

Manfred Brauneck

Former Professor of Theatre Studies at the Universität Hamburg and Director of the Zentrum für Theaterforschung

2010 Balzan Prize for the History of Theatre in All Its Aspects

For his wide-ranging account of two and a half millennia in the History of European theatre, as well as his research on currents and events of an international nature in the world of theatre.

Institute Administering Research Funds: German Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), Berlin

Adviser for the General Balzan Committee: Gottfried Scholz

The Role of the Independent Theatre in Contemporary European Theatre: Structural and Aesthetic Changes

Manfred Brauneck has designated half of his Balzan Prize to a research project which investigates the interaction between changes within social and legal conditions for performing artists, changing methods of production and distribution of theatre art and the shifting dialectics of content versus form in European contemporary theatre. The role of independent theatres in the holistic systems of theatre culture will be the centre of focus.

The different theatre systems in Europe are going through fundamental changes. Shifting prerequisites, new production methods and structures of organization have changed the content of the theatre as well as its reception. Studying this context will be an important aspect of the project. One of the most important factors driving these changes is the breakdown of the political systems in Eastern Europe after 1990, with emerging new paradigms in social and cultural life followed by the increasing pace of globalization, which has been changing the shape of Europe fundamentally since the 1990s.

These vectors have created more flexible and decentralized production structures, new cooperative relationships and brought new technologies to the planning and the

direct creation of theatrical forms of expression as well as changes in the distribution processes (e.g., increased orientation towards target audiences, PR/marketing, internationalization, event orientation, etc.). All of these elements change the nature of the work and the living conditions of theatre artists in a lasting way. Existing studies deal with the respective local/national contexts or are focused on single aspects (e.g., mobility or social status).

A concept was developed for the proposed research in close cooperation with Prof. Dr. Manfred Brauneck. It entailed producing five thematic studies as well as a series of overviews of the situation for the independent scene in different European countries as well as an empirical investigation of the socio-economic position of independent performing artists. Subsequently, it was agreed to do without the reports on individual countries and the empirical investigations because the value of the data expected from the countries in question was limited and at risk of rapidly becoming out of date. This was on account of the wide fluctuations within many of the groups and also because, from country to country, the levels of outside support differed widely. This will not, however, affect the project's wished-for representativeness nor its inclusion of the European context. Instead, the overall discourse that was initially sought will be included within the thematic studies. The entire research project has – in line with the Balzan Foundation's principles – been consistently oriented towards fostering a new generation of researchers.

With regard to the project up to this point, one thing can be stressed: the regular colloquiums and authors' meetings have become an important platform for continuing exchange within the research group and have furthered comprehensive analysis of this extraordinarily varied field of study.

The first colloquium took place on 20 October 2011 in the ITI offices in Berlin's Kunstquartier Bethanien. Those present were: Prof. Dr. Manfred Brauneck (General and Academic Coordinator), Dr. Thomas Engel (Director, ITI Germany), Friederike Felbeck (author), Prof. Günther Heeg (mentor, Universität Leipzig), Andrea Hensel (author), Christine Koch (author), Dr. Barbara Müller-Wesemann (mentor, Hamburg), Dr. Petra Sabisch (author), Prof. Wolfgang Schneider (mentor, Stiftung Universität Hildesheim), Dr. Azadeh Sharifi (author), Prof. Gottfried Scholz (Balzan Foundation) and Andrea Zagorski (Project Leader, ITI). The aims of that colloquium were: to reach a fundamental understanding of the project, to discuss the first steps to taking the work in, to work out how to approach the thematic studies. Prof. Dr. Manfred

Brauneck's elucidation of the research proposal was very helpful in this regard. The focus on the developments of the last twenty years reveals a shift towards globalization, evident since the 1990s in the increasing interconnection, digitalization and concomitant economic pressure in most European countries. Just as important, however, are the complex social transitions in Eastern European countries that have led to a rearrangement of theatre there. Another of the study's aims is to investigate the phenomenon of "independent theatre" within the European context – even though it is conceptualized very differently in different countries – and to examine social changes with regard to the effect they have had on independent theatre while also examining how this independent scene has reacted to those changes. The authors presented a first sketch of their research projects for group discussion.

