Globalism and the Festival Circuit

The global proliferation of theatre festivals has become one of the most distinguishing features of contemporary international performing arts. This remarkable phenomenon gathered steam in the latter half of the twentieth century and continues to balloon today, rivaling in popularity the annual theatre competitions of ancient Greece, or the great religious festivals of cycle plays of the European Middle Ages. But the number and the range of contemporary theatre festivals dwarfs those of previous centuries. Never before has the world seen such a visible and widespread annual array of public celebrations having drama as their centerpiece.

At my last count, I identified more than eighty-seven annual or biannual long-standing theatre festivals worldwide of some note—and this didn't include those one-of-a-kind special celebrations "in honor of __." (You fill in the blank: the anniversary of Ibsen's birth? Brecht's theatre? Moliere's death?) And in addition to their sheer numbers, theatre festivals today often impress us by their institutional character: they're "centrally listed" now on the World Wide Web (www.KadmusArts.com), they're often "end destinations" for travelers (think Edinburgh or Sydney), and in many cases they engage their artists and commission new work years in advance (consider landmark festival appearances by Pina Bausch and her Wuppertal Dance Theatre or Peter Brook's International Centre for Theatre Research).

What on earth is going on that can account for this phenomenon? Is there so much happening in global performing arts that special venues need to be created for the huge range of work artists produce these days? Are audiences too large to be accommodated in playhouses during regular seasons, that they throng at special times each year to these international events? Perhaps it's merely an ephemeral creation of the global tourist industry falling all over itself to send planeloads of well-heeled travelers to out-of-the-way destinations for wine-tasting, shrine-worshipping, bull-running, or what have you. Or maybe there's money in it somewhere for artists or cities or middlemen—perhaps all of the above.

After tracking the chronological growth of modern theatre festivals, I've reached the disappointing conclusion that history doesn't provide us with much in the way of an explanation of this global phenomenon. Certainly some major landmarks in the evolution of contemporary theatre festivals are easy to identify. For example, many feel the most venerable...
of the modern festivals is that of the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-Upon-Avon in the U.K. that started in 1879 and is still going strong despite its small size and limited scope. On this side of the Atlantic in Ashland, Oregon, the great Shakespeare festival tradition in the U.S.A. was begun in 1936, a movement that now embraces more than 200 stages in North America alone. And in 1947, Jean Vilar established the famous Avignon Festival in France which today is arguably the most prestigious venue for the international theatre community’s most distinguished new work. So modern festivals have been flourishing for over a century, but what exactly does this tell us about the great spike in festival activity that we see among artists, audiences, and producing organizations today? And more importantly, how influential is this phenomenon as an engine of theatrical experimentation and inspiration?

For me, the most fascinating aspect of this groundswell of festival popularity is how it showcases and seems to define the sort of global theatrical community that’s emerging nowadays. These are two key ideas I focus upon in my course on “Global Performing Arts and Management” that I teach every year. In fact, many see festivals as driving the emergence of a new global theatrical community. So in this essay I’d like to ask a few questions about that community. First, I’d like to identify some of the publics that are served by this worldwide “circuit” of festival stages. I’d also like to investigate the proliferation upon the kinds of new art work is created, produced, the shape of things to come for the future.

Let’s begin with the community impact. I think anyone who has attended the Theatre Festival or other major theatrical events will think they attract—especially local fans or tourists year millions of them in even major cities like terms this means the enhancing and public. business, industry and

How noteworthy then, we’re talking about how events do not come of them on their production, for example, Canada Stratford calculates that tourism to Canada’s gross domestic paid $96 million in wages full-time year-round job in the province of Ontario, where the festival is located.

That’s serious money. Many city leaders certainly hope that major theatrical events will back into local communities first-rate international attention on to their stages. Significant and节able commodity festival promotes these local and exoticism of foreign ensembles from around the world.

Who can put a value on publicity splash local and the United States,
also like to investigate the major political-economic impacts of festival proliferation upon the performing arts community, and put my finger on the kinds of new artistic challenges that festivals pose in terms of how work is created, produced and distributed. Finally, I'd like to speculate on the shape of things to come by asking what all this festival activity signals for the future.

