



## Dialogue: Erika Fischer-Lichte and Rustom Bharucha

*Erika Fischer-Lichte and Rustom Bharucha, August 6, 2011*

*To welcome the new Fellows to the International Research Centre “Interweaving Performance Cultures”, Erika Fischer-Lichte and Christel Weiler convened a meeting at the beginning of the academic year 2010/11 to discuss the Centre’s programme and concepts. The following conversation between Erika Fischer-Lichte and Rustom Bharucha about “interweaving” versus “intercultural” took place on this occasion.*

**Erika Fischer-Lichte:** We thought – and when I say “we”, it’s usually Christel Weiler and I – we thought it would be appropriate to start this year with a workshop on the terms “interweaving” and “intercultural.” Why did we decide not to use the term “intercultural”, but chose “interweaving” instead? This is the question I would like to address. First I will go into the history and explain our choice of terminology, and then Rustom Bharucha will take it from there. I think that’s very important because from the Indian perspective some things might look very different than from ours.

So let me start with some history. The term “intercultural theatre” – maybe there are some forerunners – was introduced to theatre studies sometime around the 1980s. That was the peak of Peter Brook’s productions. He had already started in the 1970s with some pieces – Orghast (1971) in the ruins of Persepolis; Les Iks (1975); The Conference of the Birds (1977) – and then, in 1985, he did The Mahabharata, which launched a big discussion. Ariane Mnouchkine with her Shakespeare productions in France – Richard II, Twelfth Night, and Henry IV, Part 1, which she did between 1981 and 1984 -, and Robert Wilson with his Knee-Plays, for instance, were also doing “intercultural theatre.” And in Japan, it was mostly Tadashi Suzuki and Yukio Ninagawa who were identified with it. Later on, some African productions based on Greek tragedy or Shakespeare were called “intercultural.” And then, of course, in China, in the 1980s, the traditional Chinese opera forms were in a way revived through adaptations of Shakespeare, or Brecht, or Ibsen. In these contexts, it was not just the dramatic text that changed according to new performative conventions, but the conventions themselves also changed. So, almost everywhere, something was going on at an “intercultural” level.

Was this so completely new? First, if we go deep into history, we find that exchanges between the theatrical forms of neighbouring cultures happened wherever we have some evidence of theatre. In Europe, of course – just to look at German theatre: professional

German theatre came into being more or less with the wandering troupes from England, or the commedia dell'arte that toured, or the French companies, all of which mixed. So one could say that the German theatre in the 17th century was a truly "intercultural" theatre. In France as well, when Molière reworked the farce, he introduced elements from the commedia dell'arte, so all over Europe exchanges were taking place between neighbouring cultures with respect to theatre. And, as I've been told, in the Far East it was something similar; for instance, a lot of exchanges took place between Korea, China and Japan in the 8th or 9th centuries.

Long-distance "intercultural" exchanges, on the other hand, were an exception rather than the rule. For instance, we know that Izumo no Okuni, when she founded Kabuki, drew heavily on sources provided by European missionaries and on Jesuit plays. On many pictures, she appears wearing a crucifix and a rosary around her neck; on others, she appears holding a samurai sword in her raised hand. So she indicated her sources of inspiration. On the other side of the globe, when Voltaire wrote his *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, which was based on Ji Junxiang's Chinese opera *Zhaoshi gu'er* (The Orphan from the House of Zhao), we know that around this time a big collection of Chinese opera pieces from the 11th and the 14th centuries had just been translated into French. So Voltaire drew on this repertoire, and his play was already being staged at the Comédie Française by the middle of the 18th century. So we can say that some "intercultural" exchanges did take place across large distances.

By the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, long-distance exchanges became the rule rather than the exception. Let us consider two examples: Western avant-garde theatre and the shingeki in Japan, and the Spring Willow movement in China. In the West, on the one hand, all those translations of plays from non-Western cultures suddenly became available. Now, these plays were also staged and directed by famous directors. Be it by Antoine or Reinhardt – they staged Japanese plays and liked their local colour. So, this was the first way: staging plays of foreign texts.

