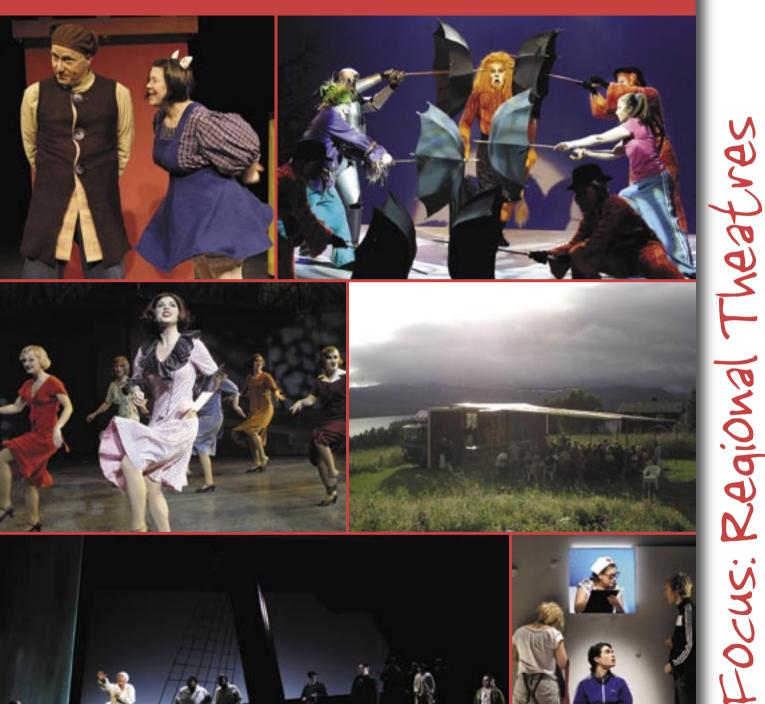
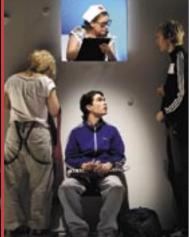
News from Swedish Theatre







RIKSTEATERN PRESENTS, IN AUTUMN 2008:



MOT VÄGGEN

A passionate and dazzling love story about Sibel and Cahit. The play is based on Fatih Akin's award-winning film Head-On from 2004 and is a part of Home not Home, Sweden's contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Director: Dritëro Kasapi – Adaption: Mikael Olsson – Scenographer and costume designer: Annika Bromberg

Cast: Elmira Arikan, Peter Perski and others – Live music: Hakan Vreskala and Dj Deleey

First night: Pustervik Theatre in Gothenburg, 6 October 2008



WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN At a hotel on the Norwegian coast, artist Rubek and his wife Maja live. Their relationship

At a note on the Norwegian coast, artist Rubek and his whe Maja live. Their relationship creeks at the joints when both past and present acquaintances make an appearance. A poetic and symbolic production about art, sacrifices and love. The production is in collaboration with the Västerbotten County Theatre, Sweden and the Unity Theatre, Liverpool, UK, and is performed in English.

Josette Bushell-Mingo

Dramatist: Henrik Ibsen – Director and scenographer: Josette Bushell-Mingo Cast: Tove Olsson, Robert Pickavance, Matthew Zajac and others

First night: Skövde Stadsteater, 10 November 2008



BAGHDAD BURNING

The staged documentary Baghdad Burning is based on Riverbend's much-talked-about blog Baghdad Burning – Girl Blog from Iraq and offers us rare insight into what life is like in the midst of a global conflict about which we each of us have an opinion.

Director: Gustav Deinoff – Adaption: Marie Persson Hedenius – Research: Tona Ishaq Video: Johan Nordquist – Music: Klas Nordin – Cast: Ellen Nyman, Nidhal Fares and Tona Ishaq

Gustav Deinoff



THE FUNDAMENTALIST

First night: Södra Teatern in Stockholm, 8 October 2008

The Fundamentalist by Juha Jokela is a powerful, intelligent and much-appreciated drama about what responsibility we take for our own life and the lives of others. In Finland the play met with strong approval from critics and audiences alike when it was staged throughout the country; The Fundamentalist is Finland's entry for the Nordic Dramatist Award 2008. It is played in Finnish with Swedish subtitles. The production is a guest performance from Tampereen Työväen Teatteri, Finland.

rne production is a guest performance from rampereen Tyovaen Teatten, Finland.