Let's begin with politics and economics: what has been the societal or community impact of large theatre festivals on audiences worldwide? I think anyone who has ever attended the Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival or Montreal's Festival de Théâtre des Amériques or some other major thespian celebration is certainly aware of the huge crowds that they attract—especially in the summer months. Whether these people are local fans or tourists and travelers is perhaps beside the point because each year millions of them put out-of-the-way venues like Tampere, Finland, or even major cities like Cairo and Montreal in the limelight. In economic terms this means that important arts festivals attract tourist dollars, enhancing and publicizing a city's quality of life—which in turn attracts business, industry and more tourism to the community and the region.

How noteworthy is this observation? Well, for one thing, the money we're talking about here is huge: performing arts ensembles and spectacle events do not come cheap, and a major festival may book a dozen or more of them on their program, or even produce some of them itself. Take, for example, Canada's Stratford Festival, the largest in North America. Stratford calculates that in 2006 they contributed $145 million annually to Canada's gross domestic product, generated nearly $56 million in taxes, paid $96 million in wages and salaries, and accounted for more than 3,000 full-time year-round jobs. That's a lot of money changing hands each year in the province of Ontario, not to mention the small village of Stratford where the festival is housed.

That's serious money, and the public knows it, artists realize it, and city leaders certainly appreciate it. It's hard to estimate just how much money major theatre festivals really do plow back into local communities when they import first-rate international performance ensembles on to their stages. Star power has always been a bankable commodity in performing arts, and festival promoters these days capitalize on the fame and exoticism of foreign artists and acclaimed ensembles from around the world.

Who can put a value on such a high-visibility publicity splash locally and globally? Here in the United States, where public officials and
corporate sponsors often need to be reminded of the practical value of theatre, credible cost-benefit analyses by the National Endowment have revealed that every dollar invested in the performing arts leverages at least seven more locally in goods and services that art patrons spend for hotels, restaurants, concessions, gasoline, and the like. It seems clear, therefore, that communities derive substantial financial and public relations impact from a major theatre festival, and I think this is a big reason why festivals have burgeoned. Around the world municipal governments are lining up to partner with artists, knowing that these kinds of events make a city attractive, luring business investment and tourist dollars. In short, global theatre festivals add economic vitality and cultural bling to Toja, Japan, to Changwon-Masan, South Korea, to Bobigny, France, and other cities that are otherwise marginalized and overlooked by the world community.

Of course, it isn’t simply local communities that emerge as winners from all this festival activity; quite often the nation as a whole also benefits. Bear in mind that the vast majority of ensembles appearing on festival stages are government-sponsored. Does the government of Singapore, for example, underwrite all the costs of sending heavily-produced shows from the Chinese Opera Institute to the small town of Liverpool, Nova Scotia for their biannual International Theatre Festival? You bet they do, because the COI is a division of their National Arts Council which enjoys “showing the flag” of Chinese opera around the world. And the same is true of the groups showcasing their work at the Berliner Festspiele, the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival, or the Festival D’Automne in Paris. Like the Olympics, there’s a great deal of national pride underpinning the cultural products that a nation globally exports; and Robert Hughes wasn’t the first art critic to note that, in the final analysis, a nation will be best remembered for the quality of art that it produces.

The financial impact, audience popularity and civic pride associated with theatre festivals, though, are only the external features of this phenomenon that deserve our attention. I'd like to set aside these aspects for a moment and look a little more closely at the artistic community itself because artists should be the centerpiece of this discussion. How has the recent growth in theatre festivals changed the work they do? What new doors have festivals opened for experimentation and artistic growth? And what artistic costs have been paid as a result? Above all, what challenges lie ahead, where does the artistic road lead in the future for those regularly presenting their work on global stages?

Probably the most significant benefit accruing to artists from festival participation is the degree of cultural interpenetration and exchange that they now enjoy. At festivals where residencies, workshops, symposia and other events are part of the schedule, artists can easily promote their opinions and exchange ideas in a particular context. In fact, more and more artists seem to be outgrowing these other kinds of institutions and public. For instance, a recent trip to Monte Carlo, the Montreux Jazz Festival to remain in residence with all their lodging, we make all the work we have to try to promote global residency. It’s important to note that the growing interpenetration and exchange of theatre festivals makes very strong links with the world of music and the visual arts; it has always profited from one speaks of the Roman Greek playwrights, or the theatre to his native land in the 1960’s bringing artists in Geneva, Berlin.

