NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

A Progressive World Theatre: The International Theatre Institute's Third World Committee, 1971-1977

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama (IPTD)

By

Matthew Randle-Bent

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

June 2023

Abstract

A Progressive World Theatre: The International Theatre Institute's Third World Committee, 1971-1977

Matthew Randle-Bent

In the 1960s, the International Theatre Institute (ITI), the organization sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with a mission to represents the world's theaters, was faced with a crisis of representation. After twenty years of existence, the institution had not succeeded in substantially expanding beyond its Western European and North American origins. As a UNESCO organization, the ITI sought to be universal in scope. In an attempt to achieve that goal, the ITI executive founded a committee on Theatre in the Third World (TWC).

Between its founding in 1971 and its demise in 1983, the TWC hosted festivals, conferences, and symposia that brought together theatre artists from Asia, Africa, and Latin America — in dialogue with indigenous and minority artists from the First and Second Worlds, and other political allies. The height of its activity was during the years 1971-1976, in which time the TWC hosted events in Manila, Shiraz, East Berlin, Caracas, and Rennes, among other cities. Its members articulated a unique institutional and artistic agenda. Institutionally, it sought to transform the ITI from within: attempting to reform its internal structures to make space for artists from the Third World to hold positions of influence, and make powerful administrators more accountable. It also sought to turn the ITI into a campaigning organization on behalf of the rights of dissident artists. Artistically, the committee gradually articulated a vision of what would

be called “progressive world theatre” — an aesthetic approach that artists from the First, Second, and Third Worlds could rally around. Progressive world theatre would use art as a tool for social transformation, drawing on culturally-specific forms to further an internationalist political project.

This story has not previously been accounted for in Anglophone theatre and performance studies scholarship. Yet historically it coincides with a significant period in the historiography of contemporary theatre and performance — the 1960s and 1970s — and the TWC events traverse key sites through which received histories of modernist and avant-garde performance have been articulated: the Shiraz Arts Festival, La MaMa ETC, the Berliner Ensemble. Furthermore, through the symposia, festivals, and publications of the TWC a range of debates over dramatic theory were engaged: the politics of aesthetics, folk forms, translation, among others. Therefore, to revisit the story of the TWC is to offer a significant revision to both the history of avant-garde performance during the 1960s and 1970s, and the history of theatre and performance theory. This revised history places the voices of artists from the Third World, and their collaborations with artists from the First and Second Worlds, center stage.

Acknowledgements

For several years I kept a document entitled “people to thank when this is all over” — an ongoing list born out of desire to be comprehensive. Transitioning between devices, like moving house, things get lost. That document was a casualty. I have decided to see this as an opportunity to be specific and intentional as I reflect on the completion of this project.

First, my committee: Susan Manning has been much more than just a committee chair since joining this project in Winter 2018. She has been a mentor in balancing a scholarly career and starting a family, while demystifying the academy and its oftentimes confounding logic at every turn. She is also the smartest pedagogue I have met: the source of innumerable ideas and approaches that have enriched my own teaching. Ultimately, she has allowed me to pursue my own research interests while diligently clarifying my thoughts, methods, and writing habits. For this, and so much more, I am grateful.

Liz Son has been a staunch advocate for our family at Northwestern. As a pedagogue, DGS, and mentor she has also shown that it is possible to succeed as both a committed parent and a committed scholar. Hannah Feldman has been my great intellectual inspiration at Northwestern. Her art history graduate seminar in Winter 2018 changed the way I thought. I still am grateful for her advocacy that I join the Summer 2018 seminar she led in Lebanon. That trip brought me into contact with one of the inspirations for the dissertation: Rasha Salti and Kristine Khouri’s *Past Disquiet* exhibition at the Sursock Museum in Beirut. Ted Ziter joined the committee a little later as an external member, but has been no less influential. Since we first discussed my research at a conference in Fall 2019, Ted has been a consistent and vocal advocate

for my work. He has read drafts and helped shape my arguments with a clear sense of the project's potential impact on the field. He has also been a valued mentor and strategist for the academic job market, and has helped find a home for my work in *Arab Stages*.

Since 2016 I have presented various versions of material found in this dissertation across the United States at conferences and symposia. Thanks to the organizers and members of the Middle East Theatre Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education; the organizers of the "Rebels and Revels" symposium on theatre in the Middle East at the University of Maryland (particularly Q-Mars Haeri), the seminar on "Mapping the Cultural Routes of 'Proletarian Internationalism' in the Global South" at the American Comparative Literature Association (particularly Maziyar Faridi), and the Performance Studies in/from the Global South working group at the American Society for Theatre Research. Special thanks to my colleagues in Middle East and North African studies at Northwestern — specifically MENA director Rebecca Johnson, as well as my fellow graduate students — for numerous opportunities to develop this work in dialogue with them. Azadeh Safaeian deserves a special mention, also — she shared with me the comprehensive pdf compiling events at the Shiraz Arts Festival in which I first read about the ITI Third World Committee.

This feels like an apt moment to acknowledge a range of other mentors who were not part of advising this project. First, those who helped me get to Northwestern — mentors from previous institutions who advocated for my applications and to whom I still feel indebted: Michael McKinnie, Jen Harvie, Nicholas Ridout, Wallace McDowell, Yvette Hutchison, and James Harding. I am also grateful to Brian Edwards, a former MENA director, for his guidance

in the early stages of my work at Northwestern. Likewise Josh Chambers-Letson, particularly for his crash course in Marxist theory.

Since 2020 I have had the good fortune of teaching young theatre artists at The Theatre School at DePaul University. The students in my civic dramaturgy and dramatic theory courses have inspired me and consistently challenged and clarified the thinking in this dissertation. Rachel Shteir has been a steadfast supporter as Head of Dramaturgy.

Some of these words were written during my time as artist in residence at The Watermill Center. I am extraordinarily grateful to the team at WMC for inviting me into that unique place and giving me time and space to think clearly. I hope one day they will have me back. An evening spent in conversation with Bob Wilson at Watermill was inspirational — and the culmination of an artistic fascination that began during my undergraduate days and still informs my thinking.

A wide community of friends and colleagues have sustained us all over the last seven years. Hamed Yousefi has become a dear friend, as well as an intellectual collaborator. He, Maya Dukmasova, and baby Nima; Maria de Simone and Yajit Jain; Tasia Jones, Sean Wilson, and baby Xavier; Marti Lyons and Luis Klein; Matt Beeber and Marissa Fenley; Angel Ysaguirre and Bob Webb; Alícia Hernàndez Grande, Peter Wright, Clara and Luca; Grace Kessler-McMunn, Matthew McMunn and Izzy — have all fed us, celebrated with us, commiserated with us, babysat for us, and much more. They have been our community.

Our families have been endlessly supportive in so many different ways over the life of this project. Our kids are very fortunate to have very present and loving grandparents. I am grateful to my parents, Jamie and Judith Bent, as well as Gary and Marilyn Randle and Joe, Kat, and

Tegan Bent every day. I am just as grateful to my oldest and dearest friends: Max, Naomi and Cyrus Dean; Tom Fowler and Zoe Patterson; Josh Goulding, and Lauren Gowers.

This project would not have made it to the finish line without my wife, Gabrielle Randle-Bent. It has been part of her life for as long as it has been a part of mine. It is a great privilege to be married to my most brilliant colleague: she has read countless words, helped shape arguments, recommended readings, challenged my assumptions, and so much else besides. Yet in a much more profound way she has helped create the conditions for my success — much as I hope to have done for her — as we have built a life around our family and our careers. Her extraordinary work as an artist and scholar continues to inspire me. I owe so much to her. Becoming parents in the latter stages of working on this project brought so many new things to our lives: wonder, beauty, exhaustion, and much needed balance. This work is dedicated to our children.

Preface

This is the first scholarly project in English to consider the history of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)'s Third World Committee (TWC). Given how little-known this story is, and the lack of wide familiarity with its artists and ideas, for the most part this project takes the form of a narrative history. My hope is to recount in detail the political and economic forces acting upon artists of the Third World movement within the ITI, and how they pursued their institutional and artistic goals while operating under those pressures. Yet, in the flow of this history I will often pause and undertake a contextual analysis of texts or events of particular significance. Likewise, I will give space to the analysis of major texts in the TWC history, in light of the evolving aesthetic and institutional priorities of the committee.

While several of the figures will be familiar to scholars of theatre and performance in the United States, the vast majority of artists under discussion are little-known. To remedy this, I have included an appendix to the dissertation, offering short biographies of many individuals. It is my hope that this research will help raise the profile of myriad extraordinary artists and thinkers who influenced the work of the TWC among Anglophone scholars: Cecile Guidote, Alfred Farag, Fritz Bennewitz, Chérif Khaznadar, and others.

Throughout I privilege the perspectives of artists as theorists and makers of theatrical knowledge. I use the ideas, writings, and pronouncements of artists and arts administrators in conferences, festivals, meetings and correspondence as the starting point for theoretical extrapolation and analysis. I am interested in pursuing the thought and action of the committee

artists on their own terms: to see what can be gained for a discipline and industry that faces similar issues to the ITI in the late 1960s.

This project is in many ways a product of the pandemic that struck in early 2020. The ensuing lockdown transformed my research process. A planned trip to Iran to conduct research and oral histories about the Shiraz Arts Festival, slated for spring 2020, never happened. The archival research I had just finished in New York City in February/March 2020 — in addition to research conducted before that time — became the focus of the dissertation. As a result, while this project strives towards a truly internationalist perspective through its use of broad published texts, and works in translation, the archival sources cited are almost exclusively North American in provenance. I consulted the papers of the US Center of the ITI at New York Public Library: a vast collection that contains a substantial amount of material on the ITI in general, and the TWC in particular — largely due to the involvement of Ellen Stewart. Given her prominence, I also consulted the LaMaMa archive, which proved a similarly invaluable resource. Inevitably, the project in its current state contains certain limitations due to the materials I was able to access during its research.

Future iterations of this project will require research in French, German, Russian, Latin American, Iranian and Lebanese (among other) archives to flesh out the story I have been able to tell from US archives. This research would allow additional voices to gain prominence, as well as allowing me to give further nuance to perspectives already present in the dissertation. In the current version, the reader will notice certain differences in the kinds of claims I am able to make with regards to different festivals: while, for example, I could draw upon rich accounts of the debates held at the 1976 “Theatre and Social Reality” conference in the DDR, the conference

held in Caracas, Venezuela the same year was a lacuna of documentation. Yet even the most well-documented events must be held at a certain distance: I try to be mindful throughout of the political agendas informing documentary practices in this deeply partisan era.

With this in mind, it should be acknowledged explicitly at the outset that I am attempting to tell a counter-hegemonic history through the archives of a hegemonic power. I see this as an opportunity to reiterate the point that official archival sources do not necessarily support the dominant politics of the hegemon.[1] Such examples abound. In the official report on the 1973 Shiraz Festival-Conference of Third World theatre written by Black choreographer Carole Johnson for the US Center of the ITI, for instance, I see how a dissenting artist could use her official standing to create deeply critical documentation of the place of the US in the Third World movement. While the major archive I consulted was compiled by US officials, it is nevertheless unmistakably filled with myriad perspectives on the US as an imperial presence in ways that cannot be obscured.

While the archives I was able to consult were fragmentary and partial, the range of documentation I was able to access still offers significant insight into this severely under-explored era in theatre history, and the history of Cold War cultural diplomacy. My intention is to continue to expand the scope of this project in subsequent years. Inspired by the example of researchers Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti cited below, my greatest hope for this project is that the historical and theoretical exposition I offer here will create space for the work of others, with different expertise, experience, and access, to expand its horizons. To adequately account for the

---

[1] For a recent discussion on this topic, see: Susan Manning, "Archives in Collision: Excursus on Method," in *Critical Histories of Modern Dance: A Retrospective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).

complex intersecting histories present in the Third World Committee of the International Theatre Institute would require access to archives across the world, in many languages. This would likely be the work of a multi-year, multi-institution research project. While I have limited this project to those festivals and conferences organized by the TWC, there is of course a potential rich seam of work to be done considering other transnational festival networks of the era, and how they intersected with the TWC. Extant festivals in Shiraz and Caracas are considered here, but in the interests of scaling the project appropriately there was no space for other sites: Baalbeck, Belgrade, Dakar, Damascus, among numerous examples. There is plenty of scope for future work. I hope my work here, shaped as it is by the circumstances of its production, will help spur further interest and research about these international collaborations.

List of Abbreviations

BE — Berliner Ensemble

DDR — German Democratic Republic (East Germany)

FRG — Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)

ITI — International Theatre Institute

LaMaMa ETC — LaMaMa Experimental Theatre Club

PETA — Philippines Educational Theatre Association

ROK — Republic of Korea (South Korea)

RPT — Radical People's Theatre

TWC — Third World Committee

UNESCO — United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

SED — Socialist Unity Party of Germany (DDR)

For Jude and Vivienne

Table of Contents

Introduction

We do not create theatre solely to prove that we can clutch the heels of civilization and claim we have theater like that of other nations.[2] — Sa'dallah Wannous

With all historical, cultural and social differences and peculiarities, we are moving towards a united, progressive world culture in which a creative dialectic between the national and the international reveals itself.[3] — Fritz Bennewitz

Between 1971 and 1983, the International Theatre Institute's Third World committee articulated a vision of world theatre committed to an internationalist liberation politics. Members of the committee, drawn from across the world, debated aesthetics and institutional politics in diverse sites: Manila, Bombay, Moscow, Shiraz, Beirut, West Berlin, Rennes, Caracas, East Berlin, Nicosia, Seoul. They offered a broad, inclusive definition of the Third World, which embraced minorities and indigenous peoples from the First and Second Worlds. They also debated topics of theoretical significance to theatre and performance studies in distinctive dialogues among artists, policy makers, and scholars. The work of this committee has seldom been remarked upon in theatre history. With this project, I begin to rectify that omission.

---

[2] Sa'dallah Wannous, "It All Begins with the Audience," in *Sentence to Hope: A Sa'dallah Wannous Reader*, ed. by Robert Myers and Nada Saab (1988; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 405-414; 411.

[3] "Discussion," in Joachim Fiebach and Jutta Hengst, eds., *Theatre and Social Reality:International Colloquy for Theatre People from Countries of the Third World* (Berlin: DDR Center of the ITI, 1977), 74.

Revisiting the history of the ITI TWC contributes to the recent revival of interest in Cold War cultural diplomacy projects in theatre. It also seeks to expand current debates in theatre studies over the question of "world theatre," and international theatre exchanges. As the East German theatre director Fritz Bennewitz stated in 1976, the TWC was part of a movement towards a "united, progressive world culture." That culture was in a material sense the product of state-sponsored collaborations between artists from the First, Second, and Third Worlds: artists committed to radical, democratic, socialist, and/or anti-colonial politics, expressed through cultural production. Yet, the terms of debate, and the range of voices invited into those debates, often exceeded the established norms of cultural diplomatic missions. As such, this project emphasizes the agency of artists as international actors.

Many artists of the TWC will be well-known to scholars of theatre in the US academy; many will not. Among the myriad symposia, conferences, congresses, and festivals under discussion here, artists including Helene Weigel, Ellen Stewart, and Sa'dallah Wannous were present. Yet, so were numerous figures lesser-known among the anticipated readership of this project: Chérif Khaznadar, Cecile Guidote, Jalal Khoury. One of the aims of this project is to amplify the arguments made, and collaborations forged, between these artists and thinkers, and reevaluate their contributions to twentieth century political aesthetics.

This is a transnational study in theatre history which tells a story that has not been told before. As historians and theorists of theatre have moved from nation-based to transnational historical models, numerous scholars have begun to pay attention to the International Theatre Institute as the world's largest theatre organization. Charlotte Canning and Christopher Balme have led the way, publishing major works that describe the origins of the ITI, and its expansion

during the 1950s and 1960s. In this emerging field of study, no English-language scholar has yet narrated the story of the Institute's Third World Committee in the 1970s: the group created with a mission to expand the ITI's reach beyond its Euro-American points of origin.

The ITI TWC was founded in 1971. The product of UNESCO-sponsored seminars of the mid-late 1960s that aimed to promote mutual understanding between "East" and "West," the hope within the ITI was that this new committee would help reach out to theatre artists in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and gather them under the universal ITI umbrella by establishing their own national centers. Over the twelve year history of the committee, its members gradually articulated their own organizational agenda: ambitiously attempting to transform the ITI from within, while collaborating on new definitions of Third World aesthetics. Throughout that history, the committee negotiated individual artistic agendas, state politics, local artistic cultures, and NGO economics.

While it is a transnational history, this study recognizes the impact of institutions as mediators of cultural contact: between individuals, between audiences and works of art, between political and cultural formations. As Christopher Balme writes: "a central concern of transnational studies in general and global history in particular is how institutions relocate across geocultural space. How have they intersected with their new environments? How have they been adapted, restated, hybridized, and transformed in processes of motion?"[4] This study concerns an itinerant committee, the TWC, which intersected with new political and cultural environments with each new event it hosted — commonly working in collaboration with national governments

---

[4] Christopher Balme, "Theatrical Institutions in Motion: Developing Theatre in the Postcolonial Era," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 31.2 (2017), 125-140; 127.

to plan festivals. Yet the committee was part of two umbrella organizations, the ITI and UNESCO, which sought to project stability, universality, and a form of political neutrality at all costs. The tension between these institutional imperatives, and the economics of supporting such endeavors, inflects my work throughout.

Given the historical importance of UNESCO and the ITI, I will begin by contextualizing these two organizations. Next, I will offer an overview of the festivals and congresses hosted by the ITI during its first two decades, emphasizing how they acted as venues for Cold War cultural politics. The introduction continues with a review of the major literature on cultural diplomacy during the era. In this section I consider the various forms of solidarity arising in international literary, theatrical, and visual arts contexts. Finally, I conclude the introduction with an outline of the project's major contribution to theatre historiography: the articulation of a progressive world theatre history, found in the archives of the TWC.

UNESCO and the ITI

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in London in 1945. A response to the barbarism of the Second World War, the organization's mission was to facilitate international cultural and educational programs that promoted "intellectual and moral solidarity."[5] As the organization's founding document stated: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."[6] Through the support of international cultural, education and scientific programs

[5] "UNESCO's History," *UNESCO* (2023) < https://www.unesco.org/en/brief#> [Last Accessed 2.20.23]

[6] Poul Duedahl, "Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945–2015," in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, ed. by Duedahl (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3-28; 3.

— and the development of subsidiary institutions working in specific sectors — UNESCO would promote mutual understanding. Such work would often focus on questions of cultural heritage, and utilize several key concepts: universalism, cultural relativism, multiculturalism, internationalization, and cultural diversity.[7]

Many of these values and programmatic concerns were passed down from UNESCO's parent organization, the United Nations. The historiography of the UN is too immense to give justice to here. Yet in this project I align myself with scholars who have in the last fifteen years considered anew the role of the UN — and by extension, UNESCO, and the ITI — as mediating institutions for the politics of Cold War, internationalism, and decolonization.[8] For Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, from this change in orientation emerges a historiography of the UN as " an amalgam of competing, or converging, universalisms — imperial and anticolonial, 'Eastern' and 'Western.'"[9] Evidence of those competing universalisms is easy to find in the procedures and politicking of decolonizing nations. From the mid-1950s onward, nations of the Third World and non-aligned movements used the UN, UNESCO, and the ITI to advance an international politics distinct from the hegemonic universalisms of the US and Soviet Union.[10]

As historian Laura Elizabeth Wong has described, in 1952 Jawaharlal Nehru served notice to the Untied Nations of the willingness among newly independent nations to exercise

---

[7] Duedahl, "Out of the House," 4.

[8] Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations," *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008) 251–274; Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2006). This as opposed to the *longue durée* and post-Enlightment historiographies that frame the UN in "civilizational" terms, or as a uniquely European legacy of humanistic universalism.

[9] Amrith and Sluga, "New Histories," 256.

[10] Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

their power in the era of decolonization by threatening the withdrawal of Asian and African nations from the UN if their concerns were not taken seriously.[11] Such international displays of intent grew in frequency and authority in the wake of the 1955 Afro-Asian conference in Bandung. This gathering of leaders from two continents, led by Nehru and Sukarno, instigated a new era of economic and cultural cooperation among the Third World. It also offered a basis for regional alignment that might rival the bipolar politics of the UN. For the United Nations' leading cultural organization, UNESCO, if it was not universal in character, its authority was non-existent. Thus, the response to rising African and Asian self-determination was to launch, in 1957, a near decade-long project on the "The Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values."[12] This influential seminar will be discussed at length in chapter one.

Founded under the UNESCO banner in 1948, the International Theatre Institute was intended to extend its parent organization's commitment to world peace through international exchange within the context of theatre and performance.[13] As Charlotte Canning has described, the ITI's founders — mostly drawn from extant organizations in France and the United States — often expressed their internationalism as "affect, rather than as a rational political argument."[14] There was a sincere belief that widening access to and education about theatre could help sustain world peace. ITI's optimism about theatre's potential role in the world was perhaps informed by UNESCO's particular conception of culture as transcendent, universal, and spiritual. As Canning

---

[11] Laura Elizabeth Wong, "Relocating East and West: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values," *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008), 349-374; 349.

[12] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 350.

[13] Charlotte Canning, *On the Performance Front: US Theatre and Internationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 156.

[14] Canning, *On the Performance Front*, 158.

notes, this vision of art "precluded the recognition of the specificity of politics…as equally essential to art."[15] UNESCO's conception of art would contribute to a definitive "culture/ politics" divide in the minds of many ITI administrators.

This politics of culture would be provincialized upon contact with opposing worldviews in the ideological terrain of the Cold War. In 1948 the ITI hosted its first World Congress in Prague, a UN-modeled gatherings of national representatives to discuss the role and development of theatre practice in their respective countries. With these meetings — which took place annually until 1951, before becoming biennial — the organization became another ground upon which the well-documented Cold War battles over aesthetics and politics were conducted, with US and Soviet state cultures jostling for influence along with their proxies.[16] Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the ITI and UNESCO would jointly organize symposia, conferences, and festivals on theatre and performing arts. The development of the East-West project exemplified a dilemma faced by the ITI, perhaps even more than UNESCO: how to incorporate the perspectives, traditions and politics of Asian, African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern peoples and nations into an organization that had since its founding been dominated by Western Europe and the United States? In this project, I see the answer to that question in the ITI's Third World Committee.

During the last ten years there has been a renewal of interest among scholars in the ITI and associated international theatre projects of the 1950s-1990s. Among the emerging literature,

---

[15] Canning, *On the Performance Front*, 166.

[16] Canning, *On the Performance Front*, 15, 173-176. For an exemplary discussion of this wider contestation over culture, see: Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002).

the most influential accounts are to be found in Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll's edited collection, *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*.[17] For them, the ITI was "the most visible representative of new forms of international cooperation amongst theatre artists, critics, and scholars" globally during the post-war period.[18] Balme and Szymanski-Düll use the term "epistemic communities" to discuss the kinds of people operating within the ITI: "networks of knowledge-based experts who advise policymakers and governments, usually on questions of scientific and technical complexity."[19] This is is an evocative descriptor for the particular class of bureaucrats and intellectuals who traversed continents attending associations and conferences via cultural diplomatic channels during this era. Yet it is worth nuancing their helpful phrase by remembering that the majority of individuals attending ITI events as national representatives were artists, with little or no prior experience as international representatives, or policy making. As such, on numerous occasions, the unruly nature of the ITI's epistemic community was evident. While the ITI's self-image as a UNESCO-sponsored organization was decidedly apolitical, artists often found themselves as the vanguard of international cultural politics, faced with decisions about how to represent themselves, their aesthetic and political interests, and their nations, on an international stage.

Balme's writing on theatrical institutions is instructive for my work here. He has described the way in which during the Cold War theatre as a form of "high culture" was sacralized internationally at the nexus of multiple institutional forms. Balme assigns these

---

[17] Christopher Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll, eds., *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[18] Balme and Szymanski-Düll, "Introduction," in *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*, 1-22; 10.

[19] Balme and Szymanski-Düll, "Introduction," 10.

institutions to multiple categories: international organizations (such as the ITI); private philanthropic foundations; "Eastern Bloc cultural policy;" international festivals "as cultural diplomacy;" and universities/educational institutions.[20] Inevitably in such sociological categorization, certain historical nuances are lost, such as the intimate connections between private philanthropic foundations and US intelligence agencies during the era in question, as described below. Nevertheless Balme offers a clarifying structure that helps me to situate the work of individual actors, or specific events, at the nexus of multiple institutional imperatives.

ITI Festivals and Congresses

As an institution, the ITI produced festivals, conferences, and congresses — in addition to supporting innumerable publications on theatre. Each ITI World Congress was an opportunity for delegates from all ITI national centers to gather in a single city to debate questions of importance to theatre workers of the world, and advance policy agendas that would receive financial support from the institution. A small number of specialist topics which the ITI was dedicated to exploring were represented on permanent committees. These included "Youth," "Education," "Study"[21] — and, eventually, "Third World." During the first decade of its existence, the ITI World Congress traversed the Cold War divides — though remaining within Europe. Congresses were organized in Prague, Zurich, Paris, Oslo, The Hague, Dubrovnik, and

---

[20] Balme, "Theatrical Institutions in Motion," 130.

[21] This was the ITI's committee dedicated to the study of emerging trends and topics of interest among global theatre makers.

Athens — taking in NATO-aligned, Warsaw Pact, militarily neutral nations, and the non-aligned Yugoslavia.[22]

As Hanna Korsberg has shown in her recent work, far from a utopian gathering of peace-loving artists, these congresses often demonstrated the manner in which the divisive politics of the time informed the politics of aesthetics. She describes the eighth congress, in Helsinki, 1959, focusing on the keynote address given by playwright Eugène Ionesco. Already established as an international representative of the "Theatre of the Absurd," Ionesco used his platform in Helsinki to argue for the avant-garde over realism — but also for a notion of artistic "freedom" staged in contrast with "propaganda theatre."[23] Korsberg recounts: "The artist," for Ionesco, "was not a pedagogue, nor a demagogue. More than anything, Ionesco stressed the freedom of the avant-garde theatre from all ideological restraints."[24] Ionesco was taking aim at a range of aesthetic targets: the realism of Chekhov and Ibsen, yes, but also the state-endorsed socialist aesthetics of the Eastern Bloc.

Ionesco's keynote prompted a "heated debate" in the hall. According to Korsberg, the rhetoric broadly fell into binary categories. East German, Soviet, Romanian and Bulgarian delegates dismissed the playwright, arguing that he was "lead[ing] the audience into despair and loneliness" in his plays.[25] Mockery followed, with Wolfgang Langhoff, intendant of the Deutches Theater, commented wryly that Ionesco's works "did not represent the 'favorite readings of the

---

[22] Hanna Korsberg, "Creating an International Community During the Cold War," in *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*, 151-163; 153.

[23] Korsberg, "Creating an International Community," 155

[24] Korsberg, "Creating an International Community," 156

[25] Korsberg, "Creating an International Community," 156

peasants of Central Europe.'"[26] Yet numerous delegates supported Ionesco's remarks: from the UK, France, Belguim, and the Finnish hosts. As Korsberg describes, the Finnish director Vivica Bandler attempted to take some of the heat out of the debate "by warning the congress representatives not to take themselves too seriously — otherwise it would be easy to guess the topic of Ionesco's next play."[27] The congress ended without a resolute stance on the avant-garde, as evidently no unified sentiment could be found. As I revisit the archives of the ITI, the Ionesco episode demonstrates the manner in which the political aesthetics of the era punctured the institutional desire for a united global cultural milieu.

Beginning with its first event in 1957, the Theatre of Nations (ToN) was the flagship festival of the ITI. If the congresses were an opportunity for artists to discuss policy and aesthetics in detail, the ToN was a grand international showcase for national theaters. Sponsored jointly by the ITI and the French cultural ministry, and led by French artistic director Jean-Louis Barrault, the event "emanated a spirit of enlightenment universality, and sought an equal focus on classics and openness to new influences and directions in and outside the West."[28] While it is true that occasional performances from outside the West were staged in Paris, it was a primarily Euro-American affair. This is of a piece with French domestic cultural policy of the time, influenced as it was by the universalism of social democratic intellectuals who had aligned

---

[26] Korsberg, "Creating an International Community," 156

[27] Korsberg, "Creating an International Community," 156

[28] Ioana Szeman, "'A Memorable French-Romanian Evening': Nationalism and the Cold War at the Theatre of Nations Festival," in *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*, 207-221; 211-212. I note that on the latter point, Szeman cites the associated founding of Peter Brook's intercultural theatre centre in Paris as evidence of Barrault's cosmopolitan vision for the ToN.

themselves with de Gaulle — most notably his minister of culture, André Malraux.[29] His central *Maisons de la Culture* policy, discussed in greater length during chapter three, was concerned with expanding access to metropolitan culture in the French provinces.

Events in May 1968 that shook the French Republic also precipitated the end of the ToN's residency in Paris. During the night of 15-16 May, protestors occupied the Odeon theatre, where the festival was due to take place, hanging a banner reading "Odéon est Ouvert" — "The Odeon is Open." Among the thousands who poured into the theatre that night were the Living Theatre's Judith Malina and Julian Beck. Student revolutionary leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit took the stage, declaring: "We must now consider this theatre, once a symbol of bourgeois and Gaullist culture, now an instrument of combat against the bourgeoisie."[30] In a historic moment, rather than seeking the immediate removal of the occupiers, Barrault joined them in the theatre. When he was publicly called out by Cohn-Bendit, Barrault took the stage, offering the following act of self-effacement in the face of the revolutionaries: "At the risk of disappointing you, I will say that I agree completely with Mr. Cohn-Bendit. Barrault has no interest in trouble; Barrault is no longer the director of this theater, but is an actor like everyone else. Barrault is dead."[31] Barrault was fired on May 22, after refusing an order from Malraux to cut the power and telephone lines to the theatre.[32] The 1968 Theatre of Nations festival was cancelled.[33]

---

[29] Jeremy Ahearne, *Intellectuals, Culture and Public Policy in France: Approaches from the Left* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 96-97.

[30] Kate Bredeson, *Occupying the Stage: The Theater of May '68* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 39.

[31] Bredeson, *Occupying the Stage*, 44.

[32] Bredeson, *Occupying the Stage*, 57.

[33] Szeman, "'A Memorable French-Romanian Evening,'" 214.

In 1969 the festival was revived, and continued in Paris until 1972, after which time it became itinerant, and gradually petered out. ToN's reputation seemed to be chastened by its proximity to French cultural policy in the wake of 1968. Simultaneously the ITI was facing up to the rising demands of Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American members whose work was so under-represented within the institution's projects. As Martha Coigney would write:

> Like many other organizations who have been slow to understand the word 'international' as meaning more than European/North American, ITI will have an enormous job in the next few years to prove to the member countries of the Third World that it can respond constructively and flexibly to their theatre demands. Asia, Africa, and Latin America have waited a long time and at great distance for more than token recognition of their contributions to world theatre. ITI is not going to be allowed to forget that inattention.[34]

In a similar vein, ITI General Secretary Jean Darcante described in a 1968 article the divide that had existed within ITI: the institutional notion that Third World artists had to be "found" by the ITI; upon which time those artists "made considerable efforts to work with us" in spite of a lack of funding from all parties.[35] These demands brought by artists previous overlooked by the organization, coinciding with the turbulence at the ToN and the end of the UNESCO project on East-West cultural values, would pave the way for the founding, in 1971, of the ITI committee on theatre in the Third World.

Recent histories of the ITI have established a historiography of the institution's founding, its political contours, and its role in the Cold War battle of ideas. Balme's scholarship offers a

---

[34] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5, 11-12.

[35] Jean Darcante, "The third world," *World Theatre/Theatre dans le Monde*, XVII, 1-2 (1968), 131.

way of thinking critically about the institutional intersections at which the ITI sat. His work has brought numerous other perspectives into the literature — reflecting the politics of the congresses and festivals mentioned above. A history of the ITI Third World committee fills a number of gaps in this nascent scholarship. Firstly, it gives substance to the occasional allusions to the place of postcolonial nations in the ITI project, and recounts a chapter in the institution's history when artists from the Global South sought to fundamentally change it. Secondly, turning to the archives of TWC festivals helps expand the historiography of theatre and performance studies as it was reformulated disciplinarily in such international gatherings. That move introduces to theatre studies a range of artists and intellectuals whose work is under-appreciated within the field. Finally, this project nuances the institution-led historiography through detailed tracking of the manner in which artists worked collaboratively across Cold War state divides to effect change within the ITI. These artists were frequently working at the nexus of Cold War politics and economics; the problems of representing one's nation within an organization that often struggled to fund its own activities.

Cold War Cultural Diplomacies

The Third World committee comprised a diverse and ever-rotating cast of cultural figures, all of whom were asked (explicitly or not) to play a cultural diplomatic role in shaping international perspectives of theatre practice. At each festival, conference, or congress, a broad range of artists and intellectuals gathered: theatre makers, visual artists, philosophers, journalists, arts administrators, curators, politicians, scientists.While gatherings under the ITI or TWC umbrellas generally celebrated and sought to advance greater international cooperation, they

commonly exhibited the strategies and tactics deployed by state institutions elsewhere in the cultural Cold War.[36]

So the question of sponsorship of international cultural events — where the money came from — is a recurring concern in this study, as it is in the deep extant literature on Cold War arts institutions. Balme and Szymanski-Düll describe how the "Cold War period saw an unprecedented expansion of public funding of the arts, especially the performing arts."[37] As I have described, the ITI as a whole was indebted to UNESCO for a block grant, but beyond that its two major sources of funding were the annual contributions given by its most politically and economically powerful members: the United States and the Soviet Union. When it came to festivals and conferences of the TWC, funding was usually provided by institutions of the host nation. Sometimes funds would be procured through a combination of public and private sources, or a combination of public entities: cultural ministries, festivals, academies of arts, and theaters. As an edition of the ITI's bimonthly magazine put it, with tongue-in-cheek:

> If one studies the ITI balance-sheets a little more closely, one notes something most surprising for our time: everything has been done, everything is being done without any money!
>
> Of course this is not true…
>
> But who pays?
>
> The National Centers, but as they too are poor, this means the governments (and, sometimes, but rarely, great foundations).

---

[36] Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War," *The Nation,* September 11, 1967.

[37] Balme and Szymanski-Düll, "Introduction," 8.

> In fact, thanks to Unesco and to the contributions of member countries, the International Theatre Institute can exist…[38]

With this in mind, when following the itinerant TWC gatherings I attend to the specific cultural politics prevailing in each host site. Wherever the TWC traveled, its members had to respond to the political conditions and cultural agenda of their sponsors. In this study, my task is to track such intersections between individual artists, institutional priorities, national politics, and the international Cold War context.

Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have developed numerous approaches to the study of cultural diplomacy during this period. In her influential *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, Penny Von Eschen charts the tours of "jazz ambassadors" from the United States across the globe. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the US State Department sponsored Black artists to travel across the Third World. In so doing, they attempted simultaneously to win "hearts and minds" through exposure to American culture, and to counter the understanding of the US as a racist state. Von Eschen's work pioneered the historiography of overt state cultural diplomatic practices during the period.[39]

Alongside research on the "cultural ambassador" role of artists in the Cold War, a breadth of scholarship on the clandestine sponsorship of international institutions and artists by US intelligence agencies has developed. In *Who Paid the Piper?* Frances Stonor Saunders recounts the way in which the CIA covertly filtered funds to artists and projects that supported a US-aligned cultural politics, via organizations like the Congress for Cultural Freedom. That history is

---

[38] Jean Darcante, "The Great Tasks," *World Theatre* (1968), 125.

