



TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Theatrical Interactivity in the Nordic/Baltic Region

TEATS
TEATTERIN-
TUTKIMUKSEN
SEURA

FOUNDATION SWEDEN
FINLAND



KONE FOUNDATION

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA
HUMANISTISKA FAKULTETEN
FACULTY OF ARTS

Humanistinen tiedekunta, PL 24, 00014 Helsingin yliopisto
Puhelin 02941 911, www.helsinki.fi/fi/humanistinen-tiedekunta
Humanistiska fakulteten, PB 24, FI-00014 Helsingfors universitet
Telefon +358 2941 911, www.helsinki.fi/sv/humanistiska-fakulteten
Faculty of Arts, P.O. Box 24, FI-00014 University of Helsinki
Telephone +358 2941 911, www.helsinki.fi/en/faculty-of-arts

Contents

Contents	2
Conference programme	4
Practical Information.....	7
Keynote	9
On the Move: Migration and Transnational Theatre Histories.....	9
Panel 1: National, Transnational, Hybrid	10
Transnational Nationalism	10
Between (In)visible Influences and (In)pure Traditions: Hybrid Character of Postmodern Lithuanian Theatre	11
Dance across borders. Contemporary circus and tango in theatre: the case study of choreographer Agnese Vanaga	12
Panel 2: Russian Influence	13
Russian Relations: Radical Empathy in the Nordic-Russian Dance Archive	13
A FINNISH NORA IN ST. PETERSBURG. Ida Aalberg in Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> (1882- 1902)	14
Latvian theatre director Eduards Smilģis in the context of European modernist theatre: influences of the theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold	16
Panel 3: Memories on Stage	17
Nordic networks of cultural memory: Zacharias Topelius' <i>The Surgeon's Tales</i> (1853– 67), its stage adaptations and illustrations	17
Travelling of Dramatic Texts and Memory Patterns	18
National Trauma on a Foreign Stage.....	19
Panel 4: Postsoviet Performance	21
Taking Sides: Baltic-Russian Theatre Exchanges and Antagonism after 2014	21
Violence and Performativity in Public/Private Interrelation: Collaborations between Baltic and British Theatre in the 2010s	22
Between Dissensus and Consensus: Political Theatre Makers Working in Exile in Today's Europe.....	23
Panel 5: Playing Ugric.....	24
Our Identities or Others'? Portraits and Self-Portraits of Finno-Ugric Language Cultures on Stages, Transnational Connections between Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian Theatres from the Beginnings to Contemporary Practices of Cooperation	24

Constructing Finno-Ugric identity through theatre	25
Soviet-Estonian-Finnish Reading of <i>Sibelius Ballets</i> (1970)	26
Panel 6: International Fame	28
Light Shines from the East: Communication of Avantgarde Ideas in Theatre of Interwar Europe	28
Finnish National Theatre travels abroad: two productions in Estonia in the 1930s.....	30
Panel 7: Bilateral Exchange	31
Swedish actors on stage in Helsinki during a turbulent and uncertain period.....	31
Theatre exchange between Estonia and Finland as East/West interaction, 1960–1990	32
Theatre connections between Finland and Estonia 1991-2017 – from festivals to co-productions	33
Panel 8: Acting Gender.....	34
Swedishness as a Strategy of Conquering the Diva Crown: Influence of Nineteenth-Century Swedish Divas in the USA	34
IT HAPPENED TO #METOO. Feminist testimony as transnational performance	35
Panel 9: Creating Networks.....	36
Nordic Exchange on the North American Prairies	36
Nordic co-operation in amateur theatre	37
Social Programme	38

Conference programme

Thu **University of Helsinki Main Library**
21.3.2019 **Kaisa building, hall 7062, 7th floor**

13:00 - Registration, entrance hall of Kaisa
14:00 building, 3rd floor

14:00 - **Conference opening**

15:15 **Keynote Berenika Szymanski-Düll**

15:15 - break

15:45

15:45 - [Panel 1: National, Transnational,](#)

17:30 [Hybrid](#)

Chair: Mikko-Olavi Seppälä

Wilmer, Steve: *Transnational
Nationalism*

Staniškytė, Jurgita: *Between (In)visible
Influences and (In)pure Traditions*

Jonīte, Dita: *Dance across borders.
Contemporary circus and tango in
theatre: the case study of
choreographer Agnese Vanaga*

19:00 Theatre performance
*Toinen Luonto / Den Andra
 Naturen / The Other Nature* at Teater
 Viirus (optional, tickets 12 €)

Fri **The House of Science and Letters**
22.3.2019

Hall 404

Hall 405

9:00-9:30 Registration, 4th floor entrance hall

9:30 - [Panel 2: Russian influence](#)

11:30 **Chair: Steve Wilmer**

[Panel 3: Memories on Stage](#)

Chair: Magnus Thorbergsson

von Rosen, Astrid & Nikolaeva, Olga &
 Klimova, Eugenia: *Russian Relations:
 Radical Empathy in the Nordic-Russian
 Dance Archive*

Lehtoruusu, Petra: *Nordic networks
 of cultural memory: Zacharias
 Topelius' The Surgeon's Tales
 (1853–67), its stage adaptations and
 illustrations*

Byckling, Liisa: *A Finnish Nora in St.
 Petersburg. Ida Aalberg in Ibsen's A
 Doll's House (1882-1902)*

Kruuspere, Piret: *Travelling of
 dramatic texts and memory patterns*

	Rodina, Ieva: <i>Latvian theatre director Eduards Smiļģis in the context of European modernist theatre: influences of the theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold</i>	Koski, Pirkko: <i>National Trauma on a Foreign Stage</i>
11:30 - 13:00	lunch break	(NTS editorial board meeting)
13:00 - 14:30	<u>Panel 4: Postsoviet Performance</u> Chair: Jurgita Staniškytė	<u>Panel 5: Playing Ugric</u> Chair: Hanna Korsberg
	Klavis, Edgaras: <i>Taking Sides: Baltic-Russian Theatre Exchanges and Antagonism after 2014</i>	Sirató, Ildikó: <i>Our Identities or Others'? Portraits and Self-Portraits of Finno-Ugric Language Cultures on Stages, Transnational Connections between Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian Theatres from the Beginnings to Contemporary Practices of Cooperation</i>
	Watson, Alex: <i>Violence and Performativity in Public/Private Interrelation: Collaborations between Baltic and British Theatre in the 2010s</i>	Saro, Anneli & Epner, Luule: <i>Constructing Finno-Ugric identity through theatre</i>
	Füllner, Niklas: <i>Between Dissensus and Consensus: Political Theatre Makers Working in Exile in Today's Europe</i>	Korppi-Tommola, Riikka: <i>Soviet-Estonian-Finnish Reading of Sibelius Ballets (1970)</i>
14:30 - 15:00	coffee break	coffee break
15:00 - 16:30	<u>Panel 6: International Fame</u> Chair: Steve Wilmer	<u>Panel 7: Bilateral Exchange</u> Chair: Pirkko Koski
	Petrikiene, Asta & Petrikas, Martynas: <i>Light Shines from the East: Communication of Avantgarde Ideas in Theatre of Interwar Europe</i>	Hoogland, Rikard: <i>Swedish actors on stage in Helsinki during a turbulent and uncertain period</i>
	Korsberg, Hanna: <i>Finnish National Theatre travels abroad: two productions in Estonia in the 1930s.</i>	Seppälä, Mikko-Olavi: <i>Theatre exchange between Estonia and Finland as East/West interaction, 1960–1990</i>
		Pajunen, Julia: <i>Theatre connections between Finland and Estonia 1991-2017 – from festivals to co-productions</i>
17:00 - 18:30	ANTS general assembly	
19:00 -	Conference Dinner	

Sat 23.3.2019	University Main Building
	Auditorium IV
9:30 - 11:30	<u>Panel 8: Acting Gender</u> Chair: Anneli Saro
	Ohlsson, Hélène: <i>Swedishness as a Strategy of Conquering the Diva Crown: Influence of Nineteenth-Century Swedish Divas in the USA</i>
	Rosenberg, Tiina: <i>Feminist testimony as transnational performance</i>
11:30 - 12:30	lunch break
12:30 - 13:30	<u>Panel 9: Creating Networks</u> Chair:Tiina Rosenberg
	Thorbergsson, Magnus: <i>Nordic Exchange on the North American Prairies</i>
	Sigurjonsdottir, Sigridur: <i>Nordic co-operation in amateur theatre</i>
13:30 - 14:00	coffee and good byes

Practical Information

While theatre activity has always crossed borders, theatre studies have normally been written from local or national standpoints. To break this pattern, the conference will feature transnational connections and interactivity, artistic migrations, and transcultural borrowings across geographical boundaries. It will focus both on individual and collective efforts, artistic touring and exchange, border crossing, transnational connections and the blurring of national and transnational identities.

