

# ODIN TEATRET

## HAMLET'S CLOUDS

Dedicated to Hamnet and to young people with no future

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Ulrik Skeel's shadow, Rina Skeel. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

# About the performance

## HAMLET'S CLOUDS

In 1596, Hamnet, the only son of William Shakespeare, dies at the age of eleven. Five years later Shakespeare loses his father and during the period of mourning writes *The Tragic Story of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. In the irregular spelling of the time, Hamnet and Hamlet are practically interchangeable. Many scholars have written long books on the relationship between Hamnet and *Hamlet*.

The play tells of the Danish King Hamlet, who bears the same name as his son; King Hamlet has been poisoned by his wife Gertrude and his brother Claudius who are lovers. Their passion is intertwined with another tragic love story between Prince Hamlet and the young Ophelia.

The ghost of Hamlet's father appears to his son, giving him the task of killing and avenging him. What does this story tell us today? What inheritance have we received from our fathers that we will pass on to our children?

## HAMLET'S CLOUDS

### SCENES AND TEXT MONTAGE

#### SCENE 1

##### Overcast sky and mournful night

*Children play with clouds. Shakespeare and the Ghost of Hamlet's father enter. The courtiers whisper, Shakespeare mourns the death of his father and his son Hamnet.*

SHAKESPEARE: You lie naked in your cold cradle. Your brown hair is scattered on the ground. I lie down beside you and listen to the bitter cry of the night birds.

#### SCENE 2

##### Shakespeare imagines two characters

*Playing musicians enter. Introduction of King Claudius and Queen Gertrude, Hamlet's mother.*

SHAKESPEARE: Here is Claudius, the brother of Hamlet's father. Gertrude, Hamlet's mother.

#### SCENE 3

##### Hamlet arrives at a gallop

HAMLET: My father, the king, is dead. (*Sings*) A cloud was wandering at dawn in the light of the sky.

SHAKESPEARE: Good Hamlet, cast off this nightly colour and let thine eye look like a friend on the new king of Denmark. Look at the sun, at the sky and its clouds. Do not forever seek in the dust for thy noble father. Thou know'st 'tis common - all that lives must die.

HAMLET: There is something rotten here.

SHAKESPEARE: That's right. Hamlet, your father gave you a task: to avenge him. To punish his foul and most unnatural murder.

#### SCENE 4

##### The author's pride

*Shakespeare praises the creative spirit of human beings.*

SHAKESPEARE: What a luminous work of art is a human being! How noble in reason! The beauty of the world and the paragon of animals. How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In actions how like an angel, in apprehension

how like a god! What a luminous work of art is a human being. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

**SCENE 5**  
**The Ghost's woes**

*Appearance of the Ghost of Hamlet's father, condemned to wander by night and fast in the fire by day.*

ALL (*Sing*): There is a castle in the west // protected by shields of gold. // There the sun sets every evening // behind ramparts of pink clouds.

**SCENE 6**  
**Shakespeare introduces Ophelia**

SHAKESPEARE: Green leaves of a white flower. Red clouds in the sky. I don't know whether it is rain or snow or the tears of a young girl. Sing, Ophelia, sing.

**SCENE 7**  
**The mirrors' hall**

*Claudius' and Gertrude's Intimacy.*

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, that this too too sullied flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew. Fie on 't, ah, fie. Hamlet's father, so excellent a king, so loving to his wife, that he might not betwixt the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly, but two months dead, nay, not so much, not two. And the other his brother in comparison a satyr. A little month and Hamlet's mother already married to him. Within a month, ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears had left the flushing in her galled eyes, she married. O most wicked speed to post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets! Frailty, thy name is woman.

**SCENE 8**  
**Death is a poison**

*Claudius and Gertrude poison Hamlet's father.*

SHAKESPEARE: It is now struck twelve. It is bitter cold, and I am sick at heart. Silence, here it comes again. In the same figure, like the King that's dead. It harrows me with fear and wonder. What art thou that usurpest this time of night, together with that fair and warlike form in which the majesty of the buried king of Denmark did sometimes march?

**SCENE 9**  
**Philosophical reflection**

*Shakespeare urges us to interpret the language of clouds.*

SHAKESPEARE: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel? By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed. Me thinks it is like a weasel. It is backed like a

weasel. Or like a whale. Very like a whale. 'Tis now the very witching time of night, when churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world.

**SCENE 10**  
**Hamlet's torment**

*Hamlet dreams of slaying his mother Gertrude and his uncle Claudius.*

CLAUDIUS: Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and struts his hour on the stage, and then comes no more. In short, be true to yourself. From which it must follow, as night unto day, that you can be false to no man.

GERTRUDE: (*Sings*): *Amor et vita, ante mortem salus eterna. Ante mortem salus eterna, eterna salus, sol et luna dominans, sol et luna dominans.*

SHAKESPEARE: To sleep, to dream, perhaps.

HAMLET: It is my dream, and it is my nightmare.

**SCENE 11**  
**Madness with method**

*Hamlet's false delirium.*

CLAUDIUS: Hamlet! How does Hamlet?

SHAKESPEARE: Hamlet, how does Hamlet? Mad! Mad as the sea and wind when both contend which is the mightier. In his lawless fit, behind the arras hearing something stir, Hamlet whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat! a rat!'. And in this brainish apprehension kills the unseen good old Polonius. His liberty is full of threats to all. Hamlet is mad, he is mad.

ALL: To be or not to be

SHAKESPEARE: Hamlet is mad! The world is mad!

GERTRUDE: The world is mad.

**SCENE 12**  
**Loving in a boat**

*Claudius and Gertrude on a lake. The Ghost despairs.*

SHAKESPEARE: Though yet the memory of the death of Hamlet's father be green, with a defeated joy, with an auspicious and dropping eye, Claudius has taken to wife she who was his sister-in-law. No jocund health that Denmark drinks today but the great cannon to the clouds shall tell and the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, re-speaking earthly thunder.

SHAKESPEARE, OPHELIA, HAMLET: Who is there? Long live the King! In the same figure, like the King that's dead. Stay, speak, I charge thee speak!

SHAKESPEARE: In this country there is something rotten.

OPHELIA (*Sings*): Red clouds in the sky // I don't know whether it is rain or snow // Or the tears of a young girl.

SHAKESPEARE: Sing, Ophelia, sing.

**SCENE 13**  
**Mother and son**

*Hamlet tries to avenge his father.*

SHAKESPEARE: Can this cockpit, there where all animals fight, hold the vasty fields of France, the arid sands of the Holy Land and the armies on the shores of the Black Sea? My good Hamlet, I pray you, speak the speech as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus. But use all gently. For in the very torrent, tempest and, as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.

**SCENE 14**  
**The escape**

*Hamlet and Ophelia gallop away.*

SHAKESPEARE: Ophelia, you are the cloud, and you, Hamlet, are the moon. Cover yourselves with both hands, and may the sky be your roof.

OPHELIA: Good my lord, how has your honour fared these long days?

HAMLET: I humbly thank you. Well, well, well.

OPHELIA: My lord, I have some remembrances of you that I have long desired to return. I pray you, take them.

HAMLET: No, not I. I never gave you anything.