Today, however, one often speaks of a “festival culture” in a world community that is more complex than the notion of an electronic “village” that many information and communications specialists believe. Certainly the World Wide Web has played a role in facilitating the exchange of artistic material, theories; it has also simplified the procurement of airline reservations, visas and the like. It has not succeeded in alleviating societal values, nor in universal human concepts. I believe this is very important for participating in the international living, face-to-face, real-world development of theatrical renewal and
ions and exchange ideas formally and informally in an exciting, creative context. In fact, more and more these days, international theatre festivals seem to be outgrowing their roles as simple international showcases, adding these other kinds of interactive activities in order to appeal to a broader public. For instance, at the 12-day theatre festival I help to organize in Monte Carlo, the Mondial, we require each of the 24 companies we bring to Monaco to remain in residence for at least nine days. We provide them with all their lodging, meals and theatre tickets while they’re with us, and we make all the workshops and related events free to them; but we also try to promote global intercultural exchange by insisting on an extended residency. It’s important for the development of global arts.

The growing interpenetration of artistic methods that occurs in the context of theatre festivals resembles the ways in which global trends in music and the visual arts have become increasingly hybridized. Theatre has always profited from cross-fertilization of artistic methods, whether one speaks of the Roman Seneca borrowing the “best and brightest” from Greek playwrights, or the Chinese admiral Zheng importing Sanskrit plays to his native land in the fifteenth-century, or New York’s Living Theatre in the 1960’s bringing the ideas of Artaud home once again to European artists in Geneva, Berlin, London and elsewhere. Today, however, one can speak of a “festival culture” in the sense of a world community that is much more complex than the simple notion of an electronic “global village” that many in business and communications still cherish. Certainly the World Wide Web has played a role in facilitating the exchange of artistic methods and theories; it has also simplified the procurement of airline reservations, visas and the like. But it has not succeeded in altering core societal values, nor in addressing universal human concerns like the arts have long been noted for doing. I believe this is very important and worth noting. Artists and audiences participating in the international festival “circuit” these days now enjoy living, face-to-face, real-time confrontations with vital, cutting-edge methods and value systems—a phenomenon that has sparked a huge amount of theatrical renewal and excitement in recent decades.
Such renewal has also resulted from highly significant artistic collaborations that global festivals have facilitated. This, too, is a remarkably important feature of contemporary theatre. The development of new cross-disciplinary and intercultural approaches to performance has led to so much reinvigoration of theatrical art in Europe, North America and Asia. Consider the colossal impact that artists like Ariane Mnouchkine (France), Robert Lepage (Canada), or Julie Taymor (U.S.A.) have exerted on the contemporary theatre scene by their work with multidisciplinary artists and theatrical forms. And reflect upon the importance of multiethnic, commercial ensembles like the Blue Man Group (U.S.A.) or Cirque de Soleil (Canada) whose stunning productions are lionized worldwide.

An excellent example of the key role that festivals play in facilitating collaboration is the evolution of the world-famous SITI Company co-founded by Anne Bogart (U.S.A.) and Tadashi Suzuki (Japan) in 1992. These artists founded the company in order to redefine and revitalize contemporary theatre in the U.S., specifically through an emphasis on international cultural exchange and collaboration. Prior to the 1980s, that is, Suzuki had developed his unique approach to theatre and earned notable international acclaim in the remote mountainous regions of Japan's countryside and in the more upscale international theatre circles.

Company is now based at global festival stages in Bonn, Colombia International Theatre Festival, Mexico City, Melbourne, Bonn, Israel.

And speaking of remarkable feature of the difficulty of finding a ticket to see in their home cities but this company is no exception to the home community in the U.S. where they do play in Amherst, Chicago, Tenochtitlan, Melbourne, Bonn, Israel.

This final point is one of the more profound insights of the festival. For example, is it not unusual for local community, to be seen throughout history that their work in serving the public service must, writers and painters, authors not only because it was to create but what extent is some of the work produced? It is not.

Attending a recent event in Havana, I was struck by the display of what can be characterized as the "disappearance of the homeless street child" as indigenes in Guatemala. It was a physically moving, not to say life-changing experience. A shared through the experience of the States, and has been...
notable international recognition as an acting theorist and stage director in the remote mountainous region of western Japan. Then in 1982, the government handsomely supported his desire to create that nation's first international theatre festival in Toga. The rest is history. Today, the SITI Company is now based in New York state, and it annually exports work to global festival stages such as the Australian Bicentennial EXPO, Biennale Bonn, Colombia International Theatre Festival, Edinburgh International Theatre Festival, MC93 Bobigny, and elsewhere.