But, equally important, if not more so, was the transfer of stage devices from other theatrical forms – for instance, the hanamichi. As we know, Max Reinhardt used the hanamichi in 1910 in his pantomime *Sumurun*. Well, of course, he knew about it from the stage designers who had been to Japan and who had described it to him in great detail. But he used it very differently from Kabuki, in so far as he let the scenes play out on the hanamichi and on the stage simultaneously. This way, he put the spectators in a situation where they had to make a decision about where to look. And wherever they looked, they knew they would be missing something, which the person sitting next to them would maybe see. So, it was a completely new way of perceiving the theatre that he introduced.

This new way of seeing can be linked to the growth of cities and automobiles, to the new phenomenon of traffic, in addition to the emergence of big department stores. This was no longer a focused perception, but a perception that could go here, there, and everywhere. It always meant that something would be missed. This is the idea that Reinhardt adopted and tried to communicate to his audience.

Inevitably, the audience also had to get used to a new way of looking at the body, which was no longer just in front of them like a picture on stage, but amongst the spectators, to be seen from all sides. As for Meyerhold, he experimented in this way in the 1920s in his production of Sergei Mikhailovich Tretyakov's *Earth Rampant* when he used a very wide *hanamichi*, on which lorries could pass onto the stage. With the means of "agit-prop" theatre, he wanted to get his audiences acquainted with the technological revolution, the revolution that new technologies were assumed to bring about. But his spectators did not really respond in the way they were expected to. They were shocked, and some finally left the theatre because they were afraid that the lorry would swerve from its path directly into the auditorium.

Along with the *hanamichi*, Meyerhold also used the *kurogo* – the stage assistant – from the Japanese theatre tradition. And these conventions, I'm sure, were not used in order to make audiences familiar with the Chinese or Japanese or Indian theatres, but were taken up in order to transform Western theatre from the psychological-realistic box stage to a theatre that could serve quite different purposes. They provided wonderful means by which the directors could bring about a kind of re-theatricalization by which they could realize their dream – namely, that theatre is able to constitute a reality of its own and no longer has to imitate or to represent a reality that already exists in other places.

On the other hand, when we look to Japan and China, what innovations do we find? In Japan, the *shingeki* – the "new drama" – introduced the spoken theatre and the realistic, psychological acting that did not yet exist with a training school of its own. Later Tsubouchi Shōyō founded such a school, the *Bungei-kyokai*, where they experimented with Shakespeare and Schiller in Kabuki style. Even Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*, the first Ibsen play to be staged in Japan, was done in Kabuki style by Osanai Kaoru with Ichikawa Sadanji II playing the lead role. With other productions he later toured Russia. Eisenstein saw them and wrote about the special relationship between devices from Kabuki and the art of montage in his essay *Behind the Scenes*. But with *A Doll's House* in 1911, the new *shingeki* really started.

Around that time the Spring Willow movement in China also started: In 1914, the friends of the New Theatre opened the Spring Willow Theatre in Shanghai. The troupe did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – I think that was one of their first productions. So they did quite a different

repertoire, which aimed to also introduce spoken theatre to China. So we can say that employing elements from the theatre of other cultures was in both cases something which was needed at that point in time. They were used in order to transform one's own theatre according to the needs that arose with a particular stage of modernization in which the respective culture was located.