OPHELIA: You know it well, my honoured lord. And with it a breath of sweet words that made them more precious.

HAMLET: Ah! Are you honest? Are you fair?

OPHELIA: What does your honour mean?

HAMLET: If you are honest and fair, your honesty should not allow discourse with your beauty.

OPHELIA: What better relation could there be than that between beauty and honesty?

HAMLET: Shut yourself in a convent: would you be a breeder of sinners?

**SCENE 15**  
**Father and son**

*Hamlet and the Ghost plot revenge.*

**SCENE 16**  
**Ophelia in clouds of letters**

*Hamlet's empty messages.*

SHAKESPEARE: Oh beautiful Ophelia, pale as snow, you will die dragged by the current of a river. You heard the winds blowing from Norway whispering to you of bitter freedom.

OPHELIA: To be or not to be?

**SCENE 17**  
**The builder of eternal houses**

*The gravedigger's wisdom.*

SHAKESPEARE: Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, and therefore I forbid my tears. But yet nature her custom holds, let shame say what it will. Clouds of words assail me in the moment of weeping.

Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter? A gravemaker. The houses he makes last till doomsday.

Hamlet, don't chase the clouds. They hide the stars and then vanish. Learn from the clouds to not choke your tears. And to avenge your father.

**SCENE 18**  
**Justice is done**

*Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet die.*

HAMLET: My father was right. One must be cruel to be kind.

**SCENE 19**  
**Clouds of tears**

*The Ghost weeps over the dead body of his son Hamlet. Shakespeare weeps over the body of his son Hamnet.*

SHAKESPEARE: You lie naked in your frozen cradle. Your brown hair is spread on the ground. I lie beside you and listen to the bitter cry of the night birds. My hands clothe you with a future nudity and invent another body for your body. I will discover the thousand bodies of your body, another life with your same name, drowned in blood. You abandoned me to my babblings and went away. I have no more tears. I prepare to cry elsewhere and in another way. I know only words, words, words. Hamnet, beloved son, do not say: my father has forgotten me. No! You live in me; you sing in my mind that dreams. I will honour you among the sparkling stars that will eternally repeat your name. You know that I know that you know.

**SCENE 20**  
**Time honours the avengers**

*Fortinbras extols Hamlet's courage.*

SHAKESPEARE: Fortinbras, now king of Denmark, says: 'Let four captains bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage. For he was likely, had he been put on, to have prov'd most royal; and for his passage the clouds and the soldier's music and the rite of war speak loudly for him. Take up the corpses.'

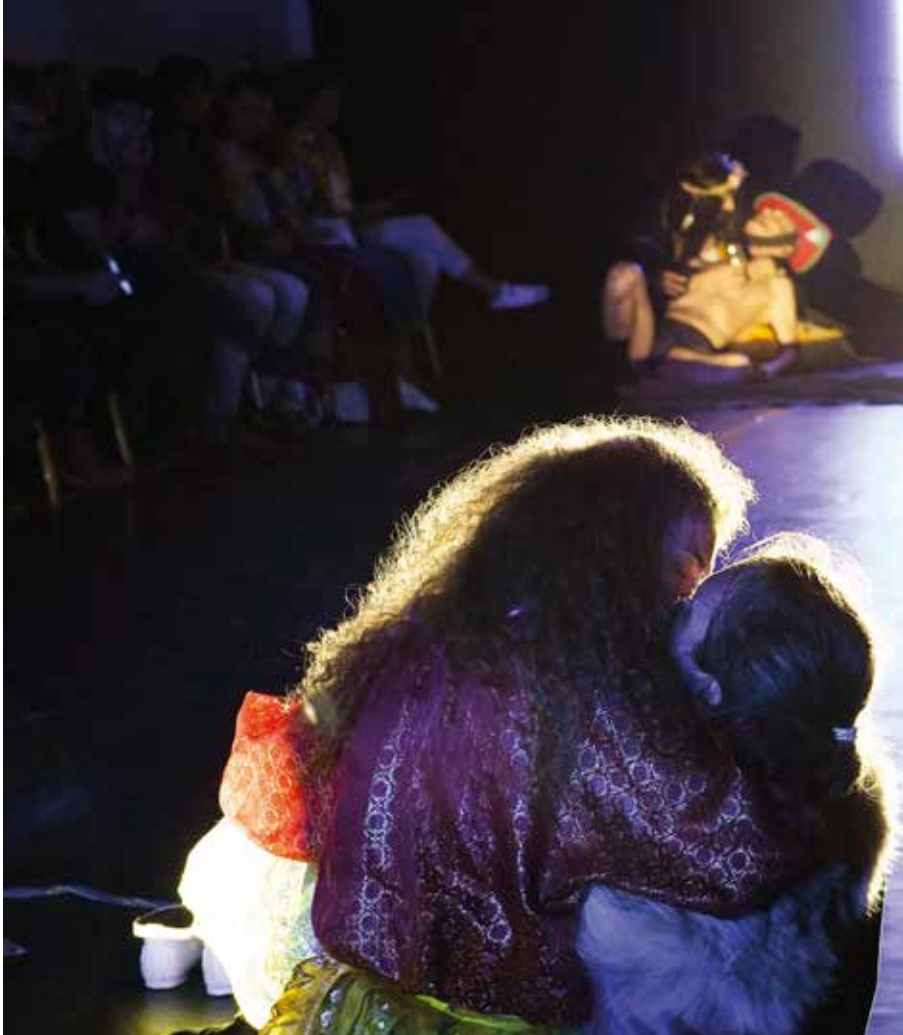
**SCENE 21**  
**William Shakespeare thanks the spectators**

SHAKESPEARE: I, William Shakespeare, finished the tragic tale of Hamlet, Prince of



Denmark, on the 14 August, 1601. It was about a father who forces his son to kill in revenge. The performance pleased her royal highness Queen Elizabeth and the noble audience of the Globe Theatre. Today (*date of the day*) we hope that the spectators present here will also welcome Odin Teatret's play with benevolence and favour.

*Everyone dances a jig around the screaming Ghost.*



Antonia Cioază, Jakob Nielsen, Rina Skeel, Ulrik Skeel. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

## THE COUNTRY OF LONGING

An elusive feeling accompanies our craft, and its essence is called longing. It manifests itself in two complementary variants: turning to the past, reliving it, analysing it, struggling against it, regretting or execrating it; and reaching out to the future as a yearning for change, research, escape, ambition, craving for presence, and a need to discover and be discovered. Many languages clearly distinguish this dual nature: in English we have nostalgia and longing, in German *Nostalgie* and *Sehnsucht*, in the Scandinavian languages *nostalgi* and *længsel*. In one of her poems, Edith Södergran, a Swedish-speaking Finnish poet, writes ‘*jag längtar till landet som icke är, landet, där alla våra kedjor falla*’ (I long for a country that does not exist, a country where all our chains fall).

This dual nature of nostalgia/longing characterises the spectator and the actor. It is not just a desire to relive something we know or a longing for an unexpected situation of leisure or reflection. Rather, it reveals the need for *another* life. The power of fiction makes us slip into a timeless time and an immeasurable space. We witness other people’s events and, at the same time, we dialogue with a secret part of ourselves. We are involved in what happens on stage, but an intimate part of us is ‘elsewhere’, in a reality that only the magic of theatre and the actors’ technique are able to evoke. It is the mysterious *willing suspension of our disbelief*, according to Coleridge’s words. Different longings and obsessions embrace each other and merge into a single body in the most intimate part of ourselves.