And speaking of the SITI Company, this leads us to note another remarkable feature of “festival-induced” performing arts today: the difficulty of finding a ticket to many of the most prestigious theatre ensembles in their home cities because they’re touring so much of the year. The SITI company is no exception; you can rarely find them performing for their home community in Manhattan. Best to catch them on the road in the U.S. where they do numerous residencies and performances in Boston, Amherst, Chicago, Tempe and elsewhere, or at international festivals in Melbourne, Bonn, Istanbul, Copenagen, etc.

This final point of national and international touring leads us to consider some of the most problematic questions posed by international theatre festivals. For example, is it important any longer for a work of art to reflect its local community, to be rooted in a specific national culture? I’m reminded that throughout history, theatre artists have always found inspiration for their work in serving their local audiences. Regardless of a play’s subject matter, writers and producers have always sought validation locally—if only because it was the hometown public that bought the tickets. After all, Shakespeare wasn’t writing for the Chinese or Costa Ricans, was he? Despite the universal appeal of his plays, he scribbled what the London public wanted to see.

So nowadays, in the face of global arts festivals, we can justifiably ask what is perhaps the most important question of all: to what extent is some of the most significant and original theatrical work of our age now being driven by the desire to showcase it internationally?

Attending a recent international festival of Latin American theatre in Havana, I was struck by how much the theatre of the southern Americas can be characterized by its emphasis on politics and human rights. The problems of the “disappeared” populations in Argentina or Nicaragua, the homeless street children in Santiago and Rio, or the human rights of indigenes in Guatemala and Mexico—these are all unique focal points of the work I saw imported on to Havana’s stages. The plays were tremendously moving, not the least because they dealt with social issues that many shared throughout the region, and this was something I was quite unused to seeing in the U.S. Political theatre is currently a dead dog in the States, and has been for the last couple of decades. In a nutshell, the
majority of the work I saw in Havana originated in the communities of Latin America where these theatre companies reside, and where these social problems are much discussed. The work was not produced in order “to play in Scranton” or Bombay or Manila or anywhere else.

I wonder how much of the new work we’re seeing on global festival stages these days finds its inspiration locally, in some specific community? And if not, then what is lost thereby? I think we all understand that in order to go over well with international audiences the work must be

“universal” to a large extent. Do audiences at the biannual international festival hosted by the Teatro San Martin de Caracas care about the diaspora of the Hmong people in southeast Asia? Probably not. An Australian company, therefore, had better think of taking something else on tour to Spanish-speaking Venezuela besides the plays of Donna Abela—despite that writer’s popularity and importance in her own region.

International festivals often restrict the work of artists in other crucial ways as well: should productions be movement-based and spectacle-oriented because of language difficulties? And what does this imply for text-based (“logocentric”) drama? Should festivals impose a performance time limit of sixty or ninety minutes in order to accommodate all the groups on the schedule? How do they accommodate? And do they even participate in the festivals? Carrying their luggage in one hotel room to another, never becoming meaningfully part of the local cultural scene, having a profound impact on the scene?

If a production is successful, venue and toured into a town and city, is it either culturally or artistically representative is it either representative of where it originated? What does it add? What does it serve? Where it today come dangerously close to being “exotica shows” for a market? Turner often decreed, “The Viennese and London, these are the centers for the “riches” of the world. And hundreds of the middle classes have their fascination for the inane—clothes, food and so on. And their complacent attitude and culture.” How can there be no substitute for the “authenticity, discovery” we seek or ever, but experience on our world?

But as many sociologists of the community is probably true, so perhaps it comes as no surprise that profit margin is their primary concern. So much more with the values of the audience, the values that do with their own national identity line, and Michael Jackson is a bigger “star” than Bush or the Pope.

Is it becoming the case of the ensemble? Will the composition, the artistic dimensions of the work matter, and is no longer cultural, social, or political? Or will they—like the top companies of corporate culture—simply
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of artists in other crucial based and spectaclewhat does this imply for impose a performance accommodate all the groups on the schedule? How many ensemble members can a festival afford to accommodate? And for how long? Can they stay, share ideas, and really participate in the festival culture, or are they simply packing and unpacking their luggage in a boring, repetitive routine that leads them from one hotel room to another, one stage to another, one city to another, without ever becoming meaningfully involved either with their fellow artists or the local cultural scene? Such limitations are very real and can have a profound impact on the work.