The conference will consider theatrical exchanges between Nordic and Baltic countries and between Nordic/Baltic countries and abroad. These could be at institutional levels between governments or theatre institutions and companies or between artists or concerning artists abroad and/or in exile. It will also consider exchanges between national subjects and non-national minorities within countries (such as the convergence of Russian-speakers and Latvian-speakers or between Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking performances in Latvia and Estonia). It will trace and analyze both the push and the pull behind the artistic migrations and theatrical exchanges, the (mis)interpretations of the Other around inter- and transnational performances, and the outcomes of this interaction.

Organisers:

The conference is organised in association with the Finnish Society for Theatre Research (TeaTS), research project "Theatre and cultural relationships between Finland and Estonia" (Helsinki and Tartu universities, funded by KONE Foundation) and The Association for Nordic Theatre Scholars.

The conference is funded by Kone Foundation and Kulturfonden för Sverige och Finland.

Scientific committee:

- Hanna Korsberg
- Mikko-Olavi Seppälä
- Anneli Saro
- Steve Wilmer
- Magnus Thor Thorbergsson

Conference coordinator:

Saara Moisio

E-mail: transnational.influences@gmail.com

P: +358 50 448 9459

Conference assistants:

Sanni Martiskainen

Sofia Valtanen

Conference Venues

Kaisa building / University of Helsinki Main Library, hall 7062, 7th floor (Fabianinkatu 30)

Kaisa-library is close to the University of Helsinki metro station. The main entrance is on Fabianinkatu, but you can also enter from Kaisaniemenkatu 5 by taking a lift to the 3rd floor or going through Well Café.

The House of Science and Letters, halls 404 and 405 (Kirkkokatu 6)

The walk from Kaisa-library takes approx. 10–15 minutes. From Fabianinkatu or Unioninkatu, turn to Kirkkokatu and continue for 10 minutes. The tall grey building is on the left hand side, standing opposite Ristorante Rodolfo.

The University of Helsinki Main Building, Auditorium IV, 2nd floor (Fabianinkatu 33 / Unioninkatu 34)

The building is located next to the Senate Square and can be accessed from Fabianinkatu and Unioninkatu. The easiest way to Auditorium IV is to use the Unioninkatu 34 entrance.

To access the internet:

Eduroam wifi is available on campus, i.e. in Kaisa-library and the University Main Building. You may log in using your existing Eduroam account.

If you do not have Eduroam account you may access the internet by using HUPnet:

username: hupnet111021
password: erja=3mennyt

For wifi at the Friday venue, The House of Science and Letters (Tieteiden talo), the details are

network name: ttalo
password: ac9z6d

Keynote

Berenika Szymanski-Düll
Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München

Berenika Szymanski-Düll is an Assistant Professor at LMU Munich's Institute for Theatre Studies. She completed her PhD in Theatre Studies at LMU with a thesis on the theatricality of Polish opposition movements in the 1980s. She was also a lecturer in Theatre Studies at the University of Bayreuth and a Postdoc at LMU's Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies. Her current research interests include global theatre history with a focus on nineteenth century, theatre and migration, and performance art in Eastern Europe. As a Junior Researcher in Residence at CAS, Berenika Szymanski-Düll will work on her habilitation project about international touring theatre in the second half of the 19th century from a transnational and transcultural perspective.

On the Move: Migration and Transnational Theatre Histories

Panel 1: National, Transnational, Hybrid

Steve Wilmer
Trinity College Dublin

Transnational Nationalism

In this paper I propose to examine the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder and the ways in which they influenced cultural nationalists in specific regions of Europe where a unified nation-state was yet to be created. Ireland, Finland and Germany are countries where his influence was particularly notable in the nineteenth century, affecting the development of theatres and dramaturgy as well as other aspects of national cultures. Although he is often regarded as a supreme nationalist because of his emphasis on the importance of folk culture and national language, his ideas were often misrepresented and exaggerated into more dangerous forms of nationalism by those who wanted to use his ideas for their own ends. It can be argued that he was more of a transnationalist than a nationalist, encouraging the importance of all cultures, rather than any single one. One can still see the influence of his thought in cultural nationalists today in such institutions as national theatres, which normally prioritize the national language and reinforce the folk traditions of the country.

Steve Wilmer is Professor Emeritus in Drama at Trinity College Dublin and editor-in-chief of Nordic Theatre Studies. He has published widely on national theatres and national identity and his most recent book is Performing Statelessness in Europe, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Jurgita Staniškytė
Vytautas Magnus University

Between (In)visible Influences and (In)pure Traditions: Hybrid Character of Postmodern Lithuanian Theatre

To use the term of French theatre researcher Patrice Pavis, Lithuanian theatre can truly be called “theatre at the crossroads of cultures”. Since the establishment of professional theatre in Lithuania it has always existed in between or on the intersection of two different and powerful theatrical traditions – the prewar modern Russian theatre school and the Western tradition of theatre art. After the shift of the socio-political situation in 1990’s, Lithuanian theater began searching for sources of renewal, turning as much to the history of the national theater of the inter-war period with its romanticized notion of theatrical poetics as to the experiences of Western art, modern European theatre in particular. At the same time, the creators of contemporary Lithuanian theatre were trying to recycle or to deconstruct the theatrical traditions from the East, which in the Lithuanian case were most widely represented by the system of acting techniques and the notion of stage realism developed by the famous Russian theatre director, actor and theoretician Constantine Stanislavsky. The new generation of theatre artists who made their debuts after the re-declaration of Independence attempted to mix the traditions of Soviet Lithuanian theater with emerging local and global tendencies, thus creating a hybrid character of contemporary Lithuanian performances, where nostalgic concepts of the pre-modern national theatre of the inter-war period, modern aesthetics from the Russian, Polish and French theatre schools, postmodern or postdramatic strategies are linked together or juxtaposed. With the help of concrete examples and case studies the paper will analyse, how the hybrid character of postmodern Lithuanian theatre is performed and perceived, and how different cultural meanings are negotiated on Lithuanian theatre stage.

Jurgita Staniškytė heads the Faculty of Arts and is a Professor of Theatre Studies Department at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania). She has published numerous scientific and critical articles on contemporary Lithuanian theatre in the context of the processes of Baltic stage art, performative aspects of post-soviet Lithuanian culture, creative communication and audience development. Jurgita Staniškytė actively participates in various scholarly and artistic organizations as well as international and national research projects. Jurgita Staniškytė is also the Board member of HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) and the Governing Board member of EU Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) on Cultural Heritage and Global Change. She was recently elected to the position of chairman of the Board of “Kaunas - the European Capital of Culture 2022”. She has published four monographs, the latest – a chapter in collective monograph “I teatri post-sovietici” (Roma, 2016).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Dita Jonīte
University of Latvia

Dance across borders. Contemporary circus and tango in theatre: the case study of choreographer Agnese Vanaga

Nowadays, merging boundaries between artistic practices is a commonplace phenomenon, particularly referring to stage performance that has strived for the synthesis of arts since its dawn. However, blurring boundaries between contemporary theatre, circus and dance has been much more complex in Latvia, since it belongs to the Post-Soviet states. For more than 50 years, transnational influences in Latvian theatre have been connected with the influence of Russia. At the end of 1990s, the situation changed, opening various possibilities for Latvian artists to study and practice outside the Post-Soviet territories.

