How can a play be successfully staged?

There is no answer to that. Or it is only one: the script has to be good. Otherwise I do not like the term successful. How can I know what is a success in Bangladesh? In my opinion there should always be room for diversity. There are so many ways. But if you ask me what I prefer to see on stage, I will say; please do surprise me, and move me. And I prefer honesty and concern for the humans. Just like Henrik Ibsen.

Who are your favourite playwrights and directors?

Henrik Ibsen, Tsjekov, Shakespeare and the modern Norwegian playwrighter Cecilie Løveid and the more famous Jon Fosse. My favourite director must be Robert Wilson. And I must mention the German dance-theatre choreographer Pina Bausch, who absolutely changed my life after having seen her pieces during the 1980s.

What is Performance Art?

Performance art is a term reserved to refer to a kind of usually avant-garde or conceptual art, which grew out of the visual arts. In the end of the 1950's a new art form was developed. Instead of painting, making sculptures or writing plays or making dances the artists started to question the modern art. By moving out of the theatres, into the galleries or just moving outside. And above all questioning the body on stage. Making theatre or choreography with ordinary people. The movement is called postmodern and the term event or happening is from that period. In a performance there needs to be a performer, but it does not have to be an actor or a dancer. In Norway there are many artists doing performance art that is about staging yourself your own body or your own life or parts of your life. The art is the artist, the act is the actor or the dance is the dancer is very much a postmodern term.



A scene from the lady from the sea.

Performance art genres include body art, flux, happening, action poetry, and intermediary. Some artists, e.g. the Viennese Actionists and neo-Dadaists, prefer to use the terms live art, "action art", intervention or "manoeuvre" to describe their activities. These activities are also sometimes referred to simply as "actions". Performance art activity is not confined to European art traditions; many notable practitioners can be found in the United States, Asia, and Latin America.

Can you talk a little about contemporary Norwegian theatre?

The most important new writer for stage is Jon Fosse. He is translated into more than 30 languages and is often performed in and outside of Norway. He is often called the new Ibsen. We have also a non-verbal theatre maker who is originally a choreographer. Jo Strømgren, who is actually the most exported artist in Norway after Henrik Ibsen. The established Theatre Houses of Norway represent a lot of classics, like Ibsen, Tsjekov and Shakespeare, but always dressed in new stage forms. The National Theatre has succeeded with both the more experimental stage and their classics and recently have been influenced by German theatre (Schaubühne) and have presented several new German directors. Recently there was a new artistic leader coming with a Russian background and we are already starting to see a more Russian influenced repertoire. The contemporary stage field is represented with their own theatre, Black Box Theatre, and they do present a mixture of national and international performances. Norwegian modern stage art is mostly inspired by European theatre, especially Germany and France. And "cross over" is still important. Visual art like video and references to performance art, dance and other art forms are often made as important as the text. The text has been deconstructed and post-dramatised.

How do you evaluate Bangladeshi theatre?

I was often asked that question when I was in Bangladesh. I worked so hard during my period in Dhaka I had seldom time to see theatre. But I did have the chance to see CAT performance *the Amputation and the Bhelua Sundari*. CAT has an international level and also an interesting approach to traditional Bangladeshi theatre forms which show their strong identity. The most interesting thing for me is of course their use of Norwegian playwrighters like Ibsen and Bjørneboe. Why Henrik Ibsen? I do think that reflects the need for independence and freedom that is reflected in all his pieces. Ibsen had a deep concern for the humans. And without freedom Ibsen could not live. (Letter to Georg Brandes) Since I am a strong believer of human rights and the freedom of expression for men and woman I do think that the Bangladeshi Theatre has an important task in their society. ■