Sometimes this body is plural, composed of several individuals who for decades have intertwined their days through a craft that brings them closer together, exalting their diversity. For a theatre group, its past can become an inert force or a tension that revitalises. The wisdom of many cultures places the past in front of us, like a compass to guide our path. The future is behind us, unpredictable and surprising. A shared past is a tangle of threads that sometimes become incandescent and remain so for years. Then the miracle of a group that remains luminous occurs despite the age that whitens the hair of its members. A whirlwind of longing envelops us, and we want to meet this group again, whether

it is called Théâtre du Soleil, Atalaya, La Candelaria, Yuyachkani or Teatro Tascabile.

Not all longing can become reality. In the epilogue of our life, we realise this and think: could or can it be different? This question feeds the longing that still winds through my daily work and in the relationships that it forces me to establish. Longing as a flight forward (utopia) or as a reflection on the past (cynicism), the book 'beyond the book', the theatre 'beyond the theatre' are irrepressible reactions and thoughts, invigorated by my experience as an emigrant who lost his mother tongue. For me, theatre has been the conquest of a presence, the right to be able to speak and to be able to remain silent, refuge and adventure, day-dreaming and common sense, bridge and passage: crossing the sea, reaching distant eras and countries, lost in history or nearby in the present, tackling the slippery ford from one culture to another, embracing the incomprehensible. Above all, meeting different individuals and voices. I know that the fragile balance between recognisability and incomprehensibility can suddenly give way and that my steps risk weighing upon emptiness. I can collapse at any moment, trivialise the little I thought I had achieved and lose 'the dream'. How can we remain guardians of our own hearts and transform into fragments of



Julia Varley, Jakob Nielsen. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

luminous memory what is fleeting, or the stories of mud, nobility and cowardice that besiege us and that we exorcise in our performances?

So many changes there have been during these sixty years of theatre! Before the revolution everything was inspiration. Afterwards, everything turned into pretence.

### **When the clouds make the words change home**

In the beginning were the clouds. They appeared in March 2023 in a dining room that I and the Odin Teatret's actors had turned into a rehearsal space. We had just been fired by the director of the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, the environment and institution that we had created and developed for more than fifty years: a group of actors without the home they had built.

Sitting there, I found myself with Else Marie Laukvik, founder with me and Judy - my wife - of Odin Teatret in Norway in 1964, the veterans Ulrik Skeel (since 1969), Tage Larsen (since 1971), Jan Ferslev (since 1975), Julia Varley (since 1976), Rina Skeel (since 1985), and two young newcomers Antonia Cioaza and Jakob Nielsen (since 2022).



Antonia Cioază. Photo: Stefano Di Buduo

Our theatre travels, visits different places and contexts. It is important not to become slaves to this constant movement, to this 'profession of walking' as actors in past centuries called it. It is important to contradict the journey and transform it into the paradox of a movement that puts down roots. The farm outside Holstebro that we had transformed into a 'theatre laboratory' in 1966 was one of my roots.

Historians tell that in London, three days after Christmas 1598, after a heavy snowfall, the Burbage brothers and the members of their company gave the first example that the theatre is not a building but the men and women who create it. The owner of the land where the Burbages had built The Theatre twenty years earlier - the first building used exclusively for theatre performances - had increased the rent disproportionately. Unable to reach an agreement, the Burbage brothers and the members of The Lord Chamberlain's Men - of which Shakespeare was an actor, author and 10% owner - completely dismantled the building in one night, loaded the various pieces onto rafts and transported it to the other side of the Thames in South London, to Southwark, a marshy and unhealthy area. There they bought a plot of land and built The Globe, whose history became one of the origins of all of us who make a living from this craft.

It has always been an imperative need for me to have a place of my own to protect my freedom. It is a conditioned reflex of my youth as an emigrant. It has always been essential for me to own a modest Bedouin tent where I can shelter the 'dream' that holds a group together. The 'dream' is not a goal to be achieved, a programme to be fulfilled, a declaration of intent. It is rather an indescribable emotional *con-fusion* of something essential. This 'essential' is different for each of its members, something incommunicable that encourages us not to give up. We do not act upon human beings through logic and knowledge but through example, trust and empathy. The 'dream' weaves bonds in the group rooted in the daily rigour of a craft and the individual consensus of a collective self-discipline that makes us equal. Everyone gives their best according to their possibilities and everyone receives the same compensation. Theatre is a microcosm composed of a few men and women, but it can become a fortress where dreams can be safeguarded and realised. When the 'dream' dies in a group, inequality reappears. The group is not a family or a commune, but a work community embedded in equality. Everyone is a co-owner and co-author. The land belongs to those who till it.

In March 2023, although homeless and dwelling in nomadism together with my Odin companions, I was aware of the vitality that springs from the tension towards a new performance. The rehearsals materialise the 'dream' of a group in a tangible way. The process of bringing it to life is a challenge to oneself and to

the circumstances of one's biography, to the past that offers us its stories and to the conditions of the present in which we live.

After more than sixty years of work I could only repeat my certainties through the words of the Brazilian writer Fernando Sabino:

*Of everything, three things remain: the certainty that we are always beginning, the certainty that we need to continue, the certainty that we will be interrupted before finishing. Therefore, we must make: of the interruption a new path, of the fall a dance step, of the fear a ladder, of the dream a bridge, of the search an encounter.*

Tell your village and you will tell the world, wrote Tolstoy. I began the first rehearsal starting from the precarious situation in which I and my companions found ourselves. Active patience is the quality that allows you to go beyond intelligence and find what you do not know you are looking for. I let instinct and experience identify the theme of the new performance. This is also what creativity consists of: deciphering and making use of the circumstances that chance offers.

The clouds appeared in Ulrik's and Rina's dining room when I asked Jan to sing a song as the first step towards the performance whose theme and title we still didn't know. With his soft voice, accompanied by the guitar, Jan intoned a popular melody in which a cloud, in the clear sky, draws shadows on the crowded world. I suggested doing a performance about clouds.

Each of us began looking for poems, music, paintings and texts that had to do with cirrus and cumulus clouds. I followed the association of a river, son of the clouds, that is born, grows and ebbs out. Rivers inhabit the world in different forms and evoke in us an ancestral future. I fantasised about their mythical power, the Nile and its civilization or the Amazon River that flows from a stream in the Andes and generates an aquatic world with hundreds of tributaries. The rivers feed the clouds whose rain gives back to them from the sky the waters that thus return to their origin and evaporate again. I tried to visualise these metamorphoses in the form of fog, hail, vapours, swamps and waterfalls: how to articulate them in a simple and exhilarating plot that would make sense to me and to my spectators?

To grasp the universal in change, Goethe said. To achieve it, you need to *know how to do it*, to master a technique, to make the process grow on two complementary levels: one directed at reason that can lose the thread of understanding and then find itself gratified by identifying another one; the other level involves the sensorial



Julia Varley, Else Marie Laukvik. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

world, the nervous system, the imagination that addresses the ineffable dimension of our individual biography and that of the spectator.

Tage, an expert on Shakespeare on whom he had prepared a masterclass, derailed the disconnected flow of my thoughts in a completely different direction. He quoted the dialogue between Hamlet and Polonius, immediately after the well-known monologue ‘To be or not to be’ (Act Three, Scene 2):

Hamlet: *Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in shape like a camel?*

Polonius: *By th’mass and ’tis like a camel indeed.*

Hamlet: *Me thinks it is like a weasel.*

Polonius: *It is back’d like a weasel.*

Hamlet: *Or like a whale?*

Polonius: *Very like a whale.*

I looked in *Hamlet* for the lines where Shakespeare talks about clouds. I assembled them as a nucleus from which to develop the first scenes of a performance whose story and meaning were to be discovered during rehearsals. It is important to ‘humanise’ the process. The performance grows like a living creature, with a coherence and a rhythm of its own. It is a foetus that must be protected, that already has an identity, and therefore should receive a name immediately.



Rina Skeel, Else Marie Laukvik, Ulrik Skeel. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

I christened the performance in gestation *Hamlet's Clouds*. Thus Shakespeare entered the space of our rehearsals and our minds.

It is the process around a text or a real or invented story that decides. It is its vicissitudes that provoke our reactions and we must act with caution without imposing our prejudiced will. It is not us who seek out stories. They knock on our door, convince us to welcome them, take us by the hand and lead us into their world. A certain type of creative process presumes giving up our propensities and compels us to follow unexpected details, abstruse proposals, misunderstandings and mistakes. It is not passivity, blindness, or indolent faith in coincidences. I follow a story that is still barely discernible with all my senses alert, like a mother follows the steps of her child who is learning to walk and make its way in an unknown world.

**1587 and 1968: Christopher Marlowe or Judith Malina and Julian Beck, Grotowski and the Bread and Puppet Theater, the young angry English authors, Ionesco and Beckett**

Shakespeare's biography is enigmatic. We have records of his birth, his marriage, the fines he received for failing to pay taxes, and the purchase of property with



his large income as an actor and poet. But we do not have a single letter written to his wife (who was illiterate), friends or colleagues. We know almost nothing about his friendships and family ties.

Nothing is closer to the theatre experience of my generation than Shakespeare's arrival in London in 1587. The young provincial from Stratford with little experience as an actor found himself in a fervently boiling environment. The city, the third most populous in Europe after Paris and Naples, had 200,000 inhabitants and the first theatre buildings constructed a few years earlier accommodated up to two thousand spectators. It was not enough to stage one or two successful shows per season and keep them playing for a reasonable number of performances. To attract an audience, companies had constantly to change their repertoire and therefore their programme every evening. The companies had an insatiable appetite for new dramas.

Shakespeare had never seen a theatre. He discovered a raised rectangular platform, jutting out into the centre of a large courtyard the size of a modern tennis court, where spectators stood in the open air, surrounded by rows of covered galleries. Just ten years earlier, in 1576, the merchant John Brayne and the carpenter James Burbage had built a polygonal wooden building, giving it the unusual name of The Theatre which evoked the amphitheatres of antiquity. Here they implemented an unusual practice that had come from the Continent: spectators had to buy a ticket at the door before seeing the performance. Until then, travelling actors had passed their hats around the audience at the end of a show.

Shakespeare joined the horde of people rushing to see Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, the sensation of the moment, at the Rose (another theatre). It was a visceral experience that changed his life. Marlowe's drama was the exaltation of the dream of domination and success. The protagonist, Tamburlaine, a poor shepherd, conquers the entire world thanks to his determination, his charisma and his ferocity. The performance overflowed with exotic pomp - an Orient to the Orient of the Orient - rivers of blood, fluttering flags, cannon roars: the celebration of the will for power. Nothing held the protagonist back: neither fear, nor obsequiousness, nor respect for the established order of society. In this drama, all civil laws and rules of conduct taught in schools, universities and by the Church were suspended. There were no more obligations to observe a moral censorship. The spectators cheered and applauded the contempt of everything they had learned through admonitions and precepts. The theatre as an oasis of freedom and enterprise.

Tamburlaine was played by Edward Alleyn, a young actor of 21 years, two years younger than Shakespeare. Shakespeare was fascinated by the majestic

presence and clear voice of his peer, capable of capturing the ears of thousands of spectators. He realised, however, that the subtle magic that enchanted the spectators did not depend only on Alleyn's vibrant interpretation or the reckless lust for power and conquest of the protagonist. Shakespeare and the spectators were speechless in front of a technical aspect never heard before: the blank verse, the irresistible dynamic flow of unrhymed lines of ten syllables and five accents that Christopher Marlowe had shaped for his drama. The charm of this metric form was enclosed in its wonderful architecture of refined and implacable rhythm.

Without lighting and scenery, in the brightness of the day and in the open air, the Elizabethan spectators were captivated by the illusionistic effect of the actors and their rich aristocratic costumes that were the prerogative of the nobles and forbidden to the people and even to the actors off stage. They didn't need darkness to imagine the night, nor papier-mâché trees to see a forest. Imagination was all powerful.

I read all this, and I remember Calderón de la Barca's *The Constant Prince*, the performance that made Grotowski and the actors of the Polish Teatr Laboratorium famous in 1966. I relive in my senses the astonishing alternation of incantations in the melodious vocal torrent of Ryszard Cieslak's monologues, the leading actor. The fragmentation of the text treated as a pretext in a performance that had broken down the spatial separation between stage and audience, created an umbilical cord between the actors and me, the spectator. I still recall what I myself witnessed: the furious energy of the time, iconoclastic, subversive, dripping with indignation, revolt and vitality in the performances of Judith Malina and Julian Beck, Luca Ronconi, the Théâtre du Soleil, the Bread and Puppet Theater, La Mama, or the angry young English authors, John Osborne, Edward Bond, John Arden, Harold Pinter and in Paris and in Poland Ionesco, Adamov, Beckett, Mrozek and Różewicz.

Then, after 1968, a new theatre culture exploded with an original production system and a transformative vision of the actor's craft. Young Marlowes and Shakespeares of our time banded together on the ground of ideological, emotional, aesthetic, therapeutic, revolutionary, religious, ethical, and political affinities.

The rethinking of the theatrical space and of the relationships between actors and spectators as well as the search for new applications of the actor's craft in specific social contexts fractured the homogeneity of the theatrical tradition of the entire planet. It was the big bang of a centuries-old profession that no longer corresponded to the criteria and purposes of the theatre of art and entertainment or to the audacity of an avant-garde theatre of experimentation.



Jakob Nielsen, Ulrik Skeel, Rina Skeel. Photo: Stefano Di Buduo

A third culture with new ways of producing takes root in the history of our craft. A Third Theatre made up of young people driven towards the theatre by different needs.

Any theatre planet has its peripheral areas, its marginalised, divergent or depressed regions. They are far from the centre, but the distance does not mean that these peripheries have not conquered their autonomy. Above all, they are proof that in theatre, the one who ends up winning is always the human: the actor and the spectator.