This research paper is an attempt to describe the landscape of choreography in Latvian dramatic theatre, focusing on the work of the dance artist Agnese Vanaga. Having finished bachelor studies in the Latvian Academy of Culture, Agnese Vanaga continued her education in Helsinki Theatre Academy, the contemporary dance arts study programme, she has also lived in Argentina, mastering tango and air dance. Currently she has returned to Latvia, and is introducing the experiences accumulated all over the world to Latvian theatre.

The tendency of blurring the borders between contemporary theatre and dance not only illustrates the specific experience of Agnese Vanaga, but also allows to reflect on the process of receiving experience outside our own country, and therefore renewing the inner habits and routine of Latvian artists. This becomes a clear example of merging the national and transnational identities.

Dita Jonīte (Mg.philol., PhD Cand.in Humanities) is a professional theatre and dance critic, currently working as a research assistant in the Institute of Literature Folklore and Art (University of Latvia). Her research is focused on theatre and dance history, theory and practice, with an emphasis on the contemporary dance choreography in dramatic theatre. At present, Dita Jonīte is writing her doctoral thesis in Latvian Academy of Culture, analysing the transgression and blurring of the boundaries between theatre and dance as one of her main research subjects.

Panel 2: Russian Influence

Astrid von Rosen, with Eugenia Klimova and Olga Nikolaeva
University of Gothenburg

Russian Relations: Radical Empathy in the Nordic-Russian Dance Archive

This paper explores the unlikely collaboration between a Swedish art and dance historian, a Russian amateur historian and a Russian-Swedish doctoral student, to seek out the early career of migrating dancer Anna Robenne (one of her names). In addition the paper looks into the activist ways in which the explorers interacted with Russian, Swedish, and Finnish archives in order to both reveal and make accessible across borders materials and knowledge pertaining to Robenne.

Robenne left Russia in 1917 because of the revolution, to work in Finland, Sweden, Norway, the US and beyond. She performed in cabarets, operettas, and charity arrangements, as well as choreographies of her own, and in every context she used her Russian background to construct herself as a starring artist. However, the stories she told differ broadly depending on the audience, and until recently her Russian background has been inaccessible and obscure. To cross borders to account for Robenne's Russian legacy counters previous historiography's disinterest in following the careers of migrating artists.

To explore the relations between the Robenne materials, the archival institutions and the group of collaborating historians we will draw on Caswell and Cifor's notion of "radical empathy" (Caswell and Cifor 2016). Inspired by a feminist ethics of care, the notion emphasizes relations between stakeholders. What makes the ethics "radical" is the idea that despite differences an empathically charged inter-subjective space can emerge in which feelings, corporeality, and experiences interact to facilitate the making and sharing of knowledge and to propel change.

Dr Astrid von Rosen is Associate professor in Art History and Visual Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and a former dancer. Her research interests include activist approaches to scenography and dance archives in our digital age.

Eugenia Klimova holds a Master's Degree in Computer Science and Engineering from Russian People's Friendship University. She has been working as Digital Marketing Manager for a Swiss company, taking part in investigating the history of its Russian affiliates before the revolution. She is an amateur historian and is interested in the cultural legacy of the Russian expatriate community.

Olga Nikolaeva is a PhD student in Art History and Visual Studies at the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg. She holds a MA in Visual Culture from Lund University and a Specialist Degree in Art History from Russian State University for the Humanities. Her main interests are audiovisual presentation and scenography of live music performances.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 2: Russian Influence

Liisa Byckling
University of Helsinki

A FINNISH NORA IN ST. PETERSBURG. Ida Aalberg in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1882-1902)

For thirty years Ida Aalberg was the leading actress of the Finnish National Theatre. Since her debut in Helsinki in 1874, she personified the romantic balance of opposites, the period's cult for great actresses coupled with her belief in art as an active force in the society. Her growth into an internationally famous tragedienne was a legend come true. She was a symbol of the national culture, on the one hand, and an icon of the modern progressive woman, on the other. Ida Aalberg's Nora in *A Doll's House* is extremely interesting as an embodiment of the feminine ideal with a critical message, as an actress who became from the national "heroine"; to a figure of international significance. As Aalberg's tours to Scandinavia and Germany have received more critical attention, it is time to evaluate her work as an intermediary between Finnish and Russian theatres.

M. Iankovskii, who researched the stage history of Ibsen in Russia, maintains that Finnish actress Ida Aalberg was the first performer to arouse serious interest among Russians in Ibsen's dramaturgy. Aalberg offered her own solution to the problem that occupied theatre artists: how to convey on stage the special philosophical content of Ibsen's creation, which does not fit neatly into the usual boundaries of realism. Aalberg brought Nora to St. Petersburg three times -- in 1882, 1894, and 1902 -- and each time she presented the role in a new light, reflecting something essential not only in her own stage of development at that moment, as well as the "Northern" interpretation of the play, indirectly accepted by the playwright himself but in the attitude, characteristic of that time, of Russia toward Ibsen.

The Finnish Theatre visited St. Petersburg, performing in Finnish to audiences mainly made up of the numerous (up to 20.000) Finns resident in the Russian capital. In 1873-1902 the theatre toured St Petersburg twelve times. The Finnish Theatre's and Aalberg's tours to Russia were part of the intensification of cultural contacts between the Grand Duchy of Finland with the Empire. Oriented culturally towards Western Europe, particularly to Sweden and Germany, Finland took advantage of the unique proximity and variety of contacts available to Finns through union with Russia.

1. Along with German and Polish productions, tours by Ida Aalberg, who came to St. Petersburg in 1882 with the Finnish Theatre, marked the beginning of the stage history of *A Doll's House* in Russia. 2. During the tour in 1891 the Finnish Theatre showed *Hedda Gabler*, *Canth's Family of a Pastor* and *Romeo and Juliet*. When Aalberg toured St Petersburg with her Finnish troupe in 1894, the atmosphere was much more favorable for producing Ibsen. Beginning in the 1890s, Russian interest in Ibsen intensified. Tours by famous foreign actresses - Duse, Sorma, Rejane, all of whom played Nora as well as other roles - played a significant role in propagandizing Ibsen. Aalberg demonstrated the psychological diapason of the writer who won the fame as both a philosopher and prophet of the new drama.

The end of the nineteenth century was marked by significant changes in Ida Aalberg's stage and personal lives. This was a time of new artistic influences from Europe, a time of rapprochement with Russian culture. Having married Baron Alexandr Uexkull-Gyllenband, in 1894, Aalberg settled in St. Petersburg where she lived until her death in 1915. 3. Over the many years in which she played Nora, Aalberg put greater emphasis on the last scenes of the play. She uncovered and refined the tragic essence of her heroine. In the same way, she anticipated the definitive Russian interpretation of Nora by Vera Kommissarzhevskaya, in 1904. The last time Aalberg played Nora in St Petersburg was in 1902, on the eve of her second Ibsen period. Russian tours by foreign actresses gave rise to a lively polemic in the press regarding the interpretation of Ibsen's roles. Both Russian and Scandinavian spectators agreed that Aalberg's 'quiet tragedy' was distinguished from interpretations by her contemporaries.

In 1904 - 1905, Aalberg and her Austrian troupe completed a tour of Scandinavia, Finland, Riga, St Petersburg, and Moscow. She enjoyed a remarkable triple success as Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *Maria Stuart*. In St Petersburg she met with great critical acclaim, which was repeated in Moscow, where Stanislavsky and Ermolova came to see her performances. Aalberg was considered the leading interpreter of Ibsen's late work. The tour marked the culmination of Aalberg's career. In January 1915, Ida Aalberg died. She died in Petrograd, but was buried in Helsinki. In Aalberg's obituary, published in the St. Petersburg journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* (Theatre and Art), her image arose again -- embodied not just in Shakespeare's Juliet, but in Ibsen's Nora: "only Aalberg conveyed the Nora that Ibsen carried in his mind."