[39] Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors: Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

well known, and need not be recounted here, but the influence of scholars like Saunders and Serge Guilbaut has over the last thirty years solidified a certain historiography in the study of the era.[40] The "revisionist" account of artistic movements like abstract expressionism has led to what Clare Fox calls "the fetishism of the covert" among scholars; or, to follow Harris Feinsod, an over-emphasis on "the act of exposing state support for art worlds and literary scenes that self-identified as apolitical and autonomous" as the primary objective of research on this era.[41] Such tendencies in historiography and method lead to a kind of flattening of the record, failing to account for either the particularity of agendas pursued by the diverse institutions disseminating covert funds, or the agency of individual artists and organizations that received and utilized such patronage. Fox and Feinsod offer a corrective: focusing on the agency that artists exercised as cultural diplomats.

My approach in this project recognizes that artists make their own histories, but they do not do so in circumstances of their own making. There are many instances in the history of the TWC in which Third World artists worked under the patronage of foundations known to have close connections to the US state; there were likewise occasions when such artists accepted patronage by agencies and ministries aligned with the Soviet Union. In each context this rotating group of artists traveled through, they pursued their own political agendas in relation to the particular local political, economic, and cultural conditions they encountered. Throughout, I try

---

[40] Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[41] Clare Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) 12; Harris Feinsod, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21.

to account for the nuances of the cultural work artists were being asked to do, the varying level of awareness of any broader politics at play, and artists' interest in conforming to the expectations of their patrons. Alan Schneider, artistic director of Arena Stage in Washington DC, explicitly used war-like metaphors to describe his work representing the US at ITI events abroad; Chérif Khaznadar offered public rebuttals to the aesthetics of the Berliner Ensemble when onstage there as part of the 1968 "Brecht Dialog," while simultaneously praising the DDR's interest in combining forces of the radical European and Third World theaters.

In this way, I am contributing to scholarly debates on the political aesthetics of solidarity and dissent among critical intellectuals and radical artists during the mid-late twentieth century. Adjacent to the literature on US and US-emanating projects of the cultural cold war is a growing literature on Second-Third World cultural diplomacy, and the aesthetics of socialist and anti-colonial solidarity developing from such collaborations. Much of this scholarship follows a similar line of argument to Feinsod's on literary production in the Americas: upsetting the narrative of homogenous "state sponsored" cultures in the second and third worlds, while emphasizing artists' self-conscious articulation of their own political projects in negotiation with their particular material circumstances. As Rossen Djagalov has perceptively written, "The main beneficiary of [the] competition for 'the hearts and minds' [of the Third World] were writers, who faced significantly expanded publication possibilities, and audiences throughout the three worlds, who were given greater access to those writers."[42]

---

[42] Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and Third Worlds* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2020), 11.

In this line of thinking, Vijay Prashad is an essential figure. In *Red Star over the Third World*, he argues for a restored understanding of the way in which the Russian revolution of 1917, and the foundation of the Soviet Union, offered hope to the oppressed peoples of what would become the Third World. If it was possible for a large peasant population in this sprawling nation to topple the old regimes, it would be possible to cast off the colonizers and imperialists, too.[43] Yet, far from simply a source of inspiration, the USSR would become part of the fabric of daily life for Third World nations — from Lebanon to Ghana to India — through the dissemination of Soviet culture. Books, inexpensive and attractive, would become the most immediate way in which most individuals and families in the Global South would experience that reach:

> If we could afford books, they would be lavishly illustrated Soviet children's books, then a volume or two of Tolstoy and then, finally, perhaps a few volumes of Lenin's writings… it is these books, from novels to primers in mathematics, that flooded the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America, providing precious knowledge to places that did not have the capacity to publish such a range of what became 'world literature.'[44]

For people of the global south, the Soviet project of universal literacy through mass literary production built deep affinities. Yet artists of the Third World were also the beneficiaries of Soviet cultural projects that built capacity for anti-colonial artistic movements. The most widely impactful of these was the Afro-Asian Writers' Association (AAWA). This organization had numerous elements and outputs, the most widely recognized of which today is perhaps *Lotus*, the

---

[43] Vijay Prashad, *Red Star over the Third World* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

[44] Vijay Prashad, *How the East was Read: Socialist Culture in the Third World* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2019), 13.

magazine founded in 1968 and funded through a collaboration between Egypt, the Soviet Union, the DDR.[45] Alongside the magazine was the Lotus Prize for Literature, widely considered to be an Afro-Asian competitor to the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Perhaps most relevant fora of the AAWA to our purposes here are its Writers' Congresses. Inspired by the Bandung conference of 1955, and envisioned as a literary and cultural extension of the emergent non-aligned and Third World movements, the Writers' Congresses brought together figures from the Global South, alongside Soviet artists (with a prominent place for Central Asian Soviet citizens) and dissident artists from the West. Much like the gatherings of the TWC, such Congresses were inevitably marked by the particular politics of host cities: the first (1958) was held in Tashkent, capital of the Uzbek SSR; subsequent congresses took place in Egypt, Lebanon, India, Kazakhstan, and Angola.

Djagalov asserts the dual nature of these Congresses, and the dialectical relations between the intentions of organizers and individual artists, in his discussion of Indian poet Krishnalal Shridharani's visit to the 1958 Tashkent gathering. Shridharani, Djagalov notes, "[complained] about the monotony of the speeches, not all of which had much to do with literature, [and] the hosts' insistence on passing political resolutions written well before the arrival of the delegates."[46] In Shridharani's estimation, the "real achievement" of the congress "lay not in the revolutions and planned organizational growth… but in the person-to-person contacts it enabled between Asian and African writers."[47] While Djagalov is right to quickly

---

[45] Nida Ghouse, "Lotus Notes" *ARTMargins*, 5.3 (2016), 82–91.

[46] Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 71.

[47] Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 71.

caveat Shridharani's perspective — that the majority of visiting artists were enthusiastic about, and committed to, both the political resolutions and the prospect of institution building — nevertheless the poet's candid account highlights the fact that there were always *de facto* two conferences taking place. The first, "official" conference, contained the events planned in advance by the organizers: debates, outings, readings or performances that inevitably bore the trappings of the host nation. The second, "unofficial" conference took place in *ad hoc* spaces and gatherings: over meals and other less clearly supervised encounters. While I do not wish to overstate the significance of such moments, especially in contexts like Iran and the DDR in which artists' words were always closely observed by powerful state surveillance, nevertheless there are notable accounts in the research that point to fleeting, unguarded encounters. Occasionally, official literary affinities could spawn artist-led collaborations, and for state-authorized politics to be expanded, nuanced, or challenged through inter-personal encounters.

In this history of the TWC I account for two strands of solidarity politics: those expressed through institutional organization, and through political aesthetics. In their revelatory exhibition and catalogue, *Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity, and Museums in Exile*, Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti survey the connected histories of several museums in exile and solidarity exhibitions in the Global South during the 1960s-1980s.[48] Salti and Khouri's exhibition was grounded in a historical account of two major historical exhibitions — the "International Art Exhibition for Palestine," organized by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Plastic Arts

---

[48] Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti, eds., *Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity, and Museums in Exile* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2018). I saw this exhibition at the Sursock Museum, Beirut, in summer 2018. For my review, see: Matthew Bent, "Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity and Museums in Exile," caa.reviews, *a*ccessed February 3, 2023, http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/3544#.Y91lDS-B3BI.

Section and held at Beirut Arab University in the spring of 1978, and the Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende (MIRSA) — and expanded onto a range of other international examples. MIRSA was the inciting incident for these linked histories. After Chile's 1973 coup, which removed the elected socialist government of President Salvador Allende, a group of Chilean artists and intellectuals sought to create an itinerant "museum in exile," protesting the Chilean situation. Progressive artists from around the world donated works in solidarity with the people of Chile, and in protest of the coup. The museum toured the world, including an exhibition at the Nancy theatre festival in 1977. Following MIRSA, the "International Art Exhibition for Palestine" in Beirut was organized according to similar principles: creating an exhibition of donated works by artists expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. Salti and Khouri argue that these exhibitions "are not embedded in the systems of power and patronage to which museums are traditionally beholden . . . neither are they legacies of colonialism."[49] They were not symbols of wealth and privilege, they were not coerced into national origin myths, they were not beacons of civilizational superiority.

As Caroll Yasky and Claudia Zaldívar have written, the solicitation and donation of artworks based on political commitment, and solidarity with the people of Chile or Palestine, "calls into question the hegemonic artistic system."[50] Many, if not most, of the works donated to these exhibitions had little or nothing to do with the specific struggles which called for their solicitation in terms of their "content" — even if they were otherwise "politically engaged"

---

[49] Exhibition wall text, cited in Bent, "Past Disquiet."

[50] Caroll Yasky and Claudia Zaldívar, "An Atypical Museum: The Museo de Solidaridad Salvador Allende," in *Past Disquiet* (2019), 299-315; 315.

works. Yet, the act of donating a work of art would become an aesthetic act, and a political act, specific to artists. Solidarity became an artistic gesture.

Yet, as Khouri, Salti, and many of their interlocutors point out, such gestures of solidarity by artists were frequently mediated by institutions of the state, or political parties. In the Eastern Bloc, international solidarity — particularly with Third World struggles against colonization and imperialism — was "stated creed and official policy."[51] The Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries provided material support to cultural workers from abroad to study in the USSR, and to artists fleeing war zones. Yet the experiences of artists from Eastern Europe whose work contributed to Third World solidarity projects diverged greatly. When interviewing Polish artists whose work appeared in the *International Exhibition for Palestine* in 1978, Khouri and Salti were surprised to find that several of them had no knowledge of the exhibition, or that their work had been contributed. It was state policy to collect the work of artists who supported the party and government; a state agency responsible for international artistic exchanges collected the works, then dispatched them to Lebanon unbeknownst to the artists.[52] Yet this experience is far from representative of all artists from the Eastern Bloc. The 1978 exhibition was one of many cultural exchanges, including a rich seam of collaboration between Palestinian and DDR artists. Khouri and Salti offer the particular example of Günter Rechn, whose self-portrait as a *fida'i*, painted during a visited to Lebanon, speaks of a personal, affective relationship with the Palestinian struggle which cannot be easily assimilated into narratives of official acquiescence.[53]

---

[51] Khouri and Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks and Speculative Histories: 1960s-1980s," in *Past Disquiet* (2019), 53.

[52] Khouri and Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks," 55.

[53] Khouri and Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks," 56.

As I will show in the case of the TWC, East German artists and intellectuals like Fritz Bennewitz formed deep and abiding relationships with artists from the Third World movement during a decade of official cultural diplomacy.

As the example of Rechn indicates, as well as informing institutional organization, solidarity politics also pervaded aesthetic forms during this era. Often in dialogue with the plays and methods of Bertolt Brecht — and most explicitly so when under invitation from DDR cultural institutions — artists from the TWC committed to the production of work that engaged with solidarity politics in content and form. Among the notable attendants at the 1968 "Brecht Dialog" in East Berlin (discussed in chapter one) was Syrian playwright Sa'dallah Wannous. A recent revival of interest in Wannous's work, facilitated in part by widely available English translations of his most influential works, has highlighted his significance as an anti-colonial artist. Coining the term "cross-revolutionary reading," Rebecca Johnson has focused attention on Wannous's 1968 play *Evening's Entertainment for the Fifth of June* as part of a post-'67 movement among critical Arab intellectuals towards Palestine-Vietnam solidarity aesthetics.[54] In the play, faced with a cadre of state-aligned theatre makers onstage attempting to perform a heroic-nationalist response to the military collapse of June '67, a group of "planted" spectators, placed in the auditorium by Wannous, begin to voice their dissent. As they offer scathing criticisms of the official culture, and solidarity with Palestinians, their dissent is internationalized through recourse to a comparative example: Vietnam.

---

[54] Rebecca C. Johnson, "Cross-Revolutionary Reading: Visions of Vietnam in the Transnational Arab Avant-Garde," *Comparative Literature*, 73:3 (2021), 360-381.

> Wannous's spectators in that telling moment in *An Evening's Entertainment* look neither inward nor backward. They look outward, to simultaneous geopolitical events, and read them together with internal dynamics. A discussion of "these [Arab] peasants" quickly turns to a discussion of "those other peasants . . . the Vietnamese," who while they are "a world away" are also engaged in a common struggle against imperialism. Seeing Palestine and Vietnam together forms not only the political content of the work, but also presents its aesthetic innovation. It is a play so explicitly concerned with how to represent the new political reality that this is its very plot: a director cannot put on a play because he cannot figure out how to "represent the current moment." The spectators "explode in conversation" and "begin discussing [the comparison to Vietnam] in an uncontrolled manner."[55]

It has been well documented that Wannous's political development was informed not only by the events of June '67, but also by his presence in Paris during the events of May '68, while he was studying at the Sorbonne.[56] Yet less well understood is the influence of his attendance at the Brecht Dialog in February 1968.[57] At this international gathering in East Berlin, solidarity with Vietnam was a frequent refrain: with a blood drive for the Vietcong, a discussion

---

[55] Johnson, "Cross-Revolutionary Reading," 361-362. The Wannous quotes under discussion by Johnson can be found in: Sa'dallah Wannous, "An Evening's Entertainment for the Fifth of June," in *Sentence to Hope: A Sa'dallah Wannous Reader*, ed. by Robert Myers and Nada Saab (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 5-119; 88, 87.

[56] Faisal Adel Hamadah, "Travelling Theatre: Saadallah Wannous's Journeys between the Local and the International," *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (2019), 305-317.

[57] There is more research to be done in order to better understand Wannous's experience at the 1968 DDR event. His presence in East Berlin is briefly discussed in a recent book chapter, but with scant detail beyond his apparent fascination with the BE — manifest through the vast collection of programs from the company's productions he collected during his time in Berlin, now housed as part of the Wannous archive at the American University of Beirut. See: Robert Myers and Nada Saab, "Wannous and Brecht: The Playwright as Political Activist," in *The Theatre of Sa'dallah Wannous: A Critical Study of the Syrian Playwright and Public Intellectual*, ed. by Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and Robert Myers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 34-56.

of *Mother Courage* in light of the war, and a rousing closing speech by Wannous's Syrian colleague, Chérif Khaznadar, in which he exhorted his fellow artists to connect Brecht's legacy to the present fight against imperialism. Furthermore, as the event's title suggests, the Berlin gathering offered an attempt to propagate an interest not only in Brecht's plays — which already enjoyed broad popularity around the world, including in the Third World — but his dialectical, dialogic methods. Wannous's subsequent career would be characterized by a "thirst for dialogue," to borrow the title of his ITI World Theatre Day address in 1996.[58] While it is not straightforward (or necessarily desirable) to designate the Berlin conference as the root of Wannous's inspiration, nevertheless his solidarity aesthetics post-67 are the work of an artist pursuing his own agenda, within the particular conditions of Second-Third World state-subsidized institutional collaborations of the time.

The examples of Wannous and Khaznadar indicate the extent to which the East German state utilized already-existing affinities between Third World artists and European socialist theatre aesthetics to establish an influence over a nascent movement. Wannous would return to the DDR in 1973 when the National Theatre in Weimar staged a production of his play, *The Adventure of the Head of Mamlouk Jabir*.[59] The director of the Weimar theatre, Fritz Bennewitz, would become integral to the TWC before continuing a highly international career through the 1980s.[60] While the TWC hosted conferences and festivals in numerous nations aligned with the

---

[58] Wannous, "A Thirst for Dialogue," in *Sentence to Hope*, 387-390.

[59] Wannous, "On the Performance of *The Adventure of the Head of Mamlouk Jabir* in Moscow," in *Sentence to Hope*, 395-402.

[60] Joerg Esleben, *Fritz Bennewitz in India: Intercultural Theatre with Brecht and Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

West during the Cold War, in the events hosted by the DDR there was a more concerted effort to define a new aesthetics of Third World theatre than anywhere else.

Towards a History of Progressive World Theatre

The most substantial contribution offered by this dissertation to existing scholarship is in the historiography of modernist and avant-garde theatre. Through its international and institutional dimensions, this project expands recent debates over the history of the avant-garde initiated by James Harding, as well as histories of radical popular theatre. Finally, I seek to politicize debates over the idea of world theatre: as a way of organizing historical artistic forms, an aesthetic form linked to the intercultural theatre movement, and a pedagogical short-hand in the Anglophone academy. Taking a coinage from one of my historical interlocutors as a starting point, through this project I offer the first draft of a history of progressive world theatre.

In his seminal 1988 book *Radical People's Theatre* (RPT), one of the major reasons Eugène van Erven offers for the decline of post-1968 popular theatre was that "a conscious international… movement was never properly organized."[61] Rather, the popular theaters documented by van Erven — a broad range, from the San Francisco Mime Troupe, to Els Joglars and 7:84 Theatre Company — were largely concerned with national issues, and local audiences. RPTs shunned the major playhouses and state-subsidized theaters of the post-war European welfare state (dismissed as hopelessly bourgeois, or politically compromised); preferring to make and present work in much closer proximity to the peasant or proletarian audiences targeted. Their

---

[61] Eugène van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 188.

work was also often collaboratively produced.[62] Such companies drew upon the major concepts of the 1968 uprisings, found in Marcuse, Mao, and Gramsci: a Marxist humanism exhausted and alienated by life under capitalist modernity; the impulse for artists and intellectuals to live among the workers; and the need to build institutions of a working class counter-hegemony.[63] The politics of 1968 were transnational — and many RPTs would present their work at international festivals — nevertheless, these companies spawned few international collaborations. While making an allowance for the way in which the Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA) bucked that trend, nevertheless van Erven laments the lack of "cooperative links interregional and internationally."[64]

One of my intentions in this project is to expand upon the understanding van Erven gives us, and demonstrate how artists used organizations like the TWC to navigate a path through international and state-sponsored institutions and establish exactly such a network of radical theatre makers. The coalition existed, but only a fraction of its membership came from the Western European and North American scenes surveyed by van Erven. My historical research offers a corrective not only to van Erven, but also to the current understanding of "world theatre" — whether conceived as a historical, "family of man" assemblage of national or regional performance traditions, or a unified Brookian aesthetic sensibility — through recourse to archives of Third World artistic collaboration.

---

[62] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre,* 173-182.

[63] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 19-22.

[64] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 188. Van Erven concludes his book with PETA for several reasons. *Radical People's Theatre* as a study is confined to Western European and North American examples. Learning about, and witnessing, the work of PETA helped him to recognize the limitations of the Western scene he'd been studying, and subsequently spawned a second book on theatre in Asia which the PETA-focused conclusion foreshadows: Eugène van Erven, *The Playful Revolution: Theatre and Liberation in Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

Historically, world theatre was a universal, anthologizing aesthetic and scholarly project. As mentioned, the Theatre of Nations festival was an "international, universal" festival founded in 1957 and housed in Paris for the first fifteen years of its existence as the flagship event in the ITI calendar.[65] From the early 1970s, the festival became itinerant, and its frequency decreased. Yet this was not the only channel through which the ITI constructed the idea of world theatre in its own image.

World Theatre (*Théâtre dans le monde*), was also the name of the ITI's bimonthly magazine during the 1950s and 1960s. As the "mouth-piece" of the organization, it represented the interests of ITI member states through the publication of articles on specific theatres, and international trends; bibliographies; accounts of ITI events, including World Theatre Day;[66] lists of member states with contact information; as well as communiques from UNESCO and the ITI secretariat. Finally, it included a section on world premieres, helping members to stay abreast of new productions internationally — with quotes pulled from reviews in the national press.

To take a representative example of the magazine's content: the double issue at the beginning of the year 1968 was compiled to commemorate the ITI's twentieth anniversary. This special edition included commissioned articles on how dramatic trends, scenography, directors, and audiences had changed over the twenty years of the organization's existence. While allowing for occasional acknowledgement of works that had toured to Europe from Africa, Latin America, or Asia, the essays reflected the European core of ITI organizing over its first two decades.

---

[65] "Theatre of Nations," International Theatre Institute, accessed February 13, 2023, https://www.iti-worldwide.org/theatreofnations.html.

[66] An annual international celebration of theatre, held on March 27. Initiated by the ITI in 1962, authors of the annual World Theatre Day message during its first two decades included Jean Cocteau (1962), Helene Weigel (1967), Peter Brook (1969), Pablo Neruda (1971), and Ellen Stewart (1975).

So, the *World Theatre* survey of the ITI's first two decades reads like familiar documents of European drama during this era. In his beautifully-illustrated essay on "Major Dramatic Trends, 1948-1968," Adam Tarn walks the reader through a detailed account of Absurdist, Epic, "Paradox and Protest,"[67] and Theatre of Cruelty trajectories across the continent.[68] Similarly, Denis Bablet and Ossia Trilling's surveys of scenography and directing practices, respectively, are nuanced accounts relating formal innovations to socio-economic questions.[69] With infrequent exceptions, their inquiries are limited to practices in Europe, whether eastern or western. Finally, Günter Schulz's "The Audience" abandons any hope of broad representativeness in its near-exclusive focus on audiences in East and West Germany.[70] These comments are not intended to condemn the authors in question. Quite the opposite, their writing on theatre is highly informed and sophisticated; deserving of more space than I can grant here. Rather, my intention in glossing their work is to demonstrate the distance the ITI as an institution still needed to travel to approach a "world theatre" deserving of that name in 1968.

During the 1960s-1980s, the world theatre label was also applied to a distinct genre of avant-garde performance — often coterminous with the "intercultural" theatre movement and finding inspiration in the the "broad spectrum" of performance theorized by Richard Schechner.[71] This genre of performance took the anthologizing, neo-orientalist logic of scholarly-

---

[67] This term, now no longer in use, referred to a broad sociological categorization of playwrights protesting traditional social forms during the 1950s and early 1960s. The coinage seems to come from: George E. Wellwarth, *Theatre of Protest and Paradox* (New York: NYU Press, 1964).

[68] Adam Tarn, "Major Dramatic Trends, 1948-1968," *World Theatre* (1968), 9-34.

[69] Denis Bablet, "Twenty Years of Scenography," *World Theatre* (1968), 35-58; Ossia Trilling, "Directors Who've Set the Pace," *World Theatre* (1968), 59-88.

[70] Günter Schulz, "The Audience," *World Theatre* (1968), 89-105.

[71] Richard Schechner, "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach," *TDR*, 32.2 (1988), 4-6.

institutional world theatre as a starting point. Namely: the nations of the world had their own distinct traditions of performance, with aesthetic and training particularities that spoke to the distinct national character of the place of origin.[72] Yet, the world theatre artists believed that there was also an inner spiritual unity among all performance traditions: a capacity for non-verbal communication that, if systematically explored, could form the basis of an intercultural communion that transcended language and politics.[73]

World theatre as genre or form can be found in the influential axis of theory and practice associated with Schechner, ritual anthropologist Victor Turner, and theatre director Peter Brook — commonly associated with the 1980s, but emergent during the two preceding decades. In 1985, Schechner published *Between Theater and Anthropology*, with a foreword by Turner, which reflects upon the disciplinary shifts to traditional theatre studies and anthropology enacted by the turn towards performance. Turner writes:

> Anthropologists are more concerned with stasis than with dynamis, with texts, institutions, types, protocols, "wiring," custom, and so on than with the how of performance, the shifting, evanescent, yet sometimes utterly memorable relationships that develop unpredictably among actors, audience, text, and… other situational variables.[74]

---

[72] Aamir Mufti, *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[73] Peter Brook was so fixed on the idea of a unified theatrical language that he and poet Ted Hughes invented their own, new language for the performance of *Orghast* in Perspepolis in 1971. See: Margaret Croydon, "Peter Brook Learns to Speak Orghast," *The New York Times,* October 3, 1971; For Ellen Stewart, theatre at LaMaMa was a search for a visceral experience of the art form's universal language, "love": DukeLibDigitalColl, "Barbaralee Diamonstein and... Ellen Stewart, 1979," Youtube, accessed February 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-UXtsrGZxo. See also the commentary in Katherine Arens, "Robert Wilson: Is Postmodern Performance Possible?," *Theatre Journal* 43.1 (1991), 14-40; 29.

[74] Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), xii.

In the expansion of the field of theatre studies, Schechner identifies a number of key concepts. Most important for my work here are the ideas of "is/as performance" — where events are considered as something which self-evidently "is" performance, or which can be seen "as" performance for the purpose of scholarly legibility and study — and the linked concept of the "broad spectrum" of performance. The broad spectrum "can be depicted as a continuum with each category leading to, and blending into, the next. There are no clear boundaries separating everyday life from family and social roles or social roles from job roles, church ritual from trance, acting onstage from acting offstage, and so on."[75] Seen in this way, much of human action could be seen *as performance* — and, through the expansion of the theatrical metaphor, could be seen as presentational, with rehearsal times, diverse audiences in varying locales with multiple efficacies.

In the well-known opening lines from Brook's 1968 book *The Empty Space*, he offers a definition of theatrical practice resonant with the theses of Turner and Schechner: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged."[76] For Brook, this concentrated conception of the practice of theatre — the requirements for which are simply a spectator-performer relationship, and a single action — would be the work of engaging the "broad spectrum" and reducing it to a universal vocabulary of performance. Recalling Schechner, any empty space may be seen *as* a bare stage; a person walking across the space while watched

---

[75] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 171.

[76] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968; New York: Atheneum, 1983), 9.

by another can be seen *as* theatre. Simultaneously any object or gestural practice from another culture may also, for Brook, be seen as a part of his theatrical language.

In *Between Theater and Anthropology*, Schechner identifies Brook, through his work with the International Center for Theater Research, as an artist operating in the space between the two disciplines. That said, while Schechner had been a vocal champion of Brook's work for much of his career, here, regarding Brook's travels in Iran and West Africa, Schechner expresses scepticism about the nature of the artist's engagements. After quoting Brook, he writes: "But were there actual exchanges? Or was the trip more a chance for Brook's group to explore improvisatory acting techniques while enjoying local hospitality?"[77] A further excursion through Brook's engagement with world theatre in Iran may be instructive here.

In Iran, the Pahlavi state's interest in supporting ta'ziyeh as a form of apolitical national culture coincided neatly with the neo-orientalist revival among Western artists and theatre-anthropologists seeking sources for the renewal of their theatrical practice. It is well known that Brook was among the European theatre makers to have traveled to Iran several times during this period, and that he took a particular interest in ta'ziyeh as a form. Brook's notebook from his 1969 trip to Iran makes for a remarkable account of the relationship between experimental theatre artists and the Pahlavi state. His writing is imbued with the breathy excitement of the travel author's mock-ordeal:

> When I was told that something called a ta'ziyeh was being performed, the word had meant nothing to me, when they said that it was officially forbidden and foreigners were told such performances did not exist, it became interesting, when they said that we could

[77] Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology,* 26-27.

> only find our way because a young actor whose home was in the region had offered to be our guide, it became fascinating…[78]

For the most part Brook's account of the ta'ziyeh reads like a Geertzian thick description. Brook spends many pages describing the space, the "villagers" around him, the musicians, and the gestures of those performing. He fixates on the circular layout of the space — a "ring of humanity" — and the way this meant his small group of outsiders were brought "close to the heart of an event of an alien culture." Having recounted his experience of the ta'ziyeh at length, the director describes how a subsequent presentation was interrupted by a police officer, who accused Brook and others of being spies, and arrested several residents of the village. Brook claims he was flown to Tehran and taken to see the Shah personally, to whom the director protested directly about the sorry state of ta'ziyeh in Iran:

> The Shah frowned. 'But I don't understand,' he said 'The Ta'zieh is not banned.' I was accompanied by Iranians who had difficulty in concealing their joy. Of course, they explained, the Shah was lying through his teeth. But as the Shah cannot lie, by the time he had finished his sentence history was already rewritten… The Ta'zieh was free.[79]

Brook narrates himself as the benevolent architect of ta'ziyeh's late-Pahlavi revival. The British director pictures himself speaking truth to an authoritarian ruler, who sets the tradition "free" out of a seeming-sense of social embarrassment, while anonymous locals gleefully look on from the background. "Thereafter," the decision was made to include ta'ziyeh in the 1970 Shiraz festival,

---

[78] Orange notebook about his trip to Iran, ca.1971. Peter Brook Collection. V&A Theatre and Performance Collections. GB 71 THM/452/12/1/6.

[79] Orange notebook about his trip to Iran, ca.1971. Peter Brook Collection.

a decision Brook decries for the way it would sully the authenticity of the tradition.[80] While Brook's diary is illuminating for its description of this embrace of ta'ziyeh, equally interesting is the particular stance of the director-anthropologist: at once imbued with a imperial savior mentality toward "tradition," a magpie-like proclivity towards formal particularities (the "ring of humanity" that would become a recurring trope in his work), and a haughty disregard for so many of the Iranian people he encounters. In Brook's account I see a nascent iteration of the framing of ta'ziyeh as the traditional, national art of Iran within a "world republic of performance" by those versed in the language of theatre anthropology.[81] By proclaiming ta'ziyeh — alongside forms like *naqqali* and *ru-howzi* — to be the Pahlavi national forms of cultural expression, they could be understood legibly as forms of world theatre - and thus part of a bourgeois-cosmopolitan family of nations.

The year after Brook's visit, the theme of the 1970 Shiraz Festival was indeed "Ritual and Theatre." A debate was a held on the subject of "Eastern and Western" theatre through the prism of ritual, involving Farrokh Ghaffary, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Nuria Espert, Arby Ovanessian and the critics Raymonde Temkine and Erika Munk - who had recently spent a year as editor of *The Drama Review*, after succeeding Richard Schechner. The lead catalogue essay was contributed by the scholar, playwright and film maker Bahram Beyzai, whose *Namayesh dar Iran* (*Theatre in Iran*), published in 1965, would become a cornerstone of Persian-language scholarship on theatre. In his Shiraz essay, Beyzai sets up a dichotomy between what is understood as "ritual" (*A'yin*; the religious, ritual) and the theatre of speech, dialogue, the

---

[80] Apparently unbeknownst to Brook, there had been a ta'ziyeh performance at the first Shiraz Arts Festival, in 1967.

[81] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

everyday. While not making recourse to a particular historical context, he thinks of the place of ritual as a premodern phenomenon — as an expression of "the entire ideology of the tribe" — with modern drama set up as its other.[82] The aim of ritual was "limitless [metaphysical] expression," and a "spiritual elevation" through its aesthetic deployment of repetition, in particular. Beyzaie implies that with the European Enlightenment, and the "development of man as the center of the universe," theatre as a single form or offshoot of ritual practices came to occupy a narrowly analytic social function. While this narrative suggests a Euro-centric, centre-periphery emanation, nonetheless as Beyzai's history approaches the present he posits a joint analytic field between West and East. He writes: "The desire to transcend one's own being, the desire for sublimation through something beyond oneself is a hopeless struggle that constitutes the life of modern man." Here Beyzai gives philosophical depth the ideas of world theatre practitioners: seeing an existential alienation in "modern man," to be remedied through a return to the spirit. That desire for a transcendent shared experience took particular form in Shiraz through the embrace of ta'ziyeh-as-ritual; ta'ziyeh-as-world theatre.

As Rustom Bharucha has often pointed out in his critiques of Brook, the director's pseudo-anthropologism manifests in a theatrical practice of "world theatre" in which formal elements (like texts, as in the example of *The Conference of the Birds*) are borrowed with little regard for their origins. Perhaps just as alarming for Bharucha is his "mimicry" of tropes which have no origin. Bharucha refers to Brook's ostensible process of experimentation with oral

---

[82] Bahram Beyzaie, "Darbareh-e Namayesh-e A'yini/Ritual Theatre," in *Chaharomin Jashn-e Honar-e Shiraz* (1970) [unpaginated].

techniques as a "primordializing" use of "non-verbal babble"[83] to imitate generic ritualized sounds. To this end, Brook and the British poet Ted Hughes went so far as to invent an entire language for their work in Iran for the 1971 Shiraz Festival, *Orghast* — all the while using co-director Arby Ovanessian as a translator to communicate with the Iranian performers because nobody else in the director's team spoke Persian.[84] Brook suggests he is looking for a "pure" language of theatre, in which formal elements are reduced to their essence. Yet, "in comparison with other languages", he suggests, French and English — the two languages Brook speaks — come closest to such purity.[85]

In the work of Brook and his contemporaries, world theatre was a genre of performance that emerged from a particular kind of theatrical contact, commonly referred to as "intercultural." Subsequent generations of scholars have historicized this interculturalism. In retelling the history of the TWC I hope to offer a distinct, alternative history of theatrical contact.

In their groundbreaking edited collection *Not the Other Avant-Garde*, James Harding and John Rouse established a historiographical shift in the study of avant-garde theatre and performance that has proven immensely generative. In particular, Harding's essay "From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges" initiated a reorientation of the way scholars in the Euro-American academy thought about the emergence of avant-garde or intercultural performance practices in moments of (neo-)colonial encounter. As Harding suggests in that piece, the history of the "European" avant-garde is the history of such moments: Artaud and the Balinese dancers, the

---

[83] Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Intercultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 2.

[84] A. C. H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 71.

[85] Margaret Croyden, *Conversations with Peter Brook: 1970-2000* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2003), 179-180.

"Primitivism" of Picasso, Brook in Iran. In spite of this fact, Harding states, in the classical scholarship on the avant-garde it has been a "matter of scholarly convention to locate the foundations of avant-garde expression subsequent to the moments of intercultural exchange rather than in the exchanges themselves."[86]

By reorienting the historiography of the avant-garde toward these "rough edges" (rather than the "cutting edge" which imagines a border of European influence expanding from center to periphery) he re-envisions the avant-garde as a "plurality of edges devoid of an identifiable center."[87] What Harding offers is a dual model of theatrical contact that endures in much contemporary thinking on modernist and avant-garde theatre history: an attention to a previously unseen plurality of simultaneously developing "global" practices, as well as a critical attention to particular moments of intercultural "hybridity" — whether the product of appropriation, collaboration, or some combination of the two — from which forms of art heretofore considered canonical emerged.

For a project that attends to the significance of Brecht to the Third World theatre movement, it is important to recognize the way in which the playwright's own appropriations fit the pattern described by Harding. Much like Artaud, a spectatorial experience with an "Eastern" performance form served as inspiration for the innovation of Brecht's aesthetic. That experience was in the Soviet Union, where the playwright attended performances and demonstrations by the Chinese actor Mei Lanfang — an experience that directly informed Brecht's subsequent

---

[86] James M. Harding, "From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges: On the Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance," in Harding and John Rouse, eds., *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 18-40; 23.

[87] Harding, "From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges," 24.

articulation of the *verfremdungseffekt* ("distancing," or "alienation" effect). As theatre scholar Min Tian has written: "in Brecht's interpretation, Chinese acting was clearly displaced, refunctioned, and used as a means to valorize and legitimize Brecht's own theoretical desires, investments, and projections."[88] This face of Brecht is elided from view in the documentation I consulted for this research: both in terms of the TWC artists who staged and discussed his plays, but also in the institutionalized discourse of "Brecht-as-anti-imperialist" propagated in DDR venues. Brecht was, of course, both: an artist who liberally theorized around cultural forms from China that he had little exposure to, and an artist whose politics may be described as anti-imperialist.