Then, we have, on the other hand, the theatre cultures of colonized countries; for instance, Parsi Theatre in India, which started – am I right? – in the late 19th century as far as I know. This theatre was the result of a process of interweaving – the proscenium arch and painted backdrop were taken from the English theatre as were the fantastical scenic effects, storm and battle scenes, explosions and all necessary machinery of the theatre, sumptuous costumes and make-up, the front curtain, tableau and choral singing at the beginning and close of the play. The dance sections, on the contrary, had their origins in Indian dance traditions, and classical Indian music was the basis for the songs, which were mostly lifted from different regional theatre forms. Similarly, the sources from which the dramas drew their themes came directly from folk theatre: Parsi romances, Hindu legends and mythology. Or, another example are the so-called Concert Parties of the 1920s in Africa. This genre of music theatre made use of revue style, North American minstrel shows, of English music hall and of Hollywood films in a free dramaturgy close to traditional African theatre in which music, dance, song, talking to the audience, dialogues and slapstick numbers alternated within one performance. The Concert Party consisted mainly of themes on contemporary urban life and the problems surrounding it. The critical flexibility and openness of this theatre form made it a valuable and important instrument of the anti-colonial movement. These examples show that these developments emerged in colonial contexts, where, first, of course, the British colonizers more or less imposed their own repertoire and their own modes of doing theatre; new mixtures of theatre at an indigenous level responded to the process of colonization.

But – and this is the important point – no one thought of calling any of these forms of theatre “intercultural.” They were transformations of already existing forms of theatre by different means, which reached out – or responded – to other cultures.

So the question really is: what became so different that we needed to introduce the term “intercultural”? There can, of course, be lots of hypotheses, and I think each of you will have her or his own hypothesis. In my opinion, it has to do with the fact that the independence movements in colonial states were more or less successful everywhere. In Africa, the last state became independent in the 1960s. So we have, let's say, a new map of the world. We no longer have – at first glance – the division between independent nations and colonized ones, the colonizer and the colonized.

In this context, it seems to me that “intercultural” was used as a term that came to suggest that all nations can now meet on an equal ground. It’s no wonder that this term came up in the West. The West was interested in suggesting the idea that we all meet on an equal ground. Interestingly enough, in all those cases where the term “intercultural” was applied, it always indicated a mixture of something Western and non-Western. Not of something within Africa, or between Africa and Latin America, or between different Asian states. No, these relationships had nothing to do with “intercultural.” “Intercultural” referred to those theatre forms that positioned the West against the rest – we could put it like that.

The question arises whether the term “intercultural”, whether this idea that we are all equals, was ultimately meant to imply that the West is superior, and remains superior; that it stays involved. Involved in the sense that theatre people who do not take up elements from the West will be excluded from tours to the West, from the great festival circuits, which started around the same time. So the use of the “intercultural”, let’s say, is a more or less friendly warning: don’t think you can disconnect from us. If you do, we will leave you where you are. You have no other choice but to take elements from us, then we will recognize you. To give an example: the production of Lear by Ong Keng Sen, for instance, dealt more or less with inter-Asian relationships. But it is significant that he chose to focus on Lear so that he had some Western element in his production in order to secure the interest of the West, which enabled the production to tour.

For me the term “intercultural” is strongly connected with all these problems. So when the opportunity opened for creating this Centre the question “What term do we use?” arose. Do we stick to “intercultural” just because everybody knows what it is, which is much better for institutional purposes? Or do we take this opportunity not to use the term any longer, but to look for another one?

This is how we arrived at the German word *Verflechtungen*. There is, of course, as all of you who work in this field know only too well, no exact translation for such words. You could say that it is a kind of “braiding”, but this sounds awkward in English. So for the English version, then, we arrived at the metaphor of “weaving”, which in turn led to calling the Centre “interweaving performance cultures”, or, as we sometimes put it, an “interweaving of cultures in performance.” So those are the two terms.

As these terms are not already loaded with a certain historical baggage, we thought, let’s introduce them in order to look at all these new and different kinds of interaction and cooperation in performance. We do not only concern ourselves with productions which use elements from here or there, but also with the collaborations taking place in the larger world of theatre – also those within a culture through its internal diversities. Here in Berlin, the existence of, among others, the Turkish community raises the question of whether and

how theatre is able to ensure cultural diversity even within one culture, and under what conditions such theatre can be productive for society at large by demonstrating the creativity of multicultural collaboration. While, at the time of the old Schaubühne, an attempt was made to have a 'purely' Turkish theatre in Berlin, with Turkish actors using the Turkish language only, today, the theatre Ballhaus Naunynstraße demonstrates the creative potential of a collaboration of artists from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, we said, well, let's just put this new term on the map and see what happens. It opens up new possibilities and gives us the opportunity to leave some of the baggage behind which, in my view, comes with the term "intercultural."

