who surely has the most lyrical lens of the twentieth century.

The rhythms of the photographs follow varied patterns, though horizontal and vertical patterns seem to predominate in many of them, suggesting a search for equilibrium and harmony. The alley of trees in "Brie, France", the symmetry of sand-lines in a desert, the parallel steps of an opera-house, are all instances of this preoccupation. However, rarely is this allowed to become an obsession.

Though this viewer's impressions started with "Joy", they ended with that saddest symbol of contemporary life, the Berlin Wall. Nonetheless, even scenes shot in that city, overshadowed by barbed-wire, were relieved of excessively grim overtones by the artist-photographer's view-point. Cartier-Bresson's innately sane, sage, but deeply sympathetic response to tragedy guides our own. We are not encouraged to over-emotionalize any situation, but only to see it as it is, gravely and soberly delineated by the artist whom I would like to term a 'classicist'. Each one of his masterpieces could be aptly entitled, like the Mrinal Sen film, *Ek Din Pratidin* or "One Day, Any Day".

—P.M.

Book Reviews

DRAMA: THE GIFT OF GODS—Culture, Performance and Communication in India by Suresh Awasthi. Published by the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo, Japan, 1983 (*In English*).

This monograph by Dr. Awasthi is an offshoot of a project undertaken by the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, dealing with "Symbolism and Cosmology in Asia and Africa". The fields of study comprise philosophy, history, literature, folklore, anthropology and sociology. But the common interest of all scholars concerns the analysis of symbolism in human culture.

In 1981, a conference was held in Tokyo University under the auspices of this project, and on the subject "The Anthropology of Spectacles and Entertainment". It dealt with problems of the study of performance in its cultural setting. There it was decided to publish the current monograph as one of a series.

Nine essays constitute the quintessence of Dr. Awasthi's thinking during the past twenty years. In the essays, the author deals with specific themes rather than with theatrical forms or historical periods.

In the first essay, the author traces the ancient origins of drama as propounded in different theories. He refers to a legendary account involving the gods of the Hindu Trinity in the creation and development of the art of drama. This legend has survived several centuries although it is believed to be a product of the post-*Natyashastra* period. Dr. Awasthi then discusses different theories of the origin of drama, both religious and secular. This makes for a colourful account, although the theories may not be on as firm a ground as the tenets of Bharata's *Natyashastra*.

In the second essay, "Gods as Players, Players as Gods", the author introduces us to the *lila* plays woven around the stories of Rama and Krishna—Ramalila and Rasalila—folk-oriented forms which have continued till our day. A conscious element of theatre existed in what would otherwise have been identified only as worship of the gods through song and dance.

As this monograph is addressed to a Japanese and a South-East Asian readership, Dr. Awasthi takes particular care to mention performances woven around the Rama legend staged in Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Kampuchea, Laos and Malaysia. The legend flourishes in these countries in the form of temple sculptures. This finds a parallel in Indian medieval miniature and traditional paintings, scrolls, wall-hangings and a variety of folk arts and crafts devoted to the same theme.

The third essay, entitled "The Temple as Theatre", is central to his work, as it covers almost entirely the field of the author's research. Temple drama, both in content and form, is a development of the whole tradition of religious congregations, discourses, and devotional singing and dancing. Dramatic forms evolved through the practice of reciting religious texts and epics with commentary and elaboration. Like Ramalila and Rasalila in the north, there were aesthetically evolved forms like Yakshagana and Kathakali in the south.

The prologues of Sanskrit drama mention temples and their festivals. Works on humanities and poetics refer to the temple as the site for performances. From the tenth century onwards, the temple acquired a unique position as the centre of community life based on Vaishnava culture, but it was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that temple drama appeared in its fully evolved form. Tracing the growth of important dance forms over the past centuries, the author examines the Bhagavatmela of Tamil Nadu, the Gita Govinda of Orissa, the Yakshagana of Karnataka, the Kutiyattam and Kathakali of Kerala and other styles such as Krishnattam and Kuchipudi.

The subsequent essays dwell on the internal aspects of traditional dance-drama, such as "Performance Text: Aesthetics and Practice" and "Theatrical Space and Setting". The first essay deals with a number of text-oriented forms, while the second successfully re-creates the theatrical format of the performance. Here, Dr. Awasthi also considers such secular traditions as *Khyal*, the folk operatic form of Rajasthan, or others from Kashmir, West Bengal and Orissa.

In "Theatrical Time and its Conventions", the concept of Time as having a cosmic orientation in Indian mythology and all that emanates from it is closely examined. The narrative structure of epic poems, such as that of Tulsidasa's *Ramacharitamanas*, observes a certain temporal development, typical of that form. The manner in which Time features in various styles of temple drama or folk drama is interestingly delineated by the author.

In the next chapter, Dr. Awasthi deals with the ethos of martial arts and related performances. In Kerala and Manipur, there exist what can strictly be called 'martial arts', whereas the Seraikela Chhau of Bihar and the Mayurbhanj Chhau of Orissa typify dance performances influenced by martial arts. The Kalari martial art of Kerala is related to the performance of Teyyam, a ritual dance practised by low-caste communities to celebrate the memories and deeds of deified dead heroes, historical figures and mythological characters.

Puppet performances form an important and integral part of the rich, traditional, oral culture. Puppet theatre may be called a shadow of live theatre; hence, it copies many of the latter's conventions. This novel section of the book provides information that complements Dr. Awasthi's research on religious and secular drama.

The last essay is entitled "Lore of the Clown" and gives us some valuable information on the subject. *Vidushaka* was once the mainstay of the vital tradition of Sanskrit theatre. Jesters and clowns in Sanskrit drama and in Sanskrit-oriented forms, such as Kutiyattam, not only indulged in antics but also played with the language. The Tamasha of Maharashtra, the Bhagvatmela of Tamil Nadu and the Yakshagana of Karnataka as also such folk-oriented forms as Nautanki and Bhavai all reserve an important place for the clown.

The world which Dr. Awasthi reveals to us in his analysis is a world of wonder. It is also enriched by long tradition. This book itself is an unusually rich compendium of information about Indian theatre traditions. Thanks to its readability and the inclusion of descriptions of plays in performance, this book has a certain value as a document. Moreover, it acts as a bridge between Indian theatre and its admirers in Japan and South-East Asia.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

RAGAPRAVAHAM (Index to Carnatic Ragas) by Dr. M. N. Dhandapani and Smt. D. Pattammal. Published by the authors with financial assistance from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, Rs. 40.00 (*In English*). Available from Higginbothams Ltd., 814, Anna Salai, Madras 600 002.

This book is a compilation of the *aroha* and *avaroha* of the *raga*-s of Carnatic music collected from various publications, music composers and performers. The *raga*-s are listed alphabetically under the *melakarta* classes.

The purpose of this work, the compilers note, is (a) to help musicians, musicologists, teachers and students of Carnatic music and music lovers to clarify their doubts, and (b) to provide an incentive for composers to compose in new scales that are not in vogue.

The compilers have certainly done a commendable and valuable job in presenting, in one volume, the *aroha-avaroha* of various *raga*-s, including the different versions of *aroha-avaroha* available for a single *raga*. The value of the book would have been further enhanced had the index been documented more elaborately, by providing information on the *aroha-avaroha* form as indicated in all the forty-five sources consulted. For instance, for the *raga* Kuntalavarali (28, 130 p. 150), the book cites three versions of *aroha-avaroha* quoted from *Sangita-svaraprastara-sagaram* of Nadamuni Pandita, *Ragakosham* of R. R. Kesavamurthi and *Ragakadal* of Mahadevan respectively. However, it is not clear which version the other forty-two sources conform to, or whether they mention this *raga* at all. Had the index listed, against each *aroha-avaroha*, the sources from which it was drawn, the researcher would have had all the required information in one volume.

There are also certain inadequacies in the format in which the compilers have chosen to present the *aroha-avaroha*. Only the letters SRGMPDN are used to represent the *svara*-s. Thus, there is no way by which one can distinguish two varieties of the same *svara* occurring in the *aroha* or *avaroha*. For instance, in *raga*-s like Bhairavi (20, 12 p. 107) or Ghantarava (20, 56 p. 109), two varieties of *dhaivata* are found; in Saranga (65, 93 p. 240), two varieties of *madhyama* occur but, in the book, this distinction, and the one between *hrasva* and *dirgha svara*-s has not been brought out. For instance, the *avaroha* of *raga* Ahiri given in *Sangitasampradaya-pradarshini* reads Sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa, but in the book under review (20, 4 p. 106) it is devoid of the long-short distinction and is simply indicated as S N D P M G R S.

Similarly, the book does not indicate the differences in *sthana* or register (*tara*, *mandra* etc.), an omission which creates confusion while reading the *aroha-avaroha* of some of the *raga*-s, e.g. Syamalavasantam (20, 207 p. 116) S N D N D R G M P D—S M G R S S N D N S; Ranjanagowri (29, 20 p. 116) S D P N S R G M P N; Gandharvam (42, 4 p. 189) P D N S R G R S — N P M P D N S N S. In the above cases, it is very difficult to figure out the *sthana* of some of the *svara*-s. Perhaps, in the next edition of the book, all these omissions could be rectified.

While this book provides an excellent reference for musicians and scholars, it is very difficult to agree with the compilers on the usefulness of the book in being an incentive for composing in new scales. *Aroha-avaroha* is a purely theoretical construct, arrived at after carefully studying the different phrases offered by a *raga*.

It is certainly an ingenious formula which attempts at condensing, in a *sutra* form, the important movements or phrases of a *raga* and presents them in ascending and descending order of the *svara*-s of the *madhya sthana*. However, *aroha-avaroha* is only one of the many *lakshana*-s or characteristics of a *raga*. Only he, who has understood all the *lakshana*-s, will be able to appreciate the *aroha-avaroha* formulated for a *raga*. The reverse is not possible. That is, on the basis of the *aroha-avaroha* alone, and in the absence of any composition, it is not possible to develop a picture of the *raga*. *Aroha-avaroha* is the ultimate stage in the course of formulating the *lakshana*-s and should not be used as a launching pad for creating compositions. Moreover, in the absence of any composition, the *svara* symbols sa, ri, ga etc. in the *aroha-avaroha* of a *raga*, will only furnish the *svara sthana*-s and cannot reveal the form of the *svara*. In fact, traditional teachers do not approve of the singing of the *aroha-avaroha* of a *raga* in their curriculum; nor is this theoretical knowledge absolutely necessary for a student interested in performance alone. The *aroha-avaroha* of the *melakarta raga*-s like Shankarabharanam, Todi and Kharaharpriya particularly, convey practically nothing about the *raga svarupa*. And, even in the case of *raga*-s like Ritigaula and Sahana, any attempt at visualising the *raga* on the basis of *aroha-avaroha* will only result in a very limited and incomplete picture, and that would be a dangerous exercise.