Liisa Byckling, Ph.D., Professor Adjunct (Docent in Russian Cultural Studies), Head of Research Project Helsinki – St Petersburg, 2010-2012. Department of Cultures, University of Helsinki, Finland. Visiting Scholar: Leningrad Institute of Theatre; Harriman Institute, Columbia University (New York), Birmingham University; Wolfson College, University of Oxford.

Panel 2: Russian Influence

Ieva Rodiņa
University of Latvia

Latvian theatre director Eduards Smiļģis in the context of European modernist theatre: influences of the theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold

The research paper is dedicated to Eduards Smiļģis (1886-1966), a legendary Latvian theatre director who has made a major impact on the creative process of Latvian theatre, especially during the interwar period (1920s-1930s).

In 1920, Eduards Smiļģis along with a group of followers – stage designer, theatre theorist Jānis Muncis, choreographer Felicita Ertnere, composer Burhards Sosārs, lighting designer Fricis Lepnis – founds his own theatre – Daile (Arts) Theatre, which soon becomes one of the most significant Latvian theatres of all time. Rejecting the aesthetic principles of naturalistic theatre, Daile Theatre positions itself as a radically new art institution which follows the aesthetic and philosophical guidelines of modernist theatre.

Eduards Smiļģis in his stage directing synthesizes elements from various modernist movements – symbolism, expressionism, modernist dance theories, etc. The aim of the conference paper is to introduce the aesthetic principles of Eduards Smiļģis' stage directing, as well as to reflect on the parallels between the creative work of Eduards Smiļģis (Latvia) and Vsevolod Meyerhold (Russia). Both Meyerhold and Smiļģis (though his artistic consultant Jānis Muncis, who studied in the Theatre Studio of Meyerhold from 1917-1919) are exploring the aesthetics of *commedia dell'arte*, constructivism in the stage setting, and the idea of the actor's body as a biological machine. However, the stage directing of Eduards Smiļģis is a unique example of synthetic theatre aesthetics, marking his significant place in 1920s – 1930s European modernist theatre.

Ieva Rodiņa (Mg. philol, PhD candidate (Arts)) is a professional Latvian theatre critic and researcher; editor-in-chief of the only Latvian theatre webpage Kroders.lv; she is also working as a research assistant at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art (University of Latvia) and giving lectures at the University of Latvia on different theoretical and practical angles of contemporary theatre in Latvia and Europe.

At present, Ieva Rodiņa is a PhD Candidate (University of Latvia), working on her doctoral thesis in Latvian theatre history, specifically, about the legendary Latvian modernist theatre director Eduards Smiļģis, analyzing his creative work in the timeframe of 1920-1945 and comparing it to the process of European and Russian modernism theatre.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 3: Memories on Stage

Petra Lehtoruusu
University of Helsinki

Nordic networks of cultural memory: Zacharias Topelius' *The Surgeon's Tales* (1853–67), its stage adaptations and illustrations

I will analyse Zacharias Topelius' novel *The Surgeon's Tales* (*Fältskärens berättelser*, 1853-67) with its dramatizations and illustrations in the intermedial and transnational landscape of Nordic cultural memory. The paper is rooted in the interdisciplinary tradition of cultural memory studies and will begin by outlining forms of Nordic interaction in cultural memory during the long nineteenth century ranging from a shared repertoire of historical events and characters to networks of production and reception of historical representations. Then I will proceed to locate Topelius' *The Surgeon's Tales* and its dramatizations within this landscape thereby illuminating the role of Nordic interaction in the formation of national cultural memories. Although I will point forms of transnational interaction in the plots of the novel and its dramatizations, the main emphasis of the paper will be the analysis of joint Nordic efforts in the production and reception of stage adaptations and illustrations of the novel. Topelius' play *Regina von Emmeritz* (1853) and the opera *Kung Carls jakt* (1852), composed by Fredrik Pacius, were performed on both sides of the gulf of Bothnia with the production process often including cooperation between Finnish and Swedish theatre professionals. Similarly, the novel was illustrated by the Finnish Albert Edelfelt and the Swedish Carl Larsson and read in several Nordic countries.

Petra Lehtoruusu is a PhD student at the University of Helsinki and the Finnish Literature Society. She is currently working on her dissertation "Intermediality and affectivity in Finnish cultural memory 1850–1917" in which she analyses the means used to enliven and popularize the past in the arts in Finland during the latter half of the long nineteenth century. In three case studies focusing on the adaptations of same story elements in literature, theatre and the visual arts Lehtoruusu analyses the historical culture of the period as an intermedial phenomenon and asks how the past was turned into an affectively engaging history. Lehtoruusu's other research interests include Neo-Victorianism, photographic art and visual culture studies. So far she has published her work in conference presentations and an article in the book Kummat Kuvat (SKS, ed. Harri Kalha).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 3: Memories on Stage

Piret Kruuspere

Under and Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Sciences /
University of Helsinki

Travelling of Dramatic Texts and Memory Patterns

In the framework of Estonian memory theatre of the 1970s-1990s and the beginning of 21st century, which aims to treat and work through individual/collective traumatic experiences of national-historical past, I will at first pay brief attention to the transcultural borrowings (allusions, archetypes) and then examine the phenomenon of travelling memory forms. The corresponding examples include dramatic works by Estonian playwrights Rein Saluri and Madis Kõiv, and female stage director Merle Karusoo. The stage interpretations of their dramatic texts as well as particular productions abroad (in Lithuania, Finland, Austria) and on the stage of local Russian drama theatre will be taken into consideration and be compared. I will ask how drama and theatre act within culture as the mood of both memory and healing process.

In the case of Karusoo, for instance, I will pose the question of possible transferring of some characteristic features of her sociological/documentary 'theatre of biographies' to Austrian and Russian stages as transnational memory patterns. Two bilingual productions *Save Our Souls* (in 2000) and *Küpsuskirjand 2005* (*Essay 2005* in 2006) as well as two productions in foreign languages *Сегодня не играем* (*Today We Don't Play* in local Russian theatre in 2006) and *Von Wien nach Moskau – Das Kinderheim No 6* (*From Vienna to Moscow. Orphanage No 6* (at Wiener Festwoche in 2004) have been taken into account.

*Piret Kruuspere is a researcher at the Under and Tuglas Literature Centre (Institute of Literature) of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, an associate professor of history of Estonian theatre and drama at the Drama School of Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, and a PhD student at the University of Helsinki. Her main academic interest focuses on the history of Estonian theatre, drama and theatre criticism, particularly the relationship between theatre and national-historical narrative and cultural memory. Kruuspere has published a survey of Estonian drama in exile, edited books on literature, drama and theatre, including a collective monograph *Eesti kirjandus paguluses XX sajandil* (Estonian Literature in Exile in the 20th Century, Tallinn 2008) and been the editor in chief of the first volume of a collective monograph *Eesti sõnateater 1965–1986* (Estonian Theatre in 1965–1985, Tallinn 2015; the second volume forthcoming).*

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 3: Memories on Stage

Pirkko Koski
University of Helsinki

National Trauma on a Foreign Stage

I will discuss a Finnish National Theatre production of *Lähtö (Minek)* by Estonian Rein Saluri. The play was written and performed during the few last years before the end of the Cold War, in 1988, when slight political liberation in Estonia made possible new views to the post-war Estonian history. The change also stimulated bilateral theatre connections between Estonia and Finland, and the National Theatre was especially active in creating new connections with Estonian theatre. I will focus my survey on the ways in which this play about recent traumatic history in one country was performed and experienced in the neighbouring country.