If a production is altered somehow by being taken out of its original venue and toured internationally under such restrictions, then how representative is it either of the group that produced it, or the culture in which it originated? What sort of community produced it and what community does it serve? When looked at in this light, some global theatre festivals today come dangerously close to resembling those nineteenth-century “exotica shows” for cultural tourists that Richard Schechner and Victor Turner often decried. Set up in major western venues like Paris, Chicago, and London, these events were often cultural smorgasbords, showcases for the “riches” of the far-flung British or French or some other empire. And hundreds of thousands of locals flocked to these exhibits, driven by their fascination for quaint people and customs, and idle curiosity about clothes, food and scenery. The nineteenth-century public’s condescending attitude and cultural arrogance towards “the foreign,” however, was no substitute for the sort of dialogue, intercultural tolerance and mutual discovery we seek of other cultures today, and which we often hope to experience on our world stages.

But as many social historians have been quick to point out, the loss of community is probably an inevitable side effect of the rise of globalism, so perhaps it comes as no surprise that these days the theatre community is similarly redefining itself in terms of the brave new world that we see emerging. Multinational corporations, so the mantra runs, are no longer responsible to any national government—only to their stockholders. The profit margin is their bottom line. Teenagers around the world identify more with the values of their favorite musical artists and bands than they do with their own national values. Fame and fortune are their bottom line, and Michael Jackson’s face is more recognizable than that of George Bush or the Pope.

Is it becoming the same with our most prestigious and inspiring theatre ensembles? Will they continue to exert their influence and pioneer new artistic dimensions only if their work has a cultural “passport” of some kind, and is no longer culturally specific to a certain geographical community? Or will they—like the Wal-Marts and Starbuckss and Yahoos of global corporate culture—start dishing-up cheesy razzle-dazzle, put indigenous

Roger Ellis
artists out of business, and undermine traditional value systems as they suck rupees, dinars and pesos from local communities?

To some extent, I suppose this is already the case. Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre is based in Glover, Vermont, but the work they do can hardly be said to have grown out of that small rural community. No, it was Schumann's horrific experiences in Silesia before he emigrated to the United States that continues to motivate so much of the Bread & Puppet's work. Similarly, the work of the International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris has in no way been inspired by "the Parisian theatre scene." On the contrary, Peter Brook—like Ariane Mnouchkine on the other side of Paris—has been nurturing multinational companies of theatre artists for years, and embarking on theatrical pilgrimages to Africa, India, and Asia in search of a universal language for theatre audiences, who are invariably multinational.

I suppose in the final analysis we're witnessing an emerging new world wherein both types of theatrical communities will coexist on world stages: the local with its specific regional or national concerns, as well as the global (on international festival stages) with more universal, supra-national or aesthetic interests. And each will need to be mindful of the other's sensibilities. Brook, for example, played fast and loose with India's "cultural property" when he developed his most famous intercultural piece, The Mahabharata, largely for Western audiences only. He was appropriately pilloried by such critics as Rustom Bharucha for exploiting Sanskrit literature and Indian culture to serve the tastes of western audiences. By the same token, local groups deplored social conditions in Capetown or Montevideo, or celebrating their regional ethnic traditions should realize that their particular concerns must on occasion give way to the larger interests of an international audience. Such spectators may instead be satisfied only by plays dealing with global problems of population migration or political terrorism (Ariane Mnouchkine's Les Atrides), or by passionate and moving works of theatrical art celebrating the beauty and inspiration of the human spirit (Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues)—without any reference to local socio-political issues.

All of this, I think, points towards a bright future for international theatre festivals, and the artists we'll see on those stages will be inspired in many new ways. For one thing, the proliferation of festivals means that the artistic stakes have increased for producers and presenters. Festival organizers, that is, have grown much more familiar with different cultural traditions, new aesthetic approaches, and diverse artistic standards of touring groups, and are more selective with their invitations than they were twenty or thirty years ago.

One reflection of international festivals is the emphasis on multicul
tural festivals in E1, which encourages a more open exchange of ideas and other resources. In recent years, researchers, the medi
cologists, and others have been able to keep pushing its agenda, bringing new artists to educated and resource-rich cultural festivals. In the past, international cultural festivals were not considered very important, but now they are seen as a valuable resource for many different types of productions. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of international theatre festivals, with many now attracting large audiences from around the world.

In conclusion, the future of international theatre festivals looks promising, with a growing number of local and global groups participating. These festivals provide a platform for artists to showcase their work to a wider audience, and for audiences to experience new and exciting productions from around the world. As more festivals continue to emerge, the possibilities for collaboration and innovation are endless.
value systems as they once were.