So, now that I have more or less explained why we changed the terminology, I think I should stop here. And now it is your turn, Rustom.

**Rustom Bharucha:** Well, first and foremost, thank you for being so upfront and direct. As the director of this Centre, you are throwing open for discussion what I would call the problematic of nomenclature, the problematic of naming: what goes into the naming of any institution? I think all of us face problems when we try to find titles for whatever we're writing, titles for books and essays. We know how complicated this process can be. Sometimes the title "happens," but, at other times, it doesn't. I think it's a very good thing to bring in an element of unease in terms of whatever one is dealing with as a writer.

The problem arises when we get used to working with stable categories – like "theatre studies" or "performance studies," whatever – and we get complacent. At some point, we are compelled to ask: what does this mean? What are we doing here? So I feel it's a good sign that there is a certain tension in the naming of the institution to which one is affiliated. Obviously, there is a tension at work here, which may not be that easily resolved; it has to be worked through. But the fact that you're trying to articulate an unease with the term "intercultural" and the baggage of "interculturalism" is, I think, a useful intervention.

Now, to what extent are "interweaving" and "intercultural" mutually exclusive categories? This is one question that comes to mind. And can we really say – if we follow your *raison d'être* for the naming of the institution – that all the problems associated with "interculturalism" will somehow disappear with the introduction of "interweaving"? When you "interweave" one culture with another, do the problems disappear? Problems relating to the distribution of power, stereotyping, etc. Obviously, they don't. In a sense, the problems could be deflected, or circumscribed—that's one possibility. But they could also engender new problems, which are as yet unanticipated.

The question that interests me is somewhat different: Why do we feel the need to reinvent our categories? How and in what circumstances do these new categories manifest themselves?

Let me turn to the word “intracultural.” I didn’t invent this word, but let’s say that I’ve invested in it, because it is a deeply resonant term for me. There was a certain point in my theatre writing when I said, I can’t go on using the word “intercultural” for what I’m addressing. At that time I was dealing with the internal cultural differences that exist within the boundaries of a particular country. Significantly, this use of the “intracultural” came about through an “intercultural” theatre project conceptualized around different Asian adaptations of Franz Xaver Kroetz’s *Wunschkonzert*. When I was working on this project in India through different adaptations of the play in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, I realized that it was no longer a question of adapting a “German” text into an “Indian” context. The national context was far less important than the different regional and local contexts. So I found myself searching for another word that could account for these internal cultural differences, and the “intracultural” seemed appropriate. The need, therefore, to create a new category often emerges out of such moments of crisis in one’s own research. Naming an institution, however, opens up different kinds of questions and modalities.

In this context, I think the problem of translation plays a crucial role. For example, we are all part of a “Kolleg,” which, as I have come to understand, is not a “college.” To be honest, I don’t really know what “Kolleg” means, and yet, I am part of such an institutional structure. These are the kinds of terms that come with institutional discourses and histories, which are unavoidably culture-specific. The problems of translating these terms from one institutional context to another are huge.

In the academic context with which I am familiar, we take words like “department” or “school” for granted, and yet the naming of schools can be challenging. I remember attending a meeting in New Delhi where I was part of a committee linked to “The School of Arts and Aesthetics” at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. In this meeting, we discussed whether we should hold on to the word “aesthetics” which, in the Indian context, is more often than not linked to the “fine arts,” and not to disciplines like cinema or contemporary theatre. At some level, the word has an old lineage linked specifically to “traditional Indian aesthetics.” Would it make more sense to substitute “Cultural Studies” for “Aesthetics”? I found myself arguing for the retention of the word “aesthetics” which is making a come-back through all kinds of new manifestations in new modes of thinking, as, for instance, in the “politics of aesthetics.” While the word may seem odd, it is actually on the cutting-edge of new critical thinking.