### **Historical details that do not help me answer the question: why Hamlet today?**

Shakesspere, Shakysper, Shaxpeer, Shakespeire, Schakspere, Shexpere, Shaxkspere, Shappere, Shaxberd. Spelling was treated nonchalantly in The Bard's time. There are more than eighty ways to write his name and he himself did not hesitate to sign Willm Shakp or Willm Shakspeare.

Hamnet and Hamlet were interchangeable names in England in the registers of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Shakespeare had christened his son

Hamnet/Hamlet with the name of a friend, his neighbour in Stratford. In 1596 Hamnet/Hamlet died at the age of eleven in the house on Henley Street. Around his bedside his mother, his two sisters and his paternal grandparents think of the father who is far away, in London, where he lives permanently earning his bread as an actor and scriptwriter. How will they explain his son's sudden illness and death?

Five years later, in 1601, Shakespeare loses his father. Now he is the only one to bear the name that will disappear with him. During his period of mourning, he writes *The Tragical Story of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. He reworks an existing text (now lost) in which he had played the role of the Ghost in his youth. The story of Hamlet had been narrated by the Frenchman François de Belleforest who, in turn, had taken it from a medieval chronicle in Latin by the Dane Saxo Grammaticus: a tale of murder and revenge in the pre-Christian Viking era in which it was the son's duty to kill the father's murderer. In Saxo Grammaticus' *Hamlet*, as in Belleforest's tale, there are no ghosts. There was no need for them because the murder was public knowledge, just like the obligation to take revenge. Shakespeare turns the murder into a secret. Hence the arrival of the father's ghost, *deus ex machina*, who tells how he was killed.

The first version of the text of *Hamlet* was published in quarto in 1603 and the last in folio in 1623 after his death. The final version of the folio is longer and more complete than the quarto. It includes more scenes and about six hundred new English words with seven long monologues that are not action but inner reflections. Today we know it well: the monologue is a technique of the characters to convey to the spectator what is happening inside them.

The 1603 quarto version is half the text of the 1623 folio, about two thousand lines - or two hours of presentation, the usual duration of a performance. It is certainly the version used by the actors. The folio version includes more than four thousand lines, a good four hours of performance, impossible for that time. The soliloquies added to the latest folio version are 'literature' conceived and added by Shakespeare or his editor friends for readers who will buy his works as books.

All this information, however, does not help me answer the question: why Hamlet today?

What does the story of a father whose ghost appears to his son and bequeaths him the task of killing and avenging him say to us today? What is the legacy we have received from our fathers and that we will pass on to our children? What if Hamlet, like Antigone, said, 'I was not born to share hate, but love'?

Doubt makes a man weak, says the Prince of Denmark. Perhaps my mistake lies in these questions: judging the value or meaning of my existence and my

actions according to norms belonging to society, a cause, a quantifiable utility or purpose of the theatre.

We are all influenced by those who came before us and by what is happening in the present. Theatre, with its history and its techniques, is a river. Even without wanting to, if you enter it, you come out wet.

If for me theatre is the land of longing, it is because it nourishes the dream of the possible in the impossible, of fantasy in reality, of wonder in banality, of dance in stillness. The possibility of sharing the action with other people. Hence the deep gratitude for my actors and for so many living and dead who taught me to find the passage towards an energy that intensifies and enlightens the incommunicable sense of my life.

I advance trying to understand if my body-mind has once again found the way. I identify impulsively with the actions of my actors: an embrace between intellect and instinct, between discipline and risk. The performance is unknown to me, its meaning is unknown. I watch not an enigma, but a mystery. Like life.

T.S. Eliot wrote: each generation is wrong about Shakespeare in a new way.

Translated by Judy Barba



Antonia Cioază, Jakob Nielsen. Photo: Stefano Di Buduo





left page:

Julia Varley. Photo: Tommy Bay  
Else Marie Laukvik, Rina Skeel, Ulrik Skeel.  
Photo: Annalisa Gonnella  
Antonia Cioază. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella  
Jakob Nielsen, Antonia Cioază, Julia Varley.  
Photo: Annalisa Gonnella  
Rina Skeel, Ulrik Skeel. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella  
Rina Skeel. Photo: Stefano di Buduo

right page:

Jakob Nielsen, Julia Varley, Antonia Cioază.  
Photo: Annalisa Gonnella  
Jakob Nielsen, Ulrik Skeel. Photo: Annalisa  
Gonnella  
Rina Skeel. Photo: Tommy Bay  
Antonia Cioază, Julia Varley. Photo: Stefano Di  
Buduo

## WITH MY HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

It was with a spirit of adventure that Odin Teatret began to perform in the streets in the 1970s, never imagining that one day we would have to work on an indoor performance without having the theatre that we have built for more than fifty years, and without the protection of the walls and roof of our home. In the old Særkjær farm in Holstebro, Denmark, we were used to rehearsing a new performance for months, spreading out across the four workrooms. During the early hours of the day, we actors worked individually alone or in the same space with costumes, songs, objects and texts. The musicians punctuated our improvisations and scores to present old and new melodies to the director. It wasn't exactly training, but a time dedicated to taking distance from the behaviours of the previous performance and finding new directions. We called this time different names: vivarium, greenhouse, fish tank... From the first day of rehearsals, after this individual time, we always made a run-through of the fixed material.

For the performance *Hamlet's Clouds* we found ourselves in a totally different situation and this influenced our creative process. We had to change to adapt to new spaces and rhythms and at the same time we maintained some of our habits and principles. The teaching of so many past processes led us to listen to the signals that arose as we advanced amid apparent ignorance.

In 1983, Odin Teatret had created the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium (NTL) as a framework for its different activities, and to involve initiatives by other independent groups and artists. Since 2015, NTL has included, amongst others, Altamira Teatro Studio, DOO and Kunstparti, Ikarus Stage Arts, The Jasonites, KompaniTo, Mathias Dyrh, Cross Pollination, Marilyn Nunes, Anna Stigsgaard, Mia Theil Have, Ana Woolf, Landsbylaboratoriet, Vali Teatro... As the coordinator of NTL, I organized a Festival in 2019 and 2020 to share the diversity of our environment. In 2021, the Festival was cancelled due to the restrictions caused by Covid.

In 2021, Eugenio Barba had decided to dedicate himself solely to Odin Teatret and the activities of the archives and theatre anthropology, and on the



1 January 2022, a person chosen from within our environment took over the direction of Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium. With the justification of a generational change, and to our surprise, he immediately began dismantling the group theatre culture and the productive autonomy that we had practised since 1964. In March 2021, I gave up my role as coordinator and in August 2021 Eugenio Barba proposed to the new director and the Board of Directors that he continued his activity with Odin Teatret within Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, whilst receiving only 10% of the subsidies and assuming the economic responsibility of the people in his group. The Board of Directors refused the collaboration, wishing him good work elsewhere and did not renew his contract. At the end of 2022, at the end of the tour of the last Odin Teatret group performance, *Thebes at the Time of Yellow Fever*, many members of Odin Teatret were fired, including Else Marie Laukvik, one of the founders of the group who is still active. As a result, Odin Teatret was re-founded in Eugenio Barba's home on the 4 November 2022, in the same room where we began rehearsals for *Hamlet's Clouds*.

I was on tour in Italy when Eugenio Barba and the actors of the 'young' Odin Teatret began working in Holstebro on a new group performance. With Eugenio were Else Marie Laukvik, Tage Larsen, Jan Ferslev, Ulrik Skeel and Rina Skeel. They had chosen clouds as their theme. I liked it. It gave me a sense of freedom and the possibility of pursuing different associations. Clouds can bring rain or snow, give shade and relief, run with the wind or cover the entire horizon with a grey blanket, unleash hail like cannonballs, cry blood coloured by the setting sun, or threaten a storm with lightning. In my imagination appeared René Magritte's clouds, white puffs of different shapes against a blue sky. They were optimistic and sunny clouds, despite everything.

On the phone, Eugenio also informed me that the two young people who had been following us for a few years, Antonia Cioază and Jakob Nielsen, wanted to watch the rehearsals. I suggested that he include them in the performance, but he replied with a firm no, reminding me that we did not have the financial means to welcome them. Since Odin Teatret was no longer part of the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, in addition to the walls and the roof, we had also lost all subsidies. The next day I heard that the young people had been included, with hoods over their heads so as not to reveal their faces, and placed at the side of the space to play their violins. When I returned, for some time I suffered from the uncertain accompaniment of one of their Bach sonatas but fortunately they quickly improved thanks to good music teachers.

The rehearsals began with a blue plastic packing rope and some chairs that each actor carried with them as a hump or baggage. With these objects,

each of us made long improvisations that we repeated during the rehearsals in the living rooms of our private homes. But the space was not enough, and the acoustics were not suitable for the music and our theatrical voices. We rented a therapeutic gymnastics room in the old disused hospital in Holstebro, equipping it with the immeasurable help of Teatret OM, friends living in the nearby town of Ringkøbing.

For many weeks the rehearsals began with the scene in which Ulrik Skeel entered in his underpants with a chair on his head, lay down on the floor, ate sweets and got dressed. All very slowly. Like Buster Keaton, it seemed that his simplest actions were very difficult. The scene disappeared and only in the last rehearsals, after many months, Ulrik reappeared half naked as Claudius fighting with Hamlet. Rina Skeel proposed songs and improvisations as an actress. Else Marie Laukvik contributed monologues from *Ornitofilene*, the first Odin Teatret performance produced in 1964, and later spent a long time sewing and inventing her 'ghost' costume, surfing the internet to discover ribbons and fabrics that were impossible to find in Holstebro. With a chair instead of a puppet, I used again a scene from *Andersen's Dream*, from 2004. The musicality of the text has remained in the final result of *Hamlet's Clouds*. A large 60 x 40 cm book bought in Copenhagen went through endless vicissitudes until it became, actually, the reflection of the world: a mirror. The chairs disappeared while we were racking our brains about how to build them as transportable versions for tours.

One day we had to take photographs to announce our rehearsals on social media and reassure people that Odin Teatret continued to exist despite rumours to the contrary. From our homes we recovered clothes and costumes accumulated during our travels. The brightly coloured skirts with lace and sequins came from Brazil, a cloak from Jordan, a dress from India, a hat from Bolivia, a jacket from Mongolia, a cape from Eugenio Barba's Honoris Causa ceremony in Cluj, Romania... We chose wigs and shoes, and after the photo session we looked carefully at the details to discover a coherence. Who were we?

The clouds directed us to William Shakespeare, his life as an actor-writer, the frenetic theatrical life of his time, the death of his son Hamnet and of his father who hid his Catholic faith in a country that had become Protestant, and the story of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Hamlet and Ophelia, Claudius and Gertrude were well-known figures at Odin Teatret. In my solo performance *The Castle of Holstebro* from 1990, still in repertory, there are many references to the inhabitants of Elsinore Castle. The performance by the Theatrum Mundi ensemble *Ur Hamlet* from 2006 told the original version of the story written in

Latin by the first Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus. In this performance, the great challenge for Eugenio was how to make contemporary spectators feel the terror that those who believed in spirits felt in the theatre of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For the character of the ghost, he imagined a tightrope walker who, above the heads of the spectators, crossed the courtyard of Elsinore Castle where the performance would take place. But the authorities did not allow the wire to be installed from the walls of a historic building; the ghost became the Queen of Rats who brings the plague to the inhabitants of the castle played by a Japanese Noh actor. *Gertrude's Son*, the performance I directed with Lorenzo Gleijeses as protagonist, was inspired by John Updike's novel about Gertrude, a young woman in love who has difficulty relating to her son.

During breaks in group rehearsals, Eugenio and I, while traveling for other commitments, developed a scene around the death of Hamnet, Shakespeare's son. Eugenio was aware that in Holstebro he would have to focus on some of the other actors with less experience. During a masterclass in Santa Fe, Argentina, in 2023, I did an improvisation with themes not related to our performance for which Eugenio wrote a text. For months the scene was repeated: large, small, with a rope and without, with sounds and without, with the text and without. We wanted to give body to Hamnet and we thought of an African mask covered by a bandage, a Hungarian folk dress and finally the puppet by Fabio Butera, already used in other previous shows *The Marriage of Medea*, *The Future on Sale* and *The Tree*. I had a small cradle for dolls that I wanted to use for a work demonstration on characters, and I laid Hamnet down in it. When I pulled the cradle with a rope, it produced a sound that seemed like a lament. We fixed it. Little by little the actions of the scene disappeared. The text, the cradle and the puppet with a gentle face remained.

I found a concrete stimulus for creating acting materials by reading about the importance of the jig, the dance and music at the end of the Globe Theatre performances. I recorded lots of melodies from the internet and found video images of the dances. During the individual work time, I danced and improvised following the impulses of this music that also gave me the intonation for some texts. The steps with both feet in which we lift our heels, still repeated today in the performance, came from that research reproducing a court dance. In my improvisations I chased the fog of London, the writing by candlelight, and the traces of clouds in the sky. Today, with the performance almost finished, I often find myself looking up. I scrutinise the clouds trying to understand where they are taking me. I dialogue with them with sounds of wind, rain, storm and the sea that calms down with the return of the sun.

For me, the richness of theatre is being able to simultaneously present opposing realities, which the different parts of the body, the varied inflections of the voice, and the flow of words integrate and split. These underline and evoke ambiguity, giving the spectators the freedom to understand according to their own interests and experience. The scenes and events of our performance are a kaleidoscope whose images are provoked by those who watch and move it. One day the crown of the deceased king's ghost was placed on Hamlet lying on the ground. The need for power to maintain itself and pass from generation to generation appeared to me. I saw the powerful of today and their lack of scruples in provoking wars, hunger and terror. One day I see the sword inside the crown that is raised, the next day the choice between the sword and the flower. I wonder if the relationship of fathers and mothers with their children is different. Do they really want to leave something to their children? Or do they just demand? One day the poetry and illusion of young love confronts the passion and eroticism of mature love. The next day I think of Shakespeare. I don't imagine him particularly attached to the son he didn't see grow up, but he must



Jakob Nielsen, Julia Varley. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

have felt the need to give continuity to his name, to leave a legacy. I think of the will hidden by his father in which he prays that masses be celebrated for his soul, and how private life is secret and different from public life. Generations follow one another with an alternating need for revolt and acceptance. One day theatre narrates and comments on its era by taking a position, another day it seems to fight only against indifference and boredom. The next day everything is dance.

