

Spring 2016

"The sound of a voice: An evening of intercultural theatre"

Amy C. Slothower
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019>

 Part of the [Acting Commons](#), [Other Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#), [Performance Studies Commons](#), and the [Theatre History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Slothower, Amy C., ""The sound of a voice: An evening of intercultural theatre"" (2016). *Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current*. 188.
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019/188>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.

*“The Sound of a Voice: An Evening of
Intercultural Theatre”*

A Project Presented to
The Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Visual and Performing Arts
James Madison University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By Amy Christine Slothower

April 2016

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Theatre and Dance, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

FACULTY COMMITTEE

HONORS PROGRAM APPROVAL

Faculty Project Advisor: Dennis Beck, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor, Theatre
General Education Cluster Two Coordinator

Dr. Bradley Newcomer, Ph.D.,
Director, Honors Program

Reader: Ingrid De Sanctis,
Assistant Professor, Theatre

Reader: Zachary Dorsey, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor, Theatre

To my parents, for always encouraging me to see the big picture.

Table of Contents

Preface	4
Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
Introduction	7
The Spectrum of Intercultural Theatre	9
Project Format	17
The Process of Discovery	18
Conclusion	24
Works Cited	25
Bibliography	26

Preface

People have always asked me, when I told them I was interested in other cultures, and traveling, “Well, you’re a theatre major—what are you going to do together with those things?” For the longest time, I couldn’t answer them. I would say that they were two separate interests, and that they didn’t have to be working in tandem for me to enjoy them both. Then we started learning about intercultural theatre in my Theory and Performance Studies class. I didn’t realize how wrong I was about myself—how much my life experiences abroad and love of cultures fuels my art, and my understanding of the world—until I started this project. Once I figured that out, creating a piece of intercultural theatre—a form that focuses on sharing culture and exploring the theatrical unknown—seemed right up my alley.

Acknowledgements

I cannot express enough thanks to my committee for all their help and guidance throughout this process: my two readers, Zachary Dorsey and Ingrid De Sanctis, and my advisor, Dr. Dennis Beck. Dr. Beck, thank you for all you've done for me over four years here at JMU. Your patience and guidance have shaped me both as an artist and as a human being.

Thank you to the JMU School of Theatre and Dance, for supporting me and being my home.

This project would not be possible if not for the incredible, dedicated work of the students who helped me bring this dream to life. Thank you to the cast, crew and artistic team behind "*The Sound of a Voice: An Evening of Global Theatre.*" I could not have asked for a better experience working with so many talented, passionate young artists.

Finally, to my family and my friends, for being my biggest fans and greatest support system. I don't know what I would do without you. Thank you.

Abstract

This undergraduate thesis examines the impact of the process of creating a piece of intercultural theatre on student artists. In the research of intercultural theatre, there is a lack of information on opportunities for intercultural performance experience for students, and much of the major research that has been done has all been by established theatre artists. The biggest concern in the theatrical community with creating works of intercultural theatre is the threat of cultural appropriation and imperialism. Much of this concern is stimulated by belief that the western dominant culture maintains a sense of imperialism towards what is perceived as “foreign,” and can only understand it through appropriation. The dangers of the euro-centric mindset can be both conscious and unconscious, and stunt much of the desire for young artists to explore intercultural theatre. In order to show that students would be positively impacted by the effects of being in an intercultural theatre process, this paper establishes some of the important themes and debates within the academic study of intercultural theatre, and talks about the process of the project and finding that students greatly enjoyed getting to work with a form they had never experienced before. This aided in the creation of greater global understanding, and the prevention of growth of a western-centric mindset.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre artist and academic Patrice Pavis says “The foreign is only the familiar lying in wait.”¹ Never has this been more true than in the twenty first century, where globalization of media and culture have made the world seem much smaller, and the possibilities for cultural mixing and intermingling, seemingly endless. But with the possibility for connection between cultures comes the possibility for appropriation of minority cultures by more dominant cultures; especially those that already have an extensive history of cultural or territorial imperialism. One of the most important places to consider this exchange is in the world of the arts, especially in live performance forms. These forms are not solely “theatrical,” but can be ritualistic, sanctified, and in many cultures have a greater significance that fits into a broader cultural and historical context. In true following of Pavis’ words, the theatre has adapted to create a way that these different global theatre forms might meet—intercultural theatre. Intercultural theatre allows pieces of culture to travel across the globe and directly impact audiences of an entirely different culture. However, this process is not always so straightforward. Because of the world history of colonialism and occupation, there exists an imbalance in perceived power: “dominant” cultures (usually the west) threaten the continuing purity and safety of minority cultures. This danger comes from the development of an ethnocentric mindset, and has put intercultural theatre practices at the heart of a great, worldwide debate. The danger of intercultural theatre—some productions being extremely effective in creating a cultural exchange, though many not— has plagued artists with the questions of “can I? Should I?” and most importantly, “what do I stand to lose?” What I present with my senior honors thesis project is the contrasting question: “what do