Lähtö describes the first years after the Soviet occupation in the late 1940s in Estonia. It tells about transportation of a family from their home to Siberia. This procedure was well-known among Estonians in 1988 but had still few years earlier been officially defined as politically indispensable. The topic was a documentary and the characters of the play had a model. Every Estonian family had experiences in post-war transportations. Accordingly, the topic was central in national memory. These events were also known in Finland, but Finns did not have similar personal links to them or may even have emotionally alienated the whole topic.

Lähtö testifies of the rapid changes in Estonia, and social and political changes of the time were reflected in the stage interpretation and the reception. The play had an Estonian playwright, director and composer, but the theatre, actors and other producers were Finnish, and the main audience and the reception were local. Finns experienced the performance in their own cultural context with growing knowledge and readiness to know about their neighbour. The production visited Estonia in 1989 and the survey of that reception deepens the national processes.

The transnational traits of this production and process are connected to a special historical period and space. As Doreen Massey, for instance, has written, a place is in fact a *meeting place*, where time and space become condensed into *heterotopy*. Mikko Lehtonen has surveyed how local and transnational elements are linked. These viewpoints to a *meeting place*, where an Estonian history-based play was performed in Finland, will frame my questions and closer methodological choices. While surveying the processes around this play and production, I will make use of the concepts of national memory, the ethics of history writing and performing history.

Pirkko Koski retired as Helsinki University's professor of theatre research in 2007. Since that time, she has actively focused on research work and expert consultation. Throughout her career, she has specialized in theatre performance analysis and historiography, as well as historical analysis of the Finnish theatre tradition. She has written and edited several articles and books for the domestic and international market, and published performance analyses in the journal

European Stages. Her most recent work includes 2013's monograph "Näyttelijänä Suomessa" ("Being an actor in Finland") and Suomen Kansallisteatteri ristipaineissa in 2019, editing with Melissa Sihra of 2010's The Local Meets the Global in Performance, and articles in the journals Nordic Theatre Studies (2015), Synteesi (2016) and Näyttämö ja tutkimus 5 (2017). She has also translated Christopher B. Balme's book The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies into Finnish under the title Johdatus teatteriin, which was released in 2015.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 4: Postsoviet Performance

Edgaras Klivis
Vytautas Magnus University

Taking Sides: Baltic-Russian Theatre Exchanges and Antagonism after 2014

After the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014 the attitudes of the Baltic theatre producers and artists towards cultural and institutional partnership with Russian theatres and their involvement into the mutual artistic exchange, tours, common projects and networking not only turned into a controversial issue in the public eye, but polarized the artistic community itself. Some artists, like Latvian stage director Alvis Hermanis, have decisively terminated all their previous creative partnerships and arrangements (cancelled tours of *New Riga Theatre* in the festivals of Saint Petersburg and Omsk as well as Hermanis' prearranged project in *The Bolshoi Theatre*) calling also other theatre artists "to take sides" as the neutrality of cultural and artistic exchange is illusory when culture is increasingly turned into a "soft" tool of public diplomacy. Others, like Russian stage and film director Kirill Serebrennikov who for years had been involved with Baltic theatres, would regard taking sides as a disastrous yielding of culture to the logic of war – theatre should be kept as the last link between societies gradually separated by reciprocal propaganda insanity.

The polemic including the exchange of public statements, but also theatre performances produced (and read) within this framework of "taking sides" opens up an opportunity to analyse transnational creative exchange in the situation of information wars and manipulative polarization. In the paper I will discuss the different positions, follow the arguments and relate them to performance analysis, referring to the theoretical background of "antagonism / agonism" by Chantal Mouffe.

Edgaras Klivis (b. 1974) is the head of Theatre Studies Department in the Faculty of Arts, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania. He is a co-author of three recent books: "Post-Soviet Lithuanian Theatre: History, Identity, Memory", published in 2014 and "Communicating Culture: Institutions, Strategies, Audiences" (2015) and "Mediation of Social Reality: Culture, Politics and Society" (2018) also a number of articles, mostly on the development of theatre, performance and film in the Baltic states in Soviet and post-Soviet period.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 4: Postsoviet Performance

Alex Watson
Royal Holloway University of London

Violence and Performativity in Public/Private Interrelation: Collaborations between Baltic and British Theatre in the 2010s

The main contention of this paper is that the two most prominent Baltic-British collaborations in theatre of the 2010s (from a British perspective) are both concerned with how performativity and violence operate in the interrelation between the public and the private spheres. The two case studies in question are Aleksey Scherbak's *Remembrance Day* (2011) and Simon Stephens' *Three Kingdoms* (2012). The former was originally written in Russian by Scherbak, developed through the Moscow workshops of the Royal Court London's International Playwriting Scheme, and subsequently translated and debuted at the Court. The latter is a collaboration between a British playwright (Stephens), a German director (Sebastian Nübling), and an Estonian theatre company (No99 Theatre).

Remembrance Day represents the contemporary socio-political divisions in Scherbak's native Latvia, whereas *Three Kingdoms* explores the inherent violence of sex trafficking across Europe. Both are concerned with the interrelation between the public and the private spheres. Scherbak's play dramatises how a public protest is informed by, and enters into, the private spheres of the protestors. Stephens' play shows how the public investigation of trans-European police officers into sex trafficking is influenced by the private misogyny of the officers (not to mention how *Three Kingdoms* caused significant debate in the public sphere, as in Britain where blog reviewers contested their opinions against mainstream journalists).

Of additional significance in parallels between these works is how they figure the effects of violence and performativity in the public and the private, and the interrelation between these spheres. The plays contend that the violence done in the private sphere spills into the public sphere through the performativity of the body – which becomes performative through other means once in the public sphere (through protest or trans-European negotiation, for example). Both pieces contest how violence and performativity in the interrelation of these spheres create division, serving as timely reminders on contemporary issues in the Baltic regions, Britain, and Europe more broadly.

Alex Watson is currently working towards completing his PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London. Supervised by Dan Rebellato, his thesis looks at the concepts of performativity and violence in 2010s British theatre. He is also an alumnus of the University of Lincoln and Kings College London. He has presented papers at the former institution's conference on Dennis Kelly, the University of Birmingham's conference on Harold Pinter (which he is currently revising for publication) and following this conference will be venturing down to Belgium to speak at VUB Brussels' upcoming conference on 'Fictions of Europe'.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 4: Postsoviet Performance

Niklas Füllner
Ruhr University Bochum

Between Dissensus and Consensus: Political Theatre Makers Working in Exile in Today's Europe

In the last few years the political turn towards authoritarianism in several countries in Eastern Europe has forced theatre makers to consider producing their work in other countries where they can work in a more free environment. For example, works of Árpád Schilling in Hungary, productions of Marta Górnicka in Poland and works of Oliver Frljić in Croatia and Poland have met with disapproval by the respective governments, which tried to ban them. The overall theatrical strategy of the works produced by these three theatre makers can be characterised in the words of Jacques Rancière as “an intervention in the visible and sayable” (Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus – On Politics and Aesthetics*, London: 2010, p. 37) and therefore as a disturbance of the order formed by the government through a “manifestation of dissensus” (ibid.). Today, Schilling, Górnicka and Frljić mainly work in Germany and Austria, that is in countries in which Jacques Rancière notices the “end of politics” (ibid., p. 42) brought about by consensus politics. In my paper I will analyse recent German productions by Marta Górnicka (*Jedem das Seine – Ein Manifest*) and Oliver Frljić (*Gorki – Alternative für Deutschland?*) to find out what it means for a ‘theatre of dissensus’ when it is produced and shown in a country where consensus politics prevail. Do the theatre makers adjust their theatrical work to the political situation of the country where they are working now, and if yes, what kind of theatrical strategies do they employ to do so? Which consequences does their decision to go into theatrical exile have for their theatrical work?