It depends on the point of view. Everyone understands what they need to understand, not what has been said or what they see. Many stories are submerged, they are no longer seen, but they continue to nourish the present. I recently read a sentence by the Italian actor Massimo Troisi: 'I am responsible for what I say, not for what you understand'. I could summarize in these words the pain of having lost the home in which I grew up professionally and in which I could welcome people and performances, and the confirmation that working on a new performance forces you to look to the future with active optimism. I lived, it seemed literally, with my head in the clouds. That is, reaching out towards the impossible and immersed in an environment of solidarity, tenacity and smiles. Friends of the 'secret people' came to visit us: Gregorio Amicuzi accompanied us for a good part of the process, Knud Erik Knudsen built the structure and also gave us a box of work tools, Claudio Coloberti sacrificed his work as a film maker to help us as a 'technician', the always serene Stefano Di Buduo gave us his videos of transmission of paternal tenderness and warrior imprint. Then we were accompanied by the visits and advice amongst others of Jan de Neergaard, Exe Christoffersen, Annelis Kuhlmann, Adam Ledger, Kathrine Winkelhorn, Dorthe Kærgaard, Anna Bandettini. For the reader of this text, these names mean little, for us at Odin Teatret they were solid walls that protected us from the ice of our era.

## THE SPACE OF THE CLOUDS

Entering the room on the first day of rehearsals, I find myself in front of two rows of chairs, one on each side of the room. They help delimit the stage space and to receive the spectators. It is the 'river space', as Eugenio Barba calls it. I know the format and part of its history.

I saw the 'river' for the first time during the performance *Mythos* by Odin Teatret in 2000. Astonishing. Sitting amongst the spectators, in addition to seeing the performance, I also experienced it. I saw it and experienced it together with other spectators sitting in front of me. I perceived their faces, their reactions, their heads moving some one way and others the opposite way, and then their open mouths, the different positions of their legs, arms and hands. I was able to physically see how the community of spectators had the experience together with the community of actors.

The 'river' is the oblong stage space that flows between the spectators and that cannot be completely dominated by their gaze. It creates two possible frontal stages, one on the left and one on the right, at the same time as a large central corridor in which the actors move, dance, sing and speak their texts.

Even before the performance begins, the 'river' immediately generates a feeling of coexistence, curiosity and contact. While waiting for the actors, the spectators observe the people sitting in front of them as they try to orient themselves in this new circumstance that, in absence of a stage on which to focus their attention, forces them to choose where to look.

When the performance finally begins, a few centimetres from the spectators, the actors generate with their presence the 'spark' that, as Jerzy Grotowski theorised and practiced, connects the two ensembles: the ensemble of the spectators and that of the actors. We all participate and live a collective experience, as in a ritual or an intimate civilian ceremony. This feeling is very different from the one we experience when watching a 'front on' show.

The stage space - which defines the relationship between actors and spectators - is fundamental in the history of theatre, as it determines the actors'

technique and the behaviour they use to construct theatre fiction and intensify the experience of what the spectator 'sees'.

In Shakespeare's England, the Globe Theatre was built in 1599 and destroyed by fire in 1613. Rebuilt again in 1614, it operated until 1642 when it was closed by order. A new Globe Theatre was built in London in 1997, respecting the characteristics of the original and continuing to host performances to this day.

The stage was in the centre of an open-air arena. In the arena, which was the cheapest place, spectators, derogatorily called groundlings, watched the show standing. Around the courtyard were balconies located at three different heights. The central balcony was very expensive and the lateral balconies, although having a worse visibility, were even more expensive and were intended for the upper class. One of the reasons for this type of construction was the fact that the audience, in addition to seeing the performance, also observed the other spectators. Theatre was a meeting place where society represented itself.

The same thing happened on the Italian stage. Its architecture allowed spectators a total perception of the action space where the actors performed. With its division into 'boxes' (*"palchetti"*), the Italian social structure of the time was evident. The stalls, despite having better visibility, were intended for the 'people'. On the other hand, visibility was reduced in the boxes, but one enjoyed the pleasure of observing other spectators and being observed by them. The 'boxes' were intended for the aristocrats who used them as living

rooms to receive guests, eat and conduct their own social life. With his small Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, Poland, from 1959 to 1964, Grotowski was the first to disintegrate the separation between actors and spectators by establishing a single space in which the actors moved among the audience. In *Faust*, the spectators participated in a banquet and in *Kordian* they were sitting on the beds of a psychiatric hospital. The consequences were extreme.

An explosion of possibilities took theatre outside of the theatre: into squares, homes,



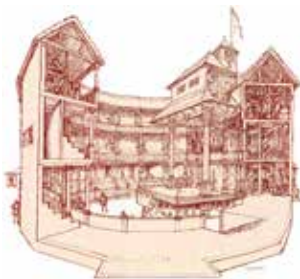
River space, *Inside the Skeleton of the Whale* by Odin Teatret. Photo: Francesco Galli Teatro San Carlo, Naples, Italy, founded in 1737.

prisons, hospitals and into any place where the encounter between the two ensembles could be generated. The stage space thus begins to transform itself, responding to the artists' desire to find, speak and express their needs to the audience. How this encounter is generated becomes, therefore, a space for practice, experimentation and reflection with the aim of actively involving the spectator.

As in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre where the different social classes of the spectators mingled to attend a show whose language spoke to everyone, today *Hamlet's Clouds* by Odin Teatret wants to take up this challenge. Every evening the actors confront a small group of ninety people who have chosen them.

The 'river' hosts this dialogue between texts, images, sounds, props, instruments, live music, wild dances and vibrant stillness. It is a tireless current animated by the composition of every single detail of the actors' 'score'. Every detail tells, evokes and suggests. The actors express their presence, aware of being surrounded by spectators, and their behaviour, through physical signs, also affects those behind them. Everything is articulated in relation to a scenic space that immerses and in which the actors no longer have just a frontal relationship but a circular one.

In the 'river' the spectators cannot see the entire scenic space, as in an Italian theatre or the Globe Theatre: now they must choose. Their attention is directed to the two ends of the 'river' through the actors' sounds, voices and actions in an incessant mosaic of simultaneous stimuli. It is interesting to see the time that Eugenio Barba, together with his actors, takes to decide where to direct the spectator's attention. Variations in intonation or tensions of the actor's torso determine the perception and guide the personal interpretation of what the spectator is experiencing. In the simultaneity of actions, the spectators choose or let themselves be captured by one action rather than another. Each spectator thus creates their own 'dramaturgy' in relation to



*Kordian* by Teatr Laboratorium, 1962. Scenic space.  
The Globe Theatre, drawing of the original building founded of 1599.



their own imagination and biography and, above all, in relation to the way in which the actions influence their perception. There is a literal level, the words, another visual with the images, another auditory with the sounds. The reactions of the other spectators sitting facing one another accentuate the kinesthetic effect of the actors' actions.

