

A Thousand Birds Flying

Eugenio Barba

Is it possible to bury the past, and then experience it returning to life as fruit and trees?

More than 50 years ago I sent an article about an unknown 29-year-old Polish director to the *Tulane Drama Review*, an American journal totally unknown in Europe. It was the time when I traveled from one capital to another to preach the exploits of a small theatre in a provincial

town in Poland. I asked everyone I met if they knew somebody who might be interested in it. In Vienna the playwright Adolf Opel gave me the address of James Hatch, a teacher at the American University in Cairo. I immediately sent him one of my texts and a few photos. I received a polite answer in which Hatch suggested I send the same materials to his friend Richard Schechner, editor of the *Tulane Drama Review* in New Orleans.

Chance doesn't exist. We all have a date with our own destiny. We could also call it a synchronism. Richard Schechner was preparing a special issue on Christopher Marlowe, and my text described the mise-en-scène of *Doctor Faustus* in the

Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów directed by Jerzy Grotowski and Ludwik Flaszen in Opole. Schechner not only published my article in the summer of 1964, but in a later issue he printed my essay describing Grotowski's technical procedures during his first theatrical steps.

The interest of *Tulane Drama Review*—i.e., of Schechner—was decisive in the diffusion of Grotowski's thought and practice in the United States and the world. Schechner contributed to an awareness that led to Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium being invited to New York. He continued to inform *TDR* readers and his students about Grotowski's numerous transformations, and followed Grotowski with his characteristically provocative, yet loyal attitude.

Eugenio Barba is the founder and director of Odin Teatret in Holstebro, Denmark, and of the International School of Theatre Anthropology. His two most recent books are On Directing and Dramaturgy—Burning the House (Routledge, 2010) and A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology in collaboration with Nicola Savarese (Routledge, 2006). odin@odinteatret.dk



Figure 1. Kazuo Ohno, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Eugenio Barba, and Jerzy Grotowski in October 1994 at Odin Teatret for the company's 30th anniversary. Holstebro, Denmark. (Photo by Fiora Bemporad)

The *Tulane Drama Review* was buried, resurrected as *The Drama Review* and, in a following avatar, became *TDR*. But Schechner—and the journal that is his extraordinary accomplishment—continued to play an important role in my life. He not only defended my mentor, Jerzy Grotowski, who had difficulties in his own country, but he also published my essay on kathakali theatre, which unveiled itself to me during my journey to India in 1963. *TDR* regularly introduced to its readers Odin Teatret's fundamental experiences: the practice of barter, the Third Theatre, and the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA).

In spite of the distance and our profound differences, a strong affective bond has grown between Richard Schechner and me. This has been nourished by the awareness of having shared a theatre mutation in which we have actively participated. Above all, something unique binds us: the memory of our meetings with two people who meant a great deal to us: Jerzy Grotowski and the Indian dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi.

When I think about *TDR*, something stirs in my head: the thousand birds that flutter when I read the articles in each new issue. I may not remember where they came from or where they were heading, but they are always with me. In other words: bury the past, and experience it returning to life as fruit and trees.

Dear Richard, deeply felt thanks to you and to all the others who have infused life into *TDR*. And, like a blood transfusion, you have offered it to me and to Odin Teatret in all its 50 years.

—Holstebro, Denmark, June 2014

TDR: The Drama Review 59:1 (T225) Spring ©2015 Eugenio Barba

Who Has Seen the Most?

Joseph Roach

In the history of theatre-going, someone somewhere has set the record for seeing more plays over the course of a lifetime than anyone else. Who is it?

There's no way to say with absolute certainty, but it's highly probable that Marvin Carlson, Sidney E. Cohn Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature, and Middle Eastern Studies at the Graduate Center of City University of New York, holds the all-time record. While he is at home in NYC, Marvin routinely attends the theatre at least five nights a week, and he schedules his frequent travels to follow the global repertoire. He regularly revisits theatre capitals, including London, Paris, and Vienna, and major festivals, such as the Berlin Theatertreffen. Having added Arabic to his fluency in several European languages, he now includes Cairo on his annual itinerary. He has seen on average 250–260 plays a year for the past 30 years for a total somewhere near 8,000 productions.

Marvin's theatrical diary records his attendance at performances of all kinds, including opera, dance, and performance art. There's no typical week, but there's never one without theatre-going nearly every night, a routine varied only by matinees. A random sampling from the diary, which notes the dates and includes cast lists of the productions he has attended, conveys something of the flavor though nothing like the full extent of this uninterrupted theatrical feast. In the last week of October 1988, for instance, Marvin took in *Anything Goes* with Patti LuPone; *Rachel's Brain* with Rachel Rosenthal; *King Lear* with Ruth Maleczech; *Waiting for Godot* with Steve Martin, Bill Irwin, Robin Williams, and F. Murray Abraham; and topped it off with *On Tina Tuna Walk* by John Glines. The final week of October in 1989 found him in New York for

Joseph Roach, Sterling Professor of Theater at Yale University, has edited Changing the Subject: Marvin Carlson and Theatre Studies, 1959–2009 (University of Michigan Press, 2009). joseph.roach@yale.edu