While James Harding has drawn scholars' attention to the rough edges, rather than the cutting edge, I contend that his theory of the avant-garde gives insufficient attention to the globally dispersed institutional contexts of such intercultural contact. Attending to the historical gatherings of artists in the ITI, I wish to shift the historiographical focus toward what I see as the specifically institutional foundations of international avant-garde performance. During the cultural Cold War, the TWC was committed to the proliferation of theatrical "rough edges" in the name of Second-Third World solidarity. Establishing a historiography of *progressive* world theatre, I work through a dialectic familiar to scholars of Cold War cultural diplomatic art: between the ways in which individual artists and intellectuals operated within national and international institutions; and the ways in which those institutions sought to use artists' work toward their own political ends.

---

[88] Min Tian, *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 213.

Progressive world theatre supplants the intercultural as an organizing historical concept in this project. The origin story of intercultural theatre described above coincides historically with the articulation of a progressive world theatre within the TWC. Yet, given the lack of scholarly attention to the ITI until very recently, the story of the TWC has not yet been told. Attending to the history of the TWC reframes the place of Third World artists in English-language avant-garde and modernist theatre and performance studies. Artists affiliated with Third World politics formed a coalition with peers from the capitalist and socialist nations constructed around solidarity, mutual affinity, and self-autonomy. While the artists of the intercultural movement were seeking a universal language of cultural essence through theatrical means, the TWC were constructing an international theatre committed to the Third World as a political "project," rather than as a "place."[89]

If such a movement had a name, it was the progressive world theatre. Retaining the global ambitions of the "world theatre" formulation, but aligned with a shifting configuration of democratic socialist, anti-colonial, liberal, and communist elements, the TWC built an international coalition of theatre workers. I have adapted this coinage from Fritz Bennewitz, artistic director of the East German National Theater in Weimar. Reflecting on the work of the TWC, Bennewitz stated at the committee's 1976 gathering in the DDR: "with all historical, cultural and social differences and peculiarities, we are moving towards a united, progressive world culture in which a creative dialectic between the national and the international reveals

---

[89] Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 1.

itself."[90] This political coalition-thinking marked a departure from the apolitical stance promoted by the ITI.

Brecht was a point of reference for many of these artists because of his use of the dialectical method, seen as an instrument in the struggle against both capitalism and imperialism. The unification of those struggles in artistic practice could produce the promised progressive world theatre. While I am mindful of the extent to which Brecht's centrality in the literature of the TWC was bolstered DDR institutions, those institutions were taking advantage of already-existing "affinities from afar" in the Third World.[91] As Lebanese playwright Jalal Khoury would later reflect:

> Brecht became for a whole generation of authors and directors, the model to follow and the master of thought. The class struggle which, since Piscator and the syndicalist Volksbühne in Berlin, underpinned European militant dramatic production, became, in the countries of the Third World, the doctrine and aesthetics of national liberation movements.[92]

Among leftist artists the interest in Brecht was already there — the work of cultural diplomacy was to give it organizational shape. Nevertheless, I hope it will become apparent that the Third World Committee represented numerous political and aesthetic approaches to theatre practice.

---

[90] "Discussion," in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality,* 74.

[91] I owe this phrase to Rossen Djagalov.

[92] Jalal Khoury, "Le texte dramatique contemporain entre l'Orient et l'Occident," in *Textes Dramatiques d'Orient et d'Occident: 1968-2008*, ed. by Carole Egger, Isabelle Reck, and Edgard Weber (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2012), 13-20.

Even those most invested in Epic Theatre were simultaneously moving beyond the confines of the German playwright's oeuvre.

Between its myriad national festivals and conferences, the TWC defined "progressive world theatre" over the course of a decade. It was both an aesthetic and institutional formation. Artistically, its agenda was multifaceted: concerned with the politics of translation, adaptation, and the translatability of the class idiom as a starting point for progressive politics; the dialectical method, both in artistic production and between the national/international as a means to stave off nationalist essentialism; the political and aesthetic utility of traditional or "folk" forms; and the ongoing enunciation of material and historical connections between anti-bourgeois and anti-imperial culture. Much like the visual artists of the era discussed here, many theatre makers of the TWC were also interested in using art as a vehicle for solidarity: using the resources provided by large institutions, in negotiation with varying national politics, to build an international artists' coalition.

Institutionally, the TWC likewise had a wide-ranging and ever-evolving agenda. Its artists sought an inclusive, transnational definition of the Third World and its peoples that cut across stark Cold War distinctions between capitalist and communist nations. Furthermore, given the manner in which European nations had dominated the ITI hierarchy during its first two decades, and in recognition of the extent to which Third World artists were helping the ITI to achieve its UNESCO-mandated universal remit, the TWC demanded the institution's leaders become more democratically accountable, with greater representation for African, Asian, and Latin American representations on its Executive Committee. In order to empower artists from the Third World,

the European and North American administrators at the top of the ITI would need to relinquish much of their entrenched influence.

I revisit the story of the TWC, and the progressive world theatre its members shaped, to expand not only van Erven's historiography, but that of the discipline of theatre and performance studies. As an interdisciplinary formation, theatre and performance studies has multiple points of origin. Much of today's scholarship is the legacy of the performance theories and ethnographies emanating from New York University or Northwestern University during the 1980s, and/or the theoretical legacies of the "New Theatre" emergent in New York City during the late 1960s-early 1970s. Its historiographies are largely nation-based — or city-based.[93] The archives of the TWC expand that historiography, revealing the importance of international festivals as venues in which dramatic theory was debated among artists and intellectuals of the Global South in ways that have not previously been accounted for.

It is my hope that retelling the story of the TWC informs the work of today's artist-activists committed to remaking theatre practice, and the theatre industry. TWC artists committed to using art as an instrument of social change, with an emphasis on solidarity politics. They also developed and attempted to implement a wide range of institutional demands for equitable representation, access to resources, and greater freedom of expression. Their collaborations may serve as inspiration for a rising generation of theatre artists attempting to transform the industry.

---

[93] Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and James M. Harding and Cindy Rosenthal, eds., *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

1. For a Third World Theatre

1957-1966: UNESCO Projects of Mutual Understanding

While the Third World Theatre committee was first proposed as an addition to the International Theatre Institute at its London World Congress in 1971, it has a pre-history dating back to the 1960s. This history has two clear trajectories: one focusing on East-West cultural exchanges, the second on histories of theatre and cinema in the Arab world. Both would come to espouse distinct forms of universalist politics: the former cultivating the kind of international ideology of "Man" with distinct national characters, born out of discrete civilizations, engaging in dialogue over the seeming-perennial questions of tradition and modernity. From the latter focus on Arab theatre and cinema would emerge — arguably in the wake of the shocking 1967 military defeat and loss of territories to Israel, and the death knell it sounded for heroic Arab nationalism in the Nasserist vein — a dialectical universalist politics bridging First, Second, and Third Worlds.

The East-West trend stemmed from a major UNESCO project on "Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values."[94] Its culturalist agenda posited two hermetic global spheres: an aesthetico-spiritual East — distinct from the unacknowledged political East — whose cultural production was primarily framed in terms of an abiding tension between "tradition" and "modernity." That tension contrasted with the assumed stability of the West. As Laura Elizabeth Wong has described, such binary thinking has a long history, and had been a feature of UNESCO

---

[94] "Letter from Donald Oenslager to Martha Geese, Program Officer, Division for Americans Abroad, Department of State, December 11, 1963," (NYPL, Coigney Collection, Box 7-1, Folder 5).

debates since its founding. Whether due to perceived civilizational differences grounded in religion, or in a West-materialist and East-spiritualist binary, critics and supporters of UNESCO alike often shared this bifurcated worldview.[95]

Multiple ITI-sponsored symposia and conferences took place under this rubric during the 1960s: in Tokyo (1963), Paris (1964), Casablanca and New Delhi (1966), and Beirut (1969).[96] Generally these followed a particular format, with national representatives entrusted to survey trends in their homelands. The program from the 1966 "East West Theatre Seminar and Theater Arts Festival" in New Delhi attests to the way in which the civilizational discourse was largely framed by intellectuals and cultural administrators from Europe. Breaking down the ITI national membership by continent, as of 1966 there were twenty-five European members, eleven from Latin America, five from Asia, and just three from Africa.[97] While this particular seminar would be dominated by representatives from India, nevertheless when it came to the organization and allocation of funds to events relating to the Third World, this was done almost exclusively without the input of representatives from those nations.

The East-West project would focus on myriad subjects. Cultural forms under consideration via conferences and publishing projects included: supporting the production of more accurate and expansive textbooks; discussing cultural representations in mass media; and

---

[95] Laura Elizabeth Wong, "Cultural Agency: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1957-1966" (PhD Dissertation: Harvard University, 2006), 17-18; 100.

[96] The latter seminar in Beirut occurred after the official end of the "East-West" program in 1967, yet nevertheless was framed in similar terms.

[97] In addition to two from North America, and one from Australasia. The five Asia nations represented were India, Iran, Israel, Japan, and South Korea; the three African nations were Congo (Brazzaville), South Africa, and the United Arab Republic. See: Reoti Saran Sharma, ed., *East-West Theatre Seminar and Festival* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Natya Sangh/International Theatre Institute, 1966), [unpaginated].

the performing arts.[98] In Wong's analysis, the project may be considered a success by addressing in the international cultural sphere the immediate political dilemma from which it sprung: the challenge posed to the UN by the emergent Third World movement that found its voice in Bandung. She writes: "The processes of redefinition that the UNESCO project fostered were part of a new dynamic in cultural politics stemming from growing consciousness of the ways in which the definition of other, be they classed as either Eastern or Western, had been shaped by the colonial experience."[99] From a bipolar institutional context which lacked the apparatus through which to accommodate dialogue on Asia and Africa, the "cultural values" project created space for an active Third World presence.

Yet there were numerous issues at the heart of the East-West project that served to both dull the politics Nehru gave voice to in 1952 and limit the ultimate extent of mutual understanding. First was the issue of "explaining" cultural particularity within the course of what were often fleeting exchanges: "the opportunity to present cultural values at an intergovernmental level quite naturally invited generalizations and simplifications that often overlooked minority cultures and tensions surrounding the formulation of values in order to arrive at a framework of national cultural values convenient to the purposes of exchange."[100] Lacking a regular meeting of the same representatives, it was not easy to establish ongoing, continuous dialogue. Furthermore, the question of what exactly was meant by "cultural values" and "East/West" were deliberately left ambiguous, to avoid potential sites of political conflict.

---

[98] Wong, "Cultural Agency," 3-4.

[99] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 373.

[100] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 356.

The declaration that announced the launch of the East-West project comes closest to a definition of cultural values, but still falls short. Most relevant to my work here is its emphasis on: "the arts and literature… as a means of expressing a nation's innermost aspirations."[101] So, the ambiguity around the meaning of cultural values is left intact, but future participants should know to look at (national) arts and literature as a place to find them. Finally, the framing of East/West — used interchangeably in this context with "Orient/Occident" — invited binary associations of spiritual/secular, traditional/modern, pre-industrial/industrial, to flourish.[102] So, while Wong rightly asserts that the project successfully folded numerous Third World nations into the work of UNESCO, nevertheless the project retained both an apolitical definition of culture and essentialist concepts of nation and civilization.

Numerous theatre-specific seminars occurred under this rubric in Tokyo, Paris, Casablanca and New Delhi. Such exchanges followed the pattern outlined above. Theatrical leaders from nations of the East and West would give presentations on theatrical traditions, and the state of theatre development in their home nations. These would be followed by group discussions. Oftentimes the subject of particular talks would highlight "exchange" of a kind — though largely concerning the performance of plays by a European playwright (read: Shakespeare and Brecht) by Asian companies.[103] While offering the promise of intercultural dialogue, the Paris and Tokyo gatherings exhibited the aforementioned issues by gathering unfamiliar artists to give national survey reports in state-sponsored surroundings. However, the

---

[101] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 360.

[102] Wong, "Relocating East and West," 356.

[103] *East West Seminar Report: June 1-6, 1964* (Paris: International Theatre Institute, 1964).

final gathering that took place before the dissolution of the UNESCO East-West project in 1967 would offer avenues forward.

The 1966 "East West Theatre Seminar and Theatre Arts Festival" hosted in New Delhi was framed around the unifying concept of "Total Theatre."[104] Taking its cues from Antonin Artaud as a European theatre artist who found "inspiration" in the East, nevertheless the participants held diverse aesthetic interests. There was of course a large contingent of theatre makers from India. This included leftist directors Ebrahim Alkazi and Sombhu Mitra. Western delegations included British director Joan Littlewood, Berliner Ensemble alum and dramaturg Käthe Rülicke-Weiler, and actor John Houseman.[105] This representative sampling suggests that those gathered may have been more at home discussing Brecht than Artaud, and it is notable that the set of three, page-long resolutions that conclude the conference publication are more politically committed and internationalist than previous events under the UNESCO cultural values project.

The first resolution was entitled "On Total Theatre and Tasks Before the Theatre Movement." Much of the resolution's language clearly resonates with the UNESCO project mission: questions of war and peace, the inter-dependence of all peoples in a globalizing world — and the "need for understanding" which has "become increasingly urgent."[106] Theatre was understood to be uniquely equipped to play a role in this mission: "This seminar believes— That the world theatre movement must place itself at the vanguard of popular aspirations."

---

[104] "East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Martha Coigney Collection, Box 7-1, Folder 7, NYPL

[105] Samik Bandyopadhyay, "A Tribute to Ebrahim Alkazi," Indian Cultural Forum, accessed 2.21.23, https://indianculturalforum.in/2020/08/19/a-tribute-to-ebrahim-alkazi/.

[106] "East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Coigney Collection.

Furthermore, the "world theatre movement" was tasked with preserving traditions (and using them as repositories for contemporary work), and seeking out "national" forms of theatre for all nations.[107] Such aspirations are somewhat contradicted in the text by a simultaneous desire to find a single, "total" form — though this concept is not elaborated on.

The second resolution, on "East-West Exchanges in the Theatre," broadened the frame beyond national concerns. Acknowledging the emphasis on exchange between Western Europe and East Asian within the UNESCO special project, the assembled artists called for the renewal of the Mutual Appreciation project for "another ten years, and extended to cover the countries of the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America."[108] A similar resolution was made with regards to a forthcoming UNESCO project translating plays from Asia into European languages, with the participants calling for the simultaneous translation of classical plays from the Middle East and Africa. These were supplemented by a call for the establishment of an "Asian Theatre Festival," taking place every two years in a different host nation, with African nations joining by invitation. Such resolutions demonstrate both the success and limitations of the East-West project, and the desire of participants to expand its aims with an international, inter-regional orientation.

The third resolution called for the establishment of an Asian Theatre Bureau within the UNESCO-sponsored International Theatre Institute. Among the aims of this bureau would be to "initiate, promote, and coordinate the theatre movement in Asia;" be a research center and hub for documentation; "to promote intra-regional and international cooperation and understanding

---

[107] "East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Coigney Collection.

[108] "East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Coigney Collection. This is a notable resolution, given the fact that among the many products of the East-West program the Middle East and Africa were sometimes a focus. Yet, it is true that they were often under-represented — with no focus at all on Latin America.

among workers in Theatre;" to organize conferences, performance, festivals, tours, and exchanges.[109] There is a subtle acknowledgement in the resolution that the fulfillment of this aspiration for an Asian Theatre Bureau would pose a legitimate challenge to the ITI's authority. The list of aims is strikingly similar to the profile of the ITI. Taken together, the resolutions produced at the end of the New Delhi event offer an understanding of theatre makers' international aspirations in the mid-late 1960s: keen to explore regional and interregional perspectives, and forge collaborations. Furthermore, it seemed like the existing international organizations under the UN umbrella were not fulfilling this interest. None of the above resolutions were enacted within the UNESCO project on East-West cultural values, which in 1966 was soon to be retired. Yet many of these points of interest were echoed in other international artists' gatherings of the late 1960s, and would find their way onto the agenda of the ITI's Third World Committee in the 1970s.

The East-West special project would close in 1967; yet one further theater seminar was held in 1969 in Beirut. Presented in the form of a round table, the seminar spawned the ITI publication *The Performing Arts in Asia*, edited by American scholar James Brandon. A dominant framing for the roundtable was the relationship between "indigenous," "traditional" performing arts practices and "the new mass arts of film, radio, and television."[110] Brandon's introduction clearly directs the collection toward a western readership, while employing Orientalist tropes of cultural "riches" that are "generally unknown outside [each] countries boundaries." For the intrepid readers of the collection, therefore, it should be known that "to

---

[109] "East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Coigney Collection.

[110] James R. Brandon, ed., *The Performing Arts in Asia* (UNESCO: 1971), 11.

appreciate Asian performing arts requires a sympathetic frame of mind and advance preparation."[111] Yet the collection doesn't belabor the universal "Asian theatre" label too heavily; rather it produces a series of country studies, through which scholars attempt to summarize centuries of theatre history in a few brief pages. In so doing, it advanced the UNESCO agenda to produce knowledge on an ever-expanding roster of "world theaters," defined by nation. The relative dearth of representation for nations outside Europe within the ranks of the ITI membership would lead directly to the founding of the Third World committee, as the ITI sought to expand its roster of world theatre experts. This helps explain why the country study format would persist into the early Third World conferences.

Such a program has a comparable logic and function to that of mid-century academic area studies — at least in the form the latter took within the United States. Area studies, in the words of former US National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, was the intellectual sphere in which the "world of learning" and the "world of power" met.[112] Within a series of fields committed to interdisciplinary knowledge production on world regions, area studies scholars and departments provided institutionalized bases of understanding upon which government expertise and policy decisions could be built. Professional associations could promote language training, provide leadership opportunities for knowledgable experts, and facilitate the grouping of research agendas to make them legible. Wealthy foundations like the Ford Foundation could channel funds toward strategic priorities as international political currents changed.

---

[111] Brandon, *The Performing Arts in Asia*, 9.

[112] Zachary Lockman, *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), x-xi.

In this vein, it is significant to note that the Ford Foundation acted as one of the sponsoring agencies behind the first conference of the Third World theatre committee in Manilla, the Philippines, in 1971. Joining Ford was the John D. Rockefeller III Fund — a foundation channelling money into arts projects, and events relating to East Asia. Joining them as a "coordinating agency" was the Asian Pacific Council, an anti-communist coordinating group of Asian nations formed in 1966. "East-West" cooperation, and the cultivation of a shared language around "traditional" and "contemporary" forms of theatre and drama, served both an intelligence-building and diplomatic end, shored up by the institutions of Cold War intellectual patronage. In a sense, this first meeting of the Third World Committee would provide a capstone for the area studies-style East-West seminars of the 1960s, with their emphasis on drawing direct lines of connection between Europe/United States and East Asia — with the notable elision of the socialist East.

Alongside the East-West mutual appreciation project, with its emphasis on Western Europe and East Asia, during the 1960s UNESCO also organized a series of seminars on cultural production in the Arab world. Collectively, these offer a closer approximation of the Third World committee's agenda after 1971. These events were numerous: between 1962-1965 an annual meeting on Arab cinema took place in Beirut, as well as a 1964 gathering in Alexandria, Egypt. Of particular significance to my purposes here were two additional events on Arab theatre, held in Hammamat, Tunisia, in 1965, and Beirut in 1967.

The purpose of the 1965 meeting was primarily to foster greater cooperation and exchange between artists in the Arab world. Yet as the future Third World Committee President Jalal Khoury would note, those present in Tunisia quickly became convinced that the program's

scope should be broadened, believing that "people and artists from other regions shared the same destiny and had the same preoccupations as they did, and that consequently contact and co-operation should be established with them."[113] This resolution articulated a distinct, common destiny for artists of the Third World movement within the context of an ITI-organized meeting, likely for the first time.

Beirut, 1967: The Search for an Identity

In step with the 1965 meeting described by Khoury, the four-day Beirut conference on theatre, cinema, and mass communication that took place in 1967 more closely approximated the agendas and direction of the future TWC. Co-sponsored by the Lebanese Ministry of Information and UNESCO, the conference was held at the Arab Coordinating Centre for Cinema and Television. This gathering acted as a revival and expansion of the UNESCO Beirut cinema seminars from the early 1960s.

Formally opened by Lebanese Prime Minister Rashid Karami and attended by numerous state ministers, the event comprised the presentation of papers by artists, scholars, and cultural administrators, as well as round-table discussions. The participants were drawn from ten Arab countries, with additional observers from Europe. Particularly prominent among these attendees were Nada Tomiche,[114] who coordinated the conference and subsequent publication; Chérif Khaznadar, the Syrian poet, playwright, director, and cultural producer who worked variously at

---

[113] Jalal Khoury and Chérif Khaznadar, "Newsletter from the Third World and Minorities Theater, June 1977" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity, 1976-1977, Folder 7).

[114] By the time of the publication of conference papers, Tomiche had been appointed a lecturer at University of Paris 8, Vincennes Saint-Denis, the university founded in the wake of the revolutionary uprisings of 1968.

the Theatre of Nations, Syrian Culture Ministry, and helmed the International Cultural Center at Hammamet during the early-mid 1960s and who summarized the roundtable discussions for publication.[115] Also in attendance were Jean Darcante, General Secretary of the ITI; and Enrico Fulchigoni, a roving UNESCO representative responsible for literature and the arts.[116]

Much of the conference focused on the theme of *Recherche d'une identité* ("the search for an identity").[117] This had overtones of pan-Arab thought, of course, but would take on particular resonance in the wake of the military defeat at the hands of Israel that June. These events would trigger a wave of introspection and self-critique among the Arab intelligentsia, of which Beirut was a home during the mid-1960s.[118] Earlier in the year Beirut had also been home to the Afro-Asian Writers Association conference — one year before the inaugural edition of the literary magazine *Lotus*.

Through their papers, participants at the UNESCO seminar offered a unified narrative of Arab performance histories, with subjects like "the genius of Arab theatre from its origins to the present day," or, "the performing arts of the Arab world over a hundred years."[119] This was not a benign reflection on traditions, but rather an image of Arab theatre as an instrument of societal evolution: "The introduction of modern techniques of exploitation of national resources and,

---

[115] It is worth noting that Khaznadar was also present at both the New Delhi conference and the round table in Beirut of 1969.

[116] "Karami Opens Round-Table Parley on Theater, Cinema," *The Daily Star,* Beirut, October 31, 1967, 3.

[117] Nada Tomiche, ed., *Le théâtre arabe* (Paris: UNESCO, 1969).

[118] The literature on this subject is vast, with some of it mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation. Perhaps the most influential intellectual document of this time is: Sadik al-Azm, *Self-Criticism after the Defeat* (1968; London: Saqi, 2011).

[119] Jacques Berque, "Les arts du spectacle dans les monde arabe depuis cent ans;" Ali Al-Rai, "Le génie du théâtre arabe des origines à nos jours," in Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 15-38; 99-113.

with it, the formation of new social structures (the urban, business bourgeoisie), new forms of land ownership, the modified relationships from owner to employee, are thus enshrined in images, stories, dramas, comedies."[120] The presentation of such narratives was typical, with *longue durée* regional histories followed by nation-based reports — the latter becoming the basis for UNESCO and ministerial discussions about the establishment of national cultural policy. These were also the kinds of attestations — on the state of training, repertoire, public subsidy, etc. — upon which UNESCO could build international programs through organizations like the ITI.

In Beirut, the historiographical framing of the search for an identity gave way to contributions by scholars and artists describing the particular contemporary material conditions of theatrical production in one or several countries. Grounds for such discussion were laid by Khaznadar in his paper on recent theatrical developments in Lebanon and Syria. As Khaznadar told his audience, Syrian theaters still turned to adaptations of canonical western plays to fill their repertoires. The great hope for a new wave of Syrian dramatists (to continue the legacy of nineteenth/early-twentieth century playwrights) was held in those young aspiring artists who had accepted government grants to study in Europe and North America.[121] Strides had been made in terms of broadening access and acquainting new audiences with modern theatre practice, as in the "Knowledge of the Theater" evenings hosted on Syrian television by Khaznadar and Rafik

---

[120] Tomiche, "Introduction," in *Le théâtre arabe*, 10.

[121] This hope would soon be realized in the form of Sa'dallah Wannous, arguably the greatest Syrian dramatist of his generation. At the time of this conference in 1967, Wannous was on leave from his position at the Syrian Ministry of Culture studying at the Sorbonne in Paris. It was there that, in the lead-up to- and during the events of 1968, Wannous wrote his seminal response to the six-day war, *An Evening's Entertainment for the Fifth of June*. See: Faisal Adel Hamadah, "Travelling Theatre: Saadallah Wannous's Journeys between the Local and the International," *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (2019), 305-317, 307; Robert Myers and Nada Saab, "Introduction," in *Sentence to Hope: A Sa'dallah Wannous Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), xiv-xvi.

Sabban to accompany televised productions of plays by Molière, Tagore, Brecht, Shakespeare, and Tawfiq al-Hakim, among others.[122] Yet, much like in neighboring Lebanon, there was a clear need not only for programs dedicated to the development of young artists, but also the cultural infrastructure to allow theatre practice to blossom outside of the most affluent city centers and the annual festival circuit. In spite of these issues, Khaznadar identified one particular artist who "has put together a team that tries to produce shows with current political significance while firmly rooted in Lebanese traditions and history."[123] He was referring to Jalal Khoury, the playwright and director who had quickly made an impact since beginning his directorial career a few years prior with Brecht's *The Visions of Simone Machard*. Khoury would soon found the Lebanese center of the ITI and become a leader of the Third World Committee alongside Khaznadar in the 1970s.

A series of round-table discussions followed, focusing on interconnected topics arising from the individual papers: the adaptation of plays from Europe, the question of how best to support emergent Arab playwrights, the cultivation of audiences, and what forms of theatrical architecture would best suit a new Arab drama. While the published accounts of these discussions are highly abridged — most speeches have been shortened and occasionally speakers are identified only by their nationality — there were several emergent, shared ideological positions. With regards to the adaptation of "foreign" texts, there was a full spectrum of opinions, varying from affirmations of theatre's universal translatability as an idiom ("you can play any piece, anywhere,") to the curatorial ("If it is absolutely necessary to draw from foreign texts, a

---

[122] Chérif Khaznadar, "Le théâtre en Syrie et au Liban au cours des dix dernières années," in Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 141-152, 145.

[123] Khaznadar, "Le théâtre en Syrie et au Liban," 151.

careful selection is essential,") to the nationalistic ("In the Arab world, we have exceeded the period of adaptation necessary for any theater that is looking for itself. Today we have reached the stage of authentically local creation. Arab authors must be allowed to express themselves.")[124] Yet there was a prevailing wariness — or perhaps weariness — toward adaptation among the speakers, who favored the development of new playwrights writing in proximity to their audiences.

Many participants described an urge for accelerated development, in the form of expanded audiences and new theatre spaces, specifically to cater for these audiences and their new forms. In relation to television — considered to be the medium of mass communication *par excellence* — theatre was defended as an "urban phenomenon," with an immediacy in representation that could not be replicated in television.[125] Theatre could be targeted to existing sites and structures in society: unions, factories, public squares. Even though there were some sources of support for this new theatre — including through trade unions — state support outside of the few large theaters and festivals was relatively unforthcoming. Training, regular subsidy, and championing local playwrights had to be made priorities.

While the symposium was supported by the Lebanese ministry of information, the assembled state ministers seemed to have played more of a spectatorial, rather than participatory, role in the discussions. Sponsorship by state ministries would become a common trend among the itinerant festivals hosted by the Third World committee. This was in part reflective of an international consensus on the necessity of at least some state funding for the arts to ensure their

---

[124] "Extraits de discussions," in Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 212. The first quote is identified by a speaker from Lebanon (no name given), the second from Moroccan director Tayyeb Saddiki, the third from Khaznadar.

[125] "Extraits de discussions," in Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 218.

flourishing outside of the realm of commercial imperatives, as encouraged by organizations like UNESCO.[126] Yet it is also indicative of the *uses* of culture and its discourses by the state: to build a cultural and intellectual hegemony in alignment with political and economic systems of governance, or as a vanguard for the cultivation of diplomatic relations with other states — whether allied or not.[127] In this light, one of the tensions inherent in this project is between the autonomy of artists and intellectuals as they produce their work, and the priorities of the state that might "co-opt" them.[128] Such tensions manifest differently in the various contexts approached — where divergent norms existed about the proximity between the intelligentsia and state patronage. Many of those who figure prominently in this work — Chérif Khaznadar, Ellen Stewart, Cecile Guidote — would be drawn into varyingly proximate relations with state institutions over a number of years. With each interaction they were negotiating between their politics, those of the state, and the priorities of intermediary organizations like the ITI, UNESCO, and the wider Third World Committee.

In the resolutions that concluded the 1967 Beirut UNESCO event, the seminar participants stated that "it is of the greatest interest for the Arab theater to see the creation of permanent ties of friendship and collaboration with countries around the world."[129] Much like the

---

[126] Jamshid Behnam, *Cultural Policy in Iran* (Paris: UNESCO, 1973), 16-17. It is worth stressing that this was not an interventionist or welfare statist mandate, but rather encouragement to states to ensure that "cultural heritage" was safeguarded, as part of a plan for economic and social development.

[127] My emphasis on the "uses" of culture is inspired by the contemporary scholarship on state deployment of culture as an economic and political instrument in neoliberal societies in George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

[128] Of course this is one of the perennial tensions of materialist scholarship, and it would be no doubt wise to hold on to Marx's dictum: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marxists Internet Archive, accessed May 3, 2023, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm.

[129] "Recommandations", in Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 225-229; 226.

seminar in Tunisia, the artists present were just as interested in discussing the development of a political theatre with fellow artists internationally as they were at home. The Beirut resolutions effectively foreshadowed the agendas of early Third World meetings. Developing "local" writers, the role of state financial support, the relationship between theatre and mass communication — these topics migrated from Beirut to Manila and onto the program of the first TWC festival-conference of November 1971. Beyond this transition, I see the gradual replacement of national concerns with a sense of internationalism, and a movement away from the NGO-style emphasis on "development," in its many guises. While in the 1967 documents there is no reference to the events of that June, soon the political precepts of the theatrical international would follow the path of critical Arab intellectuals after the war: from national-developmentalism to transnational solidarity. One of the key sites for this development would emerge the following year, in East Berlin.

Berlin, 1968: Brecht, Vietnam and Theatre Internationalism

A distinct point of origin for the kind of Third World internationalism developed by the TWC can be found in the first "Brecht Dialog," held in East Berlin in 1968. Rather than a UNESCO project, the week-long series of dialogues — held in the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm and the Berliner Ensemble's (BE) rehearsal hall — was jointly organized by the DDR center of the International Theatre Institute, the BE, and the DDR Academy of Arts.[130] During the course of this event, a current of anti-imperialist politics reflected the growing importance of Third

[130] Just as the West German state had its own Academy of Arts, it also had its own center of the ITI. The West German ITI would host an ITI World Congress in 1975, as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

World solidarity that would characterize the DDR's significant role in the ITI Third World project during the 1970s. This was arguably the moment in which Chérif Khaznadar — one of several participants from the Beirut seminar who also attended in Berlin — started to exert his influence as a leading figure on Third World politics within the ITI. During the committee's existence, numerous DDR artists and intellectuals would participate in its activities — most prominently the director Fritz Bennewitz — and the nation's ITI center would host a pivotal TWC seminar in 1976.

Now approaching its twentieth anniversary, the DDR had succeeded in producing a uniquely socialist cultural infrastructure, with a dedicated intelligentsia who had provided (critical, comradely) support for the Socialist Unity Party (SED) through multiple crises of legitimation.[131] The Berliner Ensemble were in this sense emblematic. As a company tied to the legacy of one of the DDR's greatest internal critics, Bertolt Brecht, its leadership had often chafed at the artistic and intellectual impositions periodically placed upon artists by the SED bureaucracy. Nevertheless under Helene Weigel's continued leadership the BE as an institution had become quite comfortable in its status as the country's most recognizable cultural export, and been broadly supportive of measures such as the building of the Berlin Wall.[132]

As David Barnett has shown, while the SED leadership was always more than happy to celebrate the work of Brecht the playwright, they were often lukewarm on his theories of drama. Brecht's dialectical method, with its emphasis on historical contingency, as well as the changeability of people and society, was designed to cultivate critical dialogue both in the

---

[131] As discussed extensively in: John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and its Legacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

[132] David Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 181-183.

creative process and between the stage and the auditorium. In spite of the emancipatory tenor of socialist transformation, the Brechtian "critical attitude" was often found to be at odds with the SED's spasmodic need to assert political authority over the intelligentsia. Barnett notes two particular eulogists at Brecht's funeral in 1956 who typified the attempts to "neutralize Brecht's critical legacy and canalize Brecht for the DDR."[133] These speakers were Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the SED, and György Lukács, aesthetic theorist and proponent of literary realism under Stalin. In theatrical terms, the Soviet realist orthodoxy translated into an official advocacy of Stanislavskian acting methods in the DDR, with the country hosting several conferences on acting from a realist perspective during the 1950s-1960s.[134] "Both speakers," Barnett writes, "clearly hoped that Brecht's official canonization would retain the plays without the potentially subversive baggage of the theory with its power dialectically to question and challenge historical and political issues."[135] In spite of this tension in the immediate aftermath of Brecht's death, the "dialog" form of the 1968 conference very clearly owed a debt to one of Brecht's most ambitious theoretical works: the *Messingkauf*.

Brecht's *Messingkauf* ("*Buying Brass*") is a theoretical exposition in dialogue form. Begun in wartime exile and never completed, the text as published today is drawn together from disparate fragments, including poems and acting exercises. Yet the dialogues that form its core are organized into four "nights," after a theatrical performance, as a small cast of characters assemble to discuss theatre: a philosopher, actor, actress, dramaturg, and an electrician. "The

---

[133] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 146.

[134] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 76, 111-118, 166.

[135] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 147.

cryptic title," writes John Willett, "derives from the analogy [made in the text] with a man who buys a brass instrument for the metal it is made of rather than for the music it makes. The theatre, in other words, is being cross-examined about its content, from a hard-headed practical point of view."[136] The piece not only expounds Brecht's new theories of drama, acting, and spectatorship, but, significantly, reflects his belief that theatre practitioners should be in active dialogue with both workers — the socialist theatre's "new audience" — and the intelligentsia.[137] Taking place after a night's performance, as a stagehand dismantles the set and the "characters" sit on chairs and various other pieces that still occupy the stage, the text serves to demystify the stage space as a site of work and discourse. It is a quotidian realm, in which comrades might sit, uncork a few bottles of wine, and, together, cultivate their critical attitude toward art and society.[138] Such free exchange of views and un-hierarchical critique — and dialogue between makers and those from outside the theatre — would come to characterize the working culture of the BE under Brecht, and would provide a model for the 1968 "Brecht Dialog."

Adopting the *Messingkauf*-style dialogue form was perhaps inspired by the BE's recent series of *Brecht-Abende* programs. These were innovative nights of short-form performance,

---

[136] "'Der Messingkauf': An Editorial Note," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen Drama, 1964), 169-175; 170.

[137] "Characters of the Messingkauf" in Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. by John Willett (1965; London: Methuen, 2002).