An in-depth study of the *raga*-s listed in the book reveals an amazing number of ancient *raga*-s and the number under each *melakarta*. Considering that *aroha-avaroha* as a *lakshana* crystallised only in the post-Venkatamakhi period, it is curious to see how so many *raga*-s have existed and disappeared within such a short period. The *aroha-avaroha* of many *raga*-s present very interesting structures. In an *aroha-avaroha*, one generally expects the arrangement to be based on the *madhya sthana svara*-s, with the *svara*-s at the extreme ends of the *aroha* and *avaroha* coinciding. Also, the starting *svara* of the *aroha* is the lowest pitched, and the final *svara*, the highest pitched, and vice versa in the *avaroha*. But, in actuality, some of the *aroha-avaroha* structures are quite odd. For instance, in the *raga* Purnapanchama, P M S R G P — D D P M G R S N (15, 148 p. 92), the *aroha* seems to start and conclude on the same *svara*. In the *raga* Nadhavarangini (22, 160 p. 127), the *aroha* S P M R G R S appears to incorporate the *avaroha* too.

Some of the *aroha-avaroha*-s contain redundant phrases or appear redundant. For instance, the *avaroha* of Bhogachintamani (1, 2 p. 55) is S D P M G R G R S. The repetition of G R achieves nothing by way of *raga* image; even if G R G R S were to be a typical phrase of the *raga*, it is brought within the *sutra* form of S D P M G R S which is quoted here as another version of *avaroha* for the same *raga*. Where two or more *svara*-s are successively repeated, we also come across versions devoid of such repetitions. For the *raga* Kanakambari (1, 9 p. 55), one version of *aroha-avaroha* is S R G M P D S—S N D P M G R S while another one is S R G M P D N D S—S N D P M G R S. Now, according to convention, even if the *aroha* drops a *svara*, namely *Ni*, and if the same *svara* (e.g. *Ni*) is present in the *avaroha*, then the phrase P D N D is admissible. Hence, it is redundant to incorporate the DND phrase in the *aroha*.

Thus, the various *aroha-avaroha*-s compiled in this book are fascinating specimens for academic study. But, in spite of the hard work expended in the preparation of this index, some errors have crept in. In the Appendix, *raga*-s

incorporating both varieties of *madhyama* and omitting *panchama* are listed (p. 254). The nomenclature is that of Sri Tanjavur Kalyanaraman and the corresponding names of five *raga*-s given by Smt. D. Pattammal also figure in the list. However, three of these, namely Mayalalith, Sankaralalith and Priyashri do not appear to be *Panchama-Varja* (see *aroha-avaroha* on p.90, 167 and 249 respectively). The *aroha-avaroha* of Nattapadai quoted from *Tevaram-Divyaprabandham* of Dandapani Desikar (published by the Tamil Isai Sangam) and that of Salagabhairavi quoted from *Sangitasamapradayapradarshini* (under Raganagaraga No. 22) do not coincide with the versions in the original texts. Moreover, the alphabetical index at the beginning of the book (p.38), lists four Salagabhairavi-s, one each under 17, 20, 22 and 37th *melakarta*-s. But, in the detailed lists given for the various *melakarta*-s, Salagabhairavi is not mentioned under the 17th *melakarta*. Again, in the "Synonyms of Carnatic Ragas" listed in the Appendix, some *raga*-s have been omitted. For instance, under *melakarta* LXV, *raga* Hamveeru is missing among the synonyms of Kalyani, while Hemakharaharapriya does not feature among the synonyms of Madhyamavathi under *melakarta* XXII.

In the bibliography, the information about some of the sources is inadequate. In particular, the absence of Walter Kauffmann's *Ragas of South India* and Ranga Ramanuja Ayyangar's *History of South Indian Music* is conspicuous.

As stated earlier, the book is very useful reference work for music-researchers but it could incorporate improvements in the next edition.

—N. RAMANATHAN

KALAKSHETRA—RUKMINI DEVI REMINISCENCES by S. Sarada. Published by Kala Mandir Trust, Madras, 1985, Rs.125.00 (In English).

This book is a personalised account of the birth, growth and evolution of that magnificent institution, Kalakshetra. The author, S. Sarada, herself very much a part of this institution, is able to give the reader a deep insight into its working, its productions, and its contribution to the world of art. This has been achieved through the inclusion of detailed memorabilia. A literary style which is easy to read, even rambling at times, maintains a personal and narrative quality that helps the reader identify with the author.

The earliest recollections begin at the very inception of Kalakshetra. Then the author goes on to speak of the involvement of all the great artistes and architects who helped Rukumini Devi in building up Kalakshetra to its present state. The succeeding generation also finds mention in the book.

One learns details of the creation of the remarkable, artistically well-knit dance-dramas of Kalakshetra. A graphic description of these productions proves to be very illuminating—particularly the information on the research that goes into each production. The dance choreography, music, costumes, lighting and stage decor are individually treated and this material could serve as a guideline for other productions.

This volume, which brings out the genius of Rukmini Devi and the dedication of her band of co-workers, should find a place in the collections of all artistes, art lovers and institutions devoted to art.

—CHITRA VISWESWARAN

ON MUSIC AND MUSICIANS OF HINDOOSTAN by Ashok D. Ranade. Published by Promilla & Co., 'Sonali', C-127, Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi 110 017, 1984, Rs.250.00 (In English).

This is an unusual book which needs to be studied in depth rather than merely read. It reveals the author's mastery over Hindustani classical music and related disciplines and areas, such as literature, art, cinema, radio, the *Keertana* form. It is, in fact, a sociological study of oral traditions both in literature and music. This is the first book of its kind that I have encountered, dealing so competently with the topics it seeks to cover. It is divided into two parts: the first encompasses theoretical, historical and conceptual issues; the second is a commentary on the prominent exponents of major *khayal gharana*-s and is full of deep insights into the styles of these performers.

