

Odin Teatret Archives

Presentation

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The *Odin Teatret Archives* (OTA) collect documents, filmed materials, audio materials and photographic materials. They were established in 2008, conceived and designed by Mirella Schino and Francesca Romana Rietti, initially within the CTLS (*Centre for Theatre Laboratory Studies*, founded in 2004 in collaboration with the University of Århus), later as an autonomous organism.

"Historical" archives

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The OTA are "historical" archives.

Every theatre – and every institution – has archives to conserve documentation of its on-going activities, more generally its *current life*. These sorts of "current" archives often include also memories of the past (generally as press reviews).

There exists however a second type of archives, generally named "historical" archives. "Historical" archives aim to retrieve and make available for consultation all the documentary material of an institute, in this case a theatre. Odin Teatret documentary materials comprise letters, manuscripts, contracts, notes, discarded items or film cuts, diverse materials for audiovisual documentation, audio recordings. They also include work journals, drawings, estimates for big projects and daily accountings, personal journals, versions or proposals for the texts of performances, sheet music, administrative reports, invoices. The materials are often apparently insignificant; they are however unique: they cannot be found outside Odin Teatret (as is the case for a press clipping, a magazine, a book, or a film).

The OTA are retrieving and classifying this documentary material, which was partly stored in the theatre, partly in Odin people's houses, and partly in Holstebro Museum.

The Team

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The work at OTA is managed by an international team of scholars, directors, actors, filmmakers and IT specialists who work by turns; besides collecting and classifying the materials, they conceive new research issues and projects connected to the archives. The team is composed by: Mirella Schino, University Professor general coordinator; Claudio Coloberti, M.A., responsible for Odin Teatret Film; Lluís Masgrau editor of Eugenio Barba's bibliography; Francesca Romana Rietti, Ph.D., responsible for the archives and the library; Valentina Tibaldi, M.A., OTA site manager, project manager, photo archiving and Chiara Crupi, Ph.D. film maker, editor, videodesigner (Odin Teatret Film).

The OTA also benefit from the work of a regular group of collaborators: Paula Isiegas, M.A., Gabriella Sacco, M.A., Pierangelo Pompa, M.A., Lucia Repašská, M.A., Ana Woolf, M.A.

For a complementary memory

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The apparently most ephemeral documents – such as letters, notes and discarded materials – can become the most important testimony of the past. Although more incomplete than a book, they maintain the mobility and randomness of life in the making. They were not written to hand down an opinion or insight, and they are not affected by the fact that the results are known, nor by convictions or theoretical systems. They were not originally intended to *document*: they only do so *a posteriori*.

These are crucial documents even in the case of a theatre like the Odin, on which much has been written. Not only do they complement books or films, but they maintain alive shadows and uncertainties. They allow for a constantly evolving reading or vision, a different memory, not frozen by the effect of results.

Inventories

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The Odin is still an active theatre and it is thus possible to equip the diverse documents of its historical archives with explanations and accounts by the people who lived those events.

For this reason, in addition to collecting and organising documentary materials, the OTA are in the process of building an "inventory". An "inventory" is a list of stored documents, to which considerations or quotations from the most important documents are gradually added, as well as all the necessary or useful information to reconstruct the context of the events, or to give information on Odin Teatret work logics or on the people involved.

The inventories can be consulted on-line on the OTA website. They are not conclusive, as they are renewed at every stage of the work.

Who can make use of the archives

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Odin archives are not only meant for consultation by theatre-makers or theatre scholars.

From the point of view of anthropological, historical or sociological studies, theatre is increasingly considered as a possible access key to areas of the human being difficult to approach. It can be a useful guide in the exploration of changes affecting not only theatre, but also ways of thinking, values and mentality. These transformations often touch upon the affective dimension – feelings, values, emotions. These fields of study are interesting for historians and anthropologists too, as they concern complex social and artistic relationships – for example, that between a theatre and the town or the socio-political context in which it acts, or the relationships within a theatre collective.

From this point of view, the value of Odin Teatret archives can be applied to numerous fields of study. For example, the Odin has been a prototype and an international model for a specific sort of theatre training practiced by "theatre groups" which, from the point of view of social, artistic and affective relationships, are different from traditional "companies" and from the great ensembles of the innovative theatres. This is another field of interest not exclusive to theatre scholars. The OTA staff retrieves, catalogues and makes available also materials concerning areas which are often difficult to record, so that these documents may be used for scientific research in different fields, whether theatre-related or not.

The OTA set out to organize its wealth of documents so they may be useful for:

- a) the study of the history of one of the longest standing and most significant theatre groups of the second half of the 20th century;
- b) the study of the relationships affecting the theatre life of one generation;
- c) the study of the changes in the sphere of affectivity and values which do not only concern theatre activity;
- d) the study of human relationships, using theatre as a tool for anthropological or sociological research.

Living archives

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Besides collecting, cataloguing and storing diverse documentary materials, the OTA also create new materials for documentation. An example of this parallel activity is the "training project" developed by OTA since 2009. This project aims at collecting and making available for consultation a homogenous group of "oral sources", i.e. accounts on training by Odin actors. This is not simply training documentation. For every actor who has developed a personal training for a long time, training is daily, rigorous, logical, consequential, continuous and elastic. Talking about it can be a way to reveal the most private and deep aspect of one's relationship to theatre. By listening to descriptions of what is apparently the most technical aspect of theatre acting, one can come in contact with its most immaterial features.

In 2010 OTA launched the "project *Judith*" to map the diverse autonomous layers of the work from which one of the longest standing Odin performances was born in 1987: *Judith*, with Roberta Carreri, directed by Eugenio Barba. Starting from audiovisual materials produced by and stored at the Odin, commented on and explained by the actor, her director and the film director thirty years later, this project is a testimony of the metamorphosis of the creative process which, proceeding from training through a series of intermediate phases, leads to the construction of a new performance.

The library

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The Odin has created a theatre library, alongside the archives and connected to them, comprising about four thousand volumes in more than twenty languages. The library has been built starting from a series of donations: the Eugenio Barba collection, the Tage Hind collection, the Halfdan Rasmussen collection, the Ove Sprogøe collection, the Agnete Strøm collection and the Torgeir Wethal collection. These donations make the library an important documentary source for the cultural interests of the donors (writers and artists, within and outside the Odin). Moreover, the library receives about 100 magazines representing the major theatre publications from all over the world.