[138] I imagine that the wine passed around during the *Messingkauf* serves a similar function to the cigar being smoked by the Brechtian spectator in his "Notes on the Threepenny Opera." Nicholas Ridout has recently expanded upon this: "[smoking] functions very well as a way of making another activity feel good: I am thinking about communicational activities here, such as talking to a stranger at a party, running a theatre rehearsal… The act of smoking, the 'Haltung' [attitude] it encourages, the gestures to which it leads, rolls up a range of human faculties in such a way as to make you feel somehow at home in the situation." Much like, one might say, for the purpose of this brief aside, sharing a bottle of wine or two after a performance might be recommended to facilitate the development of one's critical perspective. Nicholas Ridout, *Scenes from Bourgeois Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 166.

originating in April 1962 when the BE threw together an evening of Brecht's songs and poetry at short notice when a performance of *Life of Galileo* had to be cancelled.[139] The unique format for the BE, and the performance's relaxed setting, made it a huge success, with an all new program organized later that year. For the third *Abend*, organized to mark what would have been Brecht's sixty-fifth birthday in February 1963, the company decided to stage a version of the *Messingkauf* dialogues, alongside "demonstration" scenes from the BE repertoire (*The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Mother*, *Mother Courage and her Children*), as well as actor exercises — both originals from the *Messingkauf* texts, and new exercises proposed by the BE — to give audiences fresh insight into Brecht's theory and the company's working process.[140] The usefulness of this format for the BE was that it allowed the company to greatly increase their production output, having faced criticism for keeping old shows running for too long, and often only premiering one new production a year. Easy to produce and varied in style, the "Brecht-Abende," and specifically the *Messingkauf*, provided an ingenious alternative to the lengthy process of staging new work. The evening was praised by SED leaders, and ran for 100 performances between 1963-1970 — including one performance on the eve of the 1968 "Brecht Dialog." Participants were invited to see the performance at the BE with a post-show discussion in the theatre's foyer, in a reflection of the performance's discursive form and to set the tone for the week's gathering. The BE and the DDR cultural administration were putting Brechtian theory front and center as the organizing force behind the international gathering.

---

[139] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 176.

[140] Werner Hecht, "Notes," in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, 109; Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 179.

In spite of its occasional issues, the BE was still considered the place to see and work on Brecht, who had rapidly become the DDR's most politically expedient figure for outward-facing cultural policy. During the mid-decade the BE had held discussions with Jean Vilar, Luigi Nono, and The Living Theatre about producing Brecht together in Berlin — the latter after Weigel saw The Living Theatre's *In the Jungle of the Cities* at the Theatre of Nations festival in Paris.[141] By the late-1960s, over a decade after his death, Brecht's plays and theories had become an essential touchstone for critical theatre makers the world over, whether Marxist or otherwise. In 1968 the Brechtian dialogue form would present an opportunity to stage encounters between these myriad directors, philosophers, actors, and designers, as well as DDR cultural administrators, scholars, and figures from the broader intelligentsia. Hence the presence of such luminaries of the anti-bourgeois theatre as Ebrahim Alkazi, Jalal Khoury, Chérif Khaznadar,[142] Japanese director Koreya Senda, Giorgio Strehler, Sa'dallah Wannous, and British translator John Willett in Berlin. Of course the event was also a gathering of the DDR theatre scene, with the likes of Fritz Bennewitz, Benno Besson, Joachim Fiebach, Walter Felsenstein, and Wolfgang Pintzka present, along with numerous directors from other cities and, of course, members of the Berliner Ensemble itself. They were joined by SED officials and representatives from the various institutions that played a role in shaping DDR culture: the Cultural Department of the SED Central Committee, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Union of Theatre Workers, and *Theater Der Zeit* magazine. This expansive presence emphasizes both the

---

[141] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 192-193.

[142] Referred in the English version of the conference program as "General Secretary of the Arab Theatre Committee" — though it is unclear where this committee was housed. (Perhaps the ITI?) See: *Brecht Dialogue 1968: Politik auf dem Theater* (Berlin, Centre German Democratic Republic of the International Theatre Institute, 1968), 88.

importance placed on such international gatherings by the SED for the propagation of socialist culture, and the proximity with which artists and state policymakers (as well as Stasi agents and informants, most likely) mingled.

While the *Messingkauf* itself opened proceedings, the organizing institutions had laid on a range of the DDR's most prestigious theatrical works for their visiting artists. Brecht classics like *The Mother* (with Helene Weigel in the title role), *Days of the Commune* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* were staged by the BE, in addition to Fritz Bennewitz's *Life of Galileo* and *Life of Edward II of England* from Weimar.[143] The days were mostly dedicated to curated dialogues between artists, politicians, humanists, and scientists — with a concluding event and accompanying photographic exhibition, "Brecht on the Stages of the World." This final debate, and particularly the contribution of Chérif Khaznadar, would once again foreshadow the kind of aesthetic politics to be carried forth into the ITI's Third World committee.

Hundreds of attendees packed into the theatre and rehearsal hall for these dialogues. In his remarks opening the dialogue, Walter Felsenstein, President of the DDR center of the ITI and Vice-President of the German Academy for the Arts, framed the collective of participants as heirs to the Brechtian legacy. While Brecht succeeded in proving that the world was changeable, and indeed by and through theatre, his work should not be considered complete, Felsenstein said. The continuation of this task was the uniting force behind each participant invited.[144] Brecht was

---

[143] Among other works, by the BE and the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin - including Bennewitz's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Chérif Khaznadar also staged a student production (in Arabic - though it is not noted in the original program where the students were from) of Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*. This was perhaps a remount of the production of *Exception* that Khaznadar describes as the "first production of Brecht in the Arab world," in Syria in 1964. See: Tomiche, *Le théâtre arabe*, 144. Hideo Kanze was also invited to give a Noh "demonstration" in Berlin.

[144] Walter Felsenstein, "Zur Eröffnung des Brecht-Dialogs," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 13.

introduced as an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, revolutionary figure (in the image of the state, one might suppose), friend to people from the Soviet Union to Latin America to the Arab world. The purpose of the dialogue, then, was to compare experiences,[145] and understand together how to best adapt his method and ideas "in accordance with the concrete historical situation of each country and, moreover, how one can use theater politics in various ways toward human progress and peace."[146]

While it was perhaps inevitable that discussion tended to recirculate to the DDR context with regularity — given the shared experience participants were having with the BE repertoire, and the company's aforementioned attraction as *the* Brecht company in the socialist state — nevertheless from these conversations arose opportunities for comparison and reflection on differential experiences. This was particularly true within the lively "dialogue between directors and actors." Out of an insightful but Berlin-centric conversation between Benno Besson, Manfred Wekwerth (two of Brecht's own assistant directors), Ekkehard Schall (leading actor, and Brecht's son in law) and Helene Weigel about the particular ways Brecht would work with actors in rehearsal, arose a dialogue that featured Koreya Senda, Giorgio Strehler, and Fritz Bennewitz on the neglected question of collective production. The problem itself was posed boldly by Khaznadar:

> I followed this discussion [between the Berliners] with a great deal of interest. I can tell you why: I don't feel addressed. I come from a country where there are no theater

---

[145] Joachim Tenschert, Head Dramaturg at the BE, places a particular emphasis on a comparative approach in his opening remarks to the dialogue of Literary and Theatre scholars: "Dialog der Literatur- und Theaterwissenschaftler," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 77.

[146] Alexander Abusch, "Brecht und die Politik auf dem Theater," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 16, 24.

> schools and no professional actors, but where we still want to play Brecht. For this reason I came up with an entirely different conception of the collective of directors and actors. For me, it's all about: If I want to put something on the stage and know the social scope of the play, I have to find a group that is enthusiastic about it and that is ready to interpret it. As a director, my job is to encourage these actors to find out for themselves what to do on stage, which gestures to use, how to interpret the text. But I don't want to force anything on them, because that would have an unfavorable effect on these players in particular. That would reinforce the impression of an amateur performance… In my opinion, this is a problem that does not only affect our country [Syria]. That's why I wanted to expand the framework and aspect of the relationship between actor and director a little: it doesn't always work on a professional level.[147]

Khaznadar's vision of a collective approach to Brecht was given a prominent place in the Dialog. In advance of the week's events, the BE supported the director in finding a group of "lay actors" — Arab students living in East Berlin, studying subjects like economics, philosophy, and medicine — with whom to stage a production of Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*. This performance was framed as one of the highlights of the week, and an opportunity for the participants to discuss a specific production of Brecht's work interpreted by a director from

---

[147] "Dialog der Regisseure und Schauspieler," in *Brecht Dialog* 1968, 169-170. While it is true that the state-funded theaters in Syria were still developing (the National Theatre was not yet ten years old, for example), and that the High Institute of Dramatic Arts would not be founded until the late-1970s, Khaznadar's comments here do seem a little ungenerous to the state of Syrian theatre. Perhaps this is an issue in the transcription of his speech, given the very full account of theatre in Syria he had given in Beirut in 1967. For a detailed account of Syrian theatre during this time, see: Edward Ziter, *Political Performance in Syria: From the Six-Day War to the Syrian Uprising* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

outside the DDR.[148] Khaznadar's intervention in the debate among directors and actors served as a reminder to Weigel in particular of the pleasures (and difficulties) of producing work both as a collective, especially in the absence of the industry infrastructure and institutional support she and Brecht would eventually enjoy. These material differences in working conditions created very different experiences in playing Brecht — though all Marxist in orientation. Senda's response is illuminating, pointing to his company's collective decision making process, and its commitment to social protest, as actors would join workers each week to protest the US war in Vietnam. For a moment, a conversation that had threatened to become procedural offered an insight into the varied ways in which the tasks of Brechtian theatre were interpreted internationally in circumstances far removed from those of the DDR.

One dialogue in particular was most self-consciously referential of Brecht's *Messingkauf*. This "Dialogue of Theatre Makers, Philosophers, Politicians, and Natural Scientists" brought together the President of the Volkskammer, a philosopher from the Humboldt University, a Director of the state television service, a physicist from the German Academy of Sciences, and various others from the sciences and the BE, in conversation with Manfred Wekwerth. Such a program represented the centrality of the BE in DDR civic life. It also represented a model for what would become a focus for the future Third World committee: debating how to cultivate a political theatre aesthetic in dialogue with ongoing technological transformation and the social reality of life in capitalist, or socialist, states.

---

[148] See the clips and short interview with Khaznadar included in the film: "Brecht Dialog 1968" (Berlin: DDR Magazin, 1968), https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/film/37244.

Introducing the perspectives of scientists and politicians to the dialogue produced a number of fascinating insights and innovations. One strand of the discussion concerned how the various intellectuals present could collaborate to imagine the future concerns of theatre in what Brecht called the "scientific age." Dr Karl Lanius, a physicist from the Research Center for High Energy Physics, posed and answered a number of speculative, futuristic questions that might have a bearing on the production of theatre over the proceeding fifty years:

> Lanius: Question: when do you think there will be a new mastery of non-narcotic drugs, with the aim of expanding human intelligence? Answer: Between 1983 and 2023, probably around 2010…
>
> Dieckmann [Head of the Volkskammer]: Can't that be brought forward a little?
>
> *Laughter*.
>
> Lanius: That would certainly be desirable for everyone. The next question: When does a real human-machine symbiosis occur in order to carry out thought processes through direct coupling between the brain and the computer? The answer: Between the year 1990 and the year 2030, they will culminate around 2020… If I were to now link my demands on the theatre to there questions, then first in the very general formulation: Please a little more imagination! I do not only understand this in terms of the actors, but also in terms of the demands made by the actors on the viewer. Please trust the viewer with a little more imagination![149]

In spite of his apparent dissatisfaction with the imagination of the theatre of his day, Lanius nevertheless entrusted the collective work relationships fostered through theatre practice to

---

[149] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 211.

generate answers to these questions. Such collective practice, in Lanius's opinion, was too often lost when work was presented for an audience. This, Wekwerth offered, was precisely the kind of problem the BE was attempting to solve by staging the *Messingkauf*, and establishing the Brecht dialogues as a means of opening up the theatre-making process and educating audiences in the art and mechanics of practice. By improving their audience's knowledge of the theatre's processes, they might engage more fruitfully in dialogue over its future — and the future of other forms of production — in a rapidly developing technological society.[150] In this way, their dialogue may have been considered a "*Messingkauf* part two."[151]

With regards to politics, politicians, and the *Messingkauf*, the debate circled multiple times to the Aristotelian concept of the "zoon politikon" ("political animal"). In an echo of Gramsci's conception of the intellectual, Johannes Dieckmann, journalist and politician, offered that in the DDR, "every conscious, every thinking citizen of our republic is a zoon politicon."[152] Under socialism, politics was practiced "as a widespread human behavior."[153] As Wekwerth notes, the "philosopher" of the *Messignkauf* is looking for the ways in which theater can be rendered socially useful, as a politician would. In bringing the audience back to Brecht's *Messingkauf*, Wekwerth once again framed the dialogue as a model for the assembled participants to take out to the world beyond the BE.

---

[150] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 213.

[151] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 208.

[152] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 214. This was a particularly pertinent topic, as the DDR was in the process of determining a new constitution in 1968.

[153] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 216.

Charged with summarizing the week, Manfred Wekwerth summarized the concerns raised by the "Brecht Dialog" through three questions. First: "How does Brecht work under the conditions of today's capitalism, especially in the fight against such dangerous phenomena as veiling, mystification, and irrationalism?" Secondly: "How can Brecht be included in the work of those countries that are fighting (or been victorious) in national liberation struggles?" This most directly addressed the question of the Third World — with Chérif Khaznadar, the most prominent exponent of Third World politics present, mentioned by name — as well as the issue of translation. Thirdly: "How can Brecht work in countries that have defeated the class opponent in their own country, which, like our state [the DDR], are building a socialist society, and have entered a stage of developed socialism?"[154] In other words: how did Brecht speak to the particular epochal development, and political minutiae, of the "First, Second, and Third" worlds? Such questions, arising in the dialogues, were intended to be just a beginning.

During the closing event, "Brecht on the Stages of the World," an international cross-section of the BE's invited guests were asked to take the stage one more time in order to offer parting thoughts on the dialogue, and their own experience with the production of Brecht's work. These reports, it was foreseen, would form the first *Brecht Yearbook*. This exercise in displaying a "Brechtian World Theatre" produced varied responses. Michel Bataillon offered a thoroughgoing account of the political fight over the status of Brecht in France, where there was unanimity over his influence, but a constant struggle to retain emphasis on the dialectical method. [155] Kaisa Korhonen, the Finnish actor, director, and writer, joked that "We have been

---

[154] "Dialog der Theaterleute mit Philosophen, Politikern, und Naturwissenschaftlern," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 208-209.

[155] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968,* 243-245.

told…that the last countries in the world to go over to socialism are West Germany and Finland. *Laughter*. During the Brecht dialogue I regained my belief that Finland might not be the last country after all."[156] The sense of fellow-feeling was encapsulated by the Italian director Giorgio Strehler, who stated:

> Let us not forget this, friends, who have spoken and still speak of ideologies and the class struggle, who have lived and are still living in 'dark times,'[157] let us never forget that perhaps the greatest and clearest doctrine that Brecht teaches us about is the possibility is to make 'a poetry,' to find a poetry and a truth with the contradicting and even bloody material of our time. In the spirit of this fraternity in life, in reality that has become poetry, I would like to thank the friends of the Berliner Ensemble once again for this; they know very well what it means to do theater today and how much it costs each of us.[158]

Alongside the profusion of the European socialists, the Third World continued to resurface throughout the conversation. Vietnam haunted the week's discussions, and re-emerged in unexpected ways. Koreya Senda, Japan's most prominent interpreter of Brecht onstage, quoted from a 21 year old nurse who wrote to him about his production of *Mother Courage*: "I didn't experience the war myself, so I only got an impression of the war from books. Today, when I saw the car of 'Mother Courage' drive across the stage, the tragedy of the war came to my mind for the first time. I have the feeling that it is always the people who pay in a war. I believe that

---

[156] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 246.

[157] A reference to the Brecht poem "To those born later."

[158] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 249.

especially in this day and age, when we are fighting the war in Vietnam, this problem is of great importance to us and we can therefore very well understand the topicality of this play today."[159] George Tabori, the US-based Hungarian translator, urged the BE to do everything it could to bring *Courage* to New York, "because [its] presence could help bring the terrible Vietnam War to an end."[160] Wekwerth seemed to believe so; Vietnam was used as the most current example of the utility of Brecht's "alienation" effect, asserting the primacy of theatre over television: "The man from the… western station speaks more and more as if he were addressing me personally in my room, and only me. Here he is simulating a relationship that does not really exist. So I feel addressed by an event, let's assume in Vietnam, and it is communicated to me very discreetly, very sensibly, so that it does not disturb my dinner… Can't it be that the images that you see about the war in Vietnam at dinner are misused, that a habit begins somewhere that we want to break through in the theater with the concept of alienation?"[161]

The imperial outrage of the Vietnam War stirred something beyond the familiar language of dialectical, anti-bourgeois theatre. To close out "Brecht on the Stages of the World," Chérif Khaznadar asked to present a statement to the participants, that was approved by the participants through their applause:

> The participants of the Brecht Dialogue 1968 on Politics in the Theatre are convinced that all theatre workers of the world must unite their efforts to condemn imperialist aggressions, wherever they might appear, and today in particular in Vietnam. We must

---

[159] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 251.

[160] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 259.

[161] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 233.

> call on our audiences to set an immediate end to that aggression and to fight for peace in the world. The participants of the Brecht Dialogue agree with Bertolt Brecht, that their theatre should not be utilized for purposes of mystification, individualism, and anti-humanism, but should only serve as a means to promote mutual understanding among all progressive people of the world. Our theatre should give people clarity about their social and political situation — with the aim of changing and improving the world.[162]

Khaznadar took the stage to argue for an anti-imperialist theatre. That he was permitted to have a final word in this discussion, and to use that opportunity to make this case for the whole of the "Brecht movement," was testament to his already prominent role embedded in the ITI as an advocate for the Third World cause. With Felsenstein having opened the week's events by defining Brecht as an "anti-fascist, anti-imperialist" playwright, and Wekwerth casting a wide net in search of the Brechtian theatre's future concerns under conditions of socialism, Khaznadar shone a spotlight firmly on this theatre's role in fighting imperial aggression. Evidently the DDR cultural administrators and politicians understood the political expediency of building anti-imperialist solidarity through cultural institutions, as they would play an essential role in the founding and support of the ITI's nascent Third World project over the following decade. Where Khaznadar was given the floor to offer a concluding statement to the participants in 1968, in 1976 the DDR branch of the ITI would dedicate a week to cultivate a new theatrical discourse that would try to unite Second and Third World critical artists.

After thanking her "friend" Khaznadar for his words, Helene Weigel, perhaps the consummate DDR artist-politician, bade farewell to their guests. In video footage from the

---

[162] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 263-264.

closing event, one can see the awe and reverence she inspired in her audience as she concluded: "The dialogues have started. And they will go on, here and on the stages of the world."[163] With this, and a rousing chorus of Brecht's solidarity song, the dialogue was over:

Onwards and no forgetting

What gives us strength today

When we've food and when we're hungry

Onwards and no forgetting

Our solidarity![164]

This pre-history of the committee makes apparent the range of possibilities for a Third World theatre. By establishing its seminar on East-West mutual understanding, UNESCO sought to quell prospects for a breakaway cultural organization by decolonizing nations, while bringing new national centers from the Third World into the fold. Such seminars reflected a distinct, NGO-style apolitical vision of international culture and heritage. In Lebanon, the seminars on Arab theatre and television shifted conversations gradually from a *de facto* Arab nationalist discourse towards a desire for international and interregional dialogue. Finally, in the case of the inaugural Brecht dialogue of 1968, the DDR state sought to grow its influence among Third World artists through the strategic elevation of Brecht as an icon of both anti-bourgeois, and anti-imperialist culture. Moving into the 1970s, and the establishment of the TWC, the politics of Cold War cultural diplomacy would become ever more present in dictating where the committee organized festivals, who attended, and what was discussed.

---

[163] "Brecht auf den Bühnen der Welt," in *Brecht Dialog 1968*, 265.

[164] Bertolt Brecht, "Solidarity Song," in *The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht*, ed by Tom Kuhn and David Constantine (New York and London: Liveright Publishing, 2019), 405-407.

2. From the United Nations Model to a Transnational Third World

"The two Third World meetings that have occurred… point up a rather unnerving but persistent truth: the work and indeed the whole attitude of the Third World Committee will change each time it meets, because of where it meets."[165] — Martha Coigney

As one might expect, the early years of the TWC's formal existence were pivotal in shaping its composition and agenda over the ensuing decade. Two major festival-conferences, in the Philippines and Iran, offered a kind of legitimacy to its ambitions to expand the ITI's remit beyond its western European origins. Those two nations reflected the dominance of US and US-aligned interests within the ITI — at least at the elite organizational level. From the perspective of US policy, Manila and Tehran represented important geopolitical buffers against communist expansion, hence an interest in shaping cultural debates in each country. While the TWC would hold an explosive meeting during the 1973 ITI World Congress in the Soviet Union, it would not be until the second half of the 1970s that the committee would host an event in the Eastern Bloc.

In my discussion of the first conference of the TWC in Manila, therefore, the questions of patronage takes on a particular significance. Yet the years 1971-1973 also saw artists rise to prominence as political figures in their own right. Whether in strict alignment with the official policy of their home nation or not, artists learned and broke the laws of cultural diplomacy while announcing themselves as a force in the international political world. In 1973, these artists would

---

[165] Martha Coigney, "Report on Bombay meeting of the Third World Committee" *International Theatre Institute of the United States, Annual Report: 1972-1973*, 104.

arrive in Iran — an autocracy imperiled by rising popular resentment of a nepotistic ruling elite with its imported culture. The Shah's intellectual organs would try throughout the 1970s to appropriate left and Third World critiques, by gutting their broad political base and reframing the autocrat as a transhistorical critic of western modernity. A partnership between the TWC and the state-sponsored Shiraz Arts Festival promised a collision between the state's illusory self-image as a bastion of free and critical debate, and the reality of a truly radical political agenda established by artists.

The Third World Committee was formally established at the ITI World Congress in London during June 1971, triggering two years of rapid development in terms of internationally coordinated work on theatre and third world politics. During this period, the newly-established committee moved from a UN-style model of international cooperation, reflected in its Theatre of Nations-style festival programming, towards a Third Worldist stance that privileged peoples over nations. Such nascent political interventions coalesced into an institutional politics led by artists of the Global South. Supplanting the idea that the nation state was the natural scale of political organization was a heterogenous politics, varyingly sub-national (allowing for the particular experiences of indigenous peoples, ethnic and racial minorities), and transnational, reflecting the politics of diasporic populations, and the international peasant and working classes.

During the ITI World Congress in the Soviet Union of 1973, and the subsequent festival-conference of the TWC in Iran, artists of the Third World were called upon to serve as cultural diplomats within the ITI in new ways. In Moscow and Shiraz, this meant making political moves to establish resolutions, pass votes, and ensure the participation of political allies. Artists were asked to quickly learn how to navigate the realities of Cold War international politics, as

manifest in this subsidiary of the United Nations and UNESCO. When TWC events were being heavily subsidized by national governments and their proxies, as was the case in Manila and Shiraz, this meant artists having to balance certain obligations to fulfill institutional agendas with their own, often more radical, political priorities. The tension created between artists playing their role within the institutional apparatus, and their desire to subvert it, is often manifest in archival documentation.

Three figures emerged as leaders of the nascent Third World project in London: Enrique Buenaventura, the Columbian experimental playwright and director; Cecile Guidote, director of the Philippines Educational Theatre Association; and Ellen Stewart, founder and director of LaMaMa Experimental Theatre Club. While Buenaventura would play an important role later in the 1970s, it was the two women who led the committee's organization during its first few years. The US center of the ITI was enthused to have a figure of such international esteem as Stewart involved in shaping this project — considered to be strategically important for shaping the contributions to the ITI of Global South nations — and the rapport between Stewart and Guidote ensured the committee would be well organized, and proximate to US interests. When Guidote and her husband, politician Heherson Alvarez, fled the Philippines with the declaration of martial law soon after the first Third World theatre congress, Guidote took up residence at LaMaMa to work alongside Stewart full-time.[166]

Manila, 1971: The Politics of Patronage

[166] Nan Robertson, "Third World Moves into LaMaMa," *The New York* Times, Nov. 11, 1983.

Upon its recognition by the ITI's World Congress in London during June 1971, the first Third World Theatre "conference-festival-exhibition" was rapidly arranged for November of the same year in Manila, the Philippines. This decision was taken after the deliberations of the ITI's permanent "Study" committee, the committee focusing on the future of the ITI. In 1971 this committee considered two particular areas for further growth: Youth Education, and the Third World, both of which would eventually become permanent committees.[167]

PETA was a pioneering example of what Eugène van Erven has called "theaters of liberation," or the international radical people's theatre. While the historiography of radical popular theatre in the West often tells a melancholy or nostalgic story of the Benjaminian historical flash of left-aligned creatively surrounding the events of May '68, ultimately giving way to a slow decline and institutionalization during the subsequent two decades, van Erven contends that the spirit of artistic experimentation and liberation politics continued apace in East Asia through companies like PETA. The European radical theaters surveyed in van Erven's work tended to be based outside of major cities, producing populist work in the Brechtian tradition far from the grand, social democratic state-subsidized playhouses of the post-war period. In the Philippines, by contrast, PETA walked an intriguing line between a dispersed populism — a rural network of forum theatre practitioners based in communities around the country — and a centralized "national" institution based in Manila. So, PETA as an organization was legible both to the popular politics distinct to many Third World and radical socialist theaters of the time, and the nationally representative companies that the ITI was seeking.

---

[167] Letter from Rosamond Gilder to Ellen Stewart, April 28, 1971 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

Yet in Manila, the nation- and region-thinking propagated by the ITI manifested in the coordination of visiting delegations: each country was asked to send a "knowledgable theatre leader" to represent their nation at panel discussions. During these discussions, each representative would be asked to provide "a comprehensive background of his [*sic*] people's traditional theater and contemporary theater developments and discuss projected solutions to common problems of most developing theater groups."[168] The representatives would model a "United Nations" of theatre workers. Based upon their testimonies, it was hoped that one outcome of the conference would be to offer pathways to regional development to nations in collaboration across what in 1971 was defined as three regions: Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Programming for the 1971 conference largely reflected the format of an ITI World Congress: mornings dedicated to panel discussions on broad themes of mutual concern; afternoon lectures; conference hotel dinners and evening performances at local theatres. Most participants in Manila came from nations aligned with the West: the United States, France, and South Korea were the most well-represented foreign nations. Lectures and performances tended towards the traditional, including presentations of *wayang kulit* and a lecture on *bunraku*. Discussion of Third World politics was notable by its absence, and yet the festival could certainly be said to expand the geographical reach of the ITI, given the presence of representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, and the United Arab Republic.

While organized by PETA and the Philippines Center of the ITI, that first Third World conference had a notable list of partner agencies and foundations. The composition of this group

---

[168] "International Theatre Institute Third-World Festival/Conference/Exhibit, Manila, Philippines, November 19-30, 1971: Background Information" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity).

helps explain the political makeup of participants in Manila, as well as the conference's orientation toward nationally-representative, traditional practices. Among the sponsoring agencies were the Asian and Pacific Council, a regional anti-communist alliance of nations formed in the mid-1960s. Similarly, the CIA front "non-profit," the Asia Foundation, provided financial support, as did US-based JDR III (Rockefeller) and Ford foundations, and the US-founded, Philippines-based insurance company Philam Life.

The Asia Foundation and the Ford Foundation both played an ongoing part in the Cold War by financially sustaining cultural projects that supported the United States's vision of capitalist liberal democracy. As Inderjeet Parmar has shown, US philanthropic organizations — in particular Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie — played an essential role in extending the imperial ambitions of the US establishment (the state and its wealthy supporters) via the penetration of other states with funds strategically bestowed upon their institutions, from healthcare to education to the arts. Wherever these funds traveled, they generally were used to a specific end: establishing and sustaining "elite networks that, on the whole, supported American policies—foreign and economic—ranging from liberalism in the 1950s to neoliberalism into the twenty-first century."[169] Parmar notes that foundations didn't need to interfere in the nature of work produced by intellectual and cultural elites in order to pursue the aims of US power. Rather, foundations effectively supported US policy merely by the strategic bestowal of funds: intellectual (and, I might add, artistic) work afforded the healthy and sustaining financial support that US foundations could bring found prominence and prestige. In this way foundations had

---

[169] Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century : The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.

(and have) the power to ascribe "what is legitimate and illegitimate knowledge."[170] By supporting an inaugural festival-conference of the ITI's Third World committee in a US-aligned nation, presenting a platform that reflected the already-existing Theatre of Nations and ITI World Congress, these institutions presented new ITI members from the Global South a path to organizational legitimacy: the UN-style technocratic discussion of theatre development, alongside a showcase of nationally-representative "traditional" cultural practices. Discussion of Third World politics, or possible alignment with the Second World, were therefore largely rendered "illegitimate." This emphasis on the traditional, with its cultural alignment with the US and its anti-communist internationalism, is notable given the status of PETA as a member of the "theatre of liberation" network, and Guidote's own ambitions to operate a critical, artistically experimental Third World actors' workshop within the ITI. One suspects this was a pragmatic move: accepting the funds, and legitimacy politics, of these US foundations in order to launch the Third World project, that Guidote and others could subsequently shape on their own terms.

Within this frame, the organizers of the Third World festival-conference could claim a degree of success in folding a number of new nations into the ITI, thus helping the parent organization to fulfill its founding, universalist mission. In spite of certain hiccups — including the lack of any participation by Latin American centers, and the unexplained absence of Romanian-French playwright Eugène Ionesco (who was due to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of the Philippines), which left the conference without a keynote speaker[171]

---

[170] Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, 9.

[171] Nestor Torre Jr., "Roces is Chairman of Theater Festival," *Manila* Chronicle, Manila, November 25, 1971. Clearly there is a bigger story to be told here — which access to archives in the Philippines may be able to facilitate. Ionesco was of course an intriguing choice of speaker in Manila, given the aforementioned debate over his keynote at the 1959 Helsinki congress discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

— the gathering offered impetus for further activity in the name of the Third World within the ITI.

At the close of the 1971 conference, Cecile Guidote and PETA were appointed as secretariat to the Third World project. Ellen Stewart, attending the event with colleagues from the US center of the ITI as an observer, was asked to continue her role as a prominent "International Advisor and Consultant."[172] As noted via the heavy involvement of American foundations, the US center of the ITI was invested in the TWC's success, with the recruitment of Stewart a sign of the importance placed on the project.

When the US ITI Advisory Council met in January 1972, Stewart and Lloyd Richards, who had also attended Manila as part of the delegation, were adamant that the US should act decisively to secure the future of the TWC by publicly supporting Guidote and PETA. Jean Darcante, General Secretary of the ITI, was seen as a potential roadblock due to his previously declared indifference toward the unified "Third World" concept. Given the lack of participants from Latin America in Manila, it was feared that Darcante may attempt to break up the project into regional focus groups, redirect it to an exclusively "Afro-Asian" orientation, or attempt to disband it altogether.[173] Looking to keep Darcante and Fulchigoni (the UNESCO representative working with the ITI secretariat) honest, the US council sought a way to force them into a position of "automatically supporting" TWC proposals.[174] This would require a certain degree of

---

[172] Rosamond Gilder, "President of the International Theatre Institute of the U.S., Report: First Third-World Theatre Festival and Conference" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity).

[173] "Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972, at 2 p.m. at the Dramatists Guild [Minutes]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

[174] "Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972."

realpolitik, and a strategic use of the United States's powerful position in the ITI as its highest-contributing member state.

It was resolved that the US center of the ITI would immediately announce it was working with PETA on a second festival-conference, taking place as soon as possible. With regards to possible venues, several were suggested. Tunis, an integral part of the pre-history of the project, was ruled out: given the Tunisian boycott of Israel, they couldn't abide by UNESCO rules on universality. Australia was vetoed by Stewart on account of the state's ongoing violence toward its indigenous population. Perhaps counterintuitively, yet pragmatically, Stewart suggested the Shiraz Arts Festival as a possible solution. With a festival infrastructure already in place, and a regime "looking for political recognition," Iran would allow for rapid organization and reliable access to funds. Meanwhile, taking the initiative in this way would carve out some organizational autonomy from the skeptical Darcante.[175] The second Festival-Conference of the Third World Theatre committee would take place during the Shiraz Arts Festival from 6-9 September, 1973. This followed three interstitial gatherings in Bombay (now Mumbai) in November 1972, and twice in Moscow: March and June 1973, latterly during the ITI World Congress.[176]

Moscow, 1973: The Artist as Politician

Events in Moscow during the Spring and Summer of 1973 were significant for the development of the TWC committee, both in terms of its institutional place within the ITI, but

---

[175] "Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972."

[176] Note that even with the action taken by the US ITI to ensure Israel's participation - which included Martha Coigney writing to Darcante in March 1972 leaning on him to drop the idea of Tunisia as a host - Israeli representative Jesaja Weinberg was denied a visa to India, and was again absent from Shiraz, 1973. See: Margaret Croydon, "The Arabs' Goal: A Theater that Speaks for Arabs" *The New York* Times, March 3, 1974, 32.

also its intellectual and political orientation. Given the shift from London and the Philippines in 1971 — two national contexts in which the agenda of the ITI secretariat, and US foundations who held a similar perspective on international cultural politics, could flourish — to the Soviet Union in 1973, it is unsurprising that a sharply divergent politics began to emerge in Moscow. This year represented the high-water mark of the "UN model" of nation-based Third World organizing, and the emergence of a new, agitative stance coming from within the TWC. During the Spring meeting, the TWC's developments coalesced in three particular areas: defining "Third World" according to material circumstances and solidarity, as well as defining the forms of participation permitted for people from outside of the Third World; demanding that the Third World Theatre committee become a permanent committee of the ITI; and demanding five seats on the ITI executive committee be allocated to the TWC committee.

In defining the Third World, the participants in the March meeting[177] moved beyond the de-facto appropriation of a UNESCO term — which privileged nation and region alone — to declare the people of the Third World as united by shared historical experiences and contemporary material conditions: "want, deprivation, exploitation, colonialism."[178] Those countries falling under this banner would be accorded full voting rights in the committee as members. A further category of associate members (non-voting) comprised two constituencies: independent theatre companies and artists from the Third World, and "ethnic or indigenous tribes

---

[177] These included delegates from: Argentina, Brazil, Congo, Cuba, India, Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Peru, Venezuela, Egypt, South Yemen, North Vietnam, Senegal, Morocco, South Korea, the Philippines, Iran, Lebanon, Zaire, Uganda, and Sri Lanka; as well as Australia, the FRG, Israel, USA, USSR, Poland, Spain, France, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, the DDR, Finland, Bulgaria, and Belgium.

[178] "Third World Committee Meeting, XV Congress, Moscow, March 28-30, 1973, Preface to the Resolution" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

or minority groups within economically developed and industrialized societies suffering the same human conditions of the Third World."[179] This latter category effectively opened the door to participants from capitalist or communist countries to self-identify as part of the Third World, casting off the nation-thinking of the UN model. Here an institutional critique was emerging that would help define the TWC's internationalist politics: beyond not only UNESCO's regionalism, but also the stable differentiation between "developed/developing" which irons out patterns of uneven development and legacies of colonialism within economically-advanced nations. The decision to include minorities and indigenous people from developed countries was not uniformly welcome, as would become apparent in Shiraz. Beyond these associate members of the TWC committee, there were two remaining non-voting categories: Participant observers (who could be anyone from an ITI national center or other theatre organization recognized by the committee), and consultants: theatre experts with a particular and abiding interest in the success of the Third World project. In Spring 1973, these were listed as Ellen Stewart, Fritz Bennewitz (from the DDR), and Chérif Khaznadar - the Syrian-French artist and producer who had been influential in launching the committee since its Beirut days.