In the opening chapter, *Literature and Music in India*, the author rightly seeks answers to some of the 'literary' questions in music because no other discipline in India has been so thoroughly oral-aural as music. This implies the co-existence of the written and the spoken word with the latter so music-oriented that the line of literary movement passes virtually through music, except in the cases of the *Brahmana*-s, *Aranyaka*-s, *Upanishad*-s, *Sutra*-s etc. In the sphere of Pre-Vedic and Vedic literature, the book deals exhaustively with various aspects which include the tendency towards versification, the crystallisation of pitch-patterns, and the pervasiveness of the incantatory element. All of these can be directly ascribed to music. Love for sound *per se*, a taste for the finer manipulations of pitch, the skilled use of flexible rhythms and finally the longing for an abstract aesthetic identity of form and content were factors through which music continued to hold its sway.

In short (except for the afore-mentioned works), Pre-Vedic, Vedic and subsequent literature reveals a close relationship between music and literature, with the latter leaning heavily on the former. Its basis was a very comprehensive oral tradition which controlled expression both in music and literature. Of the two, music made its orientation clear chiefly by remaining vocal. Similarly, literature declared its basic loyalty *through* music by relying on recitation and prosodic formation, depending on sound patterns sustained through enjoying tone for its own sake.

At one point the author observes that the communications revolution threatens the validity of every consecrated art theory. The reviewer, however, feels that, with fidelity to the purity of tone, the skilled use of flexible rhythms and the principle of some basic law and order in the exposition of any art-piece are bound to remain, at least in music.

The second chapter, *Indian Oral Tradition and Hindustani Music*, details the chief characteristics of the oral tradition in the general Indian context. The author discusses the prestige of the word, the oral and the aural, its co-existence with the written form, and relates these to the particular features of Hindustani Music. In 'The Sootra Way' he enumerates twenty-seven aphorisms (current in the mouths of the musicians) which throw considerable light on their thinking and aesthetic concepts. The main thrust here is the author's plea for continued relevance of the oral tradition as a mode of communication. He stresses the fact that the Indian educational system (particularly in the sphere of music) is subjected to unnecessary tension because of print-culture. He believes that if the oral tradition is granted its proper place it may help in our quest for quality in education.

The next chapter deals with the confrontation with the occidental, resulting in the revolution in communications. The consequent 'popular culture' has led to shrinkage in the time-duration of concerts and hence of the musical pieces which are presented. Also, it has affected art-music, in that musicians aspire more for 'effect', by resorting to various clichés making for stock responses, rather than for composing artistically-satisfying and creative music. However, the author has not failed to notice the beneficial results of such a shrinkage: elimination of superfluities in presentation like repetition, warming-up periods etc. The musical repertoire in a concert thus aims at becoming a closely-knit 'art-form'. The author also deals with folk-music, which has been less affected by western influences owing to its rural base. He also strongly criticises the efforts of mass-media agencies like radio and television to 'produce' folk-music.

Chapter Four, *Film Music: Changing Compulsions*, traces the evolution in this field of activity. It discusses the role of mythology as the chief thematic content of the early films; the 'classical' music base which they needed to ensure an all-India appeal; the weightage to the 'folk' element etc. The tendency after the forties has been to make every individual song musically attractive in its own right, irrespective of the theme, and with a view to enable people to retain it in memory, forgetting its essential role as an integral 'component' of the total film. This product came to be called 'popular' music. Film music has now freed itself from the constraints of being a component; it has ceased to be 'film music' and become a joint venture of film *and* music, each making an excuse of the other to hang together. As a result, it has become transient, rootless and artificial. But the tragedy is that this process has become a success formula. One wonders if it was at all necessary to descend to such a level especially since film, as a medium, was eminently suited to raise the general cultural standard of the masses.

The next chapter deals with the special problems faced by music-films. These include loyalty to content-oriented literary devices of narration or the need to communicate musical experiences. The conclusion rightly arrived at is that the structuring of a music-film must follow the lines of music itself if the film is to convey musical and not visual literary experiences.

The subject of musical autonomy is covered by Chapter Six which details various limitations on what is generally understood as absolute autonomy. For instance, limitations of the culture of the soil within which music has flowered, the internal limitations of the given *raga* and *tala* as also the limitations of the form which excludes certain elements outside the form such as *taan*, *boltaan* etc. Besides, there

is the exclusion of certain sounds, which, though musical, are considered as belonging to an alien culture. In other words, 'autonomy' is really a limited freedom within which music has to function.

Chapter Seven deals with music and modernism. The author believes that musical modernism provides an effective answer to the stagnation in general musical activity. Irrespective of the principles of cultural development, modernism has to have a place in it. Various features of music operations are discussed: the total exclusion of primitive music and partially that of folk-music; grammatical deviation; new relationships in the internal organisation of a given form; new musical instruments; changes in the boundaries of existing forms; composite 'art-forms'; transformations in critical stance; organising of heterogeneous audiences into suitable groups; growing internationalism. The chapter is a welcome approach in the direction of re-thinking on the issue of modernism.

Chapter Eight discusses *Keertana* and its appeal to the collective mind through different devices such as prose delivery, intoned narration, speech-music continuum by way of drama, music, acting, dance etc. It traces the process by which it has attained the status of a fully developed art-form. The author rightly deplores the attitude of Indian aestheticians who have totally ignored its achievements. The main *Keertana* traditions ('Naradiya' and 'Varkari') and their respective sub-traditions are discussed, with short descriptive notes on their better known exponents. This reviewer is particularly happy that the author has examined this neglected art-form in such great detail and done justice to its achievements.

The second part of the book concentrates on six eminent performers. The approach is influenced by the author's deep study of voice-culture and his sensitive appreciation of the different *gharana*-s to which the musicians belong.

Pandit Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze's contribution to music is seen in the context of his unusually high fundamental pitch and short breath (a result of asthma). This great artiste succeeded in converting his disability into an asset. A similar example in recent times is that of Pandit Kumar Gandharva. Vazebuwa sang mainly in Tritala and Jhaptala, relying on a medium tempo to overcome his handicap. Again, because of his high pitch, his pronunciation of the words (of the *cheej*) was abrupt, introducing an element of 'pause' and creating a chiaroscuro effect of sound and silence. He rightly used the text of the *cheej* as a sound pattern, and the role assigned to words was sound-oriented rather than music-oriented. The vigour with which he sang also compensated for the lack of any appreciable speed in his *taan*. Vazebuwa enriched the *raga*-repertoire in effective circulation and, on the whole, his contribution to music was astoundingly impressive in the sense that he gave it a new dimension. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the dates of his birth and death need correction. The correct dates as verified by this reviewer are 4-10-1872 and 5-5-1943 respectively.

The next chapter on Ustad Abdul Karim Khan makes mention of his thin, pointed and rather nasal voice and also the high pitch which characterised all his music. For instance, it enabled him to obtain in the *taar* octave a highly emotional appeal (without being sentimental). His fidelity to tunefulness was superb, and this reviewer, who heard him in several *maifil*-s, can recall that the melodic quality of his music was unequalled by any of his contemporaries. The effect of this enveloping tone was that his word-contours were blurred and the role of the *tala* was subservient

to tunefulness. The *tala* showed itself clearly only in the notes adjacent to the *sam*. The Ustad was imbued with non-academism. His sense of modernity revealed itself in some of the *raga*-s he recorded, which showed a marked deviation from their accepted forms. Besides, he also imported some Karnatic phrases and blended them into the Hindustani mould to advantage. In effect, musical 'tone' reigned supreme in his presentation and there was a deep hue of anguish in all his renderings of *raga*-s. In his *thumri* recordings, he refrained from employing the words of the text in a meaningful manner as also from *laggi*-pieces which consisted in singing during the *dugan*. Thus, he liberated the *thumri* from word-dependence and made it similar to his *khayal*-s.

In the chapter on Faiyaz Khan of the Agra *gharana* the author draws attention to the easy flow of his music and its persuasively conquering edge (despite the bass boom in his voice). His *khayal*-s were *dhrupad*-oriented and in presenting them he revelled in *nom tom*-s. He was at home in *dhrupad-dhamar*, *khayal*, *tarana* and also in *thumri*. His pronunciation of the song-text was speech-oriented. He modulated the volume of his voice to soft, loud, tender and vigorous dimensions which made for dramatic presentation. He stressed *bol-aalap*-s and switched over to *boltaan*-s and *taan*-s, doubling and tripling the component units, with an abundance of *tihai*-s, *gamak*-s and *taan* patterns, beginning with successively changed starting points. He relied more on robustness of expression and ponderous musical movement. His demeanour on the stage was captivating. He seemed to sing with his full body, and his hand and head gestures were extremely communicative.

The main feature of Kesarbai's music, the author points out, was the masculine breadth of her voice, and her repertoire of *aprachalit raga*-s and complex *taan*-s. In the latter, she followed the unusual principle of sustaining some intermittent notes longer than others in her fast *taan*-s. Her presentation of *prachalit raga*-s also carried a hue of *aprachalit raga*-s: they sounded more intricate than their familiar forms. She excelled in the skilful change of patterns in her *taan*-s. She could at times loosen the *raga* frame, a device which only helped to accentuate their correctness. In spite of the complexity of the musical design, the quality of precision in reaching the *sam* point was remarkable. She never came to the *sam*, she arrived at it regally. The author observes that her music made her an ideal artiste for a student, a safe performer for a connoisseur and an admirable phenomenon for a musician. I may, however, point out that the correct date of her birth is July 13, 1892 as given in her biography and elsewhere, and not August 13, 1892 as given by the author.

The author rightly categorises Pandit Omkarnath Thakur as a major deviationist with a firm base in the Gwalior *gharana*. He was one of those musicians who sensed the importance of timbre. He could also be melodramatic and emotional in his *bhajan*-s. He used effectively the upper and lower registers of his voice. In the initial stages of a *khayal*, he pronounced the words of the song-text with clarity and brought home the meaning of the words in aural relief. But in the later portion of his elaborations, he showed a cool disregard for the same words and dismembered them completely. He was a perfect and satisfying virtuoso in the early phase of his musical career, but showed some 'exhibitionist' streaks in his last phase. He dramatised his music by various devices of contrast. The author rightly observes that extra-musical devices formed part of his total presentation technique which was often overplayed, with the result that he could be described as a performer amongst vocalists and a showman amongst performers.

Bade Gulam Ali Khan had a unique voice with a very wide range. Its sweetness, flexibility and ease of movement in all tempi made for clarity and serenity. He could maintain the phonetic outlines of the vowel sounds indicating well-coordinated voice-production. The tonal values of individual notes were treated as full-fledged musical entities. His melodic line was always clear, with component notes receiving full values. The Patiala *gharana*, to which the Ustad belonged, specialised in speed in fast *taan-s*, a phenomenon in which he excelled. This evoked an element of surprise due to its miraculous and instantaneous shortening of tonal space. Besides, his place in *thumri*-singing was rated higher than his rank in *khayal* presentation. He seemed to care more for the ordinary listener than the connoisseur. Here the reviewer must point out that the author has failed to grasp the dangers of this attitude, which has led to all sorts of pyrotechnics and other gimmicks, ruining the artistic qualities of a performance. I may here express, in passing, my doubts with regard to the year of his birth; whether it is 1903 as given by the author or 1901 as given elsewhere.

