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Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War. Conference of the DFG Koselleck project "Global Theatre Histories". München: Christopher Balme / Berenika Szymanski, Center for Advanced Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 17.05.2012-19.05.2012.

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Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War. Conference of the DFG Koselleck project "Global Theatre Histories"

The conference "Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War", organized by theatre scholars Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski, addressed the Cold War as an arena of globalization together with the role of cultural flows during this time. Emerging from a research project on global theatre histories in the late 19th and 20th centuries, the conference aimed at opening up theatre research to questions of global or world history by analyzing theatrical trade routes and the emergence of a transnational public sphere. In their call for papers, the organizers had specifically stressed the spread of communism as one of the most significant global phenomena of the 20th century. This is a particularly interesting topic considering a certain imbalance in recent globalization research, which has not given adequate attention to processes of transnationalization emanating from the Eastern bloc.

Culture played a special role in Cold War politics as it was widely perceived as one of the decisive factors in winning the war, thereby complementing military activities and diplomatic efforts. In order to fulfill this propagandistic role, cultural agents and products had to circulate and cross the Iron Curtain. Artists thus became enormously important as representatives of their respective states and systems, which gave them new forms of agency, but also subjected them to political instrumentalization and intensive surveillance. However, the border crossings and cultural transfers engendered by Cold War politics also undercut the rigid boundaries determined not only by the bipolar bloc structure, but also by nation states and colonial regimes.

The keynote lecture by CHARLOTTE CANNING (University of Texas at Austin) provided a fascinating introduction into the matter. Canning discussed the first US theatrical production to perform in the Soviet Union: the Everyman Opera's performance of Porgy and Bess. The tour, taking place in the mid-1950s, was both part of efforts to strengthen cultural ties between the blocs after Stalin's death as well as an arena of heated competition and propaganda in order to capture the 'hearts and minds' of the people. It was no coincidence that this production had an African American cast. In times of the civil rights movement against racial segregation, US officials sought to promote an image of racial harmony, while Soviet officials stressed the image of the Soviet Union as the home of the international revolutionary struggle of the oppressed. Cast members and critics followed their own agendas, such as actor Paul Robeson, who supported the US civil rights movement. Canning showed how the tour was marked by controversies and arguments over its meaning arising from various stakeholders pursuing very different aims as well as the lack of control over the reception of the performances. CHRISTOPHER SILSBY (City University of New York) later went further in depth on this subject in his paper on the changing political activism of Paul Robeson during several visits to the Soviet Union.

Central motives outlined in the keynote reoccurred throughout the conference. One important theme was the role of touring artists and theatre troupes as representatives of their respective nation and bloc as well as their relationships to the political and even military dimensions of the Cold War. Many of the papers focused on how state officials and theatre practitioners engaged in complex negotiations between ideological functions and artistic obstinacy as well as between national and transnational references. DAVID BARNETT (University of Sussex) stressed the importance of the international mobility of Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. It became one of the German Democratic Republic's most important cultural exports, which secured its domestic standing in times of heavy attacks during the formalism debate. IOANA SZEMAN (University of Roehampton, London) compared the tours of Romanian director

Liviu Ciulei and his theatrical work in the United States after his emigration with Nicolae Ceauşescu's state visits in North Korea and the US. She emphasized how all these different 'touring performances' were perceived as being representative of the nation state they were coming from. Other touring activities that were examined included those of the folk dance ensembles of the Socialist Armed Forces in East-Central Europe (VÁCLAV ŠMIDRKAL, Charles University, Prague), the world tour of the Polish folk dance ensemble Mazowsze in the 1950s (BERENIKA SZYMANSKI, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich), and the visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company to Hungary and Romania in the early 1970s (ZOLTÁN IMRE, Eötvös University, Budapest).