Peter Schumann’s Bread & Puppet Project, but the work they do is still closely tied to a small rural community. When Schumann left before he emigrated to the US, much of the Bread & Puppet’s mission was carried on in what is now the National Centre for Theatre and Media in the French town of Cerceris, and the Experimental Centre for Theatre and Media in Quebec City. “the Parisian theatre artist and director Maria Mouchkine is an inspiration for new companies of theatre companies. The first group to perform abroad, to Europe, to India, and other audiences, who are emerging new world stages: national, regional, as well as the global, supra-national or cross-cultural, and the world of the other’s sensibilities. India’s cultural representative has created an intercultural piece, The Rasa. He was appropriately performed for an audience exploiting Sanskrit traditions and Western audiences. By the time of the 2008 season in Capetown or New York, audiences should realize that the way to the larger stage is not to be satisfied with population migration numbers, of tourists (Sanskrit,)(Olympics), or by passionate festivals of beauty and inspiration (in any language)—without any reference to cultural significance.

The future for international theatre companies is write now. The proliferation of festivals means that theatre companies must develop plans for participation in international tours. One reflection of this was the creation in 1990 of the European Festivals Association (EFA), an early response to the growth spurt of major cultural festivals in Europe. Today, EFA develops co-productions, international workshops and symposiums, festival conferences, press databases and other resources. It serves more than 500 European festival operators, researchers, the media, public funding bodies and potential sponsors, and it is funded by the EU’s Directorate General for Education and Culture. A successful international touring company, therefore, will have to keep pushing its artistic envelope on a regular basis in order to appeal to educated and resourceful festival programmers and earn invitations to present its work.

Nor should we overlook the competitive aspect of the festival scene that allows the festival to the largest and most prestigious prizes in various categories like an Olympic event: best actress, best ensemble, best original work, etc. Of course, theatre festivals aren’t likely to fall into the dreary narcissistic pit of self-promotion like film festivals have become because the stage has traditionally enjoyed a more distinguished artistic and philosophical reputation. But on the other hand, invitations to the most prestigious global theatre festivals are highly selective, and groups are carefully screened for their artistic merit and cultural significance. (In case you haven’t noticed, “Fringe Festivals” are the unscreened/non-juried global venues for everything else, and the number of these, too, has proliferated recently.)

One noteworthy reflection of this is the increasingly voracious appetite of many prestigious resident theatres around the world for companies celebrated in international festivals to present their work on their stages. For example, creative institutions like Antwerp’s Toneelhuis, or the Brooklyn Academy of Music pick and choose groups to present work based on those companies’ successes on the international festival circuit. The 2008-09 season of London’s Barbican, for example, features groups like Complicite, Ex Machina, Cheek by Jowl or the Mehr Theatre Group, all of whom have won acclaim on international festival stages like the Wiener Festwochen (Austria), the Holland Festival (Amsterdam), the Kunstfestivaldesarts (Brussels), or the Festivaltheaterformen (Germany). People—important people—are looking at these world showcases, and there’s a lot at stake for an artist’s or a company’s reputation when they take to the festival boards around the world.

Other exciting challenges, too, are emerging from the proliferation of global theatre festivals: how will theatre companies finance their international tours in the future? what kind of work will artists develop specifically for such a heterogeneous international audience? and what should be the
composition of artists in such a company? What role should the classics play in an arena that seems to favor "relevant" original work over "traditional" plays? I don't think we have all the answers to these questions right now, but at least the most stimulating possibilities offered by global theatre festivals are clearly in view. And those are far and away more vital and inspiring, I think, than baffling and depressing.

To borrow the words of someone who was, in his own time, a theatrical innovator par excellence, we might remark with one of Shakespeare's characters, "O brave new world that hath such people in it!"

What Game

The slant of a rooftop on the roof: a teenage boy (60s). The woman is dead. His glasses are broken.

Flood waters have risen.

Boy pricks up his ears.

BOY: I hear something.

MAN: What do you hear?

BOY: It's loud.

MAN: (looking up) What do you see?

BOY: It's a boat.

MAN: What are you doing? Wake up. The boy has seen a boat.

WOMAN: I'll wait on waitin. (sniffs the air) Good — no death.

BOY: (calling out) Where are you?

MAN: Quiet boy!

BOY: Why?

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