In conclusion, I must again stress the importance of this book dealing with topics and concepts which have never so far received any attention from art critics. His approach is at once sharp, clear and profound. His chapters on the six major musicians of the thirties are surprisingly accurate, despite his inadequate experience of *maifil* attendance. He has relied a good deal on recordings in most cases. Even this reviewer, who has heard all of them in *maifil-s*, cannot find fault with his observations.

The book is priced on the high side and the binding leaves much to be desired. Instead of line drawings, photographs of the renowned artistes, discussed in different chapters, could have been reproduced on art paper.

—VAMANRAO DESHPANDE

KUTTAMPALAM AND KUTIYATTAM—A Study of the Traditional Theatre for the Sanskrit Drama of Kerala by Göverdhana Panchal. Published by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi 110 001, Rs. 130.00 (*In English*).

This excellent study on the only surviving example of ancient Indian theatre is timely and also for all time. It is timely because modern European theatre, having escaped the constraints of the proscenium, is looking to the East for orientation. Indian theatre, having shaken off the grip of colonial tradition, is today seeking for its roots in our sacred and secular theatre heritage. In the West, Grotowski, Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine are not exceptions; their preoccupations are shared by many other theatre practitioners. There are just two modern Indian theatre-persons who have found inspiration in Kutiyattam: Vijaya Mehta and K. N. Panikkar.

This book has a lasting value because it is exhaustive in its analysis of the theatre of Kutiyattam. In current parlance, one could say that here we have all that one needs to know of the 'hardware' and 'software' of Kutiyattam. This book will serve as source-material, in English, for years to come. Kuttampalam is "the

descendant of the ancient playhouse of Bharata" and Kutiyattam, "the play". The book takes a keen look at both, as well as at the backgrounds—social, literary, historical and even geophysical.

In the Introduction, the author delves deep into the ancient history of South India to show that though Kutiyattam is today alive only in Kerala, there was a time when it was quite popular in the regions governed by the Cholas and the Pandyas. *Koothu*, the pervasive term for many an ancient performing art of South India, from which the term Kutiyattam is derived, is studied in terms of literary and epigraphical references. The history of the Chakyars, the exclusive caste of artistes of *Koothu* and Kutiyattam and of their playhouse Kuttampalam is studied in the same detailed manner. The author's painstaking research is evident not so much in the footnotes as in some of the casual references. For instance, in the reference to the "so-called hundred years' war between the Chera and the Chola empires", 'so-called' reveals the author's familiarity with the latest points of view of Kerala history. The social forces which built temples and fostered temple-arts (*koothu*) are unearthed from inscriptions and plates. The architecture of the Kuttampalam is seen in the architectural context of Kerala which, as the author says, "has absorbed . . . the basic plan evolved by the Buddhist and Brahmanical architecture, centuries ago, outside this region." Further, the deviations are but compulsions of "the geography of the belt" (i.e. the coastal belt of Kerala and South Kanara) "and the material used, because of this". He points out that wood, the basic construction material in Kerala, was at once perishable and easily available for reconstruction. The mortality of wood, in construction, has been the despair of many Kerala historians.

The discussion moves on to the Aryan connections of Kutiyattam: its links with classical Sanskrit Drama. The *Rasa* theory of Indian aesthetics, the semantics of the term *Natya*, the accoutrement of the functioning actor (*Angika, Vachika, Aharya* and *Sattvika*) and the music, are all examined here. The deviations from the *Natyashastra* are carefully and sympathetically analysed. Deviations are essential, as otherwise no theatre can function as a viable, organic social unit. Thus, the dependence of *Hasta Lakshana Deepika* for some of the *mudra-s*. The music, an integral part of all Eastern theatre, was also coloured here by regional shades. This, of course, also has the sanction of the *Sangeeta Ratnakara*:

देशे देशे जनानां यद्गुच्या हृदयरंजकम् ॥ २३ ॥

गीतं च वादनं नृत्तं तद्देशीयभिधीयते ।

As Kutiyattam is the only surviving model of the ancient Sanskrit Theatre, we cannot today assess the regional influences minutely. Comparison is only possible with what is described of a contemporary play-production by Damodara Gupta in his *Kuttanimatam* (8th century A.D.).

The author then takes up the 'hardware', as it were. He discusses the playhouse and its structure. He undertakes an analytical study of the Kuttampalam (playhouse) in the temple-complex of Vadakkunnathan at Trichur in Kerala, perhaps because it is well-preserved and currently in use. Sketches of the site-plan of the temple-complex and photographs are helpful to the reader in understanding the organic relationship between the playhouse and the temple. An actual production of the *Shoorpanakha Ankam* act from the play, *Ashcharya-Choodamani*, is then analysed in detail, which reveals how the training of an actor in the classical manner fully equips him as an artiste. Modern theatre-practitioners, aware of the strengths of

Eastern theatre, in terms of principles of acting, are now turning their eyes to Kutiyattam, Kabuki and the Peking Opera. Elements of this last drama form, I might add, are coming to India in an imperceptible and subtle manner, through Brecht! This scrutiny of *Shoorpanakha Ankam* will be of immense help to directors and actors of modern theatre both in India and abroad. The author's deep scholarship sits lightly on him. What comes through in his report on the play-performance is the spirited enthusiasm of a *rasika*; this is a virtuoso performance in itself. The photographs of the play-performance complement the description in words.

A word of criticism concerning the transliteration of some of the Malayalam words. It is a minor issue, and is only raised here because it refers to the very title of the book. Malayalam has accepted the Aryanised alphabetical symbols, but the phonemic values given to quite a few of those symbols (letters) remain Dravidian. The letter 'T', for instance, often loses its Aryanised phonemic value in a Malayalam speaker. Instead, it takes the value of 'D'. The author himself acknowledges this when he writes about the temple of Vadakkunnathan.