- Friederike Felbeck: *Intercultural Exchange in European Theatre*.
- Andrea Hensel: *Independent Scene(s) as Core and Catalyst of New Structures in the Theatre. On the Relationship between Innovative Production Forms and Creativity in Theatre Aesthetics*.
- Christine Koch: *Children's (and Youth) Theatre since 1990: Developments, Trends, Visions. A Comparative European Study*.
- Dr. Petra Sabisch: *Artistic Working Practices and Criticism in Contemporary Dance and Performance Art at the Point of Intersection between Production and Aesthetics, 1990-2011*.
- Dr. Azadeh Sharifi: *Post-Migrant Theatre*.

The discussion of the individual topic areas was centered primarily on the significance of the independent scene within the theatre systems of various European countries.

The second colloquium took place in the Kulturfabrik Kampnagel in Hamburg on 27 and 28 January 2012. Those present were: Prof. Dr. Manfred Brauneck, Friederike Felbeck, Andrea Hensel, Christine Koch, Dr. Barbara Müller-Wesemann, Dr. Petra Sabisch, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schneider, Dr. Azadeh Sharifi and Andrea Zagorski. The host, Kulturfabrik director Amelie Deuflhard, provided an extensive report on her work in Kampnagel and as head of the production house Sophiensaele in Berlin. She focused particularly on structural changes and changes to modes of production in the independent scene, delineated financial and funding models, and described the professionalization of independent performing artists that has now been achieved. Equally useful in guiding the research was a discussion with the Viennese performance collective God's Entertainment, who provided an insight into their working practices as an

independent artists' collective within the Austrian cultural scene. The young researchers presented their work up to that point, and there was a discussion of the steps to be taken in the coming months. It was also decided to include the main aspects of the individual country reports within the framework of the thematic studies.

The third colloquium took place on the invitation of the Stiftung Universität Hildesheim from 11 to 13 May 2012 in Hildesheim. Those present were: Prof. Dr. Manfred Brauneck, Dr. Thomas Engel, Prof. Günther Heeg, Andrea Hensel, Christine Koch, Prof. Wolfgang Schneider, Dr. Azadeh Sharifi and Andrea Zagorski. The colloquium opened with a podium discussion of the role of independent theatre in Germany. Chaired by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schneider, the speakers were Prof. Dr. Jens Roselt (Stiftung Universität Hildesheim and Chairman of the Niedersachsen Theatre Committee), Prof. Dr. Annemarie Matzke (Stiftung Universität Hildesheim and performer in the group She She Pop) and Prof. Dr. Geesche Wartemann (Stiftung Universität Hildesheim). The main topic of discussion was how to place the independent scene's developments, production forms and aesthetic concepts within the general context of the German theatre landscape. Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schneider and the dramaturge Henning Fülle provided a complementary report on the position of independent theatre within the debate on cultural politics in Germany. Prof. Schneider gave an analysis of cultural politics in Germany with regard to the subsidised theatre system and the policy of supporting independent theatre. As part of the analysis, he outlined the criteria for this support, which he primarily saw as multidisciplinary, interculturalism and internationalism. Henning Fülle reported from the studies forming his doctoral project at the Stiftung Universität Hildesheim; he concentrated on the emergence of independent theatre in Germany and its evolution since the 1960s. Fülle discussed the discourse of recognition of the independent scene in politics, the media and the theatre industry. For him, the essential factors in consolidating the independent theatre are professionalization, state support, which has now been established, and improvements to infrastructure, which have now been made.