Written by: Juha Jokela – Director: Minna Leino – Cast: Auvo Vihro and Minna Hokkanen

First night in Sweden: Estrad in Södertälje, 12 November 2008

...and another twenty or so productions on tour throughout Sweden in autumn 2008 **www.riksteatern.se**



Focus: Regional Theatres

THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER of theatres in Sweden and Swedes are frequent theatregoers. Our calculations tally to 6 million theatre tickets sold each year – this in a country with a population of roughly 9 million. In recent European comparisons of participation in cultural activities, Sweden has the leading position.

The theatre arts hold an important position in national cultural policy making. There are three national theatres, the Royal Opera and The Royal Dramatic Theatre in the capital city of Stockholm and Riksteatern; touring the whole of the country. The bigger cities have municipal theatres supported with both local and national funds. There are also a large number of independent theatre groups, some with their own performing spaces, some touring, with varying degrees of local and national funding.

A policy for regional development

A unique political investment is the network of regional and county theatres that have been established since the 1970's with the intention of making professional performing arts available to all the citizens in Sweden. These theatres are to a great degree supported by local and regional funds, though the national government also contributes financially. We have chosen to in this issue of *News from Swedish Theatre* present our regional theatres and try to give you an impression of their diverse activities.

These theatres are deeply connected to the regions in which they operate and have a mandate to play in the entire region. In our sparsely populated country this entails long trips between many small communities. These theatres often engage local writers and perform works treating local issues or stories from the region, as well as classics. Several of the regional theatres also have international contacts – the very local can also have a uni-

versal relevance. In this issue we report on some exciting co-operative projects. And there are many others who have initiated interesting exchanges and co-operations with theatres and artists in other countries.

A national data base

The year 2007 brought with it more than 700 premieres of theatre and dance performances on the Swedish stages. Of these, nearly 25% were productions for children and youth. Half of the productions with dramatic texts were of Swedish origin, the majority of these being new original

texts. A large portion of these productions are produced by the regional theatres. More information about these productions is available at www.scendatabasen.se. This is a project Svensk Teaterunion initiated in 2006, a data base documenting all Swedish stage production. We have constructed this database and search motor in which 350 theatres and groups producing throughout the country

can themselves record production facts that are subsequently controlled and published by our organization.

A Swedish Theatre Information Centre

This is just one of the projects conducted by Svensk Teaterunion, a theatre information centre which is also the *Swedish Centre of the ITI* (International Theatre Institute). We are a forum for co-operation and information within Swedish theatre and dance and the centre for exchange and contact across borders. by Ann Mari Engel Secretary General





Photo: *Children's Voice* Nandikar, India Lakon Vao, Laos

The Swedish centre arranges national and international seminars, conferences and festivals. We organize the Swedish Theatre Biennial, which is our biggest national festival and theatre meeting, organized in different cities in Sweden in close cooperation with their resident theatres. The next theatre biennial will take place in Borås, 3–7 June 2009, hosted by Borås City Theatre and Regionteater Väst.

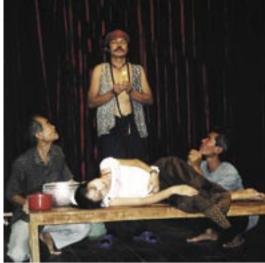
A children's theatre project

One of our major international projects is *Children's Voice* whose goal is to build and support children's theatre in Asia. The underlying aim is to support democratic development and work to strengthen



the rights of children, at the same time increasing competence of those creating theatre for or with children. With the financial support of *The Swedish International Development Agency* we work with theatre companies in India, Bangladesh, China, Vietnam and Laos in a project that will continue through 2009–2010. Many Swedish artists both from large and smaller theatres have participated actively in this exchange through

workshops and visiting productions.



Bringing Swedish Drama abroad

Over the past years our centre has had a mandate from the National Arts Council to help spread Swedish plays abroad. This is a pleasant task as we witness a growing interest in Swedish theatre and in Swedish plays. It isn't only names such as Ingmar Bergman, Birgit Cullberg and Lars Norén that are circulating in foreign lands. There is a growing number of contemporary dramatists whose plays are gracing international stages. Dramatic production for children and youth, an area where Sweden has long been in the vanguard, is attracting much interest. The latest compilation of titles we produced contains information about Swedish plays translated to 30 different languages, with a majority of titles in English. This publication, A Catalogue of Contemporary Swedish Drama 2008, is also available at www.teaterunionen.se. We publish translated plays, arrange readings in English at festivals and invite international guests to experience Swedish theatre and Swedish plays.

