

M
E
D
E
A
S

B
R
Y
L
L
U
P

Odin Teatret



HOLSTEBRO FESTUGE
7. - 15. JUNI 2008



Medea's people of ashes and gold. Rehearsal in Bali. Photo: Julia Varley.



The Jasonites: Jason's family and friends. Rehearsal in Holstebro. Photo: Tommy Bay.

ODIN TEATRET

THE MARRIAGE OF MEDEA

Celebrated in the open air or in closed spaces

A performance by Eugenio Barba

based on the myth of Medea

MEDEA: Ni Made Partini

JASON: Tage Larsen

CLOTHO: Julia Varley

DIONYSIUS: Augusto Omolú

MEDEA'S FATHER: I Wayan Bawa

THE PRIEST: Cristina Wistari Formaggia

THEATRUM MUNDI

THE MARRIAGE OF MEDEA

The Marriage of Medea is the result of Odin Teatret's lasting interest in acting traditions. Odin Teatret, whose actors are of different nationalities, has since 1966 organised various working sessions and seminars on the actor's technique. It began with the research practised by Jerzy Grotowski, Etienne Decroux, Jacques Lecoq, Dario Fo, Jean-Louis Barrault, Joseph Chaikin, Judith Malina and Julian Beck.

Since the early 1970s, Odin Teatret has involved in this activity Javanese and Balinese ensembles and artists (Sardono, I Made Pasek Tempo, I Made Bandem, I Made Djimat), Japanese Noh, Kyogen, Kabuki and Shingeki theatre (Hisao and Hideo Kanze, Mannojo and Kosuke Nomura, Sawamura Sojuro, Shuji Terayama) and India's main classical forms of theatre-dance: Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Chhau and Kathakali. In addition to the chance to see these striking Asian artists performing, these seminars were an opportunity to get acquainted with the principles of their style and technical knowledge.

ISTA, International School of Theatre Anthropology, founded in 1979, broadened the scope of this research and has grown in symbiosis with Odin Teatret. ISTA is an itinerant intermittent "university" characterised by a technical exchange between regularly returning artists and scholars of different genres and nationalities. In this "performers' village", they compare and analyse the technical foundations of their styles in sessions lasting from two weeks to two months. From 1980 to 2005, fourteen ISTA sessions have taken place in Europe and Latin America. All of them ended with a *Theatrum Mundi* performance with musicians and performers from different cultures.

It is this tradition of *Theatrum Mundi* that *The Marriage of Medea* keeps alive. The rehearsals took place in December 2007 and April 2008 in Bali and had their final phase in Holstebro in May and June 2008.



Jason and Medea. Rehearsal in Holstebro. Photo: Tommy Bay.

THE MARRIAGE OF MEDEA

With the participation of: Odin Teatret (Denmark), Gambuh Desa Batuan Ensemble (Bali), Augusto Omolú and Cleber da Paixão (Brazil), and The Jasonite Family (33 performers from 23 countries) - **Music:** Based on the actors' improvisation and classical Balinese - **Scenic space:** Odin Teatret - **Costumes:** Odin Teatret - **Props and puppets:** Fabio Butera, Odin Teatret and Gambuh Desa Batuan - **Light design:** Odin Teatret - **Technician:** Fausto Pro - **Production:** Luciana Bazzo - **Director assistants:** Julia Varley, Cristina Wistari Formaggia, Ana Woolf, Anna Stisgaard - **Literary adviser:** Nando Tavianì - **Dramaturgy and direction:** Eugenio Barba.