The two major demands articulated by the meeting of the committee in March 1973 would be carried forward to the World Congress of the ITI in June that year. In light of its groundbreaking work in fulfilling the ITI's mission through expanding participation in its activities beyond Europe and North America, the TWC sought to become a permanent committee of the ITI - thus securing its organizational position and access to financial support. The committee also sought representation on the executive committee of the ITI - its highest

---

[179] "Third World Committee Meeting, XV Congress, Moscow."

decision-making body - with five nominees from Asia, Africa, or Latin America. No delegate from any country across these regions had ever previous sat on the executive committee.

Moscow 1973 was the most politically combative World Congress in the ITI's history. In the heart of the USSR, the divergences of early 1970s international politics cut through any designs upon an autonomous discussion of theatre development. Many participating theatre workers explicitly articulated their role as akin to ideological soldiers in the Cold War. In a letter to US ITI leaders Rosamond Gilder and Martha Coigney in which he thanked them for allowing him to be one of their "troops," Alan Schneider, a director known for his work at Arena Stage and as a director of Samuel Beckett's plays, described the politicking among ITI delegates. By becoming Chair of a committee, representatives were able - and expected - to favor their own ideological side. Schneider, a US citizen who was born in Ukraine a few months after the October Revolution, cites the example of Oleg Tabakov, acting as a Soviet delegate to the Youth Committee, who was reprimanded by his "political overlords" for curtailing the particularly loquacious speech of a comrade.[180] US delegates like Schneider — and those representing the Third World bloc — similarly maneuvered into positions of authority within their chosen committees. Regarding the balance of forces in Moscow, he lamented to Gilder and Coigney: "I'm sorry the British weren't there in greater force."[181]

Of these machinations, Coigney would write (somewhat ambiguously) that there are "two sorts of people in the world: (1) Those who admit that they are politicians, and (2) The rest of

---

[180] "Letter from Alan Schneider to Rosamond Gilder and Martha Coigney," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5

[181] "Letter from Alan Schneider to Rosamond Gilder and Martha Coigney."

us."[182] Delegates of all ideological stripes were acting as "politicians" from the beginning to the end of the Congress. As the conference approached a familiar story emerged: the Soviet Union had denied visas to delegates from both Israel and South Korea (ROK). When the US center of the ITI heard of these developments, they moved to either cancel the Congress or, failing that, organize a boycott among allied delegations. Responding to these threats, the Soviets offered assurances that there had been a "terrible error," and that the entire Israeli delegation would be granted visas.[183] This story would not end here, with a fight over participation by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) still to come. Yet first another Soviet concession: the Western forces were organizing a "protestors' caucus" to pressure for South Korean participation.[184] Unofficial meetings were held in which even the Soviet-aligned socialist countries attested that they were backing the Koreans. Third World Committee members argued that to bar Korean participation would undermine their agenda.[185] When the ITI Executive Committee gathered for its meeting two days before the Congress began, a Soviet member announced that a visa would be issued to a single South Korean delegate - the director Yoo Duk-hyung - that day. As Coigney reflected: "There ensued a very unparliamentary but theatrical riot of congratulation and relief and mutual speeches of regard and understanding" — it was a victory for those on all sides who

---

[182] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5; 1.

[183] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, 2.

[184] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, 3. The members of this group were: the UK, France, Israel, West Germany, Canada, Italy, and the US.

[185] "Stage Director Yoo: Russ Society Seems to be 'Oriental'," *The Korea Times*, June 8, 1973.

sought to steer the ITI through turbulent political times while retaining its commitment to universalism.[186]

Yoo's participation in Moscow was a major development in Soviet-South Korean relations. He was the first ROK passport holder to travel to the USSR. Already well known in ITI circles, Yoo's work had been admired at the TWC Manila Festival-Conference - and he was the son of Korean ITI Director, the playwright Yoo Chi-jin. Thus he was well-placed to be a beneficiary of these thawing relations, as mediated by the ITI. Yoo's brief trip to Moscow generated a flurry of media interest, as numerous interviews appeared in Korean newspapers and in a little over a week he was transformed from renowned theatre director to fully-fledged cultural diplomat.[187] In a prepared statement read upon his return, he looked to the future of relations between the countries: "Now we can begin to have new hope for cultural exchanges and communication between the Russian and Korean people, after our relations have been closed for so long during the bitter cold war period."[188] In this turn of events, Yoo became an archetypal example of "soft" diplomacy at the state-level during the Cold War: the admission of an artist, athlete, or academic to an unfamiliar country for "exchange," and to test the waters for future political delegations.

TWC members would require such diplomacy as it brought forth the institutional demands its members had articulated in the spring: to become a permanent committee and to

---

[186] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5; 3-4.

[187] Yoo also wrote a two-part travelog reflecting on his experience. See: Yoo Duk-hyung, "Russ Seem to Enjoy Theater, But No Experimental Plays," *The Korea Times* (June 17, 1973), and Yoo Duk-hyung, "Russian Society, People Felt More Oriental than Western," *The Korea Times,* June 19, 1973.

[188] Roy Whang, "Artist Sees Hope for Thaw," *The Korea Herald,* June 10, 1973.

secure ongoing executive committee representation. In advance of the Congress the ITI executive committee recommended to each sub-committee a series of specific discussion points relating to the core congress theme. In 1973, this was "Trends of Theatre Development in Contemporary Society." In Ellen Stewart's copy of the pre-conference circular, all of the EC's suggestions for the Third World committee were emphatically crossed-out. The TWC was more interested in preparing for Shiraz, and laying groundwork for the Congress votes on their proposals.[189] This approach would prove a success: the Congress approved Third World Theatre as a permanent committee of the ITI. The organization would thereafter have five permanent committees: Congress, Third World, Study, Youth, and Music. In what can be read as a not-too-subtle rebuke to the TWC's nascent internationalism, the EC wrote in its report that "Congress attributes the greatest importance to local and regional initiatives," and further that "it is only in the domain of the theatre that the Organization can help the Third World."[190] The leadership of the ITI was attempting to reassert its purely "cultural" mission - a definition which excluded the possibility of politics. As an institution it still saw itself as outside the Third World, in a paternalist-charitable relation, in spite of the insurgent energy of the TWC committee.

Becoming a permanent committee would in theory grant the TWC access to greater financial support from the central ITI. This would be vital for the independent organization of events, as well as ensuring transportation and accommodation for its participants — particularly

---

[189] "International Theatre Institute National Centre of the USSR, XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, May 27-June 1, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection) These discussion suggestions were eventually boiled down to a single agenda item for the TWC meeting in June - seemingly a token gesture of compliance with the executive committee's interests.

[190] "Report on the Proceedings of the Congress (General Committee) of the 15th Congress of the ITI in Moscow, May 28-30, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

those who received limited funds from their national governments. Yet this funding was not particularly forthcoming, owing to the ITI's own financial issues during this era. Such issues were the result of the organization's over-dependence on large dues-payments from the US and USSR, which failed to compensate for the meagre (or non-existent) contributions by less wealthy nations.

Away from its plenary push for permanent committee status, the TWC's own meetings in Moscow were variously described as a "trench war," a "powder-keg," and "four days of near blood-shed" by participants.[191] Much of this surrounded two connected issues: levels of participation by different Third World constituencies, and the presence of artists from the Palestine Liberation Organization. One reason for the repeated discussion of "ethnic or indigenous tribes or minority groups within the economically developed and industrialized societies suffering the same conditions of the Third World," — in addition to offering a home for ethnic minorities and indigenous people from Western states — was to open up space for the inclusion of Palestinians within the committee and, by extension, the ITI.[192] In Moscow, the tactics for admitting the PLO to the Third World committee mirrored those previously employed to secure the Soviet concession over Israeli and South Korean delegates: through a hastily-arranged letter-writing campaign, internal votes, "threatened walk-outs, [and] press conferences," committee members secured from the ITI the right for Palestinian representatives to join the

---

[191] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Annual Report, 1974-1975" (NYPL Coigney Collection, ITI National Centers - US) Box 5-8, Folder 6, 26. and International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5; 10, 11.

[192] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5; 11.

meeting as observers.[193] This was the first of several attempts throughout the 1970s to find a place within the ITI for Palestinian representation. Yet here their appearance proved short lived: having given a brief speech, the PLO delegation walked out in protest at a response by an Israeli committee member.[194] The episode contributed to the sense among US ITI leadership that the Congress was becoming politically impossible to contain.

Upon its acceptance as a permanent committee of the ITI, the TWC became fully accountable to the ITI Congress, and the executive derived from it: the Executive Committee, and the Secretary General (Jean Darcante).[195] As part of the committee's acceptance, the Congress immediately referred several motions regarding the composition and status of the TWC directly to the ITI Executive Committee. These included establishing the statutes of the TWC as a permanent committee, through the collaboration of "a representative of the Third World Committee" with the EC "in view of the respective resolutions submitted by the Third World Committee."[196] Furthermore, the Congress passed on "all Third World Committee resolutions regarding ITI activities in the domain of the Third World."[197] These resolutions shifted all decisions regarding the political composition of the TWC, its finances, and its demands for comprehensive representation on the EC, over to the executive committee itself for adjudication. While this was fairly common procedure as new permanent committees were folded into the

---

[193] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Annual Report, 1974-1975" (NYPL Coigney Collection, ITI National Centers - US) Box 5-8, Folder 6; 26.

[194] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Annual Report, 1974-1975," 26.

[195] "International Theatre Institute: A Permanent Committee" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1, Folder 1.

[196] "Report on the Proceedings of the Congress (General Committee) of the 15th Congress of the ITI in Moscow, May 28-30, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

[197] "Report on the Proceedings of the Congress (General Committee)."

ITI's organizational structure, it bears noting that at this time the Executive Committee was largely subordinate to the General Secretary, who was required to attend all international meetings, be included in all reports and major communications, the contents of which he (Darcante) would then relay to Executive Committee members.[198] This effectively meant that the TWC was asking Darcante to single-handedly make his position more democratically-accountable. Given his skepticism about the direction in which the Third World committee was traveling, this was unlikely to happen. The far-reaching power of the executive branch of ITI governance — and the Third World Committee's desire to reform it — would lead to further issues with the central authorities.

Yet in spite of the impending collision with Darcante, there is evidence that senior members of the organization were aware of the possibilities presented by the TWC's institutional challenge. In a report to the US ITI, Martha Coigney wrote: "Like many other organizations who have been slow to understand the word 'international' as meaning more than European/North American, ITI will have an enormous job in the next few years to prove to the member countries of the Third World that it can respond constructively and flexibly to their theatre demands. Asia, Africa, and Latin America have waited a long time and at great distance for more than token recognition of their contributions to world theatre. ITI is not going to be allowed to forget that inattention."[199] Having survived the Moscow "trenches," the challenge ahead for the ITI was

---

[198] "International Theatre Institute: A Permanent Committee" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1, Folder 1.

[199] International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5; 11-12.

whether or not the organization's existing leadership was capable of hearing Third World artists' demands.

Such early skirmishes with the ITI secretariat are instructive. They also highlight a systemic issue at stake in the governance of arts and cultural organizations that has not abated in the present day. This is the problem of charismatic, individual authority, and the role of singular artistic-managerial figureheads in cultural institutions. Charismatic authority, in its modern, secularized understanding, was developed by the early sociologist Max Weber.[200] Charisma, Weber writes, is a

> certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader…[201]

As contemporary scholars like Melissa Nisbett and Ben Walmsley have described, workers in the arts and cultural industries often display a particular affinity towards sources of charismatic authority.[202] In industry settings where management training is scarce, such characteristics as personality type, "vision," communication skills, individual aesthetic taste, and interpersonal relationships are taken as signs of authority and capacity for leadership. Accordingly,

---

[200] I want to acknowledge the debt my reading of charismatic authority in arts leadership here owes to the brilliant work of Dr Charlotte Young in her dissertation on the subject at Queen Mary, University of London.

[201] Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 358-359.

[202] Melissa Nisbett and Ben Walmsley, "The Romanticization of Charismatic Leadership in the Arts," in *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* (2016) 46.1, 2-12.

organizational structures are built around such individuals, often without due concern for processes of accountability or succession planning.

While Darcante was not a founder of the ITI, he benefitted from a hierarchical structure that was built for charismatic authority. The body to which the ITI General Secretary reported, the Executive Committee, was composed of national representatives. Those representatives were to a significant degree reliant upon the General Secretary to be kept abreast of developments, given the global nature of the organization and the fact that each EC member was also the head of a national center, and a leading figure in the theatre industry in their own country — oftentimes an artistic director. During his time as head of the organization, Darcante would be present (with astonishing regularity) as ITI events all over the world: if an event had the ITI name attached to it, he would most likely be there. He would always have a far greater grasp of the organization's inner workings than any other member of the body to which he was accountable. This was particularly true of events in the Global South; as long as the EC remained largely European and North American in composition, Darcante was likely to be the only member of the central body to have attended such gatherings, and be capable of commenting with first-hand knowledge on developments. Given the structure of the ITI as an organization that favored the "exceptional powers or qualities" of its leader, so long as Darcante was skeptical of the TWC's activities, that would present significant obstacles to its institutional agenda.

Shiraz, 1973: Iran, between two Third Worlds

The Shiraz Arts Festival (1967-77) was arguably the most influential festival of theatre, performance, dance, and music during the 1970s. In a sense, the program presented annually in

Iran exhibited the "broad spectrum" described by performance theorist Richard Schechner: a city-wide frame placed over not just all manner of performing arts, but rituals, public debates, spectacles, cultural diplomacy, service labor, and performances of everyday life.[203] The cultural apparatus of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's state was keen to project Iran as a nation of singular, ancient cultural heritage tied to its monarchic traditions. Such cultural institutions — including Shiraz, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, and Tehran's City Theater — were often founded under the patronage of the Shah's wife, Farah. The guiding principle of the Pahlavi cultural project was to situate the nation as a meeting place of great civilizations at the crossroads of East and West.

Much of the extant literature on the Shiraz Arts Festival tends — knowingly or not — to amplify this Pahlavi-era vision of Iran, particularly by emphasizing the scope and cosmopolitanism of the performance program and its thematic concern with dynamics of tradition and modernity. Herein Iran – but specifically the city of Shiraz, with its proximity to the ancient ruins the Persepolis and its association with the great Persian poets Hafez and Sa'di – is posited as a cradle of civilization and culture. This narrative presents the festival as a site in which the great artists of the time — Shuji Terayama, Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Arby Ovanessian — could create their most ambitious work with minimal restraints. The most prominent voice in such contemporary discussion is the curator Vali Mahlouji, who holds an archive of Shiraz material and organizes exhibitions under the banner of "Archaeology of the Final Decade." For Mahlouji, Shiraz represents "perhaps the most radical multi-disciplinary

---

[203] Schechner, "The Broad Spectrum Approach," 4-6.

crucible of any commissioning festival in history"[204] While it is certainly true that Shiraz represents a cultural project of remarkable scale and ambition, in which artists from across the world were afforded handsome budgets to create new work, Mahlouji's writings on the festival apply a series of concepts that ascribe to the festival a broader, emancipatory politics: "a utopian stage," "a panoramic view of world culture," "temporary autonomous zone," "universalizing heterotopia," and, perhaps most provocatively, a "radical Third World rewriting."[205] In this way Mahlouji's work is in step with late-Pahlavi political rhetoric.

During the mid-late 1970s state-aligned intellectuals like Parviz Nikkhah and Mahmud Jafarian would adopt the language of Third Worldism to defend the Shah, using anti-imperialist rhetoric as cover for the consolidation of one-party rule and unswervingly close ties to the United States.[206] Furthermore, the originator of the "temporary autonomous zone" concept, anarchist Hakim Bey (otherwise known as Peter Lamborn Wilson), was a highly influential cultural commentator in Tehran throughout the 1970s — offering praise for the Shah's cultural projects through the language of political radicalism. Echoing Nikkhah, Jafarian, and Wilson/Bey, Mahlouji adopts a language of radicalism in defence of a cultural project that supported a politics of nationalist authenticity, while handsomely paying international avant-garde artists for their

---

[204] Vali Mahlouji, "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting," in *Iran Modern*, ed. by Fereshteh Daftari and Layla Diba (New York: Asia Society, 2013), 87–91, 87.

[205] This phrase is from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. To see Mahlouji's expansion on these topics, see the text "The Utopian Stage: The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis (1967-1977)," available at http://www.archaeologyofthefinaldecade.com.

[206] Afshin Matin-Asgari, *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 196-198. Both Nikkhah and Jafarian were ex-communists, expediently undertaking the necessary rhetorical contortions to reframe monarchy as a politics of liberation.

silence on the imprisonment, torture, and murder of dissidents and the consolidation of single-party monarchic rule.

Much as Ellen Stewart foresaw, Iran was in need of "political recognition." The prospect of playing host to a conference of the Third World theatre committee of the ITI would no doubt have appealed to the Pahlavi state's cultural administrators. Through its partnerships in the Philippines, the committee had already shown itself to be flexible enough with regards to permitting a traditionalist-inflected concept of the Third World. Iran under the Pahlavis, as I have shown, was interested in appropriating a language of anti-colonial radicalism while pushing a wholly different cultural aesthetics of "East": one grounded in so-called "eastern spirituality." This formulation, as scholars like Ali Mirsepassi and Hamed Yousefi have pointed out, inflected the work of artists and intellectuals operating in the elite circles of state patronage in 1970s Iran: from state-aligned traditionalist, Sufi scholar Hossein Nasr to pioneer of the *saqqkhaenh* art of movement, Hossein Zenderoudi.[207] The discourse of eastern spirituality, broadly conceived, informed both the legitimizing pro-monarchy intellectuals like Nasr, who constructed a nationalist mythos connecting the Iranian monarchy to Persian Sufi traditions — while fashioning the Shah as a kind of spiritual leader — and diverse perspectives critical of the state: from Ahmad Fardid's Heideggerianism (which ultimately informed the foundation of the Islamic Republic), to the anti-colonial intellectual Ali Shariati. As scholar Houchang Chehabi writes:

---

[207] The literature on this subject is broad, but to give a representative example: Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (New York: Cambridge University press, 2017); Mirsepassi's work owes much to: Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); see the excellent documentary film: Hamed Yousefi, *The Fabulous Life and Thought of Ahmad Fardid* (2015). For a highly convincing alternative history of the politics of spirituality in Iran during this era, taking in the equally expansive debate of Michel Foucault's contribution to the debates over the Iranian Revolution, see: Behrouz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution After the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

> Until the late 1960s [the] desire to be taken seriously by the West was accompanied in official circles… by a feeling that, deep-down, Iranians were Europeans, given their 'Aryan' heritage that allegedly distinguished them from their Semitic and Turkic neighbors. By the 1970s, however, the disenchantment with Western cultural influence ('Westoxification') that many anti-regime intellectuals had begun articulating in the 1960s crept into the official discourse of the Pahlavi state. The notion that Iranians could draw on the resources of their 'Eastern spirituality' to resist the negative aspects of Western civilization, i.e., its 'materialism,' came to cohabit with the older notion that… Iranians and Europeans belonged to the same civilization.[208]

So, in late-Pahlavi Iran, it was possible to advance a "Third World" politics, deeply skeptical of western materialism and bureaucracy (but with none of the mass democracy or anti-imperial economic policy of *actual* Third World politics, which had been crushed in 1953 in Iran), in tandem with an essentialist spiritualism in thrall to monarchic power. It is in this context that the decision to invite the Third World committee to Iran becomes plausible.

As the second Third World Theatre Festival-Conference arrived in Shiraz to coincide with the annual festival, it would share the front pages of Iranian newspapers with the fourth summit of the Non-Aligned nations, taking place simultaneously in Algiers. The 1973 summit represented a turning point for the political direction of the non-aligned states. It was here that Algerian leader Houari Boumédienne called for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) - an economic charter promoting nationalization, protection of national

---

[208] H. E. Chehabi, "The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran's Revolutionary Mythology," in Roham Alvandi, ed., *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements* (London: Gingko Library, 2018), 168-201; 195-196.

raw materials, more equitable trade relations, and the rejection of economic sanctions as a punitive tool against rival states.[209] As Vijay Prashad has noted, Boumédienne's advocacy of NIEO gave cover to political authoritarianism:

> Political rights within a nation [could] be subsumed as long as the rulers had an economic agenda that confronted capitalism. This view found few detractors, mainly because by the time of the summit in Algiers a number of Third World leaders arrived either in military fatigues or with military designations before their names.[210]

The turn toward an economic rhetoric of liberation and neglect of politics and the agency of the population led to a drift in the wider Third World project. During the 1970s, even the authoritarian, US-aligned Shah would co-opt the language of Third Worldism in Iran.[211] In the pages of magazines like the entertainment weekly *Tamasha*, the Shah would be extolled as an anti-imperialist monarch by former radicals on the payroll of state institutions.[212] The Third World idea remained a powerful ideological lightning rod even while it was becoming increasingly detached from political liberation. Yet as the delegates from the Third World Committee gathered in Shiraz, theirs labors would be committed primarily to political concerns.

While there was not an organized attempt to reframe the world of the TWC in light of the late-Pahlavi spiritual aesthetics, nevertheless this particular aesthetico-politics can be detected in some of the conference literature. For example, in defining the status of "regular members" of the TWC, the categories established by the conference organizers were: "1. A developing

---

[209] Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 189.

[210] Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 132.

[211] Matin-Asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 196-198.

[212] Matin-Asgari, *Both Eastern and Western*, 197.

economy. 2. A dynamic movement to assert the broadening of human rights, freedom, and peace. 3. A high level of spiritual sensitivity and ancient artistic traditions and rituals."[213] Of course, the notion of Pahlavi Iran as a part of a movement to broaden human rights is absurd, but it is notable the manner in which the mass-democratic and anti-imperialist politics of the Third World movement is here casually reduced to a US-style discourse of rights and "freedom." Yet it is the third point that most intriguingly hints at the Iranian provenance of this pseudo-Third World political categorization.

As I have noted, the Pahlavi state cultural apparatus was at pains to tie Iran's ancient history to the monarchy as a legitimizing force — in the context of theatre that was commonly tied to the category of ritual. That category would of course become essential to the formulation of performance studies in the US academy, via the collaborations between Richard Schechner and Victor Turner, the social anthropologist who popularized a highly structured account of ritual as "social drama." With its romantic notion of lost *communitas*, a communitarian fellow-feeling upheld through *liminal* ritual events, Turner sparked the imagination of a generation of avant-garde theatre makers. Many of those same artists also received invitations from the Shiraz Arts Festival during the late 1960s and 1970s, and were able to indulge what may be described as their orientalist proclivities through the newly-minted, Iranian state-upheld form of "traditional," or "ritual" drama: *ta'ziyeh*. Beginning with a special 1970 Shiraz festival focus on ritual and theatre, in which *ta'ziyeh*, a Shi'a Islamic social form practiced across the Middle East region, was prominently placed, Shiraz became a home for the practice and theorization of ritual

---

[213] Carole Y. Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," *International Theatre Institute of the United States, Annual Report, 1972-1973* (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection), 113.

performance. That tendency, which culminated in a highly influential 1976 symposium and publication, *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, and the founding of the Institute for Traditional Theatre and Ritual in Tehran, would bring together anthropologists, theatre makers and historians of Islam and Iranian society, to elevate *ta'ziyeh* as Iran's contribution to a "world theatre" of traditional, spiritually-engaged practices. In 1973, at the TWC gathering, Pahlavi cultural administrators like Farrokh Ghaffary, head of programming at Shiraz and subsequently secretary of the TWC for a brief time, were testing the waters on this framing of a counter-Third World theatrical discourse.[214]

In her detailed report on the TWC Festival-Conference, Black American artist-activist Carole Johnson described some of the issues Third World participants encountered while attempting to realize their own agenda in Shiraz. One of the most pragmatic ways in which the Iranian organizers attempted to stuff out the radical politics of many participants was the create a debate-style format that led to procedural dead-ends. She recounts the unnecessary, stale tedium of many of the meetings. Given their intriguing pre-circulated agendas, this came as an incredible disappointment. The conference was hampered by a "quasi-official setting" reminiscent of the United Nations itself:

> The conference atmosphere was anything but informal with its interpreters in booths, the delegates with ear-phones at their finger tips for the translations and who sit around a large table with their country placard in front of them and who also have the attention of newspaper and T.V. cameramen occasionally turned on them. All these trappings would

[214] For a fuller account of the "ta'ziyeh-as-ritual" debate, see my forthcoming article: Matthew Randle-Bent, "Indigenous Avant-Gardes: The Shiraz Arts Festival and Ritual Performance Theory in 1970s Iran," *Arab Stages* (2023).

> invariably lead to conservative and studied statements of people who feel that they are representing their governments instead of to a free and easy discussion between people working and interested in the arts.[215]

This format was seemingly suitable only for making procedural decisions, not for any more expansive discussion about the future potential of the committee now it had secured permanent status within the ITI.[216] The spectacle of Third World artists acting as cultural representatives on television would certainly have suited both the monarchy's desire to project a pseudo-radical self-image to its population, as well as Farah Diba's vision of Iran as a hub for the arts between East and West. Farah worked to position Iran as a kind of civilizational bridge, a place in which the traditional and the modern could intermingle, the kind of environment highly amenable to Western investors or universities seeking lucrative regional partnerships.

The Third World performance festival running alongside the conference (and parallel to the regular Shiraz program) also received mixed reviews. For Johnson, they provided a welcome respite from the meetings; for Janet Lazarian, the *Tehran Journal* critic assigned to the Shiraz Festival, the perceived quality of performances was unkindly skewed through their juxtaposition with the main Shiraz program. Performances tended to favor the "traditional" emphasis placed by the Iranian organizers — as had also been the case in the Philippines. Performers suffered

---

[215] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 110.

[216] In addition to Johnson's account of the frustrations of ITI bureaucracy, see also: Alan Seymour, "A Persian Odyssey," *Plays and Players,* November 1973, 66-69.

through a lack of critical response given the lateness of their programming — with the Shiraz Festival ending on September 8th, many critics had already gone home.[217]

Despite these evident issues stemming from a disconnect between the organizers and the agenda of the committee's most influential members, the TWC managed to advance discussions on the representation of minorities and indigenous populations in developed countries, and its challenges to the ITI as an institution. These conversations happened both in the formal setting of the conference floor, and elsewhere in Shiraz's Kourosh Hotel.[218] Writing in a special edition of *The Drama Review* on international festivals, Paul Ryder Ryan suggests that there were in a sense two conferences happening simultaneously: "In public, [delegates] made measured statements about the need to secure government support for theatre. These participants, in many cases, represented the ministries of culture in their respective countries. In private, several of these delegates professed to be militant radicals committed to overthrowing their governments."[219] In spite of - or perhaps facilitated by - this apparent split, the committee was able to pass significant measures on the conference floor.

The first afternoon discussion on September 6th was dedicated to settling on a new definition of "Third World People." As Lazarian reported: "The new definition, proposed by a

---

[217] Janet Lazarian, "Not up to standard," *The Tehran Journal,* September 9, 1973, 7; and Janet Lazarian, "Oversold tickets and no room at the Inn," *The Tehran Journal*, September 11, 1973, 7.

[218] The Kourosh Hotel - still open in Shiraz - seems to have become infamous with festival-goers. At the time it was one of a handful of higher-end hotels in the city. One account from the British press is particularly memorable: "At the Kourosh Hotel, cultural imperialism is complete. The *al fresco* dinner is accompanied by a four-girl, two-boy combo in yellow blouses, striped hot pants, white knee-high boots and yellow shirts and trousers respectively. Called the Korean Yellow Birds, they play… banal American songs like *The Way We Were* in instant muzak arrangements. The while, American guests dance awkwardly and German workers heckle. A forlorn spectacle. Drinkers in the bar are diverted by a belly dancer. From Venezuela." W. Stephen Gilbert, "Shiraz/Persepolis," *Plays and Players* November 1975, 15-17; 17.

[219] Paul Ryder Ryan, "Shiraz-Persepolis and the Third World," *The Drama Review: TDR*, 17.4 (1973), 31-33; 33.

delegate from Iran, stated that a people would be considered to be members of the Third World if it had experienced the effects of a dominant and foreign culture upon its way of life… By this definition ethnic groups in America, Australia and all former and present colonies can be members of the Theater Congress."[220] Another proposal, apparently discarded in favor of the "dominated culture" definition, would have used an economic measurement based upon annual per capita Gross National Product, thus bringing Spain, Ireland, Yugoslavia and much of Eastern Europe into the fold.[221] This marked a further step forward from the "associate member" status offered to self-identified Third World people in developed nations during the March meeting in Moscow, and further tied the concept to imperial politics. This would not have been appreciated by the General Secretary, who sent a note to the committee in June warning it against an expansion of the definition of Third World to include any parts of Europe.[222]

The role of Black American artists in the TWC network had been a point of debate within the US ITI for several years. As I have mentioned, Ellen Stewart was one of several prominent women who carried the project in its early years - alongside Cecile Guidote and, in Shiraz, Paulette Khodabandeh.[223] When the fact of US involvement in the nascent Third World project was questioned during one of their advisory council meetings, Stewart's colleague Lloyd

---

[220] Janet Lazarian, "Third World Theater Opens," *The Tehran Journal*, September 8, 1973, 3.

[221] Ryan, "Shiraz-Persepolis and the Third World," 32.

[222] "Third World Committee, Provisional Agenda [Moscow, June 1973]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection). The executive committee notes from Moscow also display his preference for TWC membership to only be permitted for those in developing nations. International Theatre Institute, "Executive Committee, (53rd Session), 1973" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Executive Committee), Box 2-4, Folder 9; 9.

[223] Khodabandeh was an organizer with the Shiraz Arts Festival. Little has been written about her, but she is credited with organizing the Iran TWC conference by Carole Johnson. She would subsequently attend multiple TWC meetings as an Iran delegate, including the Rennes conferences of 1976-1977, at which she is listed as an employee of the Shiraz Festival's Paris bureau.

Richards[224] defended their participation, arguing that the nature of the US delegation - comprising himself, Stewart, and the playwright and founder of El Teatro Campesino Luis Valdez - indicated that they were not a part of the "Western Establishment."[225] Whether or not one agrees with Richards's statement, it is indicative of the way in which Black American artists were able to prize open a space for themselves within an internationalist movement committed to the critique of capitalist imperialism and settler colonialism. Yet simultaneously, Richards, Stewart, and Valdez's perceived status as outsiders was useful to the US ITI and its political strategy: by Richards's own admission: "Everyone else [at the TWC in Manila] came prepared to be anti-Western. This was alleviated by the nature of our delegation."[226] By sending a delegation led by Black and Brown Americans, a Third Worldist critique of the West was subdued, with the US reframed as an influential ally.

Another influential member of the US delegation to Shiraz was Carole Johnson, a trailblazing Black radical dancer, choreographer, and writer. In the early 1970s she founded and edited *The Feet*, a magazine dedicated to Black Dance.[227] In 1972, she toured to Australia for the

---

[224] By this time Richards had of course already achieved national acclaim as the director of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* in 1959, the first play by a Black woman to be performed on Broadway. In 1979, he would be appointed Dean of the Yale School of Drama.

[225] "Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972, at 2 p.m. at the Dramatists Guild [Minutes]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

[226] "Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972."

[227] In an edition of *The Feet*, she offers a capacious definition of "Black Dance" that reads interestingly in light of the debates held at the TWC festival: "Any form of dance and any style that a black person chooses to work within. […] Since the expression 'Black Dance' must be all-inclusive, it includes those dancers that work in: 1) the very traditional forms (the more nearly authentic African styles); 2) the social dance forms that are indigenous to this country [the US] which include tap and jazz dance; 3) the various contemporary and more abstract forms that are seen on the concert stage; and 4) the ballet (which must not be considered solely European)." Thomas F. DeFrantz, "To Make Black Bodies Strange: Social Critique in Concert Dance of the Black Arts Movement," in Annemarie Bean, ed., *A Sourcebook on African-American Performance: Plays, People, Movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 83–93; 91. I first encountered this quote in Susan Manning, *Critical Histories of Modern Dance: A Retrospective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).

first time as a lead dancer with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company, forming relationships with artists from Australia's indigenous population that would shape the rest of her career. One can see her commitment not only to the rightful place of Black Americans in the politics of the Third World, but of indigenous peoples colonized by European settlers, in her writing post-Shiraz. Her report on her experiences, prepared for submission to the US branch of the ITI, is the fullest account of the TWC meeting in Iran available in English.

Johnson recounts how the expanded definition of "Third World People" offered during the Shiraz meeting caused disquiet among certain delegates. During the debate, an Indian delegate expressed concern about admitting Americans to the committee as full members. As Johnson suggests, this highlighted a particular bind on Black Americans on the international scene. The widespread hostility towards US cultural hegemony, juxtaposed with an admiration of Black culture and a desire to consume it, meant that Johnson and her fellow delegates might be strategically included or excluded from certain discussions whenever others felt it was most politically expedient.[228] The push to make the "Third World People" change permanent took years of political work, coordinated by Guidote and Stewart. Eventually, in the name of solidarity the majority of delegates at Shiraz voted to expand their definition of the Third World. Within the committee those previously referred to as "ethnic minorities" were renamed "Third World people in developed countries."[229]

The new definition of "Third World People," inclusive of those in developed countries, would not please the ITI Secretariat. In a letter sent to the TWC membership that October, Jean

---

[228] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 126-127.

[229] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 123.

Darcante brazenly attempted to smear Ellen Stewart's reputation.[230] Stewart had spoken out against Darcante's inadequate leadership of the Third World project in his capacity as General Secretary. On the same day Darcante wrote to Jalal Khoury — President of the Third World committee at this time — falsely alleging that Cecile Guidote had circulated inaccurate reports about the decisions made at Shiraz.[231] The difference in tone between these letters is marked, suggesting that Darcante believed that by offering superficial institutional deference to Khoury and threatening the TWC at large he could erase the efforts of his rivals whose political project had been adopted by the Shiraz delegates. These attacks continued into the ITI's November Executive Committee meeting, with Stewart (not present at the meeting) only defended upon the chance arrival of Guidote in the room.[232] This marked the first overt conflagration in relations between the Third World committee and the ITI executive, just months after becoming a permanent committee.

Johnson's report on the TWC festival-conference is highly instructive in attempting to gauge the atmosphere in Shiraz, and the kinds of discussions being had by delegates outside of the official conference venues, and the political machinations occurring in real time around the difficult questions raised in conference debates. She begins her report with a series of questions, including:

---

[230] Letter from Jean Darcante to the participants in the Third World Theatre Conference, 2nd October, 1973 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

[231] Letter from Jean Darcante to Jalal Khoury, 2nd October, 1973 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection).

[232] International Theatre Institute, "Executive Committee, (54th Session), 1973" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Executive Committee), Box 2-4, Folder 10; 14-18.

1. A central issue - Is ITI (and the Third World Theatre Committee) going to be a real force in the international world?

2.What are the colonial forces in ITI?

a. Are these forces preventing the TWT committee movement from being a real force?

3. How does and can this TWT committee relate to other Third World movements and organizations?

4. Why does it seems so conservative in relation to other international groups?

8. Why was so little attention paid to the Holland observer who was very concerned that the ethnic minorities of his country find a place in the committee, be a part of the structure, and contribute to the project?