Niklas Füllner studied Theatre Studies and English Literature and Culture in Bochum, Bayreuth and Helsinki and holds a PhD in Theatre Studies from Ruhr University Bochum. He currently works as a research assistant at the Institute for Theatre Studies at Ruhr University Bochum in a research project called “Strategies of Political Theatre in Eastern Europe”, which is financed by the DFG, the German Research Foundation. At the Centre of Fine Arts of Ruhr University Bochum he also works as a student theatre director and occasionally works as a puppeteer for the Düsseldorf-based artist duo half past selber schuld.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 5: Playing Ugric

Ildikó Sirató
Hungarian National Széchényi Library

Our Identities or Others'? Portraits and Self-Portraits of Finno-Ugric Language Cultures on Stages, Transnational Connections between Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian Theatres from the Beginnings to Contemporary Practices of Cooperation

The paper is considering not only historic periods and phases of theatrical connections of our three nations, but the goal behind those contacts: different ways of questing own identities (based on the relativity of our native languages). How we had formed pictures of the others, the Finnish, Estonian or Hungarian characters? How those portraits could be used as mirrors?

Examples are taken from the Austro-Hungarian "Volkstücken" and operettas of the late 19th century to the contemporary EU citizens' problem-plays from all three culture's repertoire. One can mention the heroes of different conservative-nationalistic plays of the period between the world wars or of the last decades (after the political changes not only on left side of the iron curtain), as well as the rare examples of crossing the borders of national value plays (as Kalevala or The Tragedy of Man, or Puhdistus). What could they mean on the stages of an other culture? And how they could effect on the viewers? Is the theatrical export-import a political or a cultural action?

At the end we could consider some questions on contemporary forms and practices of theatrical cooperation which differ from earlier ones. The traditional forms of guest performances, festival- trips or works of a guest stage director, the theatre people and audiences could nowadays meet other ways, too.

*Ildikó Sirató Ph.D. – theatre and literature researcher from Budapest, Hungary, born in 1966. Head of Collection of Theatre History at Hungarian National Széchényi Library; lecturer at different Universities and Doctoral Schools in Hungary and abroad. Theatrical activities as stage director and dramaturg. Research fields on theatre studies: comparative theatre research, dramaturgy, history of Hungarian theatre and the national type of theatres of Europe, Finnish, Estonian theatre and literature. Author of books e. g.: A Short History of Hungarian Theatre, 2017; National theatres in Europe. Institution of national theatre, comparative studies on theatre history. 2007; Theatre in the Northern Light. Estonian and Finnish Drama on the Hungarian Stage. 2005; editor of Hungarian Theatre Lexicon. 1992; book-series *Studia Theatralica* and journal *Színpad [Stage]*. Membership in ITI, IFTR/FIRT, ASSITEJ, OISTAT, TeATS (Finland) and others.*

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 5: Playing Ugric

Luule Epner, Anneli Saro
University of Tartu

Constructing Finno-Ugric identity through theatre

The definition of the Finno-Ugric peoples (Finns, Estonians, Hungarians, Mordvins, Komi, Udmurts and others) is based foremost on their language kinship. Some of them have their own independent state, some others, mainly living in Russia, just have political and cultural autonomy.

An essential platform for constructing transnational Finno-Ugric identity are different theatre festivals that bring together theatres and groups from almost all the regions where the Finno-Ugric peoples live. Festival Maiatul (hearthfire) has become the main meeting place because of its long tradition. The first festival took place in Iževsk, Udmurtia in 1992, the second one in Nurmes, Finland in 1994. Since 1997, the capital city of Mari El Republic Yoshkar-Ola took the responsibility to organise the event every second year. Nevertheless, one festival (2012) was organised in Saransk, in the capital of Republic of Mordovia.

The direct aim of the festivals of the Finno-Ugric peoples is to launch artistic dialogue and foster collaboration between participants but to show the best productions in the native languages dealing with local identities. In addition, the festivals have a more far-reaching, even political ambition to support preservation and development of the Finno-Ugric languages and sense of common identity. Productions presented at the festivals are based mostly on Finno-Ugric folklore and rituals but sometimes on plays written in local languages. In the presentation, we are going to introduce a typology of Finno-Ugric theatre performances and ideology of the Finno-Ugric peoples' movement to contextualise the aesthetics.

Anneli Saro is Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Tartu (Estonia). In 2010-2014, she was Lecturer of Estonian Culture at the University of Helsinki. Saro has been a convener of the international working groups Project on European Theatre Systems (2004-2008, 2017-) and Theatrical Event (2011-2017). She has been active as the Editor-in-Chief of Nordic Theatre Studies (2013-2015) and as a member of the executive committee of the International Federation for Theatre Research (2007-2015). Saro has published articles and books on Estonian theatre history and system, performance theory and audience research. She has edited books and special numbers of journals.

Luule Epner is an Estonian theatre and literary researcher, Ph.D. She is Associate Professor at the University of Tartu, Institute of Cultural Studies, and she also teaches at the School of Humanities of the Tallinn University. Her main research fields are Estonian theatre history, theory and practices of postdramatic theatre, and drama theory. She has widely published on relevant topics in different journals, including Sign Systems Studies, Methis, Interlitteraria, Nordic Theatre Studies, etc. She is author of Draamateooria probleeme I-II (Problems of Drama Theory, 1992, 1994), and co-author of Eesti kirjanduslugu (Estonian Literary History, 2001) and Eesti sõnateater 1965–1985 (Estonian drama theatre 1965–1985, 2015). She also contributed to the book I teatri post-sovietici (ed. Erica Faccioli, 2016).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 5: Playing Ugric

Riikka Korppi-Tommola
University of Helsinki

Soviet-Estonian-Finnish Reading of *Sibelius Ballets* (1970)

In my approach, I consider choreographer's work as a product of embodied transnational influences transformed into one artistic unity. However, the diverse origins of the choreographic characteristics can still be traced. The artistic director of Estonian Ballet, and choreographer Mai Murdmaa (b. 1938) made *Sibelius ballets* for the Finnish broadcasting company (television, YLE) in the 1970. This two-part *Ballet Fantasy* was based on *Kalevala: Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island* and *the Swan of Tuonela*. All except one dancer (Marianna Rumjantseva) came from Estonia and music was by Jean Sibelius. In her choreographic style, Murdmaa utilized Soviet-influenced ballet vocabulary and Finnish folk dance elements. Jens Richard Giersdorf (2013) has emphasized that nationalistic folk dance and Soviet-ballet were the tools of socialist realistic representation in dance especially during the Cold War. In my paper, I interpret Soviet-Estonian-Finnish *Sibelius Ballet* that solemnized the Finnish Independence Day celebrations on television on the 6th of December – after the Finnish-Soviet ice-hockey game and Soviet cartoon *Gift* – in the transnational political context.

Riikka Korppi-Tommola is a post-doc researcher and dance historian at the University of Helsinki.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 6: International Fame

Asta Petrikienė
Vilnius Gediminas technical university
Martynas Petrikas
Vilnius University

Light Shines from the East: Communication of Avantgarde Ideas in Theatre of Interwar Europe

Our presentation is framed by two important events. The first is more than famous Parisian *Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* – The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts of 1925, the second is *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* – The International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life, which took place ten years later in 1937 in Paris again. Despite not being focused on stage arts specifically, both events could be regarded as certain milestones in development of European theatre avantgarde.

In our presentation we will focus on specific Baltic perspective and dynamics of Baltic presence at both events. In 1925 André Antoine suggested the *Grand Prix* for Latvian stage designs brought from *Dailes* theatre (The Art Theatre) in Riga. Whereas, after *Exposition* of 1937 ended, its numerous teams of juries awarded at least 160 awards and several *Grands Prix* to the artists and designers coming from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. For our aims hereby most important are the prizes that were awarded to Lithuanians Adomas Galdikas and Liudas Truikys for their stage and costume designs. Especially the latter one, whose 1935–1936 designs for Antanas Račiūnas opera “Three Talismans” represented his early explorations of “visual acoustics” – Truikys’ original technique for visual representation of musical score.