These touring routines were part of a global theatre circuit that remained functional, if not restricted, during the Cold War. It entailed not only the circulation of people and theatre productions, but also of artistic formats and genres like the Ballets Russes, the Soviet Circus, folk dance ensembles, and musicals, as well as the circulation of texts, concepts and ideas. MARK GAMSA (Tel Aviv University/University of Latvia, Riga) presented a paper on Sergei Tret'iakov's play Roar China. In this documentary drama, Soviet avant-garde artist Tret'iakov discussed colonial oppression in China and called for the poor people to rise up against it. Gamsa traced the interpretations and translations of this play in Russia and China. He showed the problems that arose when references to various kinds of oppression became visible and thus had to be concealed. The play, consequently, pointed not only to foreign oppression but also to the Stalinist purges and brutalities of Chinese state politics. PIRKKO KOSKI (University of Helsinki) investigated the reception of both the aesthetic and the political dimensions of Bertolt Brecht's work in Finland. ANNA STECHER (LMU Munich) offered an overview of the different phases and important mediators in the Chinese reception of Konstantin Stanislavsky's acting theory.

Institutions played an important role in the circulation of ideas and concepts. ANJA KLÖCK (University of Music and Theatre Leipzig) explored the changing curricula of East German acting schools. She presented upon how these institutions were used to initiate a controlled cultural and ideological renewal after 1945 by implementing the Soviet model of socialist realism, which was mostly based on Stanislavsky's acting theory. However, as Brecht's Berliner Ensemble gained increasing international reputation, former dogmatic polarizations between Stanislavsky's and Brecht's models had to be withdrawn, with Brecht's concepts being slowly and selectively integrated into actors' training. Other institutions that were discussed both as agents of cultural transfers and of bipolar Cold War politics were city theatres (KYRILL KUNAKHOVICH, Princeton University) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's International Theatre Institute (HANNA KORSBERG, University of Helsinki).

Political interference with and secret service surveillance of theatre makers was common both in the East and the West. JAMES SMITH (University of Oxford) presented findings from the files of the British domestic intelligence agency MI5 that monitored artists and theatre groups who were suspected of supporting communist ideas. By outlining surveillance practices and informant networks, Smith offered insights into the surprisingly strong entanglement of Cold War intelligence activities and British theatre industries in the 1950s. Other papers showed how surveillance and ideological pressure led to specific coping strategies on the part of the artists. JOSHUA WILLIAMS (University of California, Berkeley) focused on the collaboration of Peter Brook and members of his International Centre for Theatre Research with members of the Teatro Campesino, an agitprop troupe founded in the context of the farm workers' strikes in California, in the 1970s. He showed how both groups utilized double-coded forms of artistic and political practice in order to retain their agency between the ideological front lines. The same was true for artists from the Eastern bloc, as KAROLINA PRYKOWSKA MICHALAK (University of Łódź) showed in her paper on Polish director, visual artist and stage designer Tadeusz Kantor.

Another interesting focus of the conference was the role of Cold War culture in non-aligned states and the third world, where the East and West not only fought proxy wars but also attempted to gain standing and importance through cultural transfers. In a collaborative paper with BASILIO ESTEBAN S. VILLARUZ (University of the Philippines, Manila), MELÊ YAMOMO (LMU Munich) presented the dance and theatre scene in postcolonial Manila as being torn between US-American, Soviet and Chinese influences. He even described the contemporary situation as being marked by an unresolved tension between these influences in a process of 'schizophrenic nation building'. ANIRBAN GHOSH (LMU) investigated the cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union in post-independence India and Nehruvian socialism, specifically the role of the Soviet Circus in efforts to build a cultural public sphere. Ghosh showed how the big powers were competing for cultural influence in India, while different social groups debated how this affected national or religious causes. CHRISTINE

MATZKE (University of Bayreuth) explored the way theatre troupes of the Eritrean liberation movements combined multiple cultural influences in their political struggle in the 1970s and 1980s.