9. Why should it be important to play down the role of Black America as an example of an ethnic minority?

Johnson highlights some of the political issues at stake in the TWC's movements in Iran, and the kinds of pushback the committee's more progressive members received over plans to shift away from a national or regionalist notion of the "Third World," with an emphasis on so-called "development" goals, towards a more cooperative, internationalist and transnational approach that permitted Third World membership to ethnic minorities of all nations.

As regards to whom those "conservative" or "colonial" elements around the TWC might be, Johnson has multiple answers. She identifies the shift of organizational responsibilities from PETA to Iran with a "reactionary spirit," that sought to downplay members' interest in political cooperation. Furthermore, she suggests that a broader "First World" constituency within the ITI

sought to prevent the "intermingling of art and politics."[233] Theirs was a belief in "art for art's sake," of a kind favored by the Shiraz Festival organizers. At the Third World conference, there was a new way of thinking, shared among critical participants from First, Second, and Third Worlds, struggling to be born. While she often saw this emergence stifled by bureaucratic debate, nevertheless Johnson could see that with an inclusive framework of "Third World people" in place, it would be easier to establish collaborative artistic and political projects — seen as the greatest potential of the committee — during future festivals.

Perhaps the most interesting of these proposed projects was the brainchild of Cecile Guidote. As Johnson recounts, throughout the early years of the Third World committee Guidote had tried to secure funding for a pilot "Third World Theatre Workshop." Under the umbrella of the TWC, this workshop would be "an inter-ethnic comparative cross-cultural… program. It is designed to be relevant to aspirations and to meet needs and problems of Third World people, regardless of national origin. It hopes to unify the concept of Third World as unity in diversity."[234] In so doing, it might offer a solution to one of Johnson's other questions — how the TWC might relate to other Third World projects — my bringing it into creative dialogue with one of the Third World movements core concepts. Guidote's proposal is recorded three years after the founding of Peter Brook's intercultural International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris. Brook's was a multinational cohort of theatrical pilgrims accompanying the British director to myriad sites of "traditional" performance in Asia and Africa during the first few years of the decade in search of a performing human essence. Guidote's proposal, within the context of

---

[233] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 109.

[234] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 121.

the TWC, offers an intriguing counterpoint. I suggest the dynamic between the two projects are a synecdoche for the relationship between liberal and progressive ideals of "world theatre": from a search for inner essence led by a charismatic director, to a collaborative, comparative workshop aimed at addressing needs.

While frustrations persisted over the time spent on procedural and structural questions, nevertheless developments in Iran set the committee on course for a more ambitious way of thinking about the relationship between art and society on the global scene. United Nations-style formal debate, and the institution's top-down dictation of an apolitical definition of the cultural were no longer viable. Art — and the voices of artists — were being recognized here not only as a force in the development of a national culture, often in an uneasy alliance with state patronage, but also, simultaneously, a "force in the reality of the international political world."[235] Increasingly, this international force — a dual critique, varyingly aesthetic and institutional — would be articulated in anti-capitalist, anti-imperial terms. The hope of many participants was that, with such thorny questions of participation and structure seemingly resolved, the committee could thereafter dedicate much greater time to collaborative projects between Third World artists and serious debate over the role of art as a force for social progress.

It took another longtime advocate for Third World theatre, Chérif Khaznadar, to make these arguments explicit and connect them to aesthetic concerns in Shiraz. In a manifesto circulated at the festival, Khaznadar gave expression to the concerns among TWC members that their efforts be directed not only towards institutional reform of the ITI as a more democratic, internationally representative organization, but simultaneously towards a more capacious

---

[235] Johnson, "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," 112.

understanding of theatrical form. Within the ITI there still appeared to be a conservative legitimacy politics around form: a commitment to upholding dramatic rules of unified time, place, and action.[236] Among artists of the TWC, there was little interest in such conventions.

Khaznadar's manifesto, "Tendencies and Prospects for Third World Theatre," was distributed in French to participants at Shiraz. (It was subsequently translated into English and published in *TDR* later that year.) As has been well documented, the organizers of the Shiraz Festival had proven themselves capable of showcasing for an international audience the festival's modern, vanguard credentials — while simultaneously buying off or marginalizing possible voices of dissent. Therefore, the circulation of this manifesto, offering a stridently anti-colonial communist politics, is all the more notable. Undoubtedly if the Shiraz Festival organizers had known about this text before it was passed around among attendees there would have been an attempt to suppress it. As is often the case during the history of the TWC, Khaznadar proves an intriguing figure capable of walking the line between political autonomy and institutional support.

The manifesto contains eighteen axioms, beginning with: "1. There is not one, but many Third World theatres." He continues: "Today more than ever, we ascertain that each time the capitalistic world came in contact with a foreign culture it destroyed it. Colonized by the capitalistic world, Third World countries saw their culture wasted. Now liberated, one of their primary tasks is to save what is left of their cultures." Belying the multipolar politics of the day, Khaznadar cites first Engels, then the French Communist Party minister Roland Leroy: "Our joy

---

[236] Chérif Khaznadar, email correspondence with the author, May 7, 2021.

will come from searching for the germs of the future… As far as we are concerned, we find not only ashes in the past but also burning embers."[237]

These burning embers of a culture wasted by capitalist colonization, Khaznadar writes, must be nurtured, for they will ignite a new Third World theatre that neither imitates the western modernist theatre — designed to be consumed as merely another commodity — nor simply reconstructs past forms in a mirage of historical continuity:

> 11. Today… the Third World is divided between a desire for "modernism," which would consist of adopting Western values and assimilating the theatre as an object of consumption (one has his theatre just as one has his car, his refrigerator, his washing machine, etc…), and the will to rediscover in the traditional forms of a specific culture the "burning embers" of the theatre of tomorrow.
>
> 13. "Burning embers" theatre, tied to traditions rooted in specific cultures, attempts to go beyond the transitory phenomena of fashion and to become an instrument of popular consciousness, to reflect the identity of a nation, of a people.
>
> 16. Not the avant-garde, not folklore, but a theatre answering the immediate preoccupations of the Third World. A theatre rooted in its history, resolutely turned toward the future. A theatre that does not surrender to the temptation of the fashions of a society of consumption.[238]

While there are certainly perspectives in here that might have appealed to sections of the pro-Shah Iranian intelligentsia during the early 1970s — specifically the critique of western

---

[237] Chérif Khaznadar, "Tendencies and Prospects for Third World Theatre," (trans. by Norma Jean Deák) *The Drama Review: TDR*, 17.4 (1973), 33-35; 34.

[238] Khaznadar, "Tendencies and Prospects for Third World Theatre," 35.

modernity as a society of consumption — nevertheless the explicitly communist language of the text clearly places Khaznadar in a very different anti-imperial tradition.

Khaznadar highlights three aesthetic categories: folkloric, modernist, and avant-garde. While the repeated references to so-called traditional forms of performance has shades of nationalist essentialism, the burning embers theatre would see the instrumentalization of popular forms to foment political consciousness in not one but many distinct contexts. Khazanadar's definition of modernism seems to be tied into critique of the homogenous discourse of modernity: the assumedly benevolent, uni-directional, linear trajectory toward Western-style capitalist modernity with its attendant consumer lifestyle — of which the bourgeois theatre is an integral marker of distinction.[239] Finally, the avant-garde inevitably carries particular significance in the Shiraz Festival context. The avant-garde performance patronized by the Shiraz arts festival tended to fall into two broad categories: formalist work that used so-called "traditional" performance forms as a repository of inspiration for essentialist, apolitical contemporary practice, or supposedly radical work that became indelibly compromised through association with the Shah's regime. None of these options were viable for the populist burning embers theatre.

Burning embers theatre clearly shares points of origin with the work of Khaznadar's contemporaries in the modern Arab theatre — particularly the work of Sa'dallah Wannous and TWC comrade Alfred Farag. Syria's most celebrated and iconoclastic modern playwright, Wannous drew a distinction between what he called a "theological" conception of cultural heritage — which sees folklore and other inherited cultural forms as timeless guides back to an

---

[239] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

imagined essence of identity — and a historical conception, that sees such forms as part of a complex, contradictory, multifaceted history, by turns glorious and ignoble. The critical artist's task, for Wannous, is to engage with such forms contextually and in full understanding of their varied histories — and, furthermore, to give them present utility.[240] Farag's views on this subject will be explored further in chapter three. Speaking to his contemporaries in the Arab world and to the TWC, Khazanadar saw beyond nationalist essentialism, rejected deadening tradition, and projected Third World theatre into the transnational public sphere.

Khaznadar's text exemplifies the kind of dualism identified by Ryan in the same issue of *The Drama Review*. The fact that this highly critical document was produced by someone who was in so many ways an archetypal "institutional" figure in this context is a striking indication of the extent to which many TWC participants were balancing institutional commitments with radical politics. By 1973 Khaznadar was a fixture of the international festival bureaucracy, having established a career working for the ITI's Theatre of Nations and the International Cultural Center at Hammamet. Within a few years of Shiraz he would be appointed director of the Rennes Cultural Center in France — part of the flagship *Maisons de la Culture* policy of André Malraux. His overlapping work with the Third World Theatre committee presented Khaznadar with the opportunity to challenge both the dominant aesthetics and the institutional politics of his colleagues, while creating opportunities for artists from the Third World countries to travel, show their work, and get paid well by host states. These qualities helped cement a partnership with Guidote and Stewart.

---

[240] Wannous, "On the Performance of *The Adventure of The Head of Mamlouk Jabir* in Moscow," 395-402.

Shiraz saw the apotheosis of the "United Nations" model for the committee on Third World Theatre: the bureaucratic, formal discussions of national and regional development goals by national representatives. Simultaneously at this conference a form of transnational Third Worldism began to emerge, as evidenced by the steps taken toward a new structure of political representation in the TWC — the admission of "Third World people in developed nations" disrupting the committee's de-facto nation-thinking — and the ideological turn toward explicit anti-imperialism seen in Khaznadar's manifesto. These transitions would distance the Third World committee from the central ITI, and set the stage for the TWC to attract both sympathy and hostility from various factions in the organization. In the second half of the decade the TWC would develop a more comprehensive critique not only of the ITI, but also of UNESCO and of various national governments, in the name of internationalism and solidarity. In this way it would upset the system of artistic patronage commonly found in theatre as an institutionalized art form, and advance an argument for the utility of culture and artistic acts toward political ends. And yet, in the immediate aftermath of Shiraz, this institutional critique found itself frustrated by a lack of counter-hegemonic strategy.

In 1973, Cecile Guidote was exiled from the Philippines. She was a critical artist, her husband, Heherson Alvarez, was an activist vocal in his opposition to the regime of Ferdinand Marcos. In 1972, Marcos had consolidated power and declared martial law, leading many opposition figures to flee abroad. As Guidote and PETA could no longer represent the Philippines at the ITI from exile in the United States, Iran was granted the secretariat of the TWC — with Shiraz director, Farrokh Ghaffari, entrusted with organizing future events.

Under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi — or, more accurately, through the patronage of his wife, Farah Diba — Iran's intellectual and cultural elite established myriad arts festivals and institutions that patronized artists both domestic and international. Financing was not hard to find in support of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art — featuring both a vast collection of nineteenth and twentieth century art from Europe and North America, and a hugely influential collection of modern and contemporary Iranian artists — or the Shiraz Festival. Both supported an image of Iran simultaneously at the cutting edge of contemporary international culture and connected to a spiritual national essence; both "eastern and western." Taking responsibility over a committee on theatre in the Third World, hosted by a UNESCO institution, would seem to fit into this profile — albeit for the radicalism of those artists who began pushing an explicitly internationalist, anti-colonial and leftist politics at the 1973 festival. For, rather than building on the many successes of that gathering, the Iranian delegation allowed the TWC to languish, inactive, during its term. Without access to archives in Iran, it is hard to state with certainty why this was, but it is reasonable to suggest that the image of Third Wordlist politics propagated by intellectuals coerced into supporting the Shah during the 1970s had very little resemblance to the work of artists like Carole Johnson or Chérif Khaznadar.

3. Artistic Visions and Institutional Critiques

1974-1975: Interregnum

After the years 1971-1973, in which the Third World Committee emerged and cultivated its networks and distinct politics, the years 1974 and 1975 were fallow. A promised meeting in Nigeria, which would have been the first such gathering in sub-Saharan African, was postponed to an indeterminate future time. The committee managed two meetings: one conference in Beirut, the other an obligatory gathering at the ITI World Congress in West Berlin during summer 1975.

This dip in activity was because of the transition of the TWC Secretariat from PETA to the Shiraz Arts Festival. Cecile Guidote stayed in Tehran for several weeks after the 1973 festival to work with Farrokh Ghaffary and hand over the role.[241] While he continued his work with Shiraz, Ghaffary attended neither the Beirut meeting of March 1974 nor the Berlin Congress - much to the chagrin of TWC President Jalal Khoury. This left the committee's core group of organizers — Khoury, Stewart, Guidote and Chérif Khaznadar — scrambling to shore up the future of the Third World project in the face of severe criticism in Berlin.

The ongoing dispute between Khoury and Ghaffary burst into the open during the Berlin Congress. During the committee's first meeting there, Khoury called out his absent colleague for his failure to work with committee members and to provide the requested documentation for Berlin until the last minute. This was regarded as only consistent with a general lack of communication from Shiraz. Khoury's comments quickly filtered back to Ghaffary, for he

---

[241] "International Theatre Institute, XVI Congress, June 1-6, 1975: West Berlin, FRG, Third World Committee Report," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (unpaginated).

responded directly to Jean Darcante within days, offering "documents which furnish irrefutable proof of the activity of the Iranian Secretariat and of the total absence of the Presidency of the Third World Committee [Khoury]."[242] Ghaffary enclosed copies of 14 letters (mostly addressed to Khoury), and three telegrams - and asked for Darcante to include his letter of defense in the ITI's official report on the West Berlin Congress.

As this was unfolding, Darcante made his exasperation with the TWC known. Darcante's inability to sustain reliable contact with ITI national centers in Third World nations was evidently a significant impediment to the growth of the organization in line with its mission. Cultural ministries of numerous nations, it seems, had made political appointments to helm their ITI centers — often individuals with little experience working in theatre, and few international contacts. The lack of communication from these representatives was clearly irritating to the General Secretary. Eventually Darcante threatened non-compliant national centers in the Third World with exclusion from the ITI.[243] Khoury and his Lebanese colleague Gérard Khatcherian would contest this move directly on the Berlin conference floor. Darcante responded that his statement was merely a "report of facts that exist."[244] In the wake of Ghaffary's tenure and its ensuing controversies, it was not easy for TWC members to challenge Darcante in this way — he had evidence of the committee's drift since 1973. In spite of Guidote's attempts to fill out the TWC's program retrospectively by framing numerous PETA/LaMaMa initiatives from 1974-75

---

[242] "Letter from Farrokh Ghaffary to Jean Darcante, 7 July 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1.

[243] "International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1; 7, 38-39.

[244] "International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress," 7.

as Third World projects, it was clear that the committee had been inactive. Arguably this was because of the way in which both Guidote and Stewart were to varying degrees sidelined post-Shiraz. I might also speculate that the apparent lack of interest among Shiraz administrators in continuing with the TWC was due to their interest in building an alternative institution of Third World performance, through the publications and institution-building that would emerge organically out of the Shiraz Arts Festival and were more closely aligned with the Pahlavi state.[245] Yet in the atmosphere of contestation between Darcante and the TWC in Berlin numerous critiques were leveled by Third World members which might have allowed for certain strategic gains within the organization.

By 1975 it was clear that the question of universal representation was a significant pressure point for the ITI. As the debates over Israeli participation in Tunisia, India, and Moscow — as well as the issue of Korean participation in 1973 — showed, if a meeting of the ITI could not permit all nations to attend, it risked diminishing its legitimacy as a UNESCO organization. Over time these questions around the representativeness of the ITI multiplied. Reporting from the Moscow Congress for the *New York Times*, Margaret Croydon irreverently noted that "the delegates to the Congress — average age about 55 — appeared stiff and bland."[246] According to Croydon, the middle-aged-ness of the attendees, particularly noticeable in the large US and Soviet delegations, meant that the ITI favored the views of established artists, with the perspectives of the younger generation largely absent. The British director Michael Imison would later voice a different side to this crisis of representation:

---

[245] Including the Institute for Traditional Performance and Ritual, discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

[246] Margaret Croydon, "New Trends in Russia?" *The New York Times,* July 29, 1973.

> this unwieldy institution, founded in 1948… has, despite UNESCO backing, already come close to extinction. It is made up of individual national centers whose one essential function is to provide funds for the parent body… 59 member countries were claimed in 1976, but only 42 appear on the [current, 1977] subscription list. Of these, only 14 had paid their 1977 subscriptions by the time of the [Stockholm World Congress]… The Secretary General reported to us that only 15 centers were in regular touch with his office.[247]

Imison's brutal assessment placed the organization, and Darcante in particular, into a defensive posture.[248] It is possible that this article hastened Darcante's departure from his job as General Secretary, for it was at this time that the executive committee decided not to renew his contract and asked him to draw up a job profile to start the search for a replacement. Imison's report highlighted precisely those anxieties expressed by Coigney after the Moscow Congress of 1973: the ITI needed to become a far more representative organization, both to fulfill its UNESCO mandate and to secure its financial future. The Third World Committee and its members were vital to this task.

In spite of their manifest organizational issues in Berlin, the Third World Committee were able to tap into such emergent anxieties as part of a strategy to leverage greater influence and access to funds. Firstly, this involved further lobbying for a Palestinian presence within the ITI by inviting a group of theatre makers to speak to the 1975 TWC meeting. The committee were

---

[247] Quoted in untitled ITI Executive Committee documents authored by Jean Darcante (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1978) Box 2-5, Folder 2.

[248] Darcante would respond at length to these criticisms in the Executive Committee in 1977 and 1978: (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1976-1977) Box 2-5, Folder 2; and "Are we really 'non-representative'?" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1978) Box 2-5, Folder 4.

able to build upon the previous years' recognition of the PLO by the United Nations General Assembly, while utilizing the precedent set by the Soviet ITI World Congress in 1973. Jalal Khoury took the initiative on Palestinian representation — formally requesting that the Congress discuss the issue — while Gérard Khatcherian claimed the Vice-Presidency of the Congress Committee. The executive committee was not favorable to the idea of PLO artists retuning to the Third World committee, yet allowed the Congress to vote on the issue, requiring only a simple majority to pass. First, the Congress voted on "whether or not to discuss the question of permitting the PLO members to observe meetings of the Third World Committee."[249] Fourteen countries voted against this motion, versus thirteen in favor - with six abstentions.[250] Immediately thereafter, a new vote was taken over whether to allow the PLO members to observe the TWC's activities. This passed decisively, with twenty-three countries in favor, four opposed, and five abstentions.[251]

The Palestinian representatives were given an ovation upon their arrival in the Third World Committee meeting. Over the course of the Congress they were able to observe the deliberations of the committee and contribute a report on Palestinian theatre activities. While in Moscow their contributions led to a confrontation with American and Israeli delegates, here all were co-participants for the duration of the Congress. In securing the participation of a Palestinian delegation in Berlin, Khoury and the TWCwere taking the initiative from the ITI

---

[249] "International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1; 2.

[250] Against: US, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Israel, Italy, Iran, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Greece, Finland, and Iceland. In favor: Yugoslavia, Australia, Egypt, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Venezuela, India, Cuba, DDR, Romania, USSR, Poland, and Lebanon. Abstentions: Argentina, UK, Austria, FRG, Hungary, Spain.

[251] Against: US, Canada, Israel, Italy. Abstentions: UK, FRG, Denmark, Spain, Iceland.

secretariat in achieving its core mission of representing theaters of the world. They were also projecting solidarity with the Palestinian people into an international cultural organization. To recall Coigney's words from 1973, the Third World artists were constructing their own vision of the "international" as something that exceeded the political imagination of its founders.

In addition to this move for Palestinian representation, Khoury and Khatcherian pressured Darcante directly on the questions of Executive Committee composition and the subordination of the EC to the General Secretary. Access to the EC, and the reform of the ITI's political hierarchy, would be vital for influencing decision-making and ensuring the distribution of funds for TWC activities. With its expanded roster of five permanent committees, and a stagnant income stream still highly dependent on the two hegemonic world powers and their wealthier proxies, the ITI was struggling to meet its new financial obligations.

Unsurprisingly, the demands made to the Congress for reform of the executive committee in 1973 — which were passed on to the EC and Darcante for final scrutiny — were never met. The executive branch of ITI leadership continued to dominate the democratic Congress, while lacking adequate representation from all quarters of the organization. This renewed attempt to secure greater leverage in the organization — strategically using its mission toward universality to do so — was in a sense a continuation of the congressional activity from the final days of Moscow. There, Khoury, Guidote, and Reoti Saran Sharma used the conference floor to "[stand] up to the condescending attitude of the European-dominated executive and [demand] full and prompt discussion of their resolutions." Thus, Alan Seymour wrote at the time, they "served notice, gently but firmly, on the European theatre community, that the Third World has a

presence and vigor which now cannot be denied."[252] During an election of Executive Committee members in Berlin, Khoury again protested the undemocratic structure of the ITI, stating that "the Executive Committee operated within a closed circle and lives on the information given to it by the Secretary General. Mr Khoury concluded that these methods were not in keeping with UNESCO policy."[253] The executive continued to be dominated by European and North American representatives and subordinate to the General Secretary. As Khatcherian would point out, Darcante also had the ability to co-opt additional delegates to the Executive Committee, thus by-passing the electoral system.[254]

While these critiques were sound, and strategically directed to recognizable pressure points within the ITI, because of the TWC's own organizational issues they lacked the political capital to force such changes without the support of other powerful constituencies in the Congress. In the summer of 1975 such support was unforthcoming. Darcante was able to offer a stonewall defence. He stated merely that the composition of the ITI was comparable to other international organizations and concluded the matter there. Even as the ITI was facing these issues of representation — while also being in financial dire straits[255] — the TWC had not yet built up a position of sufficient counter-hegemonic influence in the wider organization. As the

---

[252] Alan Seymour, "Moscow," *Plays and Players*, 20.11 (1973), 62-63; 63.

[253] "International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (16-17).

[254] "International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress," 38-39.

[255] The result of low dues yield from those national centers still in Darcante's orbit. For much of the 1970s the organization was propped up by contributions from the US, USSR, DDR, FRG, Italy, Japan, the UK, and France. These financial issues meant that the ITI was increasingly stretched to fund its activities. Therefore a number of Third World activities were being planned without any financial input from the ITI at all. See: "International Theatre Institute, XVI Congress, June 1-6, 1975: West Berlin, FRG, Third World Committee Report," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (unpaginated).

1975 Congress closed, these circumstances attested to an institution drifting from its mission, with the TWC holding an ever more tenuous relationship to its authority. This pattern would have to be arrested in the following years by Third World members.

Rennes, 1976: The Third World in the Maison de la Culture

After Berlin, Ghaffary and Shiraz clearly could not continue to hold the secretariat of the Third World committee. This responsibility would be transferred to one of its most influential members, Chérif Khaznadar, in his new capacity as Director of the Maison de la Culture de Rennes. Ten years after his work in the first Beirut seminars, Khaznadar would now guide much of the committee's activity from France, alongside the heads of four sub-committees within TWC established in Berlin: for Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Arab World.[256]

The Maison de la Culture de Rennes, built in 1968, was part of a far-reaching cultural project conceived by André Malraux — France's first minister of culture. Inspired by early Soviet houses of culture built in the wake of the 1917 revolution, but marked indelibly by the intellectual persona of its minister, Malraux's signature policy sought to bring the great works of French and world culture to cities and towns across France.[257] Malraux was a prominent advocate of the importance of photographic reproduction as the "printing press" of art history: an essential instrument to bring art to the widest public.[258] France's houses of culture, spread across

---

[256] Jalal Khoury and Chérif Khaznadar, "Newsletter from the Third World and Minorities Theater, June 1977" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity, 1976-1977, Folder 7).

[257] Ahearne, *Intellectuals, Culture and Public Policy in France*, 95-97.

[258] Derek Allan, "Has André Malraux's imaginary museum come into its own?" Apollo, accessed March 8, 2023, https://www.apollo-magazine.com/andre-malraux-museum-without-walls/.

the nation from Le Havre to Grenoble, were generally multi-arts centers offering theatre, cinema, concert, and visual arts programming. They would be dedicated to three missions: creation, distribution, and animation.[259]

When Chérif Khaznadar joined in 1974 year he was the Maison's first independent director. The center in Rennes was founded with the construction of a purpose-built arts center in 1968. Yet the new organization was under joint management with the pre-existing Center Dramatique de l'Ouest until 1974. Khaznadar held the directorship until 1980; briefly leading the Rennes Opera House before moving to Paris to found the Maison des Cultures du Monde. As an administrator with a decade of experience on international festival circuit, it is perhaps no surprise that at Rennes he placed emphasis on festival events and concentrated programming topics. Festivals abounded: on political cinema,[260] café theatre, and a Festival of Traditional Arts. The latter was Khaznadar's most enduring program: running for a decade, with its final edition in 1984 hosted between Rennes and Paris, as the director was founding the new world cultures institution. It's program aligned more closely with the UNESCO project of East-West cultural understanding than with Khaznadar's own "burning embers" manifesto from Shiraz. Yet as a cultural program of a mid-size French city, the festival presented a considerable breadth of "world culture" to its audiences, with a comparative perspective.[261]

---

[259] Chérif Khaznadar, "Avant-Propos," *Les Masques et Leurs Fonctions* (Rennes: Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1980), 7.

[260] Chérif Khanzadar, ed., *Cinéma et politique: actes des journées du cinéma militant de la Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1977-78-79* (Paris: Papyrus, 1980).

[261] See for example the 1977 festival symposium, on "Eastern music and medieval European music: their interrelation today." Chérif Khanzadar, ed., *Musiques D'Orient, Musique Medievale Occidentale: Leurs Rapports Aujourd'hui* (Rennes: Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1977).

Rennes would host two Festival-Colloquia of Third World Theatre during early spring of 1976 and 1977 - timed to coincide with the annual Festival of the Traditional Arts.[262] This was the first time since Shiraz in 1973 that the Third World Committee would include its own program of performances alongside its meetings, a fact reflected in the increased discussion of aesthetics and problems of artistic production. In addition to Rennes, the TWC would hold seminars in Caracas, Venezuela, and Schildow, just north of Berlin in the DDR. This was arguably a period of increasing institutionalization for the committee within the ITI, with the establishment of internal, regionally-organized representative structures, and settlement in a European home of sorts. Such moves were undoubtedly a response to the lapses of the previous two years, and the criticism the committee endured as a result. Nevertheless its membership continued to advance an ambitious political agenda, while addressing the question of aesthetics more comprehensively than before.

More than ever, the Third World events during this period demonstrated the extent to which — in spite of its eminent status as a committee dedicated to a transnational, internationalist agenda — the TWC's conferences, seminars and festivals were always inflected with the particular social issues most prominent their host countries. This was often seen as a flawed product of the committee's itinerant schedule in its early years. Yet once the committee itself had achieved a level of ideological coherence and self-definition, its internationalist stance gained greater specificity in relation to local circumstances. In the committee's moments of greatest clarity, the arguments about the scope of the Third World Theatre project were hence

---

[262] While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss this festival in detail, for more information see: Chérif Khaznadar, Françoise Gründ, and Jacques Georges, eds., *Sur la piste des cultures du monde* (Paris: ABC, 1985).

able to move dialectically between the particular and the universal, to approach its promised "unity through diversity."

The Rennes colloquium of March 1976 was organized as a series of collective debates, with experts in each respective area invited to be primary contributors, supported by interventions from fellow delegates and members of the public. Under the banner of "Cultural Identities," the daily debates broke down into the following topics: "contemporary techniques and traditional forms of expression," "audio-visual techniques: conservation or acculturation factors," "theatre for children," "techniques for acting," and "cultural decolonization." All proceedings were presided over by Khaznadar, members of the French ITI, and ITI General Secretary Jean Darcante.[263]

The discussions began promisingly. Enrique Buenaventura (Columbia), Joel Adedeji (Nigeria), and Alioune Diop (Senegal) engaged in a debate about the usefulness of theatre as a form of mass communication and subject-formation toward decolonizing ends. This drew in questions of the relationship between theatre, politics, and propaganda, and the relative merits of live performance in relation to mass communications technologies like cinema and television. The second day of debate was given over to "contemporary techniques and traditional forms of expression," and was organized to provoke a collective analysis of a performance by The Louga Theatre (Senegal) the previous night. Discussion was initiated between Buenaventura and Mohamad Aziza, representing UNESCO. In an echo of Khaznadar's manifesto from Shiraz, and in what may be read as a subtle critique of the world theatre practices of Brook, Buenaventura

---

[263] While this was not the most well-attended conference of the TWC, it did gather a broad spectrum of participants from across the Third World, as well as the regular observers Ellen Stewart and Fritz Bennewitz.

and Aziza agreed that the use of traditional forms in contemporary performance cannot be allowed to resemble a mixed "salad" of forms.[264] To avoid this outcome, or some benign revival of historical "ritual," those forms from a culture's past must be reconnected to history, and the present social problems of a people. Such lines of debate not only offered a riposte to the academic discourses of ritual theory so familiar to performance studies scholars in the US academy, but also dismantled the binary notions of tradition and modernity that undergird such thought. They also demonstrated the extent to which Khaznadar's ideal for the future trajectory of Third World theatre was shared by others on the committee.

A brief contribution by French designer Yves Bonnat sought to relate these conversations to the contemporary situation in Europe:

> It is one of the worries of our organization [the French ITI]: what is the relationship between certain cultural situations in the Third World and certain situations in France, such as Britanny, the Basque country, and Catalonia [Occitania]. The colloquium will close with a performance called *La Pastorale de Fos*, interpreted by the Théâtre de la Carriera, which will show that the culture of the provinces in so-called 'developed' countries is colonized by a centralized power.[265]

Bonnat's argument would have been inconceivable at the beginning of the decade, either from the perspective of those wishing to preserve an exclusively Tricontinental identity for the Third World from an anti-imperialist perspective, or from those who, like Darcante, wished to distance the idea of Europe, writ large, from the Third World project. Yet after Moscow, Shiraz, and

---

[264] Yves Bonnat, et. al. eds., *Festival-Colloquia of the Third World Theatre* (Paris: France Center of the ITI, 1977), 19-21.

[265] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 19.

Berlin, the Third World committee had developed a transnational analysis capacious enough to include such "uneven development" arguments.

Originally founded as an agitprop street theatre group during 1968 under the name Théâtre de la Rue, Théâtre de la Carriera emphasized the language and cultural forms of Occitania. This is the region of southern Europe encompassing parts of modern France, Monaco, Spain and Italy. Led at this time by the writer Claude Alranq, the company attempted to forge a regional, Occitanian identity within France. Their work was presented in public spaces, where possible supported by sympathetic institutions, usually trade unions and leftist political parties.[266] Describing *La Pastorale de Fos*, Eugène van Erven writes:

> [the play] typifies the troupe's intention to make its audience conscious of the specific Occitanian character of its present-day socio-economic predicament. The prominence in the play of well-known local legends, folklore symbols, and traditional cultural structures like the Provençal pastoral play draw the topicality of the dramatized events into a historical-dialectic perspective. Thus, the audience's attention is directed to the fact that the present industrialization of Occitania is only the latest instance of ages of Parisian colonialistic exploitation of the region.[267]

During the previous decade the tiny Fos, a few miles northwest of Marseille, had a large port infrastructure and steel industry installed. Company members from La Carriera learned of the effects of this change in the local landscape through interviews and journalistic investigation. The material thus gathered would be adapted, using the popular pastoral form as its aesthetic

---

[266] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 77.

[267] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 77.

structure. As with much of their work during this period, *La Pastorale de Fos* culminates in a cry against the centralized state in Paris, with its disregard for regional histories and cultural forms. Yet, as van Erven points out, in order to survive the company had to live a dual life: presenting their work in town squares and other "nontheatre" spaces to reach their audiences, while relying financially on state subsidies and additional income from festivals. Hence, their participation in Rennes.[268]

Given the convergence of their theatrical mission with the manifesto he published in Shiraz, it is no surprise that Khaznadar wanted to include Théâtre de la Carriera in the TWC program. Members of the company were invited to the Rennes debate on "cultural decolonization," held directly before their performance and used to frame their work. La Carriera would find aesthetic and political commonalities with the Columbian director Enrique Buenaventura, the founder of Teatro Experimental de Cali. Buenaventura affirmed that their shared "new theatre" would not be "the result of research in laboratories [see: Grotowski], but the result of new links with a new audience."[269] One way in which La Carriera enshrined this relationship was by signing contracts with numerous town councils for a production, and working between those towns over the course of a year to produce the work. In this way, communities, local authorities, and the company could share in the production process over an extended period (rather than receiving a single product at the end of an intense, isolated rehearsal

---

[268] van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 83.

[269] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 41-42.

process), while allowing the artists to produce work across multiple media: performances, exhibitions, and films.[270]

It was found that there are distinct benefits and shortcomings of the conceptual framing of this debate on cultural decolonization. While affirming the systemic connections between conditions in southern Europe, Latin America, and Africa, Mobiem Mikanza — a delegate from Zaïre — offered a distinction between alienation and decolonization. Alienation was as a political, economic, and cultural phenomenon of capitalist modernity and the representative structures of the liberal-bourgeois state. Influentially understood in the French context as a modern urban phenomenon through Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*,[271] in relation to the decline of French rural life via texts like John Berger's *Pig Earth*,[272] and as the psychological consequences of colonial domination in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, could be experienced in both metropole and colony. Yet, Mikanza continued, the concerns of decolonization were specific to the formerly colonized nations, charged with the ongoing task of cultural and economic extrication from colonial structures even after formal political liberation. The political task itself was ongoing, given the way in which new "form[s] of domination of the masses by a specific class" had emerged in the post-colonial era.[273] Even while Mikanza's distinction was upheld by fellow delegates, the decolonization discussion group would find

---

[270] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 42.

[271] Marx, Mao, and Marcuse often being cited as the "Three M's" of the student-led elements of 1968 revolutionary movements in Europe. Marcuse's contribution to this triptych was the critique of contemporary, technological society and its stifling effects on the subject.

[272] Berger is notable in this context for his extended meditation on the decline of the French peasantry and their ways of life, comparable to the rural-romantic radicalism of La Carriera, in the broader *Into Their Labors* trilogy of novels.

[273] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 45.

commonality in shared aesthetic strategies and forms of organization between metropole and decolonizing nations. In their resolution concluding the colloquium, the group would declare: "De-colonization must be considered as the fruit of economic and political autonomy, that is to say, as the establishment of new, free and equal relationships between the 'colonist and the colonized.' The theatre must reflect this process in a critical way, in order to make it more deliberate by constant and varied activities and to make it more obvious, indispensable, and rapid."[274]

In Rennes, in spite of the insightfulness of the above discussions, the debate over cultural decolonization was to an extent foreclosed by the interventions of its organizers. In the documented proceedings, one reads that Yves Bonnat, representing the French Center of the ITI, began the discussion by inviting a French nun, Sister Marie-Josephine Barry, to speak: she had, Bonnat reported, just spent "six years in the Mali bush," and was prepared to talk about "cultural performances."[275] With the first period of debate dominated by perspectives of French speakers, the artists present from decolonizing nations had to begin their contributions with some reaction to such racist commentaries. Furthermore, the documented account glosses a number of interventions by Third World artists, for example: "Short and rather vague dialogues between Mr Awasthi (India), Mr Buenaventura (Colombia), Mr Farag (Egypt), Mr Mikanza (Zaire) and Mr Bonnat (France)."[276] This issue continues in the documentation of the 1977 Rennes colloquium, also. Exactly what is being obscured by this kind of gloss is impossible to tell without further

---

[274] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 46.