Our hypothesis in this paper is that the two major international exhibitions could stand as case in point for understanding paths of communication of avantgarde ideas in interwar European theatre. The successes that Baltic presence achieved at both Parisian exhibitions can be indicative of weakening of centre-periphery relations in terms of formulation and reception of new forms of expression in theatres of Europe.

Asta Petrikienė (dr.) is a lecturer at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Lithuania). In recent years she has participated in several research projects, among others, “Reclaimed Avant-garde” (2017–2018) funded by Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Main focus areas of her scientific research include Lithuanian theatre history, especially institutional aspect of theatre development.

Martynas Petrikas (dr.) is an associate professor at the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University (Lithuania). His fields of interest among others are: social aspects of theatrical practice, history of Lithuanian theatre, and history and theory of theatre criticism. In recent years he has headed and participated in several research projects funded by the Research Council of Lithuania (“Bridge Between Cultures: Relations Between Lithuanian and Polish Theatre in 20th

Century” (2012–2014), “Popular Performers in Interwar Lithuania” (2015)), Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (“Reclaimed Avant-garde” (2017–2018). He has authored academic publications as well as numerous presentations at scholarly events in Lithuanian, English and Polish. In 2014 M. Petrikas published a collective monograph “Post-Soviet Lithuanian Theatre: History, Memory, Identity” (co-author, in Lithuanian).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 6: International Fame

Hanna Korsberg
University of Helsinki

Finnish National Theatre travels abroad: two productions in Estonia in the 1930s.

In the 1930s Finnish National Theatre actively sought for possibilities for international visits and co-operation. It wanted to showcase its work abroad and in the 1930s it visited Tallinn in 1931 and 1937 and Stockholm in 1936. The most significant difference between these visits is that in Tallinn the Finnish National Theatre was performing contemporary Finnish comedy, plays by Agapetus (Syntipukki) and Mika Waltari (Kurittomat vanhemmat). However, in Stockholm the audience at the Royal Dramatic Theatre saw an interpretation of Tartuffe by Molière and some short plays by Aleksis Kivi, often mentioned as the author of the national epic. Compared to the visits of the Finnish National Theatre in the 1950s, the choice of Agapetus and Mika Waltari's plays as visiting performances is extraordinary. In my presentation I am looking at these visits and discussing them as the beginnings of the theatre's attempts for mobility and international cultural encounters.

Since 2008, Hanna Korsberg has been appointed as Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests include the relationship between theatre and politics in Finland, a topic which she has studied in two monographies. She is also the author of several articles discussing theatre history, historiography and performance. She has been an active member of the IFTR Historiography Working Group since 2001, an executive committee member in 2007–2015 and a vice president 2015–2019. She has served as a member of the advisory boards in Contemporary Theatre Review and Nordic Theatre Studies. Also, she is a member of the Teachers' Academy at the University of Helsinki.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 7: Bilateral Exchange

Rikard Hoogland
Stockholm University

Swedish actors on stage in Helsinki during a turbulent and uncertain period

Svenska teatern in Helsingfors/Helsinki is the Swedish speaking minority's national stage in Finland. It has also been a possible work place for several Swedish actors and directors. I will in my paper focus on the period 1915-1925, based on material from Finnish and Swedish archives. The period is a turbulent period in Finland's history. The Russian revolution 1917 led to independence but also a civil war. The conflict between Sweden and Finland concerning the island Åland was also visible in the auditorium, when the Finnish president left the theatre before the end applause for not risk to be seen acclaiming the Swedish actor. Unclearly concerning visas, exchange rates and security did clearly infect the possibilities and volition to perform in Helsinki. This could be followed in the letters between Swedish actors and directors and the board member and from 1919 artistic director of Svenska teatern, Nicken Rönngren. Actors as Anders de Wahl, Gösta Ekman, Pauline Brunius, Tora Teje was regular guests at the theatre and long negotiations was held between the theatre and the actors. At Svenska teatern had Finland-Swedish language been more accepted as a stage language where the "rikssvenska" has been seen as a norm. But looking at payment and terms the Swedish stars got for their stage appearance, it is clear that they still was important for Svenska teatern.

Rikard Hoogland is an associate professor in Theatre Studies at Stockholm University. He has published in peer-reviewed journals and in anthologies published by the mayor academic publisher. Two recent publications is one article about Popular Theatre and one about historiography, both in Nordic Theatre Studies. During spring 2017 he was a visiting researcher at the Freie Universität in Berlin.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 7: Bilateral Exchange

Mikko-Olavi Seppälä
University of Helsinki

Theatre exchange between Estonia and Finland as East/West interaction, 1960–1990

The paper analyses the guest directions, performances and theatre teaching between Estonia and Finland in the framework of East/West interactions during the late Cold War era from the 1960s until 1980s. The theoretical framework is based on the transnational cold war studies, stressing microlevel interactions between organizations and individuals. The East/West interactions in general were based on mutual benefit and motivations that did not necessarily align with the official ideologies. More so it was the case in the theatre exchange between Estonia and Finland; the countries had been in close cultural interaction already in the 1930s.

Dr. Mikko-Olavi Seppälä defended his thesis on the history of the Finnish workers' theatres at the University of Helsinki in 2007. He works currently at the University of Helsinki as a university researcher and teaches theatre history. One of his major interests has been the history of political theatre. He has written several books, including a history of Finnish theatre, a cultural history of the 1920s Helsinki, and biographies of both the comic singer J. Alfr. Tanner and the poet Aale Tynni.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 7: Bilateral Exchange

Julia Pajunen
University of Helsinki

Theatre connections between Finland and Estonia 1991-2017 – from festivals to co-productions

In my paper, I present a survey on theatre connections and networks between Finland and Estonia from 1991 until today. I concentrate on Estonian plays, visits and collaborations in Finland and present the channels and enabling factors of collaborations.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Estonian regaining the independence in 1991 changed the political situation between Finland and Estonia. The political situation affected the position of the arts in the society in Estonia, and the change of climate attracted a new generation of Finnish artists to start to explore the neighbor. In my presentation, I examine the outcome of collaborations and border crossings between the two countries.

Festivals have been one factor from the beginning of Baltic Circle network that started in 1996 as a Baltic-Nordic network of theatre makers, aiming to promote European cultural exchange in the region. Since 1990's collaborations have been developed and become more multiple.

Nowadays, collaborations have been developed from the festival that concentrates only on Baltic region theatre to multiple co-productions and long-term artistic relationships. As an example, I demonstrate a network that artistic collaboration between Finnish director Kristian Smeds and Estonian actor and director Juhan Ulfsak have been created through their various joint productions.

Through examining the collaborations and channels to the collaborations, I analyze what are the artistic, institutional and transnational influences of Estonian connections on the Finnish theatre field.

Julia Pajunen (PhD) is researcher at the University of Helsinki. In her PhD thesis (2017), she has researched the adaptation of The Unknown Soldier by Kristian Smeds, performed at the Finnish National Theatre 2007–2009. Currently, she is working as post-doctoral researcher in a research project "Theatre and cultural relationships between Finland and Estonia" (Helsinki and Tartu universities, funded by KONE Foundation).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 8: Acting Gender

Hélène Ohlsson
Stockholm University

Swedishness as a Strategy of Conquering the Diva Crown: Influence of Nineteenth-Century Swedish Divas in the USA

This paper addresses nineteenth-century Swedish divas and their influence on modern American celebrity culture. The point of departure is their endeavors of making a North American tour. Divas dreamt about conquering the New World, but what was the attraction except making money? How did divas fashion their celebrity in order to seduce the North American audience?

The first part of the century had seen the rise of the female international superstar - women that often came from poor and humble backgrounds but achieved fame and fortune through, as Tracy C. Davis puts it, "exceptional skill, marketed with uncommon personality and an incalculable measure of ego". Inspired by Wayne Koestenbaum's mapping of diva codes, I will analyze some divas endeavors for the American tour and how these women set out to embody such stuff as what dreams are made of.