¹ Patrice Pavis, *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996) 12.

² Mower, Susan. "Peter Brook's Mahabharata: An Intercultural Consciousness." *Consciousness*,

we stand to gain from creating intercultural theatre?" For young artists, the opportunity to work on a piece of intercultural theatre could be a life-changing, eye-opening experience. It offers the chance to experience a world outside of your own culture, and to come to understand that culture through a sacred aspect of its history: theatre, or theatrical forms. The danger of intercultural theatre that comes from fear of appropriating culture/being appropriated is much smaller if the next generation of theatre artists are exposed to intercultural theatre at an early age, and trained learn against developing the "untrained Western consciousness."² The process of creating a piece of intercultural theatre is beneficial to young theatre artists as it enriches their understanding of their own cultural context and helps prevent the growth of the western-centric mindset.

² Mower, Susan. "Peter Brook's Mahabharata: An Intercultural Consciousness." *Consciousness, Literature & the Arts* 11.2 (2010): 9.

THE SPECTRUM OF INTERCULTURAL THEATRE

Intercultural theatre is a form that is currently under much exploration by artists from across the world for its potential to bring cultures closer together through intermingling of performance forms. An important thing to understand about the world of research in intercultural theatre is that, like most theatrical forms, it is very subjective: opinions differ between theatre artists as to what intercultural theatre should be aiming towards, as there are a few important concepts that stand out in each. Theatre artist and scholar Patrice Pavis describes intercultural theatre as, “hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas.”³ Pavis highlights the “hybridity” of different global theatre practices in intercultural theatre, and this is arguably the most important aspect of the form overall. It is valuable at this point to note that global theatre forms are in themselves not inherently intercultural; the intercultural part of the definition is derived from the hybridization created by the meeting and exchange between cultures. For example, Japanese Kabuki theatre, a very old and respected form that takes years of training to master, is not alone considered intercultural—however, a performance of Kabuki theatre in Germany or Sweden, to an audience of native Europeans, or a production that brings together Kabuki tradition with performance forms from these countries, achieves the sense of a meeting of cultures, or hybridization, that Pavis suggests is necessary for intercultural theatre. Director and theatre artist Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei suggests that the potential of intercultural theatre lies in fusion, which, “glorifies in diversity as well as connection. The key is respect and knowledge of cultural

³ Pavis, 8.

imperatives on all sides without sacrificing artistic experimentation.”⁴ Sorgenfrei’s fusionist form of intercultural theatre implies a world in which the performance forms work and mingle together, but also retain the dignity and cultural richness of the original context. This definition also presents another element of intercultural theatre: embracing and spreading the knowledge of cultures to one another in a way that is respectful and aware of the needs and values of both cultures.

Intercultural theatre is a communicative form; it seeks to use aspects of performance to create a dialogue between cultures, and between the people who perform them. One scholar reflects, “theatre can highlight the challenges of transcultural interactions – and do this in ways that challenge viewers to rethink their own assumptions and perspectives on the issues at hand.”⁵ This ability for self-reflection and understanding of where artists stand within the global state of theater is made possible by the cultural exchange created through intercultural theatre. The execution of intercultural theatre creation cannot be pinned down to one method, or one process; there are a wide variety of possible approaches that exist on a spectrum of different levels of cultural exchange. In order to engage in this communication, it is important to be at least somewhat aware of the cultural context of different theatrical forms. This awareness helps understand how social, political and economic language develops all over the world, and how that influences the creation of art worldwide. An example is *Noh* theatre being rooted in Japan: the slow, ritualistic, physical movement expresses the Japanese appreciation for beauty and

⁴ Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, “Intercultural Directing: Revitalizing Force or Spiritual Rape?” (New York: Peter Lang, 1995) 3.