Theatre-lovers all over the world owe a debt of gratitude to Goverdhan Panchal for this seminal work.

—T. M. P. NEDUNGADI

USTAD FAIYAAZ KHAN by Dipali Nag. Published by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1985, Rs.90.00 (*In English*).

Biographical literature in Indian music—specially in English—is still scanty. At a time when Western interest in our music (as in dance and the other arts) has grown from curiosity to cautious understanding, and then to discerning appreciation, the need for biographies of our great musicians, musicologists and traditional composers assumes added significance. Against this background, Dipali Nag's book is to be welcomed.

The author, who now heads the Research Development Wing of the Sangeet Research Academy at Calcutta, is a musicologist, a senior exponent of the Agra *gharana*, and has studied under masters of the *gharana*, including Ustad Faiyaz Khan himself. Widely travelled, she has given lecture-demonstrations of Hindustani music at several educational centres in India and abroad. In the biography under review, she draws upon her own knowledge of Hindustani music, in general, and the *gharana*, in particular, to portray the life and career of one of the most eminent among the North Indian classical vocalists of our time. The narration includes authentic information collected from many close associates of the Ustad, which gives the reader glimpses into the maestro's personal life. All this and more makes the book eminently readable and interesting.

This reviewer had the privilege of listening to Ustad Faiyaz Khan on the radio as well as on the concert platform over more than a decade, till his death in

November 1950. The Ustad was more than a versatile genius—he could be described as a phenomenon. Behind his rich, eloquent virtuosity lay a vast vision and deep feeling. His artistic intuition found beautiful expression as much in poetry as in music. His numerous compositions are a precious treasure to cherish and preserve.

Ustad Faiyaz Khan's music symbolised the grand evolution of the Hindustani tradition from the ancient *dhrupad-dhamar* to modern *thumri* or *ghazal*. His versatility as a performer was such that even as he finished with an elaborate classical theme, designed for the delight of his more sophisticated listeners, he could uncannily sense the mood of the "middle-brow" section among the audience, and quietly switch over to a *thumri*, *ghazal* or *dadra*. In a sense, the Ustad was thus a traditionalist among reformists and a reformist among traditionalists.

The impact of Ustad Faiyaz Khan's art was evident from the large following it could command throughout the country. One is saddened by the present state of the Agra *gharana*. Few of his professed followers have captured the spirit of his *gayaki*. What we hear, for the most part, from its exponents today is a stilted, even doctrinaire, representation of the pioneer's music. There are, no doubt, exceptions; but they are far too few. One of them was Sharafat Hussain Khan. His death last year, at the age of fifty-five, due to cancer, came as a severe blow to the *gharana's* future. Ustad Faiyaz Khan's genius spanned a range that was probably too vast for most of his presentday followers to understand. This is one of the very legitimate points stressed by the author in her book.

Consisting of twelve chapters, the book begins with a brief historical background of the genesis and evolution of the Agra *gharana* and its salient features. This is followed by an account of Ustad Faiyaz Khan's career—his musical initiation by his grandfather at a very early age, his rise to fame, and his permanent appointment as state musician in the then princely state of Baroda. Specially absorbing are the chapters that deal with the influence of the Ustad's contemporaries on his art, and his own contribution to the enrichment of Hindustani music. In a separate chapter, the author gives her analysis of the maestro's *gayaki*.

In her depiction of Ustad Faiyaz Khan as a man and a teacher, the author betrays no partisanship anywhere in her narration. She is candid and dispassionate about the Ustad's foibles. The concluding chapters, *Last Days*, makes poignant reading.

The inclusion of four appendices adds greatly to the value of the book. These cover thirty-five compositions written and set to tune by the Ustad, with their translations in English, a detailed presentation of the *raga* Jaijaiwanti in *alap* and *bandish* in notation, a complete discography of the Ustad, and a chart giving the family tree of the Agra *gharana*. There is also a portfolio of rare photographs.

The publishers, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, should, however, have taken some care to eliminate printing errors, and rectify mistakes. Since the overall production is somewhat inferior, the price of the book appears too high.

The author seems not to be quite familiar with the names of some of the contemporaries of Ustad Faiyaz Khan in Maharashtra. Ramakrishnabuva Vaze finds mention as Vazirbuva and, at one place, Gangubai Hangal is described as a disciple of Alladiya Khan.

—MOHAN NADKARNI

Record and Cassette Reviews

KUMARI SANGEETA—The Young Envoy. Side One: Raga Bihag. Side Two: Raga Chhayana, Bhajan Mishra Pilu and Raga Khamaj Hori.
RHYTHM HOUSE 230 343 (Stereo).

DR. SMT. N. RAJAM (Violin). Side A: Raga Darbari Kanada. Side B: Raga Kalavati, Raga Bhairavi.
EMI STCS 02B 6122 (Stereo).

AFTAAB-E-SITAR—USTAD VILAYAT KHAN (Sitar). Side One: Raga Bahar. Side Two: Ragamalika based on Khamaj, Dadra.
EMI STCS 04B 7208 (Stereo).

MUSIC OF INDIA—Melodies on Santoor, Flute and Guitar, Vol. 1. Specially released for Festival of India 1985-86.
EMI STCS 04B 7206 (Stereo).

PT. K. G. GINDE—Pure Classicism at its Best. Side A: Ragas Hindol and Khat. Side B: Raga Kedar Bahar.
EMI STCS 04B 7261 (Stereo).