Likewise, when we turn to the category of “interweaving performance cultures,” we are faced with a new set of questions. First of all, as you have indicated, there’s a slight variant in the nomenclature which is evident in the phrasing of “interweaving cultures in performance,” which is a different thing. Now already there’s a tension in your

two versions of *Verflechtungen* from German into English. I would say that “interweaving performance cultures” for me is primarily a description. It’s not an entity represented by a noun. Now, the norm – I’m not saying this is the right thing – is that when you name institutions they tend to be named through nouns. Unfortunately, we don’t describe institutions through verbs or participles. It’s always collectivized in the form of a noun. Now, of course, in German, with your great predilection for compounds...

**Erika Fischer-Lichte:** It is a noun in German.

**Rustom Bharucha:** See, this is very interesting: it is not a noun for us. So I find it somewhat difficult to relate to it as an institutional category. Rather, I relate to it as a description, as a kind of a subtitle. Like, you have a title followed by a colon, and then you do “interweaving performance cultures” – that’s how it reads to me, as a subhead of an entity (“International Research Center”). More precisely, “interweaving performance cultures” comes across to me as an activity, a method, a way of doing things, which is actually quite a beautiful construction. But whether any method can or should be institutionalized, I’m not so sure. This is just one reading of “interweaving.” I should add that the longer I stay in Berlin I am finding myself engaging with the dynamics and challenge of “interweaving” at multiple levels – at discursive, interdisciplinary, and interlingual levels. The word is taking on a life of its own.

Finally, I would differentiate between “interculturalism” and “intercultural theatre”; they are two different things. Even as they are related, they represent different kinds of phenomena. Personally, I am tired of the practice of “intercultural theatre” along the lines that you have historicized (Brook, Mnouchkine, etc). I think, it was important at some point in time – in the late 1970s and 1980s; and, perhaps, there are still residues and variants of those practices, which continue to exist today. All the examples that you mentioned, and the use of “Oriental” stage devices like the *hanamichi*, have ultimately been incorporated into specific theatrical traditions. You’re right to mention that they were used to make those traditions more “interesting.” Of course, they were also used in exotic, Orientalist, and neo-colonialist ways as well.

Here, I would like to make a distinction between some of the uses of “non-Western” theatre texts in Euro-American intercultural theatre practice, and, for example, Sombhu Mitra’s celebrated production of *A Doll’s House* which was staged in Kolkata in the late 1950s. The point is that he was not doing an “intercultural” reading of a Norwegian text. It was intrinsically a part of the larger movement of Bengali modernism. It happened to be a foreign text, but it was adapted and staged specifically for a middle-class Bengali audience, in the Bengali language, with all the cultural signs one would associate with this class and milieu. I’m thinking in particular of that emphatic gesture when the Bengali Nora



rubs off the vermilion sindurmark on her head – the most powerful sign of marriage for Bengali women -, which carries a specific resonance. That production (Putul Khela) was “Bengali” to the core of its being and there was nothing “intercultural” about it. I think we have to keep in mind that not every theatrical adaptation is necessarily “intercultural.”

Now, why the word got used first in Euro-American academia and performance circuits, well, you indicated one hypothesis, which I find rather sinister. Even as I have critiqued the phenomenon of “intercultural theatre” at political levels, I would never have gone so far as you have in indicating that this theatre more or less forced people into accepting an assumed meeting-ground of equality. Perhaps, I have no illusions of that “equality” to begin with. Today the difficulties relating to “equality” in intercultural theatre practice are intensified by the fact that it’s not just texts that are travelling from one part of the world to another: people across cultures are interacting in actual locations, with all the inevitable challenges relating to receiving funding, getting visas, dealing with the relative absence of translations in monolingual theatre cultures, etc. A different kind of materiality has entered the practice of “intercultural theatre,” which has been complicated through the ubiquity of virtual communications.

But, for the moment, let’s leave “intercultural theatre” aside. Let’s say that it represents for me a genre, a particular way of doing theatre. “Interculturalism,” on the other hand, is a hugely important phenomenon that I care about. It’s a phenomenon that encompasses a spectrum of exchanges that, increasingly, go beyond the cultural domain. However, I would not want to free it entirely from aesthetics. And that is why I think your intervention in *The Transformative Power of Performance* is important. Even as the category of “aesthetics” is proliferating and mutating, it remains strangely under-theorized in our field.

Returning to “interculturalism” in its larger philosophical registers, I would say that this term has been relatively marginalized in relation to the overdetermined discourse of “multiculturalism.” Ironically, the category is becoming increasingly more complex, even as it is being appropriated by governments of different nation-states for all kinds of official reasons. I had a very real opportunity to test the political uses of the term when I was in Ireland working on a consultancy dealing with cultural diversity in the arts. In Ireland, the agencies of the State resolutely refuse to use the word “multiculturalism.” At one level, it can be ascribed to the need to distance itself from the enormous investment that Britain has made over five decades in the policy of “multiculturalism” in dealing with its vast immigrant population. Now that Ireland itself has a large population of peoples from other cultures and ethnicities, it also needs a policy to engage with their condition. Tellingly, this policy is framed specifically under the name of the “intercultural.”

So, at an official level, you have an “intercultural” policy for education, the police force, sports, health, etc. But, in effect, the so-called “intercultural” is doing the work of the “multicultural.” As the two categories get conflated, what happens to the “intercultural” as it is commonly understood within the framework of arts and culture, interpersonal relations, and civil society? What is being excluded here?

I would argue that we need the term “interculturalism” because it is politically necessary for us as artists, as citizens, to find ways of countering the dominance of official state-determined “multiculturalism.” We know that even as “multiculturalism” is being discredited these days by conservative politicians in favour of “integration,” it has played a huge role in mobilizing the lives and cultural futures of immigrants in countries like Canada, Britain, Australia, and, marginally, the U.S. Germany has never been entirely a part of this struggle to articulate a cultural policy for immigrants. Your governments over the years have endorsed very restrictive immigration policies. And, in fact, until very recently, you were not open to allowing your immigrants to become citizens. In contrast, the process of citizenship for foreign “nationals” in countries like Britain, Canada and Australia has gone through several phases.

Even as the effects of “multiculturalism” have been deeply vexed, I don’t think it can be written off. In this regard, I would not readily subscribe to Žižek’s view that it is essentially an inverted form of racism even though I share his discomfort with the ghettoization of minorities through multicultural policies. I’m also aware of the damage that has been done in the name of non-integrated education policies for the children of minorities and the devious ways in which the State has played the policy of “divide and rule” to create tensions across ethnic communities.

Precisely because the State is the primary agent of multicultural policies, we need to strengthen “interculturalism” in the domain of civil society. I see “interculturalism” being propelled by individuals, groups, clubs, societies, sub-cultures, sometimes at very marginal levels. It is not something that is entirely controlled by the power of the State and by official policies. And yet, I am compelled to add that we cannot afford to be euphoric about these assumptions of autonomy. As I have often argued, the theatre of “interculturalism” invariably begins with the trauma of having to attain a visa. The first performance is with your visa officer, then the immigration officer. So before you can cross the border – if you want the intercultural encounter to be tangible, face-to-face, and not virtual – well, you can’t avoid the State. The State will mediate that encounter one way or the other.

That’s what I was trying to problematize in my early writings. I was not trying to say that we don’t need “interculturalism.” I was just saying that there are difficulties in making its

conditions possible and in sustaining collaborations at equitable levels. The moment we bring in the dimension of travel, we have to ask: Who is facilitating the economics of this process? And how do the economics of that process impact on the aesthetics of specific intercultural encounters? All these questions today seem to be only too obvious. But, back in the late 1970s and 1980s when my writings were first published, they were read as polemical. Hopefully, we are at a different point in time today.