Our information centre works also to spread information in Sweden about international theatre in all forms and to support meetings and exchanges between professionals in all parts of the world. Theatre is in many ways a local art form that requires a connection to a specific audience – but the local image can many times have a universal appeal!

The Theatre Award

Backa Teater's project 3 X Crime and Punishment gathered the theatre's energy in three new works; *Dumstrut (Dunce Cap)*, Att döda ett Tivoli (To Kill a Carnival) and Crime and Punishment, which in a bold and original fashion infuse Dostoyevsky's classic questions of life and morality with a contemporary light. This impressive contribution, a vitamin injection for the theatre, is equally consistent both in its gravity and in its joy in play. The result is a theatre brave enough to be relevant and to get under the skin of its audience, age seven and above – without limit.



Children and Youth Theatre Award

Dockteatern Tittut crown their 30 years of pioneer work, presenting qualified art rich in content to the youngest audience, with two new and wonderful productions. *Dollans Dagis (Dolly's Daycare)*, a dramatic puppet play based on Barbro Lindgren and Eva Eriksson's children's story, and Tove Jansson's classic story *Vem ska trösta knyttet? (Who Will Comfort Toffle?)*, a mobile shadow play. Both are full blown works of art bringing big theatre to the tiniest audience. And to their grown up companions.



The Swedish Association of Theatre Critics, The Swedish Section of the International Association of Theatre Critics, present each year an award for excellence in three different disciplines of theatrical arts. There are three awards: one for theatre, one for children and youth theatre and, since 2004, one for dance. The Theatre Critics present the winners:

The Dance Award

Director and choreographer Mats Ek has, after over thirty years creating on the stage, a seemingly inexhaustible ability to form his unique and bold expression into works of art where the borders between dance, theatre and this year even opera are erased. Strindberg's A Dream Play at The Royal Dramatic Theatre was a bold commentary on our times set to the rhythms of Bollywood. Orphee' at The Royal Opera was a poetically minimalistic daily life interpretation of Gluck's opera. With the revival of Hon var svart (She Was Black) from 1995, the Göteborg Opera Ballet showed that this piece stands alongside Ek's famous interpretations of the classics, as a classic of modern dance. Mats Ek transforms human experience into a communicative body language; visible not in the least in this year's exquisite meeting of stars Mikhail Baryshnikov and Ana Laguna in Ställe (Place). And as if this wasn't sufficient, Mats Ek, himself an expressive dancer, took the stage performing with Ana Laguna when Cullberg Ballet celebrated 40 years.



Awards

Photo: Ola Kjelbye Dumstrut Backa Teater *Ivar Sviestins* Dollans Dagis Dockteatern Tittut *Urban Jörén* Gamla barn Cullbergbaletten



The centre and the Periphery

by *Ingrid Kyrö*, President, Svensk Teaterunion – Swedish ITI Artistic Director Ex Meritus

THE NATIONAL CULTURAL policy adopted by the Swedish government and ratified by its parliament in 1974 was fundamental to the ensuing regionalisation of cultural life in Sweden. A conscious political investment in regional structures alongside the efforts of artistically aware individuals, idealists, laid the groundwork for the establishment of regional theatres throughout the country. These theatres have become the hubs for theatrical activity in their regions, where the close proximity to professionally produced theatre production has made all the difference.

I myself have had the great pleasure of managing two regional theatres, first Teater Halland and subsequently Regionteatern Blekinge-Kronoberg, for a total of fourteen years. During my eleven years as artistic director of Regionteatern Blekinge-Kronoberg, situated in the southern Swedish town of Växjö, I upheld the theatre's tradition of offering one production per year to each of the five levels in school, from preschool to high school. The greater portion of these productions consisted of new dramatic writing commissioned from Sweden's best playwrights. It was a major challenge, with these bold new plays, to gain the trust of the region's teachers, to convince them to let us to come in and play for the children and the students in their care. Our success in doing this led the government to give us a national mission; within the framework of "Art and Knowledge", our theatre worked for three years in close accord with Växjö University's Department of Sociology and Department of Educational Sciences and with the Theatre Department of Stockholm's University. This cooperation meant that researchers followed every aspect of the theatres work; first readings, rehearsals, opening nights and tours in schools throughout the region. Each researcher examined different aspects of the work relating to their specific subject of study, but all were concerned with the interface between the theatre and its audience.

This three year national mission resulted in a large number of academic papers, one licentiate's dissertation and two doctor's thesis presented in the spring of 2008. The first thesis is a cultural/ sociological analysis of youth theatre and the second is a dissertation exploring the way in which theatre, in an educational context, can provoke or challenge our self-image and how we perceive the world around us. The later, entitled "Putting yourself at stake: On language and counter-language in pedagogical practice", is written by Birgitta E Gustafsson. This cooperation between a regional theatre and two universities, with the life of the surrounding community as a constant reference has produced results that can help develop the artistic process and even could change the way pedagogical institutions view the power of art and its influence on children and youth.

It was clearly manifested to me what an active theatre could mean for a community in providing experiences, inspiration and knowledge, and also in imbuing a sense of pride of ownership in politicians, and in citizens in relation to "their theatre". In the end we are part of defining the regional identity.

It is in this sense crucial to guarantee the economy and the existence of the regional theatres over the long term. We seem today to lack a vision of the large picture in cultural politics. We make decisions without proper consequence analysis, affecting the regional theatre's ability to achieve their goals and to exist as necessary hubs in democratic society.

An exaggerated amount of attention is paid Sweden's three largest cities; Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö, while theatres outside of these population centres are marginalised and their contributions rendered invisible in the larger cultural political context.

The centre and the periphery are living concepts that demand our awareness; decision makers, media representatives and the artists themselves. A regional theatre is as important to the community it serves, as are larger institutions in the three major population centres of Sweden. They should not be subjected to medial negligence and to a life in silence.





Photo page 6: *Mats Samuelsson* Näktergalen Länsteatern Blekinge Kronoberg

Photo page 7: Joakim Strömholm För guds skull Joakim Strömholm Vildanden Länsteatern Blekinge Kronoberg

Regional theatres - in the centre of the action

by *Lars Ring* Theatre Critic

Photo: Dan Forsberg Nattblind ung scen/öst Lars Jacob Jacobsson En Herrgårdssägen Västanå Teater Petter Koubek Arns Cecilia Länsteatern in Örebro THE REGIONAL THEATRES comprise the bedrock on which theatre in Sweden stands. It is here that the art of the stage most clearly cultivates audience interface and acts as a search engine pinpointing local identity - and also as democratic necessity, producing art that formulates current questions, that explores the conditions for and the meaning of life.

The theatres in the big cities are often regarded as the best, the most important. Here young directors engage in battle, brandishing productions of classic plays, stars pull in the crowds and marketing departments triumphantly announce sold out houses. Still, no one can deny that the greatest portion of Swedish theatre production arises from the regional theatres and that the greater part of Sweden's cadre of actors are performing in village halls and on provincial stages.

Interesting things are happening in the regional theatres at the moment. Erik Kiviniemi is leaving Norrbottensteatern after several very successful years in which he explored and tried to capture the Tornedal culture on stage, not in the least through texts by Mikael Niemi. Kiviniemi brought with him a touch of Finnish folk theatre, free from the court theatre ballast Swedish psychological realism is most often laden with.

Östgötateatern has successfully pursued its SPETS-project and produced a duo of century old plays by women dramatists long forgotten: *Räddad* (*Saved*) by Alfhild Agrell and *Familjelycka* (*Fam*- *ily Happiness*) by Anne Charlotte Leffler. These are texts that show us both intellectually and artistically how impermanent and arbitrary the classical canon we create really is. The project also wields a feministic blade, laying bare structures of male domination that have proved difficult to dismantle.

Östgötateatern also runs ungscen/öst in Linköping who, together with several other regional theatres have driven the project Nya pjäser – Nya världar (New plays – New worlds) allowing young dramatists with immigrant backgrounds to debut as professional playwrights. ungscen/öst is above all, a stage where uncompromising, bold and contemporary plays with perfect pitch are presented to young audiences.

And one could keep on in the same manner. Despite the stagnation in funding while costs somehow consistently rise, the regional theatres in several localities maintain a high artistic vision. Sometimes they are even able to get their local politicians on board: In Jönköping a new theatre is being constructed for Smålands Musik och Teater. Västanå Teater, an independent group, has just been given the mandate to perform as Värmland's official regional theatre, in one of the few blank areas on the regional theatre map.

Should one tag along with Jämtlands Länsteater on a tour of village halls under starry frozen skies and the swirling aurora borealis, or see a summer production of *Arns Cecilia* by Länsteatern Örebro,





one would witness an ability to communicate with the audience that is both unique, and in a pleasant way, unsophisticated. You'll see ensembles that play in the here and now – directly for and directly to their audience. Theatre also can make eye contact.

At the present, their position is acutely tenable. Regional theatres are facing threats from two directions. The new conservative government plans to hastily present guidelines for new cultural policies. One would hope that this government will see that a structure built up over 40 years should not be struck down during one term in power, but one cannot be sure. Another danger is the will to re-divide the country geographically, which would place two or more regional theatres in each of the new, larger regions. Will the new regions accept responsibility for more than one theatre? One would hope so; the proposed changes do nothing to diminish audience demand.

Regional theatre is the bedrock of Swedish Theatre. It is the home of the masses in Swedish Theatre – it is here that the theatre meets it's audience, where people can enjoy a decentralized culture created expressly for them, that places them in the center of the action and speaks in their own dialect.

To be reasonably close to a theatre that can reflect and question one' place, one's soul and the times one lives in, could reasonably be considered a democratic right.





THE WESTERBOTHNIAN THEATRE

A regional theatre with a mission

THEATRE FOR ADULTS, TEENS AND CHILDREN IN THE COUNTY OF VÄSTERBOTTEN

Our commission is to produce theatrical performances for all inhabitants in Västerbotten. We tour in an area as big as Scotland and travel 100 000 km every year.





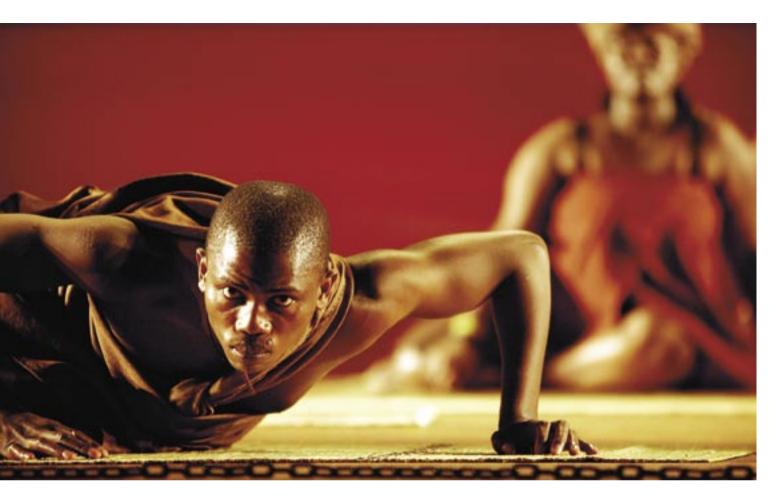
Regionteater Väst

Regionteater Väst initiates in 2008 a youth project designed to involve young people in the theatre's activities, to provide incitement through a transfer of power from the theatre's administration and to encourage a political – cultural discourse within the theatre itself. The project is an extension of the gender project the theatre worked with over the past decade, and will continue to be guided by, during our ongoing investigation of Gender and Identity. Three of the theatre's actors; each with broad experience of artistic leadership, directing, working as dramaturge and teaching, have been given the challenge to lead this project.

The basic idea is that the theatre will over a two year period build up and work with reference groups consisting of young people, and in this way form closer relationships with children, youth and their teachers. It is the project's hope that this

will create opportunities for extended cooperation between the theatre, the schools and other public arenas. Through this work we expect to gain insight in the field - to examine youth culture and theatre for youth in its present incarnation, to observe youth culture and its emotional and structural properties. It is expected that the project will lead to the establishment of a permanent venue for youth theatre and that we will discover new methods for interacting with children and youth through theatre, creating the need for such a space. Larger and smaller productions will alternate, plays for the stage and for the classroom, as well events, tours, and various co-productions. The first planned premiere will be of an adaptation of Jean Genet's The Maids entitled Schoolyard Parliament. It will be played in classrooms for the eighth and ninth grades.

Photo: *Ulf Michal* En världsomsegling under havet Regionteater Väst



NorrlandsOperan

Photo: *Malin Arnesson* Poet and Prophetess NorrlandsOperan A co-operation between north and south: The successful association between NorrlandsOperan and Cape Town Opera has, to this day, resulted in three productions that have received much attention; *Rusalka* and *Porgy and Bess* (2006) and our major hit this spring; a newly commissioned opera entitled *Poet and Prophetess* (2008).

It all started in 2004 with a letter received by NorrlandsOperan's artistic director, Magnus Aspegren, from Michael Williams, his counterpart at the Cape Town Opera in South Africa. "I noticed an announcement from The South African government describing a SIDA project, and soliciting Swedish opera companies that wanted to cooperate with South African opera houses. The funding was available, so I sent an e-mail to all the Swedish Institutions." Magnus Aspegren from NorrlandsOperan was the first to respond to the letter. The two artistic directors connected immediately and over the course of their first meeting, a weekend in Cape Town, they discussed everything from operas, concerts, productions for children to even productions on Robin Island.

These discussions, and the fruitful collaboration they resulted in, will continue into the future, The two opera houses will co-produce *Peter Grimes* in 2009 and there are plans for another newly commissioned opera in 2012.

"We share the same ideas about how to develop the opera as an art; that this development should proceed from our respective cultures. Our goal is the creation of something that exists nowhere else", says Magnus Aspegren.



Byteatern – Kalmar Läns Teater

Located in Kalmar on the beautiful southeastern coast of Sweden and close to the cultural heritage island of Öland, Byteatern in Kalmar is a watering hole for dry throated theatre lovers from the region and from the whole country.

The theatre was created by four visual artists in the 1970's and has, from that day, cultivated it's own, unique language of scenic expression where masks, puppets, visual imagery, objects and also music play an important role. Their obstinate productions have over the years garnished them many awards, The Assitej Award for the year's best play, The Swedish Critic's Award for best children's play, Aftonbladet's Award for Culture etcetera.

This autumn's main production for adults and youth is Orfeus – a round trip to the kingdom of

death, in which dance and new circus are integrated. Ninth graders coming to see *Orpheus* are offered an opportunity to take part in a workshop examining the themes of love and death. One hundred students will see the performance simultaneously, dividing afterwards into three groups to do workshops in visual art, film or dance at Kalmar's old art museum.

Fall 2008 will also see a production of *En stund på jorden* (*A Moment on Earth*) performed by actors and puppeteers. It is a play about a two siblings well known to the Kalmar audience, whose refusal to sell the home they grew up in determined the city's appearance today.

Photo: *Bertil Hertzberg* En kantarell i hissen Byteatern



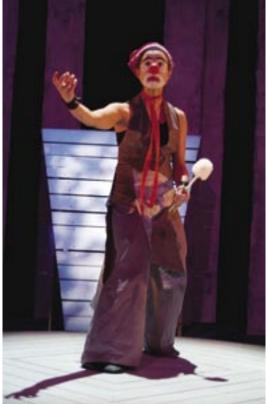


Photo (top left): Citizen's Theatre Länsteatern in Örebro

Länsteatern in Örebro

To increase the opportunities for local citizens to participate in theatre and to develop in terms of cultural diversity, Länsteatern in Örebro has over the past few years tried to develop community theatre in two of the city's neighbourhoods. Establishing partnerships with amateur theatres, adult educational organisations, tenant associations and the like; we intend to create a community theatre belonging both to Länsteatern and to the local community. Creating a venue for collaboration, co-production and education is the goal of the project *14*theatre* initiated in 2007.

A contact taken earlier with Glasgow's Citizen's Theatre/TAG Theatre, provided the impetus to begin a study of their ten year project in the local community. They were similarly happy to learn about our perspectives in educational and community work through drama.

The cooperation is led by Tomas Dahlberg and involves field study in both cities. The participation of Neil Packham, Community Drama Director at The Citizens Theatre, in The Swedish Theatre Biennial in Örebro 2007 made a great impact and inspired us to take the next step. We have now agreed on a closer cooperation between our respective theatre workers and community groups to create shared international experiences. This collaboration will include staff exchanges, tours and co-productions. The issues of cultural diversity and social exclusion need to be addressed and worked with by the theatre. Working through community theatre provides a way to increase artistic standards and to reach broader audiences, an item of increasing importance as our theatre meets the future.

Teater Halland

Teater Halland has over the past decade researched the traditions of Commedia dell' Arte and developed their audience contact, not in the least towards children and youth. Improvisation and work with masks has become a defining feature of our work and is one of our special abilities. We have decided now to develop the theatre's expression in a new direction.

Teater Halland will initiate in 2008 and conduct over the next two years, a project based on the dramatic writings of the playwright Federico Garcia Lorca. Teater Halland's main mission is to play theatre performances for children and teens. This project, however, is designed to cross barriers, both in relationship to targeted audience groups by creating intergenerational meetings, and by finding new interfaces between the theatre and it's audience. Several productions are planned alongside an elaborate educational project.