PRABHAKAR KAREKAR—The Meaning of Rasa. Side One: Raga Bhupal Todi. Side Two: Raga Chandrakauns Bageshwari Ang.
RHYTHM HOUSE 240 346 (Stereo).

KANKANA BANERJEE—Dedicated to You. Side One: Raga Shudh Kalyan. Side Two: Raga Jog.
RHYTHM HOUSE 240 344 (Stereo).

BEGUM PARWEEN SULTANA AND USTAD MOHD. DILSHAD KHAN—The Ethereal Duo. Side A: Raga Marwa. Side B: Raga Kausi Nat, Thumri Mishra Bhairavi.
EMI HTCS 04B 7204 (Stereo).

PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI—Evening and Morning Melodies.
EMI 6TC 04B 7200.

BHAJAN SATSANG—PURSHOTTAMDAS JALOTA. Double Cassette Album.
HMV STHVS 40117/18 (Stereo).

GHAZALS BY VAJAHAT HUSAIN—Aashna (Intimate).
MUSIC INDIA 2394 855 (Stereo).

I have to begin, rather reluctantly, with a comment on an unmusical facet of music cassettes: the poor quality of the tapes used or shoddy copying techniques, even in the case of some of the EMI cassettes. This causes wobbling and, as a result, the music that is recorded sounds out of tune. After a while, one is not in a mood to continue to listen and, by and large, the reputation of the artiste suffers. It is high time Indian cassette publishing companies improved the technical quality of their presentations.

The encouragement by Rhythm House to talented young artistes (who need a break) is a positive development deserving special mention. These artistes of

promise are presented in a dignified and appropriate manner and provided with an opportunity to stage a remarkable entry into the music world. For example, Kumari Sangeeta, the gifted daughter of Dr. N. Rajam, is bound to attract the attention of classical music listeners and students of the violin. She emerges as a violinist with potential in her sincere and soulful presentation of *raga* Bihag. She is the youthful replica of her mother, Dr. Smt. N. Rajam, who, in turn, presents a chaste and spirited delineation of Darbari *raga*, reminding us of the interpretation of this *raga* by Pandit Omkarnath Thakur.

Ustad Vilayat Khan's *Aftaab-e-Sitar* is in tune with his reputation. The vigorous Bahar is what I favour. The *Ragamalika* is unimpressive because no single *raga* gets any scope for full expression.

Another instrumental offering is by the famous trio—Shiv-Hari-Brij, who present folk and *Dhun* melodies likely to be hummed and remembered by the general as well as the *dardi* listener. This 'Festival of India' special release will certainly capture the imagination of western audiences.

Pandit K. G. Ginde's cassette, at least the copy provided to me, is an example of the poor technical quality of Indian productions. His Kedar-Bahar (at least I could listen to it fully) is better than the *Dhamar* in Hindol, which was unbearable due to the persistent wobbling of the cassette.

Prabhakar Karekar is a serious classical musician even though his popularity is mainly based on *Natya-Sangeet* presentations. He proves his adherence to the traditional classical mode in the recent release by Rhythm House. His interpretations, especially of the *raga* Bhopal Todi, evoke the serene spirit of the *raga*.

Kankana Banerjee's voice is melodious though there are times when the pitch sounds unpleasant to the ear in the higher octave. The style of singing is reminiscent of Ustad Amir Khan who was her guru, but it lacks his depth and musicianship. Her treatment of both Shudh Kalyan and Jog is marked by some swift *tan* passages.

Begum Parveen Sultana and Mohammed Dilshad Khan complement each other. While Dilshad shows imagination and verve, Parveen, with her amazing voice range, develops her husband's theme with graceful answering phrases. *Raga* Marwa thus provides us with good listening.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's cassette, copied from his popular E. P. discs, entertains the listener with an hour of pleasing music.

Bhajan-s by Purshottamdas Jalota will prove to be a feast for his admirers. This *Satsang* shows his command of the effective pronunciation of words (*uchcharan*). It is a well-deserved tribute by H.M.V. to this veteran artiste.

Vajahat Hussain's *Aashna* (Intimate) is an offering of *gaza*-s, part of the fashion of the day. Though he belongs to a family of classical musicians, he emerges here as a promising *gaza* singer and also as a composer. Gifted with a sweet and flexible voice, he is better in the role of a singer since his compositions hardly strike a new note and only remind us of many previously heard melodies.

—SARALA BHIDE

Statement about ownership and other particulars about the Quarterly Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February.

FORM IV
(See Rule 8)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Place of Publication | : | Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021. |
| 2. Periodicity of its Publication | : | Quarterly |
| 3. Printer's Name | : | Shri M. N. Palwankar |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | Tata Press Limited,
414, Veer Savarkar Marg,
Bombay 400 025. |
| 4. Publisher's Name | : | Shri J. J. Bhabha |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | National Centre for the Performing Arts,
Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021. |
| 5. Editor's Name | : | Dr. Kumud Mehta |
| Whether citizen of India | : | Yes |
| Address | : | National Centre for the Performing Arts,
Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021. |
| 6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital | : | The journal is owned by a non-profit-making philanthropic organisation and is published on a non-commercial basis. No individual owner. |

I, J. J. Bhabha, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 1-3-1986

J. J. BHABHA
Signature of Publisher

Published by J. J. Bhabha for the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay House, Bombay 400 023. Edited by Dr. Kumud Mehta and printed by M. N. Palwankar at the Tata Press Ltd., 414, Veer Savarkar Marg, Bombay 400 025.

Reg. No. 24073/73

Cover: *A scene from Chakravyuha.*

Second Cover: (a) *Scenes from Puputan.*
(b) *A scene from Ottayan.*

Third Cover: *A scene from Ottayan.*
Fourth Cover: *A scene from
Moon & Darkness.*