In this paper I will analyze some divas performance of Swedishness as strategies to win the heart of the American audience. Their tours coincided with the evolvment of a national Swedish identity and are thereby associated with this movement. I will argue that the American tour is associated with the myth of the American dream in combination with divas identification with queens.

In June 2018 Hélène Ohlsson (PhD) defended her dissertation in theatre and performance studies at the department of culture and aesthetics at Stockholm University. "Divine, nothing less than divine!" Actress Ellen Hartman's performance on stage and in public life is a contribution to the history of actresses. Hélène Ohlsson's research focuses are divas, historical actresses, the nineteenth-century theatre, critical femininity studies and the art of acting. Ohlsson is also an actress and a director and has, among others, been linked to Västana Teater, Riksteatern and Dala Teatern. She got her education as a performer at École Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Hélène Ohlsson has also been active as a drama teacher and dramaturge.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 8: Acting Gender

Tiina Rosenberg
Stockholm University

IT HAPPENED TO #METOO. Feminist testimony as transnational performance

“The personal is the political” was the feminist slogan that dominated the 1970s. As Nancy Miller observes, “feminist theory has always built out from the personal witnessing ‘I’ of subjective experience”. Testimonial performance is motivated by the desire to inform the public about an atrocity. The performer reveals her personal experience not to express the ‘truth’, but to bear witness to a collective injury. This paper concerns #metoo performances as transnational travelling through testimonies and analyzes what #metoo performances *do*, what they allow us to see, to experience, and to theorize, and their complex relation to systems of power (Taylor 2016: 6). What is “just theatre” and what is “truly performative” that results in real change? According to Diana Taylor, performance is not limited to mimetic repetition. It includes the possibility of change, critique, and creativity within frameworks of repetition. Performance practices have their own structures, conventions, and styles that clearly separate them from other social practices in daily life (2016: 15).

Tiina Rosenberg is professor of Performance Studies at Stockholm University and has previously been professor of Gender Studies at Stockholm University and at Lund University. Rosenberg has written extensively on performing arts, feminism and queer theory. Her most recent books include Don't Be Quiet, Start a Riot. Essays on Feminism and Performance (2016), Mästerregissören. När Ludvig Josephson tog Europa till Sverige (The Master Director. Bringing Europe to Sweden, 2017) and HBTQ spelar roll – mellan garderob och kanon (LGBTQ Plays a Role – Between the Closet and the Canon, 2018).

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 9: Creating Networks

Magnus Thor Thorbergsson
University of Iceland

Nordic Exchange on the North American Prairies

Through the US Homestead Act of 1862 and the equivalent Canadian Dominion Lands Act of 1872 North American authorities provided opportunities for people to acquire ownership of land. Followed by a campaign advertising free farmland, these acts created a massive wave of immigration from Europe to America. Among these groups of immigrants were between 2.5 and 3 million immigrants from the Nordic countries, who mostly settled in the US Upper Midwest and the prairie provinces of Canada. This wave of immigration created a fertile soil for cultural exchange, which can for example be seen in the immigrant community theatres emerging in the North American prairies in the period.

Migrant theatre may be seen as a means to stage communal identity, preserve the language and culture of the immigrant group and to maintain ties with the homeland, as well as a venue to probe and confront encounters with foreignness. At the same time, it serves as a platform for mutual exchange and a route for transnational influences between the homeland and the immigrant community, and across communities in the place of immigration.

The paper looks at Nordic immigrant community theatre in the North American prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on theatre in communities of Icelandic immigrants, investigating the routes of influence across borders. Exploring the forms of influence and the points of intersection in immigrant community theatre, the paper looks at hybridity, mobility and the limits of transnational exchange in migrant theatre.

Magnus Thor Thorbergsson holds a MA-degree in theatre studies from the Free University in Berlin and defended his doctoral thesis on national identity and class formation in the Icelandic theatre 1850-1930 at the University of Iceland in 2017. He is currently working on a research project on the history of Icelandic-Canadian theatre. Magnus is a former co-convener of the IFTR Historiography Working Group and is the current chair of the board of the Association of Nordic Theatre Scholars.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Panel 9: Creating Networks

Sigríður Lára Sigurjónsdóttir
University of Iceland

Nordic co-operation in amateur theatre

The work of amateur theatre in the Nordic and Baltic countries thrives under many different mandates. There is also a considerable difference between countries (and languages) what is considered amateur theatre and in what way it differs from professional theatre in each country. In some countries there is furthermore a “middle”, defined as semi-professional theatre (like in Denmark) whereas in other countries those are parts of either amateur theatre organisations or associations of independent theatre groups (like in Iceland).

In 1998 NEATA, North European Amateur Theatre Alliance, was formed by Amateur Theatre Associations of the Nordic and Baltic countries. The Associations have since taken turns in hosting amateur theatre festivals every other year. NEATA is partly based on an older alliance of the Nordic Countries, Nordisk Amatørteaterråd (NAR). This paper is an overview of festivals and other co-operation of the Nordic and Baltic countries that the alliance has founded and facilitated.

This historical overview will be a possible starting point for a comparative research on how this collaboration has affected the amateur theatre in Northern Europe. In addition to giving an overview of the festivals and other projects that have been formed or facilitated under the guise of NEATA, this paper will introduce a questionnaire that will be sent to theatre groups that have participated in festivals and other collaborative projects.

The paper also ties in with my collaboration with a new research by the STEP research group on amateur theatre in European countries.

Sigríður Lára Sigurjónsdóttir is a PhD student at the University of Iceland and is finishing her thesis on political theatre and protest performance in Iceland in the crisis after 2008. She holds MA degrees in comparative literature (from 2004) and publication and editorship (from 2009). She worked for the Icelandic Amateur Theatre Association from 1999-2007 and was a part of the organizing team for the NEATA festival in Akureyri, Iceland, in 2010. She is currently employed by Austurbrú, an education and research centre in East Iceland.

[Back to Conference Programme](#)

Social Programme

Thursday 21.3.2019 at 7 pm (optional, with pre-booked tickets only)

Toinen Luonto (Den Andra Naturen / The Other Nature)

Toinen Luonto is a funny and at the same time melancholic performance about getting used to living, the ethical choices that are hidden in our everyday lives and the moments in life that shake up our habitual behaviour. The performance contemplates our mortality that we share with all the other living beings.

Unpacking the relationship between humans and animals the performance looks deeper, at ones relationship to the other. How do we perceive the difference between living creatures? What does it mean to own another, is it allowed or even possible? Can you refuse to do so?

The performance is Finnish-speaking and subtitled to English and Swedish. All you need to do is to **download the free app THEA** from iTunes App store or Google Play.

Teater Viirus, Välimerenkatu 14, Helsinki

The easiest way to get to Viirus is by tram number 9, which has a stop right outside the door. Tram number 8 has it's endstop at the end of the street Välimerenkatu, while tram number 7 and 6T have stops at the start of street next to Hotel Clarion. Both stops are only a few minutes' walk away from the theatre.

Friday 22.3.2019

Conference dinner at 7 pm (optional, with dinner tickets only), at Restaurant Block by Dylan (Eteläranta 18)

Menu

"Finnish Whistle tuned"

Seasonal green salad with pickled butternut squash and roasted pumpkin seeds

Roasted cauliflower, edamame beans confit of truss tomatoes & rocket pesto

Organic tofu, marinated in peanut butter with yuzu concasse and caramelized root veggies

Smoked whitefish, red- & white roots and horseradish mayo

Organic rye bread, potato flatbread and rosemary butter

Over cooked breed beef with port wine sauce

Roasted salmon in lemony hollandaise sauce

Thyme flavoured root veggies with artichoke & "puikula" potato hash

Baked apple & cinnamon panncotta with merinque.

Drinks: sparkling wine, two glasses of wine with food and avec with dessert and coffee/tea, including non-alcoholic options.