⁵ Nelson, Cynthia D. "Live Theatre: A Dynamic Medium for Engaging with Intercultural Education Research." *Intercultural Education* 24.4 (2013): 341-47.

restraint, while the form itself is derived from historical, agricultural festivals to try and guarantee a good harvest. Artist Eugenio Barba suggests that it is important for humans as individuals to be aware of their identity, but in addition, “it is also essential to take the opposite and complementary point of view: to think of one’s own theatre in a transcultural dimension, in the flow of a ‘tradition of traditions.’”⁶ Barba suggests that not only does each culture have its own individual identity, but it exists in a world of traditions that are all valuable and important. It is the “tradition” of culture to be built on cultural “traditions,” so to speak. Pavis states, “meaning arises from the clash of contexts, not from the coexistence or multiplicity of cultural sources.”⁷ This “clash of contexts” is the gateway for communication through global performance forms, as it forces audiences to engage with both the elements of culture they are familiar with, and those they are unfamiliar with. When creating intercultural theatre, cultures are forced to figure out how they might work together in cultural exchange to communicate story or meaning through their combined performance forms.

The interpretation of cultural exchange in intercultural performance varies on a case-by-case basis, and there is much debate in the academic community as to how effective each type is in communicating meaning or story to a global audience. In the 1980’s, English theatre artist Peter Brook launched a globalized production of *The Mahabharata*, which became famous as a representation of the side of the spectrum that leans towards intercultural theatre as universalism. *The Mahabharata*, an Indian epic poem written in Sanskrit, is one of the most important texts in the Hindu religion; yet Brook refers to the piece as “a work that doesn’t belong to India. It is a

⁶ Eugenio Barba, “Eurasian Theatre.” *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1996) 218.

⁷ Pavis, 9.

great heritage of India, but it has meaning for others. . . . these works have a meaning not for Indians, or for white people, but for this being called Man. *The Mahabharata* belongs to mankind.”⁸ Brook sees cultural distinction as inhibiting the true purpose and potential of the theatrical arts, and is engaged in the idea that by removing the cultural context of the piece being solely Indian, a more universal understanding of the piece can be pushed to audiences. The production, which contained a multi-lingual, multi-racial cast of over twenty-five people and was eleven hours long in total, took years of preparation—including years of study in India—before it was performance ready. Many of the responses to the work were positive, and it was considered a commercial success, even garnering a film version. Theatre scholar Maria Shevtsova lauds Brooks desire for universalism as a “metaphysical quest for transparent truth, for a truth that can be true anywhere and everywhere, regardless of time and space and cultural differences.”⁹ Shevtsova, along with others, perceive Brook’s production as transcending the barriers that separate cultures and further divide the arts, preventing the growth of a collective, universal artistic form or understanding.

In spite of its success for some, the production received negative reactions from those who saw Brook’s attempt at universalism as a form of western imperialism. Such complaints came from artists such as theatrical scholar and director Rustom Bharucha, who refers to Brook’s interpretation as “one of the most blatant (and accomplished) appropriations of India in recent years. . . . It nonetheless suggests the bad old days of the British Raj, not in its direct allusions to

⁸ Peter Brook and Jonathan Kalb, “*The Mahabharata: Twenty-Five Years Later*,” *PAJA Journal of Performance and Art* 32 (2010): 69-70.

⁹ Maria Shevtsova, “Interculturalism, Aestheticism, Orientalism: Starting from Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata*,” *Theatre Research International* 22 (1997): 99.

colonial history, but in its appropriation of non-western material within an orientalist framework of thought and action, which has been specifically designed for the international market.”¹⁰ Bharucha, an Indian himself, brings up both cultural appropriation and orientalism as points of contention, even comparing Brook’s work to the historical occupation of India by the British from 1858-1947. This almost century-long period is noted for, as Bharucha suggests, the total appropriation of Indian culture by the British, who deemed it primitive in comparison to English culture, but still exoticized it. Bharucha creates a strong distinction of Brook as the “west,” and criticizes his desire for universalism as catering to other cultures without respecting the source culture. While Brook yearned to reach a sense of global artistic appreciation and creation, Bharucha claims that Brook has done both the Indian culture and the text of *The Mahabharata* a disservice: “One cannot agree with the premise that, ‘The *Mahabharata* is Indian but it is universal.’ The ‘but’ is misleading. The *Mahabharata*, I would counter, is universal because it is Indian. One cannot separate the culture from the text.”¹¹ Bharucha suggests that Brook’s universalism is not “universal” as much as an interpretation that better fits a western way of digesting Indian culture.

The potential for cultural appropriation is by far the most discussed issue in the theatre community regarding the creation of intercultural theatre. Scholar Una Chaudhuri writes that, “[Interculturalism] has sometimes seemed to collude in another version of cultural imperialism, in which the West helps itself to the forms and images of others without taking the full measure

¹⁰ Rustom Bharucha, “Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata*: A View from India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (1988): 1642.

¹¹ Bharucha, 1643.

of the cultural fabric from which these are torn.”¹² Chaudhuri reiterates the idea of removal of a culture from its original context as important in perpetuating cultural imperialism, but adds the distinction of it being an issue that the West and western culture are mostly responsible for. The various cultures of the west are not the only cultures in the world to have taken, and even appropriated, cultural and theatrical works from other cultures; however, because of the deep history of colonialism and imperialism by the west, research is especially critical of pieces of intercultural theatre where it appears that the west could be appropriating a minority culture. Cultural imperialism has several subcategories to be examined. One of the most notable is Orientalism, which deals with the mentality of the west towards non-western cultures; it suggests that if aspects of the culture, including its theatrical forms, do not line up with the western way of thinking or understanding, then they are abnormal and invalid, or “Other.” Sorgenfrei writes, “Orientalism is a way of defining the other by authorizing views about it, a method of control representing the Other as weak, incomprehensible or dangerous.”¹³ The creation of the “Other” turns culture into a binary system where what is familiar or understood is presented as the “right” way and the foreign is presented as the “wrong” or “obscure” way. This binary thought process lends itself to the creation of base-level assumptions made about the culture and the people involved on it: stereotypes. Scholar Julie Stone Peters asserts that, “constructing difference by means of stereotypes, in a binarism that helps to perpetuate a politics of ‘them’ and ‘us,’ becomes a defense against incursion from anything that might be genuinely foreign.”¹⁴ There is a

¹² Julie Stone Peters, *Imperialism & Theatre* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis Ltd/Books, 1955) 193.

¹³ Sorgenfrei, 2.

¹⁴ Peters, 200.

resistance created on both sides: one side who does not want to be turned into an “other,” and one side who becomes too scared or self-absorbed to learn anything at all.

Also living on the spectrum of cultural exchange are the artists who value the distinctions between cultures as beneficial and even necessary to the creation of intercultural theatre. These artists choose to create theatre that uses the distinct methods or cultural context of the global theatre forms together in order to make a statement about art, society and the rest of the world around them. Erika Fischer-Lichte states, “Interweaving cultures in performance does not mean erasing their differences or homogenizing them. Rather, because of the multiple states of in-betweenness elaborated above, performances are particularly suitable as sites for different cultures to meet and negotiate their relationships through various processes of interweaving that result in something completely new and beyond the scope of any single participating culture.”¹⁵ The “in-betweenness” Fischer-Lichte refers to is the place where culture is not binary, but fluid enough to cultivate cultural exchange on both sides, so that something entirely new might be created. French director Ariane Mnouchkine is one of the leading examples of this kind of artistry: heavily influenced by the theatrical forms of East Asia, she desires to bring to her work the level of ritualistic dedication found in the theatre forms of those cultures. Some of Mnouchkine’s most notable works are her adaptations of *Richard II* done with influences of Japanese Noh and Kabuki theater. Mnouchkine qualifies her choices by saying, “There is nothing Japanese in *Richard II*: the references to Kabuki, to Noh, to bunraku, are to do with the ritual aspect, like traces rather than a mold. We have sought to establish a subtle relationship with the form, so that it should not be a narrowly restrictive corset but a space which replays

¹⁵ Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 25 (2009): 6.

elsewhere what Shakespeare had at his disposal: a place and not a form.”¹⁶ By using East Asian theatre forms as a frame to further the storytelling and the ritualistic aspects of *Richard II*, Mnouchkine has created a form of interwoven theatre that is neither entirely Japanese, nor entirely western. The two forms meet in the “in-between,” share their strengths through these selective pieces of culture, and try to build meaning out of it.

¹⁶ Ariane Mnouchkine, “The Theatre is Oriental,” *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996) 96.

PROJECT DESIGN

The only way to accurately test my thesis is to undergo the process of creating a piece of intercultural theatre, using young artists. For my project, I will direct a production of David Henry Hwang's *The Sound of a Voice*, in the style of Japanese Noh theatre. I will propose the show to the JMU School of Theatre and Dance Faculty as a laboratory production to be performed in the Experimental Theatre in the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts, so that it might be seen by the largest number of people available. I will cast student actors, and work with them on the Noh technique, teaching the aspects of the technique that are most important to the storytelling and helping them embody the physically demanding style. In order to give more examples of the vast expanse of the theatrical world, I will also present two scenes of other pieces of global theatre along with *The Sound of a Voice*: Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* and Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. I will choose a design and management team of students to assist me in bringing the technical elements of the production together, so that they honor the storytelling, as well as the beauty of the Noh technique and the works of global theatre. The product of these efforts will consist in three performances in mid-February, attended by JMU students, faculty, and members of the local community. The week after the performances, there will be a post-mortem discussion with the cast, artistic team, JMU Theatre and Dance Faculty, and other JMU students as to the effectiveness of the performances, and any responses that people will have.

A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

In my research for this project, many of the examples I found of the major works of intercultural theatre seemed distant to me—not just in time (though Brook’s *Mahabharata* is approaching thirty years old) but in the fact that the people doing it were theatre artists with years of experience. The artists I’ve spoken about were all established professionals when they began their forays into the world of intercultural theatre. This made me think, what kind of effect would this experience have on younger artists, who are very much still learning the craft? How would this impact not just their artistic development, but also their social and global consciousness? More than anything, I wanted to be given the ability to try my hand at intercultural theatre, and attempt to discover the answers to these questions myself.

In my thesis I talk about helping create an understanding of the “cultural context” of young artists, in the belief that the more an artist understands where both they and their culture fit in the global consciousness, the more effective their art will be in maintaining awareness of the western-centric mindset. A part of this that I did not anticipate until I was immersed in the process was what discovering “cultural context” meant for students who identify with multiple cultures. My student actors for the *Princess Pocahontas* and *The Strong Breed* scenes were all of different ethnicities: partaking in this project for them meant getting a chance to explore how their ethnic culture—Native American, Puerto Rican, Nigerian—and the western context in which they grew up intermingled to form their sense of identity. Though not something I had really considered in my original proposal, providing a space in which this exploration could happen became one of the most rewarding things about my project.

Because a key aspect of my thesis had to do with being a process-oriented approach, it was important to establish that this project was being done out of a spirit of curiosity and

intrigue, rather than out of a place of “knowing.” I knew that there was no way I could approach this process claiming to be an expert in any of these genres of performance. All of them have an incredibly rich history and some (like Japanese Noh) require a lifetime of training to truly master. But approaching the work with that understanding—along with the understanding that I was setting out to create something new, not replicate what already exists—helped keep my mind open to more possibilities and the constant potential for fusion of the different forms.

One of the most important aspects about this project was the distinction of each of the rehearsal processes. Each of my three pieces had a different focus and objective, which directly influenced how I worked with the actors. A discovery I made during the course of the rehearsal processes was how the two scenes from pieces of global theatre really assisted in creating and engaging the students in their cultural identities. The piece of Native American theatre, from Monique Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, told the story of people from the Native American and Latin communities using the legend and ritual of their history to battle both physical and cultural oppression. The two females, who play a variety of different characters—from the satirical “Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides,” to the Spirit Guide, to contemporary women—go through the twelve phases of the moon in an empowering exploration of both the minority and female experience. Because I was able to cast actors from the JMU community who identified as Native American and Latina, our process was heavily based on relating their personal identities and experiences to the text. We had many conversations about what it was like to be a minority woman in college in the twenty first century, the day-to-day microaggressions and oppression, and the challenges of working as artists in and on a campus that lacks a strong sense of racial diversity. Creating the personal connection for the actors enabled them to use Mojica’s play to speak for themselves, and made a strong statement about

the appropriation of their history. The piece of Nigerian Theatre by Wole Soyinka, *The Strong Breed*, had a bit of a different focus. “The Strong Breed” tells the story of a Yoruba village at the time of the *egungun* festival, where one member of the community is exiled to appease the god’s for the year’s trespasses. Eman, an outcast to the village, finds out that the sacrifice is to be his mentally impaired friend, and fights to sacrifice himself in his place. The play is self-reflective as Soyinka uses it to pose questions of morality about traditional practices that are seemingly inherent to the community. This process was heavily focused on research of the Yoruba culture, and developing an understanding of the intricate relationships in the community—so, I decided to engage our own community. I asked a student who is first generation Nigerian American to come in and talk to the actors about what she knew of the culture, and answer questions from the actors. This process allowed the actors—one of whom was ethnically Nigerian, but had little contact with the culture—to identify with a piece of themselves and their history through their chosen art form; unfortunately, not an opportunity that minority students get to have here at JMU. Not only did these two scenes provide the students with opportunities to consider their own personal identities and sense of cultural self, but it asked them to look at themselves in the context of the JMU culture, and a larger global culture.

The process for *The Sound of a Voice*, and the creation of the intercultural theatre piece was the process in which I felt like the stakes were the highest for all of us involved. I developed a mentality that reminded me that every choice I made, I had to be consistently aware that it was going to not only impact the communication between the actors and the audience, but the communication between the cultures intermingling onstage. There is a question of “the neck” of the work of intercultural theatre, and the question of what elements of performance forms get

filtered and how that impacts the performance. Being the one to have control over that was both exciting and terrifying, and kept me on my toes for every decision I made. That being said, I had to quickly learn that if I was going to doubt myself about my decisions for the entire process, nothing would ever get done. While it was a lot of pressure, I am actually glad to have had that feeling throughout the process because it kept me accountable to my concept and the intention behind my work, making sure I didn't overlook any details.

Another discovery I made was that I as the director was the vessel through which the language of the process was established. My actors, who were all students, were eager and excited to be involved with the project, but had limited training/experience with these forms of theatre. In directing *The Sound of a Voice* especially, I learned to develop a language with the actors about the intercultural theatre work that cohesively mixed the dual cultures values. Using my own research on Noh theatre, I created exercises for the actors that introduced the core concepts of Noh; once mastered, these exercises acted as a collective foundation that we could refer back to in the rehearsal process. A challenge I hadn't anticipated is that one of my actors didn't have the same western-style training to what I have experienced, so I had to tailor our collective language to figure out ways to communicate most effectively with them as well. It struck me, while this was happening, that this is what we all mean when we claim to emphasize process as equally as important as product; building this language, and foundation of understanding between the actors and the material, and making sure the actors got what they needed to perform at their highest capacity by creating an environment of respect and curiosity.

A few days after the run of the show ended, faculty members, the cast and artistic team, and students who had seen the show gathered for a *postmortem*: a meeting traditionally held after every performance at JMU where we can hold conversations about the performance. This

includes statements about what was effective, what was moving, what was ineffective, and what elements can still be improved upon in the future. Overall, the response I received about my project was overwhelmingly positive. Faculty and my peers commended the risk-taking aspect of this project, and how it truly felt like I approached it with a spirit of openness and enthusiasm. They commented on the beauty of the restrained style of the Noh elements in *The Sound of a Voice*, and how it effectively created new depth to the story I asked questions concerning whether or not the audience felt uncomfortable at any point during the performance, and why; many people confirmed this feeling during the first two performances, because they were very unsure of what to expect. They also responded that *The Sound of a Voice* provided not discomfort, but tension in both the physical and acting elements that kept them engaged and on the edge of their seats.

The faculty did mention that because I only showed scenes from *Princess Pocahontas* and *The Strong Breed* it was harder to fully understand and appreciate the world they created, which I agree with: if I could have done all three pieces in their full length, I absolutely would, and they were hard to cut down to selective scenes as it was. However, I don't regret including them because I think they added a rich element to the process for the actors, one of whom even expressed in me interest in pursuing a graduate degree in Native Studies because of this experience. The biggest suggestion I got from the faculty was that I could have gone further with everything—made people even more uncomfortable, forced the audience to go to even more ritualistic places with the performance, and really embraced the idea of presenting something that might be more unfamiliar to an audience than familiar. That being said, I felt that if this was the biggest critique I received, I had done something right.

My actors were given a chance to speak on the experience, and talked about how even though the material was for the most part, unfamiliar, they all enjoyed the exploration of the forms through the process. One of my actresses commented that focusing on the body for the Noh movement was actually freeing, as it made her feel more grounded in her acting; she said she would continue to use aspects of this training in her “western” acting in the future, as it was so beneficial. An actor in *The Sound of a Voice* said that he enjoyed being able to play around in a theatrical world he’d never experienced before, and isn’t sure when he’ll ever be able to have this kind of experience again. One of the actresses in *Princess Pocahontas* spoke on the topics of identity, and affirmed that she’d never had the opportunity to explore her own culture through performance before. She said that her participation in the project made her appreciate her dual cultures, and “made her embrace that she is on the cusp of difference.” To me, these responses are of the utmost value. My project set out to open the minds of young artists to the world of global theatre forms, and if these students are touched and changed by this experience, then I’ve accomplished my goal.

CONCLUSION

As an experiment and brief foray into the world of creating intercultural theatre, I feel that my project was hugely successful in proving my thesis. In conversations with faculty, students who came and saw the show, and my own actors after the whole thing was over, I was delighted to find not only acceptance and excitement about intercultural and global theatre forms, but questions. Rather than walking away to live in ignorance, people were actively discussing all the things I've talked about in this paper—the merits, the conditions, what we as an educational institution know we are capable of, and what we have yet to try. Expanding the global consciousness of the students of the School of Theatre and Dance was my goal, but it's only the first step in raising global consciousness of James Madison University as a whole, and ultimately the world. The topic of intercultural theatre is of course something that is always expanding, and my own thoughts on the subject were certainly changed from when I started. Going in, I had an idealistic mindset about my abilities, and that some moral intuition would help me make all the right decisions, but of course, it ended up being more complicated than that. Ultimately, intercultural theatre is subjective. There are no exact guidelines for how to do it successfully or how to fail—what one person sees as a failure, others applaud as greatness. There is only feeling, empathy and the need to create; the fundamentals to any good piece of theatre.

Works Cited

- Barba, Eugenio. "Eurasian Theatre." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 217-222. Print.
- Bharucha, Rustom. "Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*: A View from India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 23 (1988): 1642-1647. JSTOR Journals. Web. 21 Mar 2016.
- Brook, Peter, and Jonathan Kalb. "*The Mahabharata*: Twenty-Five Years Later." *PAJ: A Journal Of Performance And Art* 3 (2010): 63. *Project MUSE*. Web. 4 Apr. 2016.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erkia. "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between." *New Theatre Quarterly* 25.4 (2009): 391-401.
- Mnouchkine, Ariane. "The Theatre is Oriental." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 93-98. Print.
- Mnouchkine, Ariane and Josette Feral. "Building up the Muscle: An Interview with Ariane Mnouchkine." *TDR* 33.4 (1989): 88-97. JSTOR Journals. Web. 5 Apr. 2016.
- Mower, Susan. "Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*: An Intercultural Consciousness." *Consciousness, Literature & the Arts* 11.2 (2010): n. pag. EBSCO Host. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.
- Nelson, Cynthia D. "Live Theatre: A Dynamic Medium for Engaging with Intercultural Education Research." *Intercultural Education* 24.4 (2013): 341-47. *Taylor & Francis Online*. Web. 5 Apr. 2015.
- Pavis, Patrice. *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Peters, Julie Stone. "Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology, and the Imperialist critique: Identities, Inheritances, and Neo-Orthodoxies." *Imperialism and Theatre*. By J. Ellen Gainor. New York: Psychology Press, 1995. 195-208. Print.
- Shevtsova, Maria. "Interculturalism, Aestheticism, Orientalism: Starting from Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*." *Theatre Research International TRI* 22.02 (1997): 98-103. Print.
- Sorgenfrei, Carol Fisher. "Intercultural Directing: Revitalizing Force or Spiritual Rape?" *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama*. Ed. Marc Maufort. New York: P. Lang, 1995. 45-55. Print.
- Williams, David. "Remembering the Others That Are Us." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 67-78. Print.

Bibliography

- Barba, Eugenio. "Eurasian Theatre." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 217-222. Print.
- Bharucha, Rustom. "Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*: A View from India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 23 (1988): 1642-1647. JSTOR Journals. Web. 21 Mar 2016.
- Brook, Peter, and Jonathan Kalb. "*The Mahabharata*: Twenty-Five Years Later." *PAJ: A Journal Of Performance And Art* 3 (2010): 63. Project MUSE. Web. 4 Apr. 2016.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between." *New Theatre Quarterly* 25.4 (2009): 391-401.
- Greig, Noël. *Young People, New Theatre: A Practical Guide to an Intercultural Process*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- He, Chengzhou. "World Drama and Intercultural Performance: Western Plays on the Contemporary Chinese Stage." *Neohelicon* 38.2 (2011): 397-409. EBSCO Host. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.
- Kim, Ju Yon. "When Marco Leaves the Building: Intercultural Performances and Other Audiences." *Modernism/modernity* 19.4 (2012): 677-91. Project MUSE. Web. 5 Apr. 2015.
- Latrell, Craig. "After Appropriation." *TDR/The Drama Review* 44.4 (2000): 44-55. EBSCO Host. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.
- Mower, Susan. "Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*: An Intercultural Consciousness." *Consciousness, Literature & the Arts* 11.2 (2010): n. pag. EBSCO Host. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.
- Nascimento, Cláudia Tatinge. *Crossing Cultural Borders Through the Actor's Work: Foreign Bodies of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Nelson, Cynthia D. "Live Theatre: A Dynamic Medium for Engaging with Intercultural Education Research." *Intercultural Education* 24.4 (2013): 341-47. Taylor & Francis Online. Web. 5 Apr. 2015.
- Mnouchkine, Ariane. "The Theatre is Oriental." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 93-98. Print.
- Mnouchkine, Ariane and Josette Feral. "Building up the Muscle: An Interview with Ariane Mnouchkine." *TDR* 33.4 (1989): 88-97. JSTOR Journals. Web. 5 Apr. 2016.
- Mower, Susan. "Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*: An Intercultural Consciousness." *Consciousness, Literature & the Arts* 11.2 (2010): n. pag. EBSCO Host. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.

- Nelson, Cynthia D. "Live Theatre: A Dynamic Medium for Engaging with Intercultural Education Research." *Intercultural Education* 24.4 (2013): 341-47. *Taylor & Francis Online*. Web. 5 Apr. 2015.
- Pao, Angela. "The Red and the Purple: Reflections on the Intercultural Imagination and Multicultural Casting." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 24.4 (2014): 467-74. *Taylor & Francis Online*. Web. 5 Apr. 2015.
- Pavis, Patrice. *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Peters, Julie Stone. "Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology, and the Imperialist critique: Identities, Inheritances, and Neo-Orthodoxies." *Imperialism and Theatre*. By J. Ellen Gainor. New York: Psychology Press, 1995. 195-208. Print.
- Rebellato, Dan. *Theatre & Globalization*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- Schechner, Richard, and Willa Appel. *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. Print.
- Shevtsova, Maria. "Interculturalism, Aestheticism, Orientalism: Starting from Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*." *Theatre Research International TRI* 22.02 (1997): 98-103. Print.
- Sorgenfrei, Carol Fisher. "Intercultural Directing: Revitalizing Force or Spiritual Rape?" *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama*. Ed. Marc Maufort. New York: P. Lang, 1995. 45-55. Print.
- Welsch, Wolfgang. "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*. Ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash. London: Sage, 1999. 194-213. Print.
- Williams, David. "Remembering the Others That Are Us." *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. By Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996. 67-78. Print.