

A Pioneer of Total Theatre

ONE of the characteristic elements of European Theatre is the sheer physicality of performance that incorporates various aspects of performing arts along with the essential component of dialogue. Swedish director Eric Norlin has taken this form of theatre to extreme limits mesmerising audiences with his electric productions. He is the director who found an art full of physical movement, dance and acrobatics, music and song; who has included magic, mystery and rituals, living texts in what can be termed 'total theatre'.

A joint workshop Production of Theatre Slava (Sweden) and Rupantar (Bangladesh) was held in Khulna a couple of weeks ago conducted by Norlin.

In the field of European theatre Slava is to be located among those pioneers who during the twentieth century have sought new potential paths for the dramatic art--from Antonin Artaud's burning manifesto to OdinTheatre's anthropological methodology. Disgusted with the one-sided illustrative realism and text-dependency of the traditional theatre, they left the gilded salons to seek other impulses for dramatic creativity, drew theatrical forms from the well of popular culture and travelled to foreign countries in search of living theatre traditions.

The group was born in 1992 out of an education project at a Steiner upper school in Jarna. The name Slava was taken, or rather acquired, from a noted production of the same name which was a part of this project. The group has its home in Jarna, a small town situated in the Sodertalje area just south of Stockholm. Threads of many colours make up the tapestry, which is Slava's repertoire. Slava performs indoors and outdoors, in venues both profane and sacred.

"We want to tell stories about our own lives..... the 'now' is always at the root of Slava's performances", says Norlin. "But we have to be far enough away from Cleopatra's nose to be able to see it; to make the story life-like of the period we want to capture. The Greeks knew this. When Euripides in The Trojan Women told the story of the Athenian democracy's collapse into despotism and brutality he chose the story of the women of Troy, defeated eight hundred years earlier. And no Athenian who saw the drama performed in the fifth century could have any doubt about the inner story which was really being told. So I would maintain that the art which does not depict the present has no justification"

The group has performed sixteen plays so far. Slava's notable works are Eld & Vragor, Misteria,, Millennium, Myths That Roams, Cassandra Now and recently they have performed Exile. It is an adaptation of Greek playwright Euripides's Medea. They also have some productions for children and also with the children like Children(For children), In Lap of Gods, Dramatic Games and Eoaming Myth(With children).

The chorus in ancient Greek drama gave a voice to the shared experience of the people. It was the voice of women, slaves, warriors and the aged. In the meeting between the individual

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Eric Norlin

and the chorus lies the focal point of Greek dramas. But the function of the chorus is not only what it says, but how it is said; through voice and dance, mime and the speech of silence. Thus it provides a challengingly rich palette. There is a great temptation to create, with many voices, modulations of sound, tone and noise, woven together with the unexpected, dynamic meetings of bodies.