The play *Blood Wedding* will be mounted as well as four shorter plays newly translated by Marika Gedin and never previously staged. The first production, opening in November 2008, will be a one-act play entitled *On Love*, followed by *Blood Wedding* which opens in March 2009, *Shadows*, *Licence for Emotion and Jehovah*. We plan to end the project with a new Swedish play inspired by our work with Lorca and our studies undertaken during the term of the project. It is also our hope to host a large international Lorca Symposium.

The Lorca project has an educational component as well. We will invite researchers in theatre and in gender studies, historians, philosophers and artists to work partly with the theatre's own artistic team, but also in public events such as workshops, lectures, seminars and debates. These activities target schools, special interest groups, cultural organisers and the general public. Through Lorca's writing and through a deeper investigation of the mask, the role and methods of physical expression, Teater Halland hopes to create a discourse bridging the generation gap while exploring subjects such as gender, identity, culture and power. Photo page 14 (top right): Freden Teater Halland

Pel Amor - teatro de animales, prem. Nov 2008
Bodas de sangre, march 2009
Sombras, fall 2009
Performances on tour
Teater Halland 2008-2010 - The Lorca Project



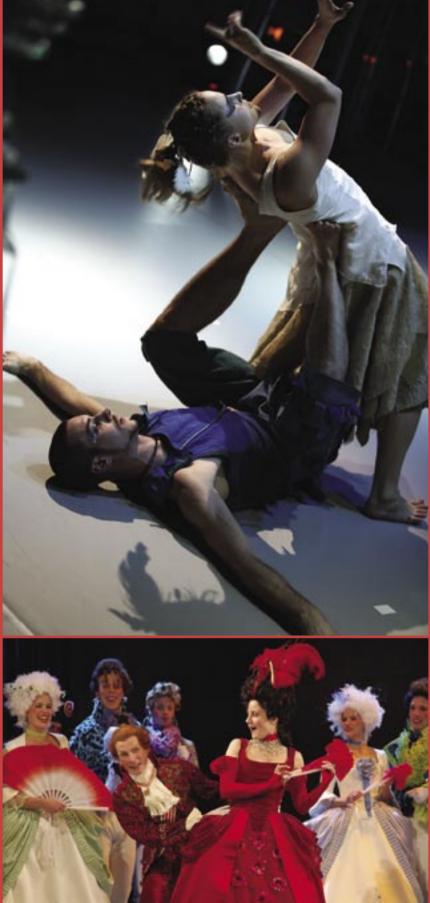


.

V











For information about the photos, please see page 30

Nationella dramaturgiatet

by Henrietta Hultén Project Manager

> Photo: *Anders Kratz* Räddad Östgötateatern

ATIONELLA DRAMATURGIATET is a cooperative project concerning dramaturgical interests; playwriting, artistic discourse and repertory discussions; shared by nineteen of Sweden's regional theatres and Riksteatern. The project is now entering its third and final year of initial construction. The twenty co-operating theatres all have regional missions outside the heaviest populated regions in Sweden, including touring to small towns not housing a permanent theatre. Only ten of the participating theatres employ a dramaturge, but with the creation of Nationella Drama-

turgiatet, all have access to a network in which working dramaturges meet regularly around common artistic interests.

The dramaturges discuss repertory, arrange seminars with international guest lecturers and discuss questions specific to theatres working in

theatres working in less populated regions. The results of their work, including play reports and discussions, are posted into a common play catalogue housed in Nationella Dramaturgiatet's own web portal, Dramawebben. This catalogue is only open to those theatres connected to the project.

Dramawebben also has a section open to the public. In this section, two Swedish researchers are presently locating and publishing older Swedish plays on the Internet. These are works in the public domain (the author has been dead for more than 70 years), especially plays written by women. Many of them – there are now over one hundred titles! – until recently completely forgotten and in some cases intentionally buried, having once again come to light, are receiving much attention. These plays, are being staged for the first time in 100 years on several of the larger stages in our country, from The Royal Dramatic Theatre to a number of the smaller regional institutions. This catalogue of older plays has spawned a number of projects in which Nationella Dramaturgiatet co-operates with Theatre



Departments at our universities, Theatre Academies and other institutions of higher education.