In his introductory remarks at the beginning of the conference, CHRISTOPHER BALME pointed out that the focus on border crossings on the one hand, and on tensions between national theatre histories and a global approach on the other might lead to readjusted research questions. While the different case studies highlighted the local, regional and international aspects of theatre during the Cold War, it remains to be seen how these cases relate to each other within a global history of theatre in the context of processes of modernization, colonialism, and the Cold War. Nonetheless, the shift in focus on travelling artists, artifacts and ideas is an important first step in opening up theatre history to transnational perspectives. The next challenge will be to further link these new questions and findings to the theoretical concepts and methodologies used in the ongoing interdisciplinary discussions on globalization processes. The planned publication of selected conference papers will hopefully continue developing shared terms and ideas in order to strengthen the dialogue between scholars of theatre history, Cold War cultures, and the history of globalization.

Program

Welcome: Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski (LMU Munich)

Keynote: Charlotte Canning (University of Texas at Austin): The Cold War Battle Ground of Catfish Row Versus the Nevsky Prospekt: A US Production of *Porgy and Bess* in the Soviet Union

The Beginnings

Christopher Silsby (City University of New York): Spirituals, Serfs, and Soviets: Paul Robeson and Race Policy in Soviet Union at the Start of the Cold War

Kyrill Kunakhovich (Princeton University): Staging Socialism: The Political Function of Theaters in Krakow and Leipzig, 1945-1970

Institutions

Hanna Korsberg (University of Helsinki): Creating an International Community in Theatre during the Cold War

Anja Klöck (University of Music and Theatre Leipzig): Acting on the Cold War: Imperialist Strategies, Stanislavsky and Brecht in German Actor Training after 1945

Václav Šmidrkal (Charles University, Prague): The Artistic Ensembles of the Socialist Armed Forces: Combat Units for the Ideological Front?

Secret Service

Berenika Szymanski (LMU Munich): The Case "Mazowsze"

James Smith (University of Oxford): Anti-Communism, Government Surveillance, and the British Cold War Theatre Industry.

Zoltán Imre (Eötvös University, Budapest): Midsummer Night's Censors: The Visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company to the Eastern-Bloc around 1972 and its Consequences

Brecht

David Barnett (University of Sussex): The Politics of an International Reputation: The Berliner Ensemble as a GDR Theatre on Tour

Pirkko Koski (University of Helsinki): Challenging with Brecht

Asian Arena

Anna Stecher (LMU Munich): Chinese Exercises in Socialist Realism: The Stage Works of Jiao Juyin

Mark Gamsa (Tel Aviv University/University of Latvia, Riga): Sergei Tret'iakov's *Roar China*, in Moscow and in China

Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz (University of the Philippines, Manila) and meLê Yamomo (LMU Munich): Performing Diplomacy: Dance and Theatre in the Philippines in the Period of the Cold War

Third World Perspective

Anirban Ghosh (LMU Munich): Staging the Soviet: Circus and other Histories

Christine Matzke (University of Bayreuth): Whose Side Are You On? Cold War Trajectories in Eritrean and Ethiopian Theatre Practice, 1970s to 1991

Rikard Hoogland (Stockholm University): Different Valuations in a Political Context: The World Premiere of Peter Weiss' *Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz* in Stockholm 1967

On Tour

Ioana Szeman (University of Roehampton, London): United in Division? Touring Performances, Nationalism and the Cold War

Karolina Prykowska Michalak (University of Łódź): Tadeusz Kantor: Artist during the Cold War

Joshua Williams (University of California, Berkeley): Cold War Clowns: Peter Brook, Teatro Campesino & the Crypto-Radicalism of the Western Left, 1970-1976

Battlefields

Nikolaos Papadogiannis (Humboldt University of Berlin): Theatre as a Cold War Battlefield in Post-Dictatorship Greece, 1974-1981

Sebastian Stauss (LMU Munich): Checkpoint Music Drama

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