A fourth colloquium with the title "Art and life. Transformations in (Eastern) Europe's Independent Theatre Scene" was held on 8 November 2012 at the University of Leipzig in the framework of the euro-scene festival in Leipzig. The discussions and panels primarily addressed the international perspective. This entailed considering the structures and working practices of free and independent theatre in other European countries. Invited speakers: Prof. Dr. Günther Heeg (University of Leipzig, Germany), Dr. Vitomira Lončar (Artistic Director, Mala Scena Zagreb, Croatia),

Stefan Schmidtke (Associate Artistic Director, Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, Germany), Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schneider (University of Hildesheim, Germany), Dr. Bettina Sluzalek (Dramaturge, Artistic director Radialsystem V, Berlin, Germany), Anja Suša (Director, Selector Bitef-Festival, Serbia, Germany), Attila Szabó (International Department, Hungarian Theatremuseum and -institute, Hungary), Rok Vevar (Director, Publicist, Critic, Slovenia).

A conference, Postmigrant Perspectives on European Theatre, was held 20-22 March 2013 at the Goethe Institute in London. Migration is one of the most influential contemporary phenomena. The social as well as the political consequences it causes are likewise recognized within the European theatre landscape. During the past number of years, postmigrant artists, theatre ensembles and institutions have gradually stepped into the limelight of the particular national theatre scenes. The conference Postmigrant Perspectives on European Theatre analyzed these developments together with representatives from the arts, academia and cultural policy. Based on the regional theatre scenes in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, the conference mainly focused on questions of representation, networking and the institutionalization of post-migrant theatre in Europe. Invited speakers: Nasim Aghili (director, Stockholm), Tanika Gupta (author, London), Mehmet Ergen (Artistic Director, Arcola Theatre, London), Rani Kasapi (Managing Director, Riksteatern, Stockholm), Lucien Kembel (Director, MC Theatre, Amsterdam), Chris Keulemans (Artistic Director, Tolhuistuin, Amsterdam), Onur Suzan Nograba Kömürçü (Goldsmiths College, University of London), Shermin Langhoff (designated Director, Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin), Hassan Mahamadallie (Senior Strategy Manager, Arts Council England), Prof. Sarat Maharaj (Malmö Art Academy, Lund University), Saban Ol (Artistic Director, Rast Theater, Amsterdam), Prof. Dr Wolfgang Schneider (Institute for Cultural Policy, University of Hildesheim) and Deniz Utlu (author, Berlin).

The conference was organized by PhD Azadeh Sharifi in cooperation with the Goethe Institute London as well as the German Centre of the International Theatre Institute (ITI), and was also supported by the ZEIT-Foundation Ebelin and Gerd Bucerius (Hamburg). ITI Germany has placed information about the research project on its homepage, in its annual report and in the members' magazine *Impuls*. It also regularly sends updates in its newsletter. Moreover, the ITI centres, co-operating organizations and the Goethe Institute are kept informed on the Balzan Project.

The final international symposium will be held in Hildesheim in October 2015, and

will work closely with the Institute for Media, Theatre and Popular Culture and the Institute for Cultural Policy at the University of Hildesheim. A multi-day international meeting which will deal decisively with the research methods and results from the Balzan project is planned. Scientists, artists and students will be invited to examine the artistic developments, changes in production conditions and the increasing internationalization of independent theatres in various forums. The concept for this international symposium will be developed in collaboration with Professor Dr. Annemarie Matzke, Professor Dr. Gesche Wartemann and Professor Dr. Jens Roselt (all from the Institute for Media, Theatre and Popular Culture, University of Hildesheim) and Professor Dr. Wolfgang Schneider (Institute for Cultural Policy, University of Hildesheim).

Researchers:

Friederike Felbeck
Andrea Hensel
Christine Koch
Petra Sabisch
Azadeh Sharifi

Publications:

A publication with the five monographs by the researchers, a general overview, an introduction by Prof. Dr. Manfred Brauneck and articles by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schneider and Prof. Dr. Matthias Rebstock is planned for the spring of 2015. It will be published in German and English by transcript-Verlag.

Link:

<http://www.iti-germany.de/index.php?id=223&L=5> (ITI Balzan page)