The kinesthetic sense makes us aware of our body and its tensions and also of the people around us. Up to a distance of eight to nine metres, the kinesthetic sense concretely influences the spectator's nervous system. A greater distance, however, creates a distancing, like when watching images on television. This is the fundamental dynamic and perceptive difference between theatre and cinema or television, that is, between three-dimensional living organisms and two-dimensional images.

We are therefore all manipulated at a sensorial kinesthetic level by the proximity of the actors' actions that constitute the 'river's' energy flow. Its clean or turbid waters pass through us, and even if we do not grasp the meaning of some words - Odin Teatret has always performed in different languages - or the director's way of narrating, the 'river' speaks to us, because we too are part of its tensions and its dynamism. We are not solitary individuals: in this ritual without balconies or privileged places, the proximity of the spectators in front, who we can see and who see us, merges with that of the actors.

The 'river' transports us with Gertrude and Claudius, as they embrace, play and plot during the course of the performance, moves us with Shakespeare who imagines writing about Ophelia and Hamlet's love in the book of the world, but also his pain for the death of his son with the same name as the Prince of Denmark.

The 'river' speaks to our eyes, ears, instincts, dreams and ghosts. The ghost of Hamlet's father wanders in the 'river' and envelops us with his moans, groans and screams. Conscious or not, its current drags us beyond a tragic story of revenge.

Translation: Julia Varley

# ODIN TEATRET

Odin Teatret ([www.odinteatret.org](http://www.odinteatret.org)) was founded by Eugenio Barba in 1964 in Oslo, Norway with four young people who had been rejected from the national theatre school. In 1966 Odin Teatret moved to Denmark and converted a farm outside Holstebro into a theatre laboratory. In 1983, the name was changed to Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium/Odin Teatret as a framework for an institution with many artistic and educational activities, a publishing house, film production, festivals and community initiatives. In 2022 Odin Teatret and Eugenio Barba left Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium and continue their activities in Denmark and around the world. In 2024, Odin Teatret's activities include performances in Denmark and abroad, teaching and workshops, intensive contact with theatre groups also through European projects, the annual intensive nine-day residency Odin Home in Ringkøbing-Skjern, the annual Transit Festival dedicated to women in theatre in Stendis, and the Thursday Poetry evening in collaboration with other institutions in Holstebro.

In collaboration with the Barba Varley Foundation Odin Teatret is active in the production of educational films and videos, the publication of books, the support of individuals and groups in disadvantaged situations, in sessions of the ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology), performances with the multicultural Theatrum Mundi Ensemble, the journal "JTA - Journal of Theatre Anthropology" and a series of films on theatre anthropology that can be downloaded for free ([www.fondazionebarbavarley.org](http://www.fondazionebarbavarley.org)).

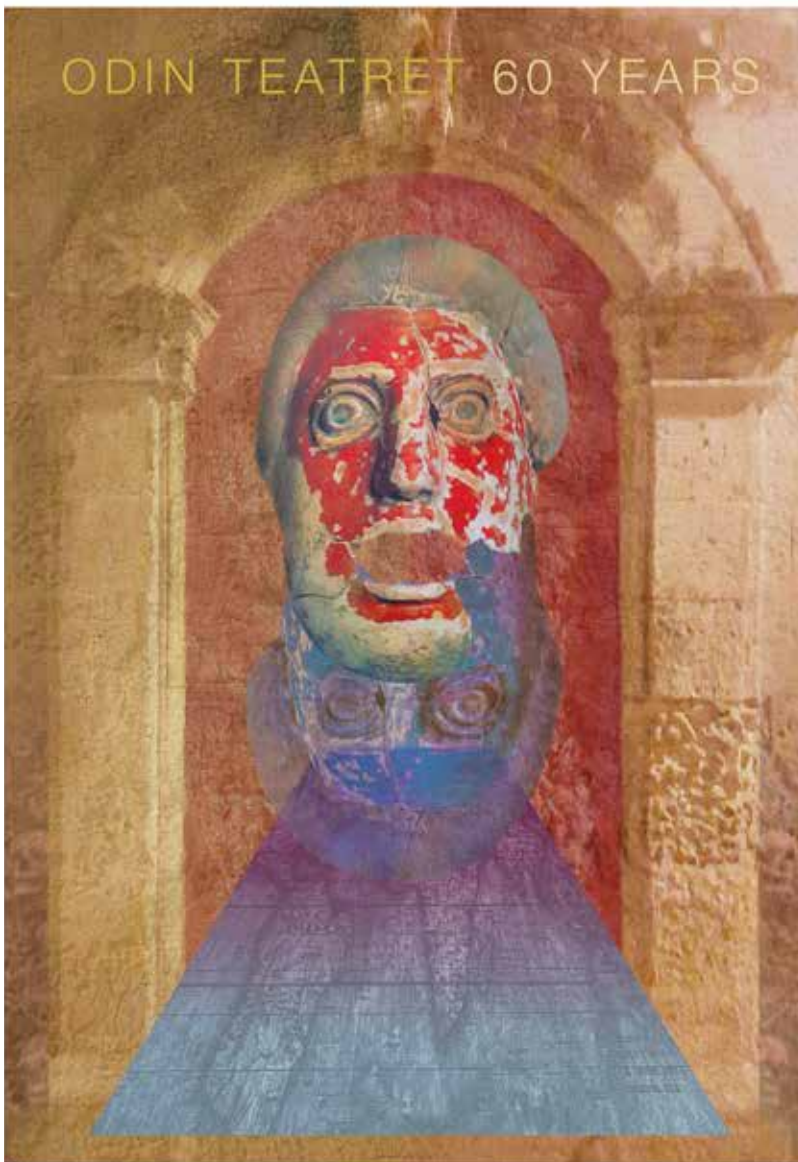
At the heart of this collaboration is LAFLIS, Living Archive Floating Islands ([www.LAFLIS.org](http://www.LAFLIS.org)), created after Barba donated his library and artistic heritage to the Puglia Region in Italy. It is in Lecce, at the Bernardini Library, that the history of Odin Teatret lives again, as well as the extensive documentation on the Transit Festival directed by Julia Varley, the Magdalena Project and the Third Theatre groups. A digitised archive is available with documents dating back to 1960, when Barba went to Poland to study directing and met the young Grotowski. The ties woven during 60 years have led to the development of a professional and academic environment in cooperation with universities, groups and cultural associations. Odin Teatret's experiences, with 86 performances presented in 67 countries and in different social contexts, have generated a particular culture with roots in cultural diversity and the principle of 'barter': the actors of Odin Teatret present their work for a specific environment, which in turn responds with songs, music and dances of their own culture.



Jan Ferslev, Rina Skeel, Eugenio Barba, Julia Varley, Antonia Cioază, Jakob Nielsen. Below: Tage Larsen, Else Marie Laukvik, Ulrik Skeel at Mini Transit Festival. Stendis 2024. Photo: Annalisa Gonnella

**Odin Teatret:** Eugenio Barba, Antonia Cioază, Claudio Coloberti, Jan Ferslev, Knud Erik Knudsen, Tage Larsen, Else Marie Laukvik, Jakob Nielsen, Francesca Romana Rietti, Anne Savage, Rina Skeel, Ulrik Skeel, Julia Varley

ODIN TEATRET 60 YEARS



Design Peter Bysted



## ODIN TEATRET

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