The dramaturges accesses international influences through a network of international lecturers, boasting members from South America, English speaking Africa, Eastern Eu-

rope and the Arabic countries. We have a discussion group for plays written in French, as well as a network of dramaturges from Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden, directly connected to Nationella Dramaturgiatet. New plays are continuously channeled through Dramaturgiatet out to all the regions, making available throughout the country, influences from other languages and cultures. You may visit us at:

www.nationelladramaturgiatet.se

A Theatrical landscape of diversity

HY DID SWEDEN choose to create a network of regional theatres? What alternatives existed at the time? Does the result live up to the vision behind the creation of these regional institutions?

In 1933, a group appointed by the newly elected social democratic government of Sweden to undertake a national analysis of the theatre, presented their report. State support to theatre was at the time concentrated almost entirely to Stockholm. The report stressed the rights of every individual in Sweden to access theatre of high quality. This led to the establishment of Riksteatern, a national touring theatre whose initial mission was to put productions from the Royal Dramatic Theatre and the Royal Opera on tour, but which began themselves to produce when it became apparent that there was no strong will in the Royal Institutions to go out on the road.

The right of access has since that day been a fundamental principle of Swedish cultural politics, even if the definition of access has changed over the years. A follow-up investigation undertaken in the 1950's concluded for example, that the growth of the automotive industry had already solved the accessibility problem.

New Cultural Policy

In 1968 the government authorised a new investigation, which would define new guidelines for cultural policy. The reason for this investigation was, among other things, a number of sociological investigations of audience showing that despite 30 years of social democratic cultural policy, the working classes were largely absent from the cultural arena. The expressed opinion was that culture had somehow been overlooked. Now this last stone in the foundation of national welfare would be put in place in order to reduce human alienation.

Sweden's theatrical landscape had already started to change without any central governmental decree. A number of municipal theatres had been established; Riksteatern had seen which way the wind was blowing and established their own regional ensembles, and Sweden's first Regional Theatre, Norrbottensteatern, was founded. Another important change was the recent movement of independent theatre companies, the free groups, reaching new audiences, primarily children and young audiences, and playing theatre that took up political issues. These groups had another relaby *Rikard Hoogland*, Ph.D Theatre Studies, Stockholm University

Photo: *Nadja von Bahr* My Nation Folkteatern Göteborg



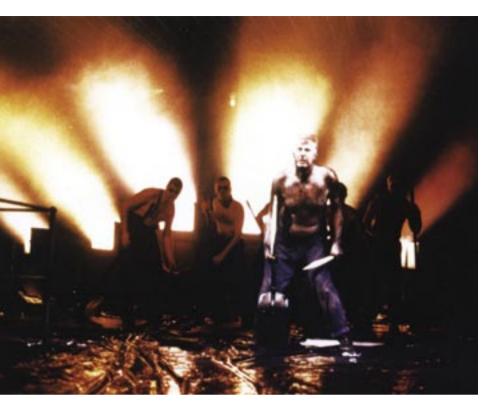


Photo page 20: Den kaukasiska kritcirkeln Gävle Folkteater

Photo page 21: *Anders Kratz* Familjelycka Östgötateatern tionship to the audience and the reigning cultural debate. This inspired the authors of the report on culture, even if the social democratic government didn't wholly share the occasionally extreme left wing stand points of the free groups and expressed concerns about artistic quality.

New Institutions

The inquiry did not lead to investment in the independent theatre movement, but rather to the establishment of new institutions that would produce theatre for a whole district or county, under the auspices of the local government. These district theatres (länsteatrarna) were partially supported by national funds, but linked to local funding so that should local governing bodies reduce financial support, the national government would automatically follow suit. This economic construction, where one funding reduction would directly imply another, was deemed sufficient to guarantee the theatre's continuing economic viability. There were however several instances in which local government did cut funding to these theatres. In these institutions, the board of directors was composed of local government appointees, with the national government lacking any representation in the governing bodies of the regional theatres.

Several of the theatres were established during the early and middle 1970's. They were small organisations with a total of 12-14 employees, of whom the majority worked as artistic personnel. A decade later the total number of employees had doubled though the number of those employed as actors, directors or designers stayed the same.

Difficulties and Conflicts

These new regional theatres had different histories; some were for example former regional ensembles of Riksteatern granted new status, or independent performing groups that had evolved. Their experiences of working in a politically steered institution were to say the least, very different. The county governments, who (together with their municipalities) were principally responsible for public health, had no previous experience in this new area of responsibility. Conflicts were unavoidable. These conflicts ensured that after the first wave of regional theatres was established, few regions attempted to follow in their footsteps. Today, however, there is a county or district theatre in every county in Sweden.

What were these conflicts about? They were about everything, from what kinds of theatre these institutions would