The 5th session of the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), which took place in Salento (Apulia, Italy) from 1st to 14th September 1987, was an encounter between two stable yet changing realities: on the one hand the Eugenio Barba’s “floating island” with the performers of Asian and international theatre as well as Odin Teatret’s actors; on the other hand the Salento “quasi-island” and the complex personality of its inhabitants.

After the session in Volterra in 1981, ISTA came to Italy for the second time. But if in the Tuscan town the work was carried out in an almost monastic way, although with regular openings to the outside world, the session in Salento was distinguished by the abundant offer of performances in various locations like a festival of Asian theatres and in constant relationship with the people of the territory.

On the streets and in the squares, in the courtyards of castles and in public gardens, “theatre dialogues” took place between Asian actors and local musicians and dancers:

ISTA Salento will take place in the street and the squares. One of its aims is to study what happens in situations of intercultural dialogue. It will show us how the sense of a performance is transformed in the passage from the tradition of the actor to the personal ‘translation’ of the viewer who is distant from this tradition.

Eugenio Barba

The Spectator's Shadow

ISTA Salento 1987: the practice of theatre dialogues

Abstract: The author summarises the different stages of his continuous research on the 5th session of ISTA in Salento (1987) that he began in 1997. The text throws light on the ISTA participants’ group dynamic during the ‘closed’ part of the session, the variety of ‘dialogue-performances’ (barters) with the local population during the ‘open’ part, and quotes several observations by cultural anthropologist Piero Giacchè during his field work which lasted several months.

Keywords: Salento, Spectator, Tradition, Identity, Barter, Intercultural dialogue, Faust, Piero Giacchè

Vincenzo Blasi