[275] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 38.

[276] Bonnat, *Festival-Colloquia*, 45.

recuperative attempts: seeking insight in the archives of individual artists, or the archives of institutions being represented by those artists. Given the insightfulness of each of the artists labeled "vague" therein, and the obscurantist perspectives given precedence in the documentation of the "cultural decolonization" debate, it seems to me likely that a very real and relevant debate could have been elided from the record.

Yet it is also true that emergent from the discussion in Rennes were a series of linked concerns that would build associations between anti-colonial artists of the Third World, and the European radical popular theatre. These included an emphasis on "folk" aesthetics, blending supposedly traditional forms with a populist politics, and a sense of both the distinct historical conditions of radicals in metropole and colony, but the connectedness of their political objectives. Moving rapidly into the TWC event in East Germany that summer, such aesthetic and political concerns would be further advanced with the support of a state apparatus pushing a solidarity agenda.

Berlin, 1976: A United, Progressive World Culture

Eight years after the inaugural "Brecht Dialog" that brought together a number of Third World committee members and helped define its agenda, the TWC would be formally hosted by the DDR center of the ITI and the DDR Ministry of Culture in June of 1976. This time they would meet in the small town of Schildow, just north of Berlin, for a colloquium on the subject of "Theatre and Social Reality." Unlike Rennes there was not an attendant performance program

here, with emphasis instead placed on "reports, theoretical generalization, [and] discussion," supplemented by films and slides presented by the German hosts.[277]

DDR representatives had remained close to the Third World project since 1968. Alongside Ellen Stewart and Chèrif Khaznadar, Weimar-based director Fritz Bennewitz attended almost all Third World events in his capacity as an invited observer. As Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti have described, solidarity with Third World nations was often official policy in socialist countries.[278] While this would inflect the state-level cultural diplomatic aspects of ITI activities — the DDR Ministry of Culture sponsoring such an event, for instance — there was also an aesthetic and political affinity between many artists from the Third World and the DDR. In particular, Brecht's influence was palpable across numerous theaters of the Third World. It would also, perhaps inevitably, be front-and-center in the papers presented at the TWC colloquium— even if his name was not so explicitly evoked by its organizers. In fact, a number of participants from the 1968 dialogues would return for the "Social Reality" colloquium: Khaznadar, Darcante, Ebrahim Alkazi, Koreya Senda, and the Syrian-Kurdish writer/translator Adel Karasholi, who was living and working in Leipzig. In total, sixteen "Participants from the countries of the Third World" were present, alongside six "Foreign Observers" — including Khaznadar, Darcante, and Senda — and eleven attendees from the DDR.

Summarizing the orientation and goals of the colloquium, Joachim Fiebach indicated how the DDR event would build upon the comparative aesthetics exemplified by Enrique Buenaventura and Théâtre de la Carriera in Rennes. By thinking across performance histories

---

[277] Joachim Fiebach, "Preface," in *Theatre and Social Reality,* ed. by Fiebach and Jutta Hengst, 7-8; 7.

[278] Khouri and Salti, "Transnational Solidarity Networks," 53.

and contemporary "historically concrete conditions" in the Third World, "over-lapping international processes and the various peculiarities in the societies and countries [would be] made clear, discussed, and then made fruitful for historically progressive work in theatre in all parts of the world."[279] The papers and slide presentations given by participants focused on the relationship between theatre and social conditions in varying contexts. National insights and surveys were offered by Awni Karoumi ("On the Problems of Depicting Social Reality in the Iraqi Theatre"), Ebrahim Alkazi (Functions and Forms of Current Theatre in India - depicted through the Activities of the National School of Drama"), and Nelly Garzón ("Main Forms of Theatre in Venezuela.")[280] The cultural principles of proletarian internationalism were represented by Ignacio Gutierrez Diaz of Cuba.[281] Most intriguing, though was the ample opportunity for unstructured discussion between papers allowed for comparative appraisal of theatrical forms, methods of production, and consciousness-raising across national or regional borders.

Manfred Wekwerth was invited to give the opening talk: "Some Comments on Depicting Social Relations and Social Attitudes in the Theatre." The summer of 1976 was one of the most important periods of Wekwerth's career. As perhaps Brecht's most trusted assistant director, following the playwright's death Wekwerth had established himself as one of the leading interpreters of his mentor's plays. Yet following a series of fallings-out with Helene Weigel, he had left the BE in acrimonious circumstances in 1969.[282] He had also alienated himself from the

---

[279] Fiebach, "Preface," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 7.

[280] Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 21-22, 31-32, 78-79.

[281] Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 29-31.

[282] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 222-224.

increasingly influential Barbara Brecht-Schall, to the extent that when Weigel died in 1971, and the BE was in need of a new *Intendant*, Brecht-Schall threatened to withdraw the rights to stage her late father's plays if Wekwerth was appointed.[283] Ruth Berghaus, also an experienced BE director who had recently been appointed Weigel's deputy, was the chosen candidate.[284] Her tenure would be short lived, and too often defined by outcry over her aesthetic choices in the press. Berghaus took the company toward what David Barnett has called a "post-Brechtian" aesthetic, which, while proceeding from a socialist foundation, would move closer to the kind of experimental *regietheater* more commonly found across town at the *Volkbühne*, or, more contentiously, on the other side of the Berlin Wall.[285] This debate was hashed out both in public, through articles in DDR newspapers and magazines — as well as internationally[286] — and within the BE itself, as Berghaus's production of Heiner Müller's *Cement* and Fritz Bennewitz's production of *Galileo* caused their own "controversies." By this time the BE was subject to numerous factions claiming the "proper" way of practicing the Brechtian aesthetic, with Berghaus falling victim to the conservative nature of such debate.

Berghaus would eventually be removed from her position in 1977, yet the period surrounding the TWC symposium saw an intensification of public disputes over her leadership.

---

[283] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 233.

[284] Interestingly, the appointment of Berghaus, while satisfying numerous factions around the BE and the DDR cultural administration, was not Weigel's choice. As Werner Hecht has shown, Weigel's own preference was for a new organizational structure to be created, featuring a directorial council that would be chaired by Wolfgang Pintzka. See: Werner Hecht, "Farewell to her Audience: Helene Weigel's Triumph and Final Exit," in *Helene Weigel 100: The Brecht Yearbook 25*, ed. by Judith Wilke (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 317-327; 320, 326.

[285] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 259.

[286] Notably by British theatre critic Kenneth Tynan in an article for the *New York Times*. Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 284-285.

In August 1975, Wekwerth wrote two pieces critical of the BE around the anniversary of Brecht's death: one article in *Neues Deutschland* criticizing contemporary productions of Brecht without naming names (though it was clearly aimed at Berghaus). Additionally, he published an open letter to the dramaturgy department of the BE in *Theater der Zeit* magazine during the same month. This set the stage for two more interventions just after the colloquium in Schildow: another article in *Neues Deutschland*, and a joint television interview with Ekkehard Schall in which they both set out their (veiled) criticisms of Berghaus's unorthodox approach to Brecht.[287]

Wekwerth was well-connected within the socialist bureaucracy, as well as being a high-profile Stasi informant. After settling his scores with the Brecht-Schalls, he would be the obvious candidate to replace Berghaus as BE *Intendant*. He also had an international profile, making him an ideal keynote for the DDR colloquium on theatre in the Third World. Much like his writings for *Neues Deutschland*, it is hard not to read certain remarks of his from Schildow as veiled criticisms of Berghaus:

> But wherein does a change in [staging] Brecht lie? Surely not in external, formal changes such as placing a figure on the right where it had previously stood left, or if an up to now understandable dialogue with the audience is now garbled and no longer understandable with the reasoning that this would show the lack of communication between people.[288]

Such dismissive commentary on formal changes is reminiscent of the language used throughout the debate on Brechtian theatre, and socialist aesthetics more broadly. In spite of the changing

---

[287] Barnett, *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*, 282-286.

[288] Manfred Wekwerth, "Some Comments on Depicting Social Relations and Social Attitudes in the Theatre," in *Theatre and Social Reality,* 9-13; 10.

meaning of the term "formal" — and, indeed, the fact that the label had often been used to criticize Brecht's own work in the DDR — it still denoted a degenerate, even indulgent, drift from the depiction of social reality. In this context, Wekwerth euphemistically referred to a departure from Brecht's dialectical method, a legacy of which he was arguably the most prominent living representative. Wekwerth was using this gathering of prominent radical theatremakers to once again make the case against Berghaus's leadership of the BE.

During his remarks, Wekwerth would draw lines of connection between the Brechtian and Third World theaters that were consummately political and that suggested a natural proximity between socialist and anti-imperialist aesthetics. Such theaters shared two major concerns: the great epochal transformation from capitalism to communism, and the individual subject's question: how to be a revolutionary? This latter question relates specifically to the matter of what Wekwerth calls "daily politics…what is useful to me today and here or in your [the audience's] own struggle."[289] While it is taken to be true that the answer to this question will be different in discrete contexts, nevertheless the idiom of class struggle — and its greatest theatrical proponent, Brecht — was translatable:

> [if] a play, let us say "The Exception and the Rule," were put on with exactly the same text and the same message, but in a different field of social struggle, e.g. in the Arab countries. It would look quite different, although being the same. In this connection I would remind you of the production put on at the 1968 Brecht Dialogue by Khaznadar

---

[289] Wekwerth, "Some Comments," in *Theatre and Social Reality,* 10.

> with Arab students: they used their music, their traditions of human relations and, of course, their topical struggle against oppression.[290]

In this formulation, the adaptation of Brecht might take on new garb particular to the culture and political relations in the host context, yet while the struggle might "look quite different," it is in fact "the same." Wekwerth's comments sit somewhat ambivalently with the stance taken by numerous TWC members I have highlighted so far. Solidarity and the prominence of class politics were indeed held in common between European socialists and artists of the Third World, nevertheless, as I have shown, while the Brechtian aesthetic was highly influential, many of the same artists who were interested in his work expressed a wariness toward the wholesale adoption of any imported artistic model. Staging Brecht remained popular across the Third World because of the politics of his plays and genuine interest in his methods, yet this embrace was often tempered with a recognition of the necessity to cultivate new talent.[291]

This sense would emerge in the discussion that followed Wekwerth's paper. After watching two recorded excerpts from Wekwerth's work — his television adaptation of Vsevolod Vishnevsky's *Optimistic Tragedy* and scenes from his BE production of Brecht's *Days of the Commune* — the discussion was opened by Ebrahim Alkazi with comments on the paper's topics (the epochal task of revolutionary theatre makers, and the day-to-day question of "how to be a revolutionary") as expressed through these two dramatic works. While Wekwerth would attempt to draw a clear line from the French Revolution, via the Paris Commune, to the Russian

---

[290] Wekwerth, "Some Comments," in *Theatre and Social Reality,* 10.

[291] This question was explicitly addressed in: Awni Karoumi, "On the Problems of Depicting Social Reality in Iraqi Theatre," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 21-22. Karoumi's perspective echoes those of participants at the 1967 Beirut seminar, discussed in chapter one.

Revolution, on to the establishment of the DDR, *and then* to the revolutionary struggles of the Third World, Alkazi highlighted "a great revolution…which we [on the left?] tend to forget."[292] This was the non-violent anti-imperialist revolution led by Gandhi against the British colonizers. Notable to Alkazi in this context were two aspects of Gandhi's work: the way in which he wore "the garments of the peasants," thus breaking the politics of class in a unifying way, and his use of symbolic gestures in the streets that, for a theatre maker, undercut the use of aesthetics in favor of the direct "dramatic" action of the street. While Brecht would place a revolution onstage for examination by spectators, Gandhi took symbolic action out into the city.

Reoti Saran Sharma would address the question even more directly. The value in seeing *Optimistic Tragedy* and *Days of the Commune* was to see examples of how to put a revolution onstage. According to Sharma, in spite of the many revolutions the Third World had by this time seen, "under the influence of the western theatre and western literature that revolutionary situation… is not depicted."[293] Revolutionary drama is needed not to depict a glorious moment in the past, but to remind the young, those who did not participate in the revolution itself, "what changes are required." While, according to Sharma, the *form* of this work should be drawn from the "old folk forms" of a particular community, the "indigenous" forms, the focus should be on change in society based upon an analysis of conditions.[294] Wekwerth would extend this thought by placing focus, once again, on the Brechtian method as his mentor's most abiding and widely applicable legacy:

---

[292] "Discussion," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 14.

[293] "Discussion," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 16.

[294] "Discussion," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 16-17. See also the contribution by Adel Karasholi on 18-19.

> I want to speak only about one point that could become a misunderstanding: that is the question of the transitoriness of things and, of course, also of pieces of art…As a dialectician, Brecht dedicated his work to transitoriness, to changes in things… when I speak of Brecht's [own] transitoriness [as a playwright] I really mean the same as Brecht when he spoke about Shakespeare. If we produce Brecht's plays today, it would be quite wrong to put them on the stage as though a contemporary had written them…[and] it would be wrong to equate German fascism with fascism in Chile when performing a play like "Arturo Ui." In this way Brecht is transitory, but his view, his method which makes sacral processes visible in all phenomena is everlasting, and in this sense I agree with Alkazi when he says that although Brecht's productions have passed into time, we have by no means learned to utilize his method.[295]

Wekwerth's final comment that Brecht's productions "have passed into time" is quite remarkable from a figure jockeying for position to become the *Intendant* of the Berliner Ensemble, but his words speak to the way in which the debate problematized the question of translatability. To borrow some of the language from 1968 dialogues, if Brecht saw Shakespeare as marking the slow decline of the feudal epoch and presaging the rise of the modern bourgeois subject, Brecht's own plays may be seen from the mid-1970s as marking the great transformation from capitalism to socialism. For those emerging from colonial or imperial rule toward national liberation — even where that liberation was projected toward the communist horizon — the artistic works dramatizing that epochal shift would inevitably take a different form. European class politics and their aesthetic vanguards could and should not be mistaken for the vanguards of Third World

---

[295] Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 19-20.

liberation. Yet as Wekwerth stated, enlisting Alkazi for support, the dialectical method that Brecht pioneered in theatre, drawn from Marxist theory, was a universal device, insisting always on the changeability of social life.

The internationalist prospects for the dialectical method were best summarized by Leipzig-based Syrian translator Adel Karasholi:

> …two worlds are in confrontation here — a socialist world and one which would like to have a socialist orientation. I would express it very carefully: one has to ask whether we can learn from the revolutionary changes made in socialist countries, and in how far we, dependent on the objective circumstances of our countries, can use this revolutionary past. The delegate from India [Sharma] pointed out quite rightly that we must study our social system, our objective conditions, that we must go to the people in order to find our subjects.
>
> When discussing this question we must base ourselves on a dialectical connection between the national, the international, and class interests. If we lose sight of one side of this triangle, I believe that we make generalizations which go in one or the other wrong direction… the revolutionary process in the world today can no longer be understood regionally.[296]

Between Wekwerth's and Karasholi's words one finds the sought-after connection between Brecht's dialectical method for staging drama and the Marxian-inflected internationalist dialectic of the Third World movement seeking "unity through diversity" — the dynamic movement

---

[296] Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 18.

between national, international, and class-based interests through the politically isolationist and culturally essentialist borders of nation and region.

In the wake of presentations by Ebrahim Alkazi and the Cuban ITI leader Ignacio Gutierrez Diaz there was a comparative discussion about the history of colonization in Cuba, India, and the Arab world (via interventions from Adel Karasholi).[297] This grounding enabled Alfred Farag to start a debate on the function of cultural traditions in struggles for liberation, nation-building, and class consciousness.[298] For Farag, as for many artists of the Third World project, "traditional" or "folk" forms of theatre was of great importance at different times — yet always part of the terrain of ideological contestation: "For us, the traditions were a weapon against colonialism and imperialism. The left and the communists raised the banner of tradition in order to fight against the destruction of traditional cultures by the imperialist forces. However… the conservative forces have also become very interested in traditions. Traditions help them to propagate an unreal, but popular dream about the past."[299] The generalized proliferation of traditional forms risked calcifying civic life into a "psychological rigidity" — a stubborn belief that the forms of the past will always provide a better life than any dreamed-of future. Farag is describing the interrelationship between liberation struggle and the definition of a new national culture in anti-colonial nationalism influentially theorized by Frantz Fanon.[300] This process, necessary to bind a people together in opposition to the colonizer, risked becoming

---

[297] Nelly Garzón would pick up this discussion later in the colloquium. Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 40

[298] Alfred Farag, "On the Problem of Cultural Traditions," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 38.

[299] Alfred Farag, "On the Problem of Cultural Traditions," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 38.

[300] Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963; New York: Grove Press, 2004), 145-180.

mired in essentialism and reaction in the liberated nation. Hence the need for a turn toward class analysis and internationalism by the left: "Ten years ago it was very simple: we opposed colonialism, we opposed imperialist attacks aiming to destroy our national culture, and we fought under the slogan of the traditional and the national. Now we must approach the problem by looking at it from all its aspects and treating it dialectically."[301]

As a playwright who worked across multiple forms — whether traditional, historical, contemporary-critical drama — but nevertheless embodied a spirit of Left-dissent, Farag embodied many critical Egyptian artists' struggle between censorship and official endorsement during the Nasser years.[302] While Farag was not a communist, he was imprisoned for several years in the early 1960s for his defense of the Egyptian communists' critique of the United Arab Republic.[303] Yet, by the mid-1960s and after his release from prison, he was playwright in residence for the Ministry of Culture, and, later, the highly-influential director of the ministry's "Mass Culture" division.[304] Under Nasser's socialist charter of 1962, there was an attempt to assimilate formerly persecuted communists (and those who defended them) back into the political mainstream. An adaptable figure who worked across theatrical genres, Farag would leave Egypt in the early years the Sadat presidency for Algeria, then later London.

Brecht's own perspective on the art of the "folk play" is well documented. He saw the need for a "new folk play," a progression from those familiar traditional forms found

---

[301] Farag, "On the Problem of Cultural Tradititons," 38.

[302] Rasheed el-Enany, "The Quest for Justice in the Theatre of Alfred Farag: Different Moulds, One Theme," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31.2 (2000), 171-202; 172; Dina A. Amin, *Alfred Farag and Egyptian Theatre: The Poetics of Disguise, With Four Short Plays and a Monologue* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 6-12.

[303] Amin, *Alfred Farag and Egyptian Theatre*, 8.

[304] Amin, *Alfred Farag and Egyptian Theatre*, 12-13.

internationally, that would be “naïve but not primitive, poetic but not romantic, realistic but not ephemerally political."[305] By politicizing and “infect[ing] it with the high ideals to which it very name commits it,” folk forms could become a useful populist tool for socialist and liberation artists.[306] This way of thinking about folk theatre was greatly influential among Left artists of the Third World movement during the 1960s, as well as the “radical people’s theatre” of western Europe.[307] Yet, for Arab playwrights of Farag’s generation, the political shock and horror of the June 1967 defeat in the Six-Day War brought about a revaluation of the way in which “folk” culture had been appropriated by reactionary forces to distract from free and critical debate. Such urgency to ditch “canned folklore”[308] and reassert the necessity of critical art is exemplified by Sa’dallah Wannous’s *An Evening’s Entertainment for the Fifth of June* — a play that dramatizes the rejection of a stifling, nationalistic representational frame by an audience who storm the stage and model a radically democratic “rehearsal for civil society" in its place.[309] Wannous drew a distinction between what he called a “theological” conception of cultural heritage — which sees folklore and other inherited cultural forms as timeless guides back to an imagined “essence” of identity — and a historical conception, that sees such forms as part of a complex, contradictory,

---

[305] Bertolt Brecht, “Notes on the Folk Play,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen Drama, 1964), 154.

[306] Brecht, “Notes on the Folk Play,” 156.

[307] Particularly John McGrath and his 7:84 theatre company, in whose work one can see a reflection of Brecht’s discussion of revue theatre in this essay.

[308] Margaret Litvin, *Hamlet’s Arab Journey: Shakespeare’s Prince and Nasser’s Ghost* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 121.

[309] Edward Ziter, “Refugees on the Syrian Stage: *Soiree for the Fifth of June*” in *Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre* (London: Pluto Books, 2012), 11-27; 15.

multifaceted history, by turns glorious and ignoble. The critical artist's task, for Wannous, is to engage with such forms contextually and in full understanding of their varied histories.[310]

Like Wannous, Farag was not interested in abandoning national traditions. Yet they should be approached "not with the eyes of archeologists, but [with the eyes of] artists."[311] In a nation where a large peasant class see trains rush by and planes fly overheard, the alienation of this disconnect can be bridged uniquely by a modern approach to traditional forms. Farag elaborates: "We have used parables form ancient literature to show our contemporaries that the ideas of socialism have a long history. We want to show our audience that human beings have always had a certain feeling of social justice… We wanted to show that the social struggle is historical, that it is traditional, that it is authentic."[312] Banishing superstition and foregrounding the dialectical struggle for justice — this is Farag's solution to the apparent contradiction of "traditional" forms.

Numerous aesthetic-ideological questions arose in the discussion following Farag's presentation: numerous comrades asked if the reactionary state was co-opting traditional forms which had been used to forge a national culture, was it still the task of the committed artist to retain such forms and imbue them with a class analysis? Or, as Rauf Mossad Bassta suggested, would it be more expedient to turn to "topical life" for dramatic treatment?[313] Given the nature of national particularities, there could be no unanimous analysis among the participants. Reaffirming the Brechtian position, East German academic Rolf Rohmer suggested whatever the

---

[310] Wannous, "On the Performance of *The Adventure of The Head of Mamlouk Jabir* in Moscow," 395-402.

[311] "Discussion," in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 59.

[312] "Discussion," in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 59.

[313] "Discussion," in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 39-45; 39.

aesthetic path chosen, there was a shared consensus over need for a "historical function" for artistic production - a certain utility in ongoing struggle.[314]

Joachim Fiebach would further theorize this relationship between form and social function in his "Comments on Methods of Presentation and Communication in Theatre of Europa and the Third World":

> It seems to me that varying structures, varying means of presentation and communication can be used in theatre for varying contents and functions. So in our discussion we must not consider a certain form, a definite structure to be the only theatrically correct one, to be alone important or necessary. This would be a dogmatization of certain forms and techniques and thus limit the possibilities of theatre.[315]

The theatre of social reality - which aims at "progressive, at democratic and revolutionary involvement in reality" - may appeal to the senses of its spectators in myriad ways. Most pressing is the need for artistic production in which "the imagination and active, subjective behaviors can be encouraged to unfold." This manifests in both Third World and European theatre, wherever the structural elements of cultural production are channeled toward historically progressive ends.[316] Fiebach describes the aesthetic cultivation of what Brecht called the "critical

---

[314] "Discussion," in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 43.

[315] Joachim Fiebach, "Comments on Methods of Presentation and Communication in Theatre of Europa and the Third World," in *Theatre and Social Reality*, 70-73; 70.

[316] Fiebach, "Comments on Methods of Presentation and Communication," 72. This may include western artists who appropriate the forms of Asia and Africa - though not, Fiebach notes, the likes of Brook and Artaud, due to the "historically objective backward-looking function" of their work (71).

attitude"[317] as the "inner link" between socialist and democratic movements in Europe and the anti-colonial, anti-imperial struggles of the Third World.[318]

Alfred Farag returned to this dialogue in order to build upon Fiebach's comments. Here, the playwright took a conceptual turn to "world theatre." This was not the essentialist assemblage of national traditions toward anthologizing ends, but rather the systemic analysis of historical conditions connecting theaters of the world:

> It is important to realize that our modern theatre or the efforts we made to create a modern national theatre, were undertaken against the European bourgeois form which dominated in our country during the colonial period. And now I ask, were not Brecht's and Meyerhold's efforts directed against exactly the same bourgeois theatre that we opposed in our countries? Both, we in the Third World and in Europe, marched against the same form of theatre.[319]

Farag was not equating the historical, material circumstances faced by those fighting colonial domination with those experienced by socialists in Europe - nor was he suggesting that artists in the Third World should adopt revolutionary forms cultivated in European anti-bourgeois struggles. Rather, Farag signaled both a systemic global analysis of capitalist modernity attentive

---

[317] "The critical attitude/Strikes many people as unfruitful/That is because they find the state/Impervious to their criticism/But what in this case is an unfruitful attitude/Is merely a feeble attitude. Give criticism arms/And states can be demolished by it./Canalising a river/Grafting a fruit tree/Educating a person/Transforming a state/These are instances of fruitful criticism/And at the same time instances of art."
Bertolt Brecht, "On the Critical Attitude," in *The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht* (New York: WW Norton, 2019).

[318] Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality,* 73.

[319] "Discussion" in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 74-77; 74.

to regional and national historical differences, and the need for ongoing solidarity in critical art production: "that our efforts should not be directed only towards our immediate environment."[320]

In the words of Fritz Bennewitz, the Third World committee's comrade of many years, the collective's aim was to produce a "united, progressive world culture," propelled by the creative dialectic between the national and international — and contrasted with the capitalist notion of a world culture that would eliminate national particularities.[321] In a none-too-subtle slight at the "world theatre" practices of groups like Peter Brook's International Centre for Theatre Research, Ebrahim Alkazi concluded: "There are many people in the West who study our theatre forms for their own purposes." In contrast to this impulse, the progressive world culture would pose an alternative way of working: "we have to examine all forms toward their rational, their scientific structure, towards anthropological, sociological, and economical points of view, towards their significance for the political and cultural identity… otherwise we shall remain on the surface."[322]

These discussions in the final days of the DDR symposium of the Third World committee give life to the idea of an internationalist critique of world theatre. Neither fetishizing nor discarding multifarious global traditions of performance, nor mandating a particular form (such as socialist realism) as the house style of critical art, the participants found an aesthetic approach to the TW's search for "unity through diversity." The dialectic described by Bennewitz and Alkazi reflects the Marxian(-Brechtian) methodological movement between the particular and

---

[320] "Discussion" in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 74-77; 74.

[321] "Discussion" in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 74-77; 74.

[322] "Discussion" in Fiebach and Hengst, *Theatre and Social Reality*, 80-82; 82.

the universal, keeping essentialist calcification at bay. It is also a critical riposte to capitalist modernity and its vision of a world culture homogenized by the market.[323]

Caracas, 1976: Institutional Critiques, and the Limits of the Itinerant Model

Between Rennes and Berlin, the Third World Committee held one more meeting in 1976. While the Berlin meeting was committed to theorizing revolutionary aesthetics, here the committee would focus on the institutional task at hand. The Fourth International Conference of the Theatre of the Third World,[324] held in Caracas, Venezuela, was the first meeting of the TWC committee to be take place in Latin America. It was also surely the most politically outspoken, and continued the committee's dispute with the ITI leadership. Yet the outcomes from the conference also demonstrated the shortcomings of the TWC's (and indeed the ITI's) itinerant activities. While such travels enabled the participants to become familiar with material circumstances in diverse places (and discuss commonalities/divergences therein), as well as offering many greater freedom to speak candidly about political conditions in their home countries, the committee was occasionally hampered by the need to familiarize new members with the ITI's own organizational structure and procedures. Arguably this unhelpfully

---

[323] "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

[324] Counting Manilla as the first, Shiraz second, and Rennes as the third.

contributed to the sense among members of the Executive Committee that the Third World Committee was in some way dysfunctional.[325]

Much like the 1973 gathering in Shiraz, the TWC's Caracas conference was attached to a pre-existing festival. The Caracas Festival was an annual event, presenting international work — with a strong emphasis on work from Latin America, alongside a small number of works from other continents.[326] Work presented often reflected a progressive politics. Performances would occasionally take place in the streets, and address political topics in a direct manner. Notably, given van Erven's critique of the radical people's theaters' lack of international connections, the festival line-up included numerous European companies. Among their number were Els Joglars, the Catalan group deeply critical of Francisco Franco's regime.[327]

The Caracas Third World coneference produced a host of decisions, declarations, resolutions, and propositions. These can be read as an alternative program for the International Theatre Institute, for they reimagine it as a campaigning, activist organization. The fourth conference of the Third World committee was the high-water mark of "solidarity becoming art" in the ITI.[328] Recognizing the particular value of their work not only to the ITI but to national governments as cultural representatives, the artists at Caracas produced a collective document of

---

[325] The Caracas event is also the TWC gathering for which I was able to access the least documentary material. Clearly, as the only TWC conference to be held in Latin America, further research on this particular event would enrich the narrative of the progressive world theatre immeasurably. While with the Schildow and Rennes gatherings I could access detailed (though partial) accounts of actual discussions, the Caracas notes only included the resolutions discussed here. Therefore, I have not been able to access any possible views that dissented or diverged from the published resolutions.

[326] Jennifer Merin, "Caracas Festival," *Canadian Theatre Review*, 9 (1976), 134-137.

[327] Merin, "Caracas Festival," 136.

[328] I owe this phrase to: Elodie Lebeau, "When Solidarity Became Art: The Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende (1975-1990)," in *Past Disquiet,* 317-333.

solidarity in lieu of artistic production. As I have shown, the ITI mission under the UNESCO banner - broadening cultural understanding - was an admirable aim, but too often led to a calcified vision of world cultures under its bureaucratic leadership. The artists' statement of demands, and declaration of international solidarity, reinforced artistic agency and creative subjectivity as intimately associated with political action.

The challenges presented to the ITI by the Conference on Third World Theatre in Caracas were manifold, beginning with a recognition of the "duty" of Third World theatre workers to sustain their battle "against the colonialist, racist, imperialist, and neo-colonialist attacks, to destroy their cultural personality and their national existence."[329] In light of the rising tide of political authoritarianism in Latin America after military coups in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, it was proposed that the ITI should create its own Secretariat of Defense of the Rights of Man. Such a body would disseminate information among all member countries about the persecution of artists and to dedicate time and resources to leveraging international pressure against offending countries. In addition, members in Caracas called for the expulsion of Chilean and Uruguayan representatives from UNESCO, and for the ITI to "reinforce the struggle that the people of Puerto Rico is carrying on for its cultural and political independence."[330]

Furthermore, following the appointment of Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow to the position of Director General of UNESCO - the first person from outside of Europe or North America to hold this role - the Third World Conference appealed to him directly:

---

[329] "IV International Conference of the Theatre of the Third World, Caracas, Venezuela, April 20-24, 1976" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1.

[330] The ITI had previously rejected an attempt to allow Puerto Rico to establish its own, independent branch of the ITI.

> [The Conference] welcomes with a profound satisfaction the nomination of an eminent representative of the Third World as Director General of UNESCO, thanks him for the high patronage accorded to its work, requests of him kindly to take certain necessary measures, within the framework of the program of the organization, in order to reinforce the role of the ITI in favor, particularly of the theatre of the Third World.[331]

As Lindsay Goss has elaborated, the kind of call issued by the Conference - whether it is a call to boycott, a call for solidarity, or another kind of call to action - confronts those hailed with the moral and political question of how to respond.[332] The call for solidarity with artists in Latin America, and to reform the ITI as an organization to defend international artists, required a response. By reaching beyond the ITI to the leadership of UNESCO, the Conference was taking a strategic step toward achieving some of these goals: bypassing the organization's usual structure of patronage to draw greater attention to the calls for a more politically-engaged form of cultural governance.

The Institution Responds

The Caracas resolutions were indeed discussed during the meeting of the ITI Executive Committee in October 1976. While it is unclear from the minutes exactly what was said by whom, it was reported that "a lively debate ensued on the question of whether the ITI should involve itself in these resolutions, which were judged to be too political and at the same time too

---

[331] "IV International Conference of the Theatre of the Third World, Caracas, Venezuela, April 20-24, 1976" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1.

[332] Lindsay Goss, "You Are Invited Not to Attend: Answering the Call for a Cultural Boycott of the Shiraz Festival of the Arts," *Performance Paradigm*, 14 (2018), 10-27; 15-16.

vague or too precise."[333] Darcante intervened here to note that due to the fact the conference had been organized by the Venezuelan ITI, in collaboration with the central ITI and UNESCO, "it was difficult…to write off this conference as non-existent."[334] The General Secretary would add that in Venezuela he personally had negotiated certain cuts from the final resolution texts. Exactly what these adjustments were is not elaborated upon.

Comparing the Rennes and Caracas conferences, Darcante "mentioned that if the first had been very interesting, the second had revealed that the ITI was little known, to such an extent that he had felt it necessary to write and distribute a new text summarizing the activities of the Institute in this area."[335] The evidence of this fact could be found elsewhere in the Conference's resolutions. Those present at Caracas suggested that the ITI establish a center for information and exchange relating to theatre in the Third World; arguably this was already happening in Rennes under the guidance of Khaznadar. Likewise, the Conference recommended that there be an annual meeting under the banner of the ITI solely dedicated to the Third World Committee's work, with a permanent secretariat responsible for organizing such meetings. While the committee had hitherto not had a permanent secretariat, it had always had some form of secretariat (PETA, Shiraz, now Rennes) responsible for its activities over the course of several years.

The EC discussion of the Caracas resolutions concluded with the production of their own motion. Its contents demonstrated the lukewarm feelings of committee members toward the

---

[333] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (59th Session) 25th-28th October 1976" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1976-1977) Box 2-5, Folder 2.

[334] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (59th Session)."

[335] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (59th Session)."

Caracas conference: "The Executive Committee sends its best wishes to all the participants; approves the spirit of the works which promote and defend the ideals of culture, peace and freedom; notes that certain of these resolutions have already been put into effect by the ITI; will study all those which may be realized in the near future."[336] The second and fourth clauses of their motion effectively indicate the decision of the EC to ignore the substance of the Caracas participants' demands. Given how seldom opportunities arose for ITI members to hold the EC to account — the only substantive moments being at the biannual World Congress — there was little institutional imperative for them to respond to the TWC's demands at greater length.

A year after this meeting of the ITI Executive Committee, after the second gathering of the TWC in Rennes and the ITI World Congress in Stockholm, Darcante moved to break up the committee. He initially argued to the EC that the Third World committee had become a form of "segregation," a "ghetto" which confined its members rather than allowing them to participate in all parts in the ITI. Yet he soon returned to an older critique, that "each continent has its own problems," a notion evidenced by the supposed continental insularism of the respective Third World Conferences.[337] Yet as I have demonstrated, from the start there was a clear consciousness among TWC participants of a "shared destiny" across continents, with one of the key points of coalescence in Moscow, Shiraz, Rennes, and Schildow a shared sense of historical material circumstances, as well as common aesthetic practices. Darcante was attempting to break up a rival power base within the organization that challenged his leadership and held him to account.

---

[336] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (59th Session).

[337] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (61st Session) 29th-30th November, 1977" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1976-1977) Box 2-5, Folder 2; 8.

Having unilaterally declared the "fundamental uselessness" of the committee, he sought a consensus from the EC allowing him to further study the best way to reform it.[338]

In the six years since the Third World committee's formation, the ITI had not successfully addressed its lack of representation from developing nations. As has been noted above, the number of national centers actively participating in ITI activities had effectively plateaued. After being elevated to the status of permanent committee of the ITI, the Third World committee had seen little material benefit from the central organization. Its events continued to be funded largely through sponsorship by friendly national centers (Iran, DDR, France, Venezuela), and the Executive Committee remained Eurocentric. In the profile of the General Secretary role Darcante wrote in 1978 to assist the search for his successor, he described the Youth and Third World committees as the two aspects of his job that most "haunted" his tenure.[339] Darcante had been incapable of hearing the demands of his organization's members, which was arguably one reason why he was being asked to prepare the ground for his own departure.