GAMBUH DESA BATUAN ENSEMBLE (Batuan, Bali): Cristina Wistari Formaggia, Ni Wayan Sudiani, Ni Wayan Nugini, Ni Nyoman Juniati, Ni Kadek Ari Antini, Ni Luh Anik Windasari, Ni Made Srimpi, Ni Made Partini, Ni Nyoman Tjandri, Ni Wayan Phia Widari Eka Tana, I Wayan Bawa, I Wayan Purnawan, I Wayan Martawan, I Made Suteja, I Wayan Suamba, Ida Bagus Kertayasa, I Made Lesit, I Ketut Lida, I Made Merta, I Made Suamba, I Wayan Kader, I Wayan Naka, I Ketut Karwan, I Nyoman Doble, I Ketut Suwana, I Ketut Sandi, I Made Budiana, I Made Renanta, I Wayan Rawa, I Wayan Marca, I Nyoman Suwida, I Ketut Buda Astra. - **ODIN TEATRET (Holstebro, Denmark):** Tage Larsen, Augusto Omolú and Julia Varley. - **THE JASONITE FAMILY:** Adam Horowitz, Aeran Jeong, Alberto Martinez Guinaldo, Alessandro Curti, Alvaro Iván Hernández Rodríguez, Andrea De San Juan Hazen, Boryana Ivanova, Bruna Longo, Christina Kyriazidi, Devrim Evin, Felipe Vergara, Francesca Trueba Guillén, Francesco Vellei, Gabriella Sacco, Giuseppe Leonardo Bonifati, Isabel Balboa, Isabela Paes, Isadora Pei, Juliana Johanidesova, Juste Ruskyte, Loren O'Dair, Marcelo Gomes Miguel, Marco Galati, Mary Vastaki, Mira Noltenius, Monserrat Montero Cole, Mykalle Bielinski, Paulina Almeida, Roberto Aldorasi, Sabera Shaik, Soon-Heng Lim, Stephanos Regueros Savvides, Ya-Lan Lin.



(Top) Clotho (Julia Varley) ready to sever the thread of life. Rehearsals in Holstebro. (Bottom) Dionysius (Augusto Omolú) pursuing the Jasonites. Photo: Tommy Bay.

THE MARRIAGE OF MEDEA

Scenes of the performance

1. The nuptial procession of Medea and Jason with their children appears from the past here and now.
2. Clotho, the divinity who spins and severs the thread of human lives, presents the thread of the story.
3. Medea dances with the women of her people.
4. Festive intermezzo.
5. First celebration: Medea helps Jason to steal the Golden Fleece.
6. Festive intermezzo.
7. Second celebration: Family scene with king Eeta, his daughter Medea and his son Apsirtus. Medea slaughters her brother in order to run away with Jason. Grief of her father who, blinded by rage, slits the throat of a horse.
8. Festive intermezzo.
9. Third celebration: Quarrel between Medea and Jason who wants to leave her so he can marry the young Creusa. Medea sends her children to Creusa with a gift and uses her magic arts to multiply herself and burn her rival.
10. Festive intermezzo.
11. Fourth celebration: Medea kills her children and is rescued by the Barong, the totem animal which is the protector of her people.
12. Jason talks to his dead children.
13. Clotho reties the broken threads of life, and the nuptial procession sets off again.

Eugenio Barba

Eternal Return



Amongst the possibilities and privileges of theatre is the capacity to represent huge historical processes and complex cultural dynamics with little means. Shakespeare famously described how a humble “wooden O” or “cockpit” can hold kings long dead.

This applies not only to space, but also to time. In the theatre, time can be compressed or stretched out (like an accordion, says Claudel) or tied into knots, like lines of melody in contrapuntal harmony. Not only can time proceed chronologically, flowing from the past into the future, but it can also move in a circle, where the end is the beginning, and what is done is continually re-done. Circular time is the time of myth, the numinous, the sacred, or more simply, of re-telling. “Conte rédire - qui s’écrit aussi *contredire*”¹, as Levi-Strauss brilliantly observed.

Theatre demands simple forms, and must keep its feet on the ground. How could you explain to a child the idea of mythic time and eternal return? Or better, how could we explain to the child who - if we are lucky - continues to live in our head?