Back to “interweaving:” Erika, I think you demonstrate this masterfully in your last book, where I think that what you’re interweaving is not cultures or even performances. For me your “interweaving” skills were most evident in the way you braid philosophy and history into avant-garde performance, in the almost effortless way by which you can incorporate Schiller and Simmel into your understanding of embodiment in contemporary performance. In essence, you’re reading today’s performativity within a very rich spectrum of European philosophical ideas, which is your intellectual tradition. And you are highlighting this “interweaving” of philosophy and performance through aesthetics.

You end your book – and this, I believe, is a complex moment – with the possibilities of “enchantment.” You highlight the “enchantment of the world through the process of transformation” embodied in the aesthetics of receiving and experiencing a particular performance. There are big assumptions at work here, which are qualified by your acknowledgement that this process of enchantment is not counter-Enlightenment. So it’s still working very much within the complexities of what you embody in your own tradition, which is nonetheless open to readings and manifestations from other performance cultures, which you interweave into your own. Whether this process needs to supplant the larger prospects of “interculturalism,” or whether it can be assumed to avoid the problems of “interculturalism,” I’m not so sure. So that’s basically what I have to say, these are some preliminary comments.

Erika Fischer-Lichte: Yes, thank you very much. Let me make a few remarks. The *Transformative Power of Performance* came out in 2004. It was written in the context of a research centre, which prioritized the study of performing cultures or *Kulturen des Performativen* – another phrase which is difficult to translate. In this context I said we have to strengthen aesthetics and so this is why it plays such an important part in my book. It is more or less a continuation of a discussion, which in Germany has been consolidated over the years through a reading of Kant’s *On Aesthetics*. Quite different to the Anglo-Saxon world, aesthetics has always played a prominent role in the German cultural world. And it was my intention, when writing this book, to show that, over the last forty years, a new aesthetics has evolved within the theatre. So my book does not so much have to do with interweaving cultures.

I started to work on so-called “intercultural theatre” in the 1980s when I got a chair in Comparative Literature in Bayreuth. We had a comprehensive research project in African Studies there. This was also the time when I came in contact with many people from Africa; and it was the time when I got involved in the problematic of “intercultural theatre.” I think, in 1988, we were more or less the first in Germany to hold a conference on this issue. It took place in Bad Homburg at the Reimers-Stiftung and was called “Das eigene und das fremde Theater” (“Theatre, own and foreign”) – a title we would never choose today. At the conference we did not talk about “interweaving” in a broader sense, but we talked about what happens in “intercultural theatre”; and we invited people from Africa, China, Japan, Indonesia, India and Latin America to have a broad spectrum of representations. This led to the writing of my book, *The Dramatic Touch of Difference*. To be honest, it was only when the “Käthe Hamburger Collegia” programme of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research was announced in 2007 that I thought it would be good to take up again what I did some time ago. But it had to be under a different category and with another perspective, as I see the notion of “interculturalism” very differently today.

In fact, I wanted to get rid of this term for the reasons I explained in my presentation. Needless to say, as you have indicated, Rustom, the problems do not disappear, but, on the contrary, they are laid open. And this is what I like about this approach: it does not try to cover up the problems – pretending everything is intercultural and, thus, all is well. In fact, “interweaving” doesn’t happen by itself; it needs someone who interweaves. In addition, when we chose the term “interweaving”, it was important to us to reach out beyond theatre, to engage with “performances” of different kinds, and see how we can interweave different kinds of “intercultural” projects. That’s what we had in mind.

However, let me emphasize that I’m not clinging to terms. For the time being, I think that, as a term, “interweaving” serves its purpose. If, in two or three years, we come to the conclusion that a different name or term is more suitable, we can still change it. I hope that the conversations and discussions we have in the context of this Centre “Interweaving Performance Cultures” will feed the use of this term or the naming of a new term. And perhaps we will arrive at a point in time when we may consider using “intercultural” again because it is, let’s say, cleansed from all these dimensions with which we do not feel at ease.

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