In spite of the seemingly-terminal nature of this situation, Darcante would remain in post for several more years, before retiring in 1981. Third World would continue as a permanent committee of the ITI until the Berlin World Congress in 1983, at which time it became the "Cultural Identity and Development Committee" and was downgraded from permanent committee status. This was perhaps a reflection of the changing political times — with the "Third World" marker no longer holding the same political significance into the 1980s — but it was also a reflection of the way in which the committee was allowed to drift with little

---

[338] "International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (61st Session)," 8.

[339] Jean Darcante, "What is a Secretary General of the ITI? 6th December, 1978" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1978) Box 2-5, Folder 4.

organizational support. Before this change, the committee did organize two further international meetings: a conference in Nicosia, Cyprus in October 1980, and a Fifth Festival-Conference on Third World Theatre in Seoul, South Korea in March 1981. The committee also initiated a Third World playwriting competition — a project requiring much further research. In these meetings the participants continued to advocate for the issues that had preoccupied them during the previous decade: solidarity with persecuted artists, the establishment of a Palestine Center of the ITI, the rights of ethnic minorities in capitalist and communist nations - as well as pushing for greater financial support for Third World theatre activities.[340]

After the disappointments of the immediate post-Shiraz period, the TWC hosted a series of events that arguably articulated its most comprehensive artistic statements on what a Third World approach to theatre might look like. Simultaneously, in the form of the Caracas resolutions, TWC members described a far-reaching platform to transform the ITI as an institution: essentially reimagining it wholesale. These institutional and aesthetic critiques marked the height of the committee's ambition and output. Yet the period of 1976-1977 also demonstrated the seemingly insurmountable problems with the TWC (and, arguably, ITI) models. No matter how ambitious, the Caracas resolutions suggested a fragmented membership with participants unfamiliar with the committee's own prior work. While European artists had been involved in the TWC since its inception, the concentration of activity and administrative capacity in France evidently suggested a certain failure of the ITI to build capacity outside of its traditional centers of power. While certain aesthetic trends emerged between the Rennes and

---

[340] "International Conference of the Third World Theatre: Final Report" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Permanent Committees) Box 6-1, Folder 9.

Schildow events, their programs were disparate, and little reference was made to the intervening DDR event when the committee gathered for the second time in Rennes during 1977. With only limited continuity of participants and agendas, it was seemingly near-impossible to plan towards mid- or long-term strategic goals.

Conclusion

Before the founding of the TWC in 1971, artists had begun using UNESCO-sponsored gatherings of theatre artists to call for greater international cooperation, opportunities for collaboration, and representation within ITI bodies. Between the years 1971-1977, those nascent interests became a shifting, but still coherent agenda for an aesthetics and institutional politics of Third World theatre. Revisiting this period in the history of theatre is instructive in an era of renewed global scholarly thinking, a renewal of nationalist politics around the world, and in a moment where theatre artists are attempting to establish a progressive agenda for theatre institutions.

Between the ITI World Congress of 1973 and the TWC festival conference in Shiraz later that year, the committee established a capacious, inclusive definition of the Third World as a political entity. The people of the Third World would be those who had experienced the domination of a foreign power: including indigenous peoples in the developed world, Black people in the United States and Europe, and ethnic minorities across the world. Not only did the shared historical experiences of those groups with the peoples of formerly colonized nations deserve international recognition, but the people of the Third World deserved greater representation in the organizational structures of bodies like the ITI. For such efforts to be successful and sustainable, the ITI should become more democratically accountable to its members. This was the initial reform agenda presented by members of the TWC as it pushed to become a permanent committee.

In Shiraz, Chérif Khaznadar presented a manifesto for theaters of the Third World. His aesthetic vision, deeply critical of Western European theatrical modernisms and naturalistic tendencies, would find numerous echoes in the agenda created in collaboration between the TWC and the DDR center of the ITI in 1976. There, discussion of folk aesthetics — an appropriation of traditional forms in service of contemporary material needs — established resonances between anti-colonial theater makers and the work of Bertolt Brecht. The TWC and its members were never in thrall to Brecht. Yet the heterogeneity of his oeuvre, from the *lehrstücke*, to the dialectical method, to his writing on folk forms, ensured his regular evocation as a common artistic touchstone. While the formal ambitions of Third World theatre artists generally exceeded Brecht; yet, due to the intense cultural diplomatic work of the East German state and its elevation of the playwright's legacy, they were regularly in dialogue with him.

Across all of the TWC gatherings, dramatic theory was debated constantly. One product of the long-term neglect of this history is that many innovative theatrical dialogues have not been revisited. As I hope to have captured here, the dialogues between figures like Khaznadar, Cecile Guidote, Ellen Stewart, Alfred Farag, Manfred Wekwerth, Fritz Bennewitz, and many others, offer new insights on major topics in theatre studies: the politics of aesthetics, ritual, art and revolution, theatre and the state, styles of acting. In a new era of global consciousness and appetite for radical solutions among theatre workers, these debates take on a compelling renewed significance.

In the academy, both in the United States and Europe, the 1980s inaugurated a period dominated by scholarly interest in postdramatic theatre — and the rise of performance studies.[341] As Nicholas Ridout has recently discussed, postdramatic forms are widely understood to be less social that dramatic theatre: less bound to existing institutions and genres. He follows the argument of Fredric Jameson, who sought: "to restore a consideration of genre to literary history in the face of an 'ideological modernism' that insists instead upon the 'singularity' of each individual work (as though each work were its own unique form)."[342] Pivotal to the articulation of this theory of drama was Hans-Thies Lehmann, whose *Postdramatic Theatre* — appearing in German in 1999 and in English translation in 2006 — Ridout characterizes at one point as "the most willfully anti-theatrical dramatic criticism ever [which] failed entirely to speak of the relationship between the dramatic action on stage and the audiences and theatres that received and contained such action."[343]

So, postdramatic works relate less readily to existing forms, and their scholarly study (if we take the most widely-read example as representative) takes little account of the relationship between the art work and the social world it enters. Among the artists surveyed in Lehmann's "panorama of postdramatic theatre" — Tadeusz Kantor, Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Jan Lauwers, among many others — it is easy to observe the broad shift away from the radical politics of aesthetics and institutions found in the TWC, towards the study of formal innovations

---

[341] To adequately make a sustained argument about the relevance of this dissertation to contemporary performance studies would take far more space than would be reasonable here — but may be the basis of a future publication.

[342] Nicholas Ridout, "Media: Intermission," in *Postdramatic Theatre and Form*, ed, by Michael Shane Boyle, et al, (London: Methuen Drama, 2019), 96-112; 97-98.

[343] Ridout, "Media: Intermission," 98. I should be explicit: Ridout's text is not a hatchet job on Lehmann. While these criticisms seem particularly scathing out of context, it is clear the influence of Lehmann's work on Ridout. Lehmann's book has also been hugely influential on my own theatre criticism.

by individual artists.[344] Such artists are celebrated in the transnational space of the post-Cold War international festival, where large-budget, formally and scenographically-daring works by (mostly white, male) *auteur* directors dominate. While in the Theatre of Nations festival of the 1950s and 1960s the national theaters of Western Europe dominated, today it is the production companies of major directors.

This is not an argument against postdramatic theatre, but for a renewed thought about the relationship between artist, artwork, and institution in theatre studies. While the artists of the TWC did not conform strictly to a single theatrical genre, they shared a sense that the work of art, and the institution in which it was presented, had not only the capacity but the responsibility to engage in social discourse — and to address a popular audience. They had a clear notion that theatrical forms were political, and that theatre institutions were civic actors.

Momentum gained by the TWC through the articulation of its institutional and aesthetic programs ultimately failed to translate into long-term organizational change. There are many reasons for that. Notably: a lack of appetite among the institution for the kinds of changes being demanded; whether due to concern over the ITI's UNESCO-mandated mission of universalist cultural politics, or a desire to maintain centralized power in the hands of its General Secretary. It also became increasingly apparent that the TWC lacked the resources to coordinate a complex and contentious multi-year agenda across several continents, between committee leaders who were also responsible for running their own organizations in their home nations.

For the ITI, the TWC didn't translate into larger numbers of national ITI Centers across the Third World. Oftentimes nations would send delegations to TWC events, but didn't commit

---

[344] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 68-133.

the ongoing funds required to establish a center and maintain relations with the central organization. The presence of theatre leaders from Latin America, Africa, the MENA, and Asia meant the ITI membership was more reflective of global trends, and better informed about theatre practices around the world. Yet without national centers contributing funds the institutional bureaucracy could not expand its capacity in a meaningful, strategic way.

The Third World committee did not transform the ITI. In 1983, members were still pushing the ITI to include Third World artists in the Theatre of Nations festival. Yet it did foster an international coalition of theatre workers committed to the ideas of the Third World political movement: popular liberation politics, anti-imperialism, unity in diversity. Its example can help scholars of theatre and performance to reevaluate the institutional politics of theatre workers on the international scene during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and the connectedness of progressive theatre movements across the world.

References

Adel Hamadah, Faisal. “Travelling Theatre: Saadallah Wannous’s Journeys between the Local and the International.” *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (2019) 305-317.

Ahearne, Jeremy. *Intellectuals, Culture and Public Policy in France: Approaches from the Left.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010.

al-Azm, Sadik. *Self-Criticism after the Defeat*. 1968; London: Saqi, 2011.

Allan, Derek. "Has André Malraux’s imaginary museum come into its own?” *Apollo* (2020) < https://www.apollo-magazine.com/andre-malraux-museum-without-walls/> [Last accessed March 8, 2023].

Amin, Dina A. *Alfred Farag and Egyptian Theatre: The Poetics of Disguise, With Four Short Plays and a Monologue*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

Amrith, Sunil, and Glenda Sluga. “New Histories of the United Nations.” *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008) 251–274.

Anderson, Benedict. *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination*. London: Verso, 2006.

Arens, Katherine. “Robert Wilson: Is Postmodern Performance Possible?” *Theatre Journal* 43.1 (1991) 14-40.

Bablet, Denis. “Twenty Years of Scenography.” *World Theatre* (1968) 35-58.

Balme, Christopher. “Theatrical Institutions in Motion: Developing Theatre in the Postcolonial Era.” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 31.2 (2017), 125-140.

Balme, Christopher, and Berenika Szymanski-Düll, eds. *Theatre, Globalization, and the Cold War*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Bandyopadhyay, Samik. “A Tribute to Ebrahim Alkazi.” *Indian Cultural Forum* (2020) < https://indianculturalforum.in/2020/08/19/a-tribute-to-ebrahim-alkazi/> [Accessed 2.21.23].

Barnett, David. *A History of the Berliner Ensemble*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Behnam, Jamshid. *Cultural Policy in Iran*. Paris: UNESCO, 1973.

Bent, Matthew. “Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity and Museums in Exile.” *caa.reviews* (2019) <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/3544#.Y91lDS-B3BI> [Last accessed 2.3.2023].

Bharucha, Rustom. *The Politics of Intercultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. London: The Athlone Press, 2000.

Bonnat, Yves, et. al., eds. *Festival-Colloquia of the Third World Theatre*. Paris: France Center of ITI, 1977.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Brandon, James R., ed. *The Performing Arts in Asia*. Paris: UNESCO, 1971.

Brecht, Bertolt. “Notes on the Folk Play.” In *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willett, London: Methuen Drama, 1964.

Brecht, Bertolt. *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. by John Willett. 1965; London: Methuen, 2002.

Brecht, Bertolt. “On the Critical Attitude.” In *The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht,* ed by Tom Kuhn and David Constantine. New York: WW Norton, 2019.

Brecht, Bertolt. “Solidarity Song.” In *The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht*, ed by Tom Kuhn and David Constantine. New York and London: Liveright Publishing, 2019.

Bredeson, Kate. *Occupying the Stage: The Theater of May ’68*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018.

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. 1968; New York: Atheneum, 1983.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002.

Canning, Charlotte. *On the Performance Front: US Theatre and Internationalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Chehabi, H. E.. “The Shiraz Festival and its Place in Iran’s Revolutionary Mythology.” In Roham Alvandi, ed., *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements*. London: Gingko Library, 2018.

Croydon, Margaret. “Peter Brook Learns to Speak Orghast.” *The New York Times*. October 3, 1971.

Croydon, Margaret. “New Trends in Russia?” *The New York Times*. July 29, 1973.

Croydon, Margaret. “The Arabs’ Goal: A Theater that Speaks for Arabs.” *The New York Times*. March 3, 1974.

Croyden, Margaret. *Conversations with Peter Brook: 1970-2000*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003.

Darcante, Jean. “The Great Tasks.” *World TheatreTheatre dans le Monde*, XVII, 1-2 (1968). 125.

Darcante, Jean. “The third world.” *World Theatre/Theatre dans le Monde*, XVII, 1-2 (1968). 131.

DeFrantz, Thomas F. “To Make Black Bodies Strange: Social Critique in Concert Dance of the Black Arts Movement.” in Annemarie Bean, ed., *A Sourcebook on African-American Performance: Plays, People, Movements*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 83–93.

Djagalov, Rossen. *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema Between the Second and Third Worlds*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2020.

Duedahl, Poul. “Out of the House: On the Global History of UNESCO, 1945–2015.” in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*. ed. by Duedahl. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 3-28.

DukeLibDigitalColl. “Barbaralee Diamonstein and... Ellen Stewart, 1979.” *Youtube* (2009). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-UXtsrGZxo> [Last accessed 2.13.23].

Duk-hyung, Yoo. “Russ Seem to Enjoy Theater, But No Experimental Plays.” *The Korea Times*. June 17, 1973.

Duk-hyung, Yoo. “Russian Society, People Felt More Oriental than Western.” *The Korea Times*. June 19, 1973.

East West Seminar Report: June 1-6, 1964. Paris: International Theatre Institute, 1964.

Egger, Carole, Isabelle Reck, and Edgard Weber, eds. *Textes Dramatiques d’Orient et d’Occident: 1968-2008*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2012.

el-Enany, Rasheed. “The Quest for Justice in the Theatre of Alfred Farag: Different Moulds, One Theme.” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31.2 (2000). 171-202.

Esleben, Joerg. *Fritz Bennewitz in India: Intercultural Theatre with Brecht and Shakespeare*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1963; New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Feinsod, Harris. *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Fiebach, Joachim and Jutta Hengst, eds. *Theatre and Social Reality:International Colloquy for Theatre People from Countries of the Third World*. Berlin: DDR Center of the ITI, 1977.

Fox, Clare. *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrouz. *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution After the Enlightenment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Ghouse, Nida. “Lotus Notes.” *ARTMargins*, 5.3 (2016). 82–91.

Gilbert, W. Stephen. “Shiraz/Persepolis.” *Plays and Players* (November 1975). 15-17.

Goss, Lindsay. “You Are Invited Not to Attend: Answering the Call for a Cultural Boycott of the Shiraz Festival of the Arts.” *Performance Paradigm*, 14 (2018). 10-27.

Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Harding, James M. “From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges: On the Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance.” in Harding and John Rouse, eds. *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006. 18-40.

Harding, James M., and Cindy Rosenthal, eds. *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner’s Broad Spectrum*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Hecht, Werner, ed. *Brecht Dialogue 1968: Politik auf dem Theater*. Berlin, Centre German Democratic Republic of the International Theatre Institute, 1968.

Hecht, Werner. “Farewell to her Audience: Helene Weigel’s Triumph and Final Exit.” In *Helene Weigel 100: The Brecht Yearbook 25*, ed. by Judith Wilke. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.

Jackson, Shannon. *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Johnson, Rebecca C. "Cross-Revolutionary Reading: Visions of Vietnam in the Transnational Arab Avant-Garde." *Comparative Literature*, 73:3 (2021). 360-381.

"Karami Opens Round-Table Parley on Theater, Cinema." *The Daily Star*. Beirut, Lebanon: October 31, 1967. 3.

Khaznadar, Chérif. "Tendencies and Prospects for Third World Theatre." trans. by Norma Jean Deák. *The Drama Review: TDR*, 17.4 (1973). 33-35.

Khanzadar, Chérif, ed. *Musiques D'Orient, Musique Medievale Occidentale: Leurs Rapports Aujourd'hui*. Rennes: Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1977.

Khaznadar, Chérif. "Avant-Propos." *Les Masques et Leurs Fonctions*. Rennes: Maison de la Culture de Rennes, 1980.

Khanzadar, Chérif, ed. *Cinéma et politique: actes des journées du cinéma militant de la Maison de la Culture de Rennes 1977-78-79*. Paris: Papyrus, 1980.

Khaznadar, Chérif, Françoise Gründ, and Jacques Georges, eds. *Sur la piste des cultures du monde*. Paris: ABC, 1985.

Khouri, Kristine, and Rasha Salti, eds. *Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity, and Museums in Exile*. Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2018.

Lasch, Christopher. "The Cultural Cold War." *The Nation.* September 11, 1967.

Lazarian, Janet. "Not up to standard." *The Tehran Journal*. Tehran, September 9, 1973. 7.

Lazarian, Janet. "Oversold tickets and no room at the Inn." *The Tehran Journal*. Tehran, September 11, 1973. 7.

Lazarian, Janet. "Third World Theater Opens." *The Tehran Journal*. Tehran, September 8, 1973. 3.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Litvin, Margaret. *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Lockman, Zachary. *Field Notes: The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Mahlouji, Vali. "Perspectives on the Shiraz Arts Festival: A Radical Third World Rewriting." In *Iran Modern*, ed. by Fereshteh Daftari and Layla Diba. New York: Asia Society, 2013. 87–91.

Mahlouji, Vali. "The Utopian Stage: The Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis (1967-1977)." <http://www.archaeologyofthefinaldecade.com> [Last accessed 3.20.23].

Manning, Susan. *Critical Histories of Modern Dance: A Retrospective*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. 1848; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. (1852) *Marxists Internet Archive*. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm> [Last accessed 2.20.23].

Matin-Asgari, Afshin. *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Mejcher-Atassi, Sonja, and Robert Myers, eds. *The Theatre of Sa'dallah Wannous: A Critical Study of the Syrian Playwright and Public Intellectual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Merin, Jennifer. "Caracas Festival." *Canadian Theatre Review*, 9 (1976). 134-137.

Mirsepassi, Ali. *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Mufti, Aamir. *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Myers, Robert, and Nada Saab, eds. *Sentence to Hope: A Sa'dallah Wannous Reader*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Nisbett, Melissa, and Ben Walmsley. "The Romanticization of Charismatic Leadership in the Arts." in *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* (2016) 46.1. 2-12.

Parmar, Inderjeet. *Foundations of the American Century : The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Prashad, Vijay. *How the East was Read: Socialist Culture in the Third World*. New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2019.

Prashad, Vijay. *Red Star over the Third World*. London: Pluto Press, 2019.

Prashad, Vijay. *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*. New York: The New Press, 2007.

Randle-Bent, Matthew. "Indigenous Avant-Gardes: The Shiraz Arts Festival and Ritual Performance Theory in 1970s Iran." *Arab Stages*. (2023).

Ridout, Nicholas. *Scenes from Bourgeois Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020.

Ridout, Nicholas. "Media: Intermission." In *Postdramatic Theatre and Form*. ed, by Michael Shane Boyle, et al. London: Methuen Drama, 2019 96-112.

Robertson, Nan. "Third World Moves into LaMaMa." *The New York Times*. Nov. 11, 1983.

Ryan, Paul Ryder. "Shiraz-Persepolis and the Third World." *The Drama Review: TDR*, 17.4 (1973). 31-33.

Saunders, Frances Stonor. *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. London: Granta Books, 1999.

Schechner, Richard. "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach." *TDR*, 32.2 (1988). 4-6.

Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

Seymour, Alan. “A Persian Odyssey.” *Plays and Players*. November 1973. 66-69.

Seymour, Alan. “Moscow.” *Plays and Players*. 20.11 (1973). 62-63.

Sharma, Reoti Saran, ed. *East-West Theatre Seminar and Festival*. New Delhi: Bharatiya Natya Sangh/International Theatre Institute, 1966.

Smith, A. C. H. *Orghast at Persepolis*. New York: The Viking Press, 1972.

“Stage Director Yoo: Russ Society Seems to be ‘Oriental.’” *The Korea Times*. June 8, 1973.

Tarn, Adam. “Major Dramatic Trends, 1948-1968.” *World Theatre* (1968). 9-34.

“Theatre of Nations.” *International Theatre Institute* (2016). < https://www.iti-worldwide.org/theatreofnations.html> [Last accessed 2.13.23].

Tian, Min. *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Tomiche, Nada, ed. *Le théâtre arabe*. Paris: UNESCO, 1969.

Torpey, John C. *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and its Legacy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995

Torre Jr., Nestor. “Roces is Chairman of Theater Festival.” *Manila Chronicle*. Manila, Philippines: November 25, 1971.

“UNESCO’s History.” *UNESCO* (2023). < https://www.unesco.org/en/brief#> [Last Accessed 2.20.23].

van Erven, Eugène. *Radical People’s Theatre*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

van Erven, Eugène. *The Playful Revolution: Theatre and Liberation in Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Von Eschen, Penny. *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors: Play the Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Wasserstrom, Steven M. *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Weber, Max. *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Wellwarth, George E. *Theatre of Protest and Paradox*. New York: NYU Press, 1964.

Whang, Roy. “Artist Sees Hope for Thaw.” *The Korea Herald*. June 10, 1973.

Willett, John. “‘Der Messingkauf’: An Editorial Note.” In *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett. London: Methuen Drama, 1964. 169-175.

Wong, Laura Elizabeth. “Cultural Agency: UNESCO’s Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1957-1966.” PhD Dissertation: Harvard University, 2006.

Wong, Laura Elizabeth. “Relocating East and West: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values.” *Journal of World History*. 19:3 (2008) 349-374.

Yousefi, Hamed. *The Fabulous Life and Thought of Ahmad Fardid*. 2015.

Yúdice, George. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Ziter, Edward. "Refugees on the Syrian Stage: *Soiree for the Fifth of June*." In *Doomed by Hope: Essays on Arab Theatre*. London: Pluto Books, 2012. 11-27.

Ziter, Edward. *Political Performance in Syria: From the Six-Day War to the Syrian Uprising*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Archival Sources

NYPL Martha Coigney Collection

Coigney, Martha, "Report on Bombay meeting of the Third World Committee" *International Theatre Institute of the United States, Annual Report: 1972-1973*

Darcante, Jean, "Are we really 'non-representative'?" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1978) Box 2-5, Folder 4

Darcante, Jean, "What is a Secretary General of the ITI? 6th December, 1978" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1978) Box 2-5, Folder 4

"East West Theatre Seminar, New Delhi 1966," Martha Coigney Collection, Box 7-1, Folder 7

Gilder, Rosamond, "President of the International Theatre Institute of the U.S., Report: First Third-World Theatre Festival and Conference" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity)

"International Conference of the Third World Theatre: Final Report" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Permanent Committees) Box 6-1, Folder 9

"International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (59th Session) 25th-28th October 1976" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1976-1977) Box 2-5, Folder 2

"International Theatre Institute Executive Committee (61st Session) 29th-30th November, 1977" (NYPL Coigney Collection: Executive Committee, 1976-1977) Box 2-5, Folder 2

"International Theatre Institute Third-World Festival/Conference/Exhibit, Manila, Philippines, November 19-30, 1971: Background Information" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity)

"International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1

"International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (2)

"International Theatre Institute, Report of the 16th Congress, West Berlin, 1 June-6 June, 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (16-17)

"International Theatre Institute, XVI Congress, June 1-6, 1975: West Berlin, FRG, Third World Committee Report," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1

"International Theatre Institute, XVI Congress, June 1-6, 1975: West Berlin, FRG, Third World Committee Report," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1 (unpaginated)

"International Theatre Institute: A Permanent Committee" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1, Folder 1

"International Theatre Institute: A Permanent Committee" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1, Folder 1

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Annual Report, 1974-1975" (NYPL Coigney Collection, ITI National Centers - US) Box 5-8, Folder 6

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Annual Report, 1974-1975" (NYPL Coigney Collection, ITI National Centers - US) Box 5-8, Folder 6 (26)

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5 (11-12)

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5 (1)

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5 (3-4)

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5 (11-12)

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5

International Theatre Institute of the United States, "Report on XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, Moscow, May 27-June 1, 1973," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5

International Theatre Institute, "Executive Committee, (53rd Session), 1973" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Executive Committee), Box 2-4, Folder 9

International Theatre Institute, "Executive Committee, (54th Session), 1973" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Executive Committee), Box 2-4, Folder 10

"IV International Conference of the Theatre of the Third World, Caracas, Venezuela, April 20-24, 1976" (NYPL Coigney Collection, Committees: Cultural Identity) Box 6-1

"Letter from Alan Schneider to Rosamond Gilder and Martha Coigney," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-5, Folder 5

"Letter from Donald Oenslager to Martha Geese, Program Officer, Division for Americans Abroad, Department of State, December 11, 1963," (NYPL, Coigney Collection, Box 7-1, Folder 5)

"Letter from Farrokh Ghaffary to Jean Darcante, 7 July 1975," (NYPL Coigney Collection, World Congresses) Box 3-6, Folder 1

LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection

"International Theatre Institute National Centre of the USSR, XV Congress of the International Theatre Institute, May 27-June 1, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

Johnson, Carole Y., "Shiraz Meeting and Festival," *International Theatre Institute of the United States, Annual Report, 1972-1973* (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

Letter from Jean Darcante to Jalal Khoury, 2nd October, 1973 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

Letter from Jean Darcante to the participants in the Third World Theatre Conference, 2nd October, 1973 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

Letter from Rosamond Gilder to Ellen Stewart, April 28, 1971 (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972, at 2 p.m. at the Dramatists Guild [Minutes]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Meeting of Advisory Council on Friday, January 21, 1972, at 2 p.m. at the Dramatists Guild [Minutes]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Report on the Proceedings of the Congress (General Committee) of the 15th Congress of the ITI in Moscow, May 28-30, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Report on the Proceedings of the Congress (General Committee) of the 15th Congress of the ITI in Moscow, May 28-30, 1973" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Third World Committee Meeting, XV Congress, Moscow, March 28-30, 1973, Preface to the Resolution" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

"Third World Committee, Provisional Agenda [Moscow, June 1973]" (LaMaMa Ellen Stewart Collection)

Victoria and Albert Museum Peter Brook Collection

Orange notebook about his trip to Iran, ca.1971. Peter Brook Collection. V&A Theatre and Performance Collections. GB 71 THM/452/12/1/6

Other

"Brecht Dialog 1968" (Berlin: DDR Magazin, 1968) <https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/film/37244> [Last accessed 3.20.23]

Appendix: Biographies of key figures

Ebrahim Alkazi (1925-2020) was an Indian theatre director and educator. He was director of the National Drama School in New Delhi during the 1960s and 1970s. Born to a wealthy Arab family in Pune, he trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London during the late-1940s, before returning to India. He worked as a curator with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, and as a theatre maker in The Theatre Group, in the early 1950s. Throughout his career he was a prolific director of Western plays. Alkazi attended both the New Delhi East-West UNESCO seminar of 1966 and the 1968 Brecht Dialog in East Berlin, in addition to the 1976 DDR conference of the TWC.

Fritz Bennewitz (1926-1995) was an East German theatre director. He made his name as a director in the late-1950s at the Meiningen theatre, before being named director of the DDR National Theater in Weimar in 1960. While in this role Bennewitz began working much more internationally: first as an influential member of the ITI TWC (where he was present at almost all conferences and festivals); later through production and lecture tours in Latin America and South Asia. In 1984 he was elevated to the position of vice-president of the International Theatre Institute.

Enrique Buenaventura (1925-2003) was a Columbian theatre director and actor. An exponent of "committed theatre," Buenaventura helped articulate a new language for Latin American theatre that sought to address social issues. In 1955 he founded Teatro Experimental de Cali, a radical theatre collective. While Buenaventura was undoubtedly the lead artist, the company prioritized a form of collective creation among its ensemble and spectators. Buenaventura was present at the founding of the TWC in London, 1971, and notably attended the 1976 conference in Rennes.

Jean Darcante (1910-1990) was a French actor, director, and administrator. Known primarily as a film actor during the 1930s and 1940s, he became director of the Théâtre de la Renaissance, Paris, in 1946. From this position he was elevated to the status of General Secretary of the International Theatre Institute, which he led until the 1980s.

Alfred Farag (1929-2005) was an Egyptian playwright. Having begun his career as varyingly a teacher and literary critic, Farag would become a defining playwright of the 1950s-1970s. Farag's plays, including *The Caravan* (1956), and *The Barber of Baghdad* (1964) were respected for blending formal elements: colloquial and formal Arabic; traditional and contemporary representational genres, while addressing socio-economic and political issues. As a critical artist, Farag's favor in official circles varied greatly during the Nasser era. Farag attended TWC events in Rennes and East Berlin in 1976.

Farrokh Ghaffari (1921-2006) was an Iranian film maker and cultural administrator. He was one of the curators of the Shiraz Arts Festival (1967-1977), with a particular focus on its performance programming. From 1973-1975 he was responsible for the secretariat of the ITI TWC. In 1976-1977 he oversaw the founding of the Institute for Traditional Performance and Ritual in Tehran: a product of international scholarly collaborations in Shiraz over traditional performance forms.

Cecile Guidote (1943-) is a Filipina theatre director and cultural administrator. She is the founder of the Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA), and a leader of the national theatre movement in the Philippines. She studied in the United States, and returned there in exile during the early 1970s, taking up residency at LaMaMa ETC in collaboration with Ellen Stewart. She was the first Filipina to be elected to the ITI Executive Council. Many decades later, Guidote served as executive director of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, the equivalent of a Ministry of Culture in the Philippines. As head of PETA, Guidote held the secretariat of the TWC from 1971-1973, remaining one of its most influential members throughout the decade.

Carole Y. Johnson (1940-) is an American dancer, choreographer and arts administrator. As a lead dancer in the Eleo Pomare Dance Company, she toured to Australia in the early 1970s. There, Johnson initiated a series of long-term collaborations with indigenous artists that would lead to her co-founding the Bangarra Dance Theatre and the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Scheme — a contemporary dance company and performing arts college dedicated to supporting indigenous Australian artists. Johnson also helped articulate the language of Black Dance as an aesthetic form, including through her journal, *The Feet* (1970-1973). She attended the 1973 TWC festival-conference in Shiraz.

Adel Karasholi (1936-) is a Syrian-German poet and translator. After an early career as a poet and critic in Syria, he left in 1959, settling eventually in Leipzig in 1961. He completed his doctorate at the Leipzig University on Brecht, publishing *Brecht in Arabischer Sicht* in 1982. Karasholi taught at Leipzig for twenty-five years, while publishing collections of poetry and essays. Among his numerous translations from Arabic into German are the plays of Alfred Farag. He attended the Brecht Dialog of 1968 and the 1976 TWC gathering in the DDR.

Chérif Khaznadar (1940-) is a Syrian-French cultural director. He is President of the Maison des Cultures de Monde in Paris. During the 1960s and 1970s he held an itinerant career, serving in various educational, administrative, and directorial roles at the Université du Théâtre des Nations, the Syrian Ministry of Culture, the International Cultural Center of Hammamet, UNESCO, and the Maison de la Culture de Rennes. He was also a theatre director and poet. Khaznadar was an instrumental figure in the ITI TWC, attending all events while serving in an advisory capacity. In 1975 he brought the administration of the TWC in-house at Rennes, where he was director until 1980.

Jalal Khoury (1933-2017) was a Lebanese playwright and theatre director. During the 1960s he wrote extensively for French-language literary and cultural magazines in Beirut, before finding success with own plays starting 1968. A Marxist, his first project as a director was Brecht's *Visions of Simone Machard* (1964). His greatest international success was *Al-rafiq Segean* (*Comrade Segean*), staged at the Volkstheater Rostock in the DDR. Khoury was President of the TWC from 1973-1977.

André Malraux (1901-1976) was a French author and government minister. Malraux's reputation as a public figure was forged in the 1920s and 1930s, primarily as a novelist but also as an adventurer of sorts. Post-war he reinvented himself as an art historian and public intellectual aligned with Charles de Gaulle. He served twice as a minister under de Gaulle: first as Minister for Information (1945-1946), later as France's first Minister of Cultural Affairs (1958-1969). As a social democrat nevertheless committed to preserving French high culture, Malraux initiated the restoration or construction of libraries, theatres, museums, opera houses, and multi-arts *maisons de la culture* throughout France, as part of a wide-ranging cultural policy.

Koreya Senda (1904-1994) was a Japanese director, translator, and actor. He was Japan's most prominent interpreter of Brecht's work, as a translator and director. Senda lived in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, where he saw Brecht's plays for the first time and became involved with the German Communist Party. Upon returning to Japan, he became a prolific film actor and active member of the progressive theatre movement. During the 1940s, Senda was a co-founder of the influential Haiyuza Theatre Company, partially subsidizing the company's work with proceeds from his acting work. Senda enjoyed close ties to the DDR — attending the 1968 Brecht Dialog, as well as the 1976 TWC conference.

Ellen Stewart (1919-2011) was an American theatre director. As the founding Artistic Director of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, she was arguably the most influential figure in the New York Off-Off-Broadway movement. From early in her theatrical career Stewart sought out international collaborations, and work from La MaMa continued to be a fixture of international festivals during the 1960s-1980s. This interest in the international potential of her work led Stewart to become a key member of the United States Center of the ITI. Her interest in the TWC, for which she was an advisory member, led her to a long-term artistic partnership with Cecile Guidote. At La MaMa, Guidote and Stewart hosted numerous gatherings of Third World artists visiting the United States.

Giorgio Strehler (1921-1997) was an Italian theatre and opera director. In 1947 he co-founded the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. Strehler and his theatre became known for visually striking productions of Shakespeare (*La Tempesta*), Carlo Goldoni (*Servant of Two Masters*), and opera. He was also a director of Brecht. Strehler and Brecht would become friends during the 1950s, with the playwright strongly supportive of the director's vision for his work. Once considered a possible choice for *Intendent* of the Berliner Ensemble, Strehler maintained close ties with the East German theatre.

Sa'dallah Wannous (1941-1997) was a Syrian playwright. During the 1960s and 1970s, Wannous helped found the Arab Festival for Theatre Arts, and the High Institute for Theatre Arts, in Damascus. Yet his greatest impact was in reinventing modern drama in the Arab world through his "theatre of politicization." Plays like *An Evening's Entertainment for the Fifth of June* (1968) and *The Adventure of the Head of Mamlouk Jabir* (1970) posed bold questions of Arab social, intellectual, and political life in the wake of the Six Day War of 1967, while also experimenting with theatrical form. After the Israeli assault on Beirut in 1982 Wannous took an extended hiatus from writing, before a late-career renaissance in the 1990s. In 1996, he became the first Arab artist to deliver the annual ITI World Theatre Day address. Wannous attended the 1968 Brecht Dialog.

Manfred Wekwerth (1929-2014) was a German theatre director. One of Brecht's assistants in the early days of the Berliner Ensemble, Wekwerth would lead the theatre from 1977-1991. Several of his productions would be recorded for East German television, or turned into films — such as his 1958 film of *Die Mütter*. During the 1980s he became president of the DDR Academy of Arts. He was also a longtime Stasi informant. Wekwerth attended the 1976 TWC conference in East Berlin.