Let us imagine the river of history. We imagine a procession of people walking in one direction; they cannot turn back. It is an aristocratic wedding procession: a new family is being created, everyone thinks of the future, celebrating the ephemeral joy of the present. Soon the procession must drain away into the heavy vicissitudes of life. It has no choice but to go on, and so, for now, it rejoices. But imagine we already know how this marriage will end, for it is part of a story that has been told for centuries. It is a criminal story, scorched by the sun, branded by abandonment, struggle and infanticide. This tragic story cannot change. It repeats and confirms itself. It rises and falls, then rises again. It be-

1. Literally “To re-tell a story can also be written as to contradict”, punning on the French.

longs this second mode of time that does not order things chronologically. The story is always present in its entirety. We are able to observe it from different perspectives, seeing the beginning in the end, and the end in the beginning.

Between these two poles - linear time and the time of eternal return - unfolds *The Marriage of Medea*. Its form is a travelling performance that flows forward, then stops to eddy round, presenting variations on the "fact" of what happened, has happened and will happen, immutable and contradictory.

A ship full of foreigners enters the port. Medea and her retinue - the people of ashes and gold - embark in Europe. They are met by Jason the Greek, who awaits his Asiatic bride. The foreigners lift up their ship with its black and gold sails onto their shoulders and with Jason following, they advance towards the city. The music and songs gain intensity, and the procession pauses to make festive ceremonies and dances. They are interrupted by the arrival of groups of local citizens who welcome Medea as their new queen, and present her with their own culture. Within the frame of these celebrations, all the salient scenes of the myth are re-enacted: the theft of the golden fleece, the treachery of Jason, Medea's vengeance, the killing of two children by their mother.

From the moment the boat docks at the port, the performance radiates outwards in various directions, encountering the culture and ceremonies of the associations and institutions of the city which it traverses; it meets citizens who have been integrated for a long time, and those who have only recently arrived, who come with different histories and define themselves as ethnic minorities.

At the heart of the performance lies an intercultural vision of *theatrum mundi* which crosses different myths and cultural forms from Europe and outside Europe. This marriage portrays an acceptance of extreme difference, but one engraved with tragic signs. The nuptial event - which is the intimate and extreme acceptance of the different - charged of disturbing and tragic premonitions is the thread that weaves the different episodes, apparent digressions and startling references into the painful fabric of the myth.

Our cities are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, hiding communities that grow in number day by day, like entire cities nestling one within the other. Divergent habits and customs are lost in this urban struggle, through a tumultuous daily encounter between different realities that inhabit the same territory. *The Marriage of Medea* will transform this dynamic of cohabitation into a festive event, bringing the fragmented urban realities into a theatrical whole.

It is a highly visible performance, involving many people: the actors of Odin Teatret; the Balinese Pura Desa Gambuh ensemble of 33 musicians and danc-

ers; dancers and musicians from the Afro-Brazilian dance tradition of Candomblé, and an international group of 35 actors drawn from Europe, South America and Asia. To this is added other local theatre groups and artists.

Mixing cultural elements, which appear contrasting, but are actually deeply fused, has long been central to the artistic and political work of Odin Teatret. It now forms the motor of this itinerant performance that for many hours will traverse different parts of the city. Thus theatre opens the possibility of a genuine meeting and cohabitation between different social realities. It creates metaphors of tolerance, without losing consciousness of the fact that over every new emigration falls the shadow of refusal and the violence of history.

Translation: Max Webster



Medea's boat carried by the Jasonites. Rehearsal in Holstebro. Photo: Tommy Bay.



ODIN TEATRET
NORDISK TEATERLABORATORIUM

SÆRKÆRPARKEN 144 · POSTBOKS 1283
DK-7500 HOLSTEBRO · DENMARK
TEL. +45 9742 4777 · FAX +45 9741 0482
odin@odinteatret.dk · www.odinteatret.dk
HOLSTEBRO · JUNI 2008