Nordic Breezes on Stage

Un-Magritt Nordseth has worked for several years in the Norwegian Stage Community. After finishing The Oslo National Art School of Norway in 1984, she ran her own dance-theatre company in Norway for more than ten years doing several independent stage productions including collaborations with music festivals (Ultima and Music Factory) and the International Festival of Bergen. In 1998 she started choreographing for the main theatres of Norway with the Black Rider production of Robert Wilson. From then on she has continuously choreographed for the Norwegian Theatre and National Theatre and have done more than ten main stage productions. She was invited to open The Art Museum at Lillehammer (Winter Olympics 93) and she choreographed the official celebration of the turn of the century in Norway 2000. Since 2002 she also worked regularly for The Ibsen Theatre, both as a director and choreographer.

She has also worked with several family productions for the young audience, including art for small children. The production has been shown in London, Hungary, Paris, Germany, Egypt and has been performed more than 150 times. In 2008 she directed and choreographed The Lady from the Sea for Centre for Asian Theatre in Dhaka. She Speaks to ***Rahad Abir*** *about her experiences.*



The director with a performer.

When did you start your theatre life?

My education is from dance. At the age of five in a Ballet School in Norway and when I was twelve I danced in a stage production. I continued dancing and went to The States Ballet School of Norway. My focus was Modern Dance and Dance-Theatre. For many years I have been working as a choreographer for theatres in Norway and since 2006, during the Henrik Ibsen 100 years jubilee I started directing for the Ibsen Theatre.

Tell us about your experience working with young Bangladeshi artists and how you managed to stage *The Lady from the Sea* in Bangladesh?

The Centre for Asian Theatre has some hardworking and highly skilled actors full of artistic creativity. They were open minded and willing to work in a different way than they were used to. They were eager to learn and wonderfully creative in the process concerning both building a character and the interest in a physical approach.

Since my cultural background obviously it was very different, I wanted to find some elements that we had in common. The set design and music are examples of that, a mixture of Nordic stylized architecture and contemporary music based on Bangladeshi materials and instruments. But first of all, it is Ibsen's play. The moving story is about the troubled married couple striving to keep their marriage. Henrik Ibsen makes us question how we live our lives and Ibsen's piece is about making human choices. And that is also what direction is about to make choices. I do believe we succeeded in making a universal performance, which can communicate both in Bangladesh and in other parts of the world.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced in developing this play here?

The language!

How is a play formed in your mind before rehearsals start, and what kind of criteria become important when you select a play to stage?

The most important work is the script. I worked for several months with my dramatic adviser and later on with the translator Khairul Alam Shabuj. The script was shortened and modernised to make more visual, and to modernise the language. Before this I already analysed the play and the characters. And I needed to be clear about my aim.

When I was first asked to direct in Bangladesh I had just done *A Doll's House* in China, and therefore I considered *The Lady from the Sea* being a natural follower. The main character in The Lady, Ellida Wangel, is a complex and interesting woman who has elements of Hedda, Rebecca and the more famous Nora. She is, as many of Ibsen´s women, in need for independence and values her life beyond relationship to men. They are all in the need for being a human being making independent choices for themselves. And I did think this matter would interest the Bangladeshi audience as well as me.

What advice would you give new directors?

The most important thing to know is why? Why do you want to be a director? What is your contribution to the art field? Do you have something important to say? About life? About your society? And then remember the actor is the gold of your performance. And to develop a good creative team. I do not believe I am superior in every way. I do believe in building teams with high skills in every field music, light, set design and costumes.