**Facts and Tales**  
ISTA sessions 3 - 4 - 5  

**ISTA 3, Blois\Malakoff, 1985**  
**Dialogue between Cultures**

**Introduction**

The first symposium on theatre anthropology, in Bonn, in 1980, entitled *Le regard qui sait voir* (The eyes that know how to see) brought together about fifty international experts. One of them was André Helbo, who successively organised the *Colloque International pour la Sémiologie du Spectacle* at the University of Brussels in 1981. André Helbo invited Eugenio Barba to attend the *Colloque* where he met Patrick Pezin, a young French actor and director who had also just founded a publishing house, the journal *Bouffonneries*, and a Training and Research Centre in Cazilhac, France.

Patrick Pezin became Eugenio Barba’s publisher in France. Already in 1981, he published *L’archipel du théâtre* (The floating islands) and later most of Barba’s books, sometimes in collaboration with other publishers such as *L’Entretemps* and *Deuxième Époque* that in 2021 published *Les cinq continents du théâtre* (The five continents of theatre).

One of the important outcomes of Eugenio Barba’s and Patrick Pezin’s friendship was the third ISTA session in Blois and Malakoff in 1985.

After the first and second ISTA, Eugenio Barba had difficulty in finding organisers who could finance a session lasting one or two months. The costs were considerable. In his upcoming book, *On All Forgotten Faces*, Roberto Bacci, the organiser of the second ISTA in Volterra in 1981, writes that the expenses for the session of two months amounted to more than 400 million lire (corresponding to about 823,000 euros today). Moreover, until the seventh session of ISTA, participants did not pay, and the artistic and scientific staff consisted of about fifty artists and scholars.

For Eugenio Barba, ISTA and the field of theatre anthropology had become a theoretical-practical activity that enabled the development of an environment with exceptional
collaborators: Asian and Western artists with their ensembles and musicians; scholars from different universities who had become fascinated by the new field of study; and above all the possibility of sharing with Third Theatre actors and directors the adventure of “learning to learn” which involved them all at the same level. It was an unprecedented situation of pure research on pre-expressivity, the level of organisation of the actor/dancer’s stage presence.

The collaboration with Patrick Pezin allowed Eugenio Barba to envisage a very short session that would gather ISTA’s environment again, giving it continuity and prospects. The leaflet of the third ISTA in France in 1985 announced a fourth session that would take place at Odin Teatret, in Holstebro, Denmark, the following year.

Compagnie du Hasard, directed by Nicolas Peskine, had been invited to Odin Teatret in Holstebro in 1984. Eugenio Barba and Patrick Pezin managed to involve him in the organisation of the third ISTA session that took place in the historical castle of Chambord in Blois from the 12th to the 18th of April 1985. The theme was “Dialogue between Cultures.”

Edith Rappoport, who knew Eugenio Barba since 1972 and had invited Odin Teatret’s performances to Paris, hosted the third ISTA symposium, Le maître du regard, in dates 20-21 April 1985, at Théâtre 71, a theatre that she directed with Pierre Ascaride on the outskirts of Paris.

Sixty participants and a reduced artistic and scientific staff of only 22 people took part in the third ISTA session. However, the organisers - typical representatives of the Third Theatre - managed to activate an impressive list of patrons: L’Etablissement Public Régional de la Région Centre, La Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles de la Région Centre, La Direction du Développement Culturel, L’Action Française d’Action Artistique (AFAA), Le Ministère de la Culture - Direction des Théâtres, L’Office National de la Diffusion Artistique (ONDA), Maison d’édition Bouffonneries-Contrastes, La Compagnie du Hasard, Théâtre 71.

Wanting ISTA to last over time and give it roots as an intermittent tradition-in-life, forced Eugenio Barba to invent a new structure, organisation and time architecture. One obsession remained unchanged: the establishment of a u-topia, a non-place, an ephemeral “performers’ village” where different generations, cultures and specialisations could coexist, share and learn.

Few documents exist about this session in Odin Teatret Archives. But this third session is fundamental in the history of theatre anthropology because it relaunched this adventure despite the odds against it. Eugenio Barba had understood that ISTA could not be the consequence of a demand just from the outside. He had to take the initiative to trigger the conditions for new ISTA sessions, thus renewing the interest in the comparative studies of theatre anthropology.

Here the third session of ISTA is presented by an article by Liliana Alexandrescu and a copy of an excerpt of the Report.

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**Liliana Alexandrescu**

**Odin Teatret revisité**

**Abstract:** This is an excerpt of the article by Liliana Alexandrescu that was published with the same title in the Romanian journal Dramatica 1/2014, “Eugenio Barba. Celebrating 50 years with Odin Teatret.” Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, pp. 157-182. After two meetings with Eugenio Barba and Odin Teatret’s actors, in 1976 and in 1981, the author visited Odin Teatret’s home and was fascinated by Barba’s and his actors’ working model. In 1985, Alexandrescu attended the ISTA symposium held in Malabouf, France, 20th-21st April 1985. The paper presents the symposium, enriched by original notes taken by the author.

**Keywords:** Odin Teatret; Eugenio Barba; Actor; Theatre anthropology; Maître du REGARD

*Seules les relations comptent. Ce sont des fils ténus, illusores, consolidés par les années ou l’intensité d’une rencontre. Elles finissent par construire un pays qu’aucune carte de géographie ne peut représenter et décrire. Solitaires, nous habitons une géographie faite de liens et de nœuds : affections, livres, souvenirs, passions, collaborations qui durent une vie entière.*

En partant de Holstebro, j’avais le sentiment d’avoir découvert un modèle de travail idéal, un centre d’énergie fonctionnant comme un tout. Pourtant, après l’extraordinaire spectacle qu’avait été Cendres de Brecht, certains changements étaient survenus dans le groupe : de nouvelles aspirations, de nouveaux besoins personnels, de nouvelles circonstances de vie. Aussi était-il nécessaire de réorganiser les rapports de forces à l’intérieur et d’élargir le champ d’activité au dehors : « Non plus Odin Teatret avec en sous-titre Théâtre Laboratoire Scandinave, mais Théâtre Laboratoire Scandinave qui regroupait nombre d’activités autonomes parmi lesquelles l’Odin Teatret, Farfà de Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Basho de Toni Cots, l’Odin Teatret Film de Torgeir Wethal et le Canada Project de Richard Fowler ». Odin devenait ainsi plutôt un cri de ralliement, et Holstebro, ancien lieu de réclusion, un centre d’expansion créatrice.