



Culture 2000

**European Association for Theatre Culture /
AKT-ZENT International Theatre Centre**

Artistic Director Dr. Jurij Alschitz

**From Cliché in Art to the Art of Cliché
an intercultural theatre research project**

Programme Director Christine Schmalor

In May 2004, AKT-ZENT (Germany)/European Association for Theatre Culture (EATC) initiated an international research project in conjunction with the Theatre Education & Training Committee ITI/UNESCO entitled: "From Cliché in Art to the Art of Cliché".

Organisations from twelve European countries actively supported the application for the Culture 2000 programme of the European Commission: the co-organisers were ITI Centre Cyprus and SCUT - Skandinaviskt centrum för utforskning av teater, Sweden, with further partners including Théâtre et Publics (Belgium), Academy of Performing Arts (Czech Republic), Rakvere Teater (Estonia), KOINE (France), Hellenic ITI Centre (Greece), Academy of Drama and Film & ITI Centre (Hungary), Iceland Academy of the Arts, PROTEI (Italy) and the Slovakian Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Additional actors were also present from San Marino, Portugal, Turkey, Burkina Faso and Egypt.

AKT-ZENT (alongside its partner organisations) took the lead responsibility for organising this unique, world-wide, comparative research, through collaborations and exchanges with many international theatre artists. It included workshops, master classes, colloquia and laboratories, and took place from July 2005 to June 2006 with approximately one hundred and twenty actors, directors and teachers.

The Idea

If we understand cliché as a 'constantly fixed form', if we understand 'life' as constant state of changing, and if we understand 'creation' as a basis for life - it must be the opposite of cliché. It is the fight between life and death.

However, these 'constantly fixed forms' of masks and rituals have been the principal fundamentals of theatre and human dramatic expression since its first days. Do they lead beyond life and beyond death?

These questions summarised the central challenge of our research.

Therefore, the project followed two lines of enquiry:

1. How to fight cliché in thinking and acting?

All actors and directors fight in one way or the other with the bitter truth: that today's stage practice consists of a high percentage of clichés. How can we lead actors into a territory, where clichés have no chance to realise themselves? How can we encourage the process of true creation and freedom?

2. Understanding cliché as a 'fixed form', one which may attain a higher, semantic meaning

Examining the possibilities which mask, ritual, and stylised expression offer contemporary theatre.

Seeing as these two lines seem to be contradictory, further research and analysis of training methods and theatre cultures is necessary to reveal new ways on how the two can be potentially combined.

Project Lines

1. International Theatre Summer Academy

Rubiera (Italy) 12th July - 2nd August 2005

Thirty professional theatre artists worked in three courses: 'The Vertical of the Role' for actors, 'The Art of Dialogue' for directors and 'Theatre in Education' for teachers.

One course focussed on particular usages of language and gesture an on-going area for development and research), whilst those aimed at directors and pedagogues concentrated on the theme - 'to fight cliché' as a starting point for more specific training.

2. L'école des femmes: a women project

Berlin (Germany) 6. - 27. November 2005 and 1. - 25. February 2006

The first working session in Berlin focussed on voice and sound development, whilst the second session (in an all-female ensemble) led to a production of Chekhov's "Sisters", after spending time analysing the impact of clichés, semantics and rituals on female stage expression.

3. European Laboratory

Berlin 1. - 19. December 2005 - Cyprus 28. April - 18. May 2006 - Monza (Italy) 3. - 22. June with final performance of Dostoevsky's "White Nights": Lecco 21. / 22. June 2006

This laboratory piloted new ways to develop actor expression, encouraging participants to use textual analysis in order to independently create work; the main aim remained the fostering of the artistic personality. Only then, in this third session, did the international ensemble collaborate in creating multilingual performance.



4. Directors' and Trainers' Course in Bratislava - Prague - Sweden

Three sessions focussing on the title, 'How to fight cliché', were given to young directors, students and teachers of the Academies:

The Art of Training, for the School - for the Laboratory - in Theatre

Academies of Bratislava (VSMU): 6. - 18. January 2006

The Art of Analysis, asking 40 questions of one play

Academies of Prague (DAMU): 13. - 25. March 2006

The Art of Rehearsal, Method "stage - table - stage"

Uppsala (Sweden): 21. - 31. May 2006

5. Publication of 40 Questions of one Role by Jurij Alschitz,

Edited by Christine Schmalor

This is a published handbook for all actors, directors and teachers, which supports their self-preparation in the lead up to (as well as throughout) the analysis and rehearsal period.

Summary

This project included even more workshops and seminars than those mentioned above and certainly highlighted the prevalence and importance of the 'cliché' as an academic subject. As a result of this research, it is clear further work is necessary, in order to fully explore the concept of 'cliches' or 'fully fixed forms' at the level of theatre education. Participating directors and teachers were unanimous in stating that this research must begin with the education of theatre teachers in the academies themselves. Moreover, participants also stated a wish to be involved in long term education programmes, whilst continuing to be active in their profession; combining productions with ongoing education, leading toward the development of new acting techniques for the modern actor.

The framework of partners has provided a platform for future development and international collaboration:

Result

RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE THEATRE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE AT TAKT-ZENT INTERNATIONAL THEATRE CENTRE BERLIN (GERMANY)

After the two-year exploration phase of pilot-project "From Cliché in Art to the Art of Cliché" came to an end, AKT-ZENT was appointed Research Centre of TECOM during the 31st World Congress in Manila, May 2006.

Board of directors: Prof. Dr. Jurij Alschitz (European Association for Theatre Culture), Christine Schmalor, Shafi Ahmed, Etienne Minoungou, Barbara Tumova.

Research projects were defined on the 31st World Congress in Manila, May 2006:

1. Further development and geographical expansion of the on-going project "From Cliché in Art to the Art of Cliché".

2. Development and implementation of an African-European educational programme with regards to the true exchange of knowledge, traditions, cultural heritage.

Work-modules for primary training

Work-modules for continuous training

Programmes for the training of trainers