

Odin Teatret celebrates its 60th anniversary. The legendary ensemble has made its mark on the history of contemporary theatre not only through its theatrical work, but also through its multi-threaded social activities.

The More than Theatre Festival. 60 Years of Odin Teatret at the Mazovian Institute of Culture presents the latest work of one of the most important and longest-running experimental theatres in the world. The program includes the Polish premiere of the latest performance – "Hamlet's Clouds" directed by Eugenio Barba, a work demonstration, a family performance, as well as screenings of documentaries – including those not shown in Poland before – and meetings with the ensemble and thematic seminars.

The group has existed since 1964, when Eugenio Barba, a director without a degree, together with four novice actors who had not been accepted to theatre school, decided to establish their own theatre in Oslo. On the wave of the 60s counterculture and inspired by Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre of 13 Rows, with whom Barba had worked for three seasons in Opole. From Norway, the group moved to Holstebro in Denmark, where on the premises of a former farmstead, they ran a "theatre laboratory" focused on actor training and developing their own acting techniques.

In the 1970s, the group, traveling around the world, developed its own model of cultural exchange with local communities – the so-called barter – based on the belief in the equality of cultures and the value of mutual influence. "Intercultural theater" is one of the names used to describe the group's activities.

The International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) was founded on Odin Teatret's initiative, and Barba's name is mentioned among the creators of the term "theatre anthropology". The term Third Theatre, used to describe the movement of independent theatre groups around the world, also comes from Barba. For years, Odin Teatret has moderated the networking of the entire environment, organizing conventions, workshops, artistic residencies, and festivals.

Another important project initiated connected with the group is The Magdalena Project – an international program of women in performing arts – and the organization of the annual Transit festival, dedicated to women in theater. Odin Teatret also publishes the Journal of Theatre Anthropology (JTA).

Among the most important recent projects is the Living Archive Floating Islands (LAFLIS), which was created after Barba donated his library and family archive to the Apulia region in Italy. The Bernardini Library in Lecce hosts an innovative archive in the form of an interactive installation of visual materials, artifacts, and publications related to Barba's biography, the work of Odin Teatret, and the Third Theatre movement.

A separate thread in the history of the group is its links with Poland and cooperation with Polish independent theatre groups – including Akademia Ruchu, Biuro Podróży, Teatr Brama – which have visited Holstebro or co-created Odin Teatret projects. For his contribution to the development and popularization of Polish theatre abroad, Barba received an honorary doctorate from the University of Warsaw and the Gold Medal for Merit to Culture Gloria Artis.

Odin Teatret regularly performs in Poland, each anniversary is a pretext for cooperation and visits. But this one is particularly important and symbolic. In 2023, after almost 60 years, the group lost its headquarters and left Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, the institution it created. The festival is therefore an opportunity to both sum up these six decades and to reflect on what tomorrow may bring.

Festival curator: Zofia Dworakowska

Festival producer: Agnieszka Daroch

Organizer: Mazovian Institute of Culture, Institute of Polish Culture (University of Warsaw)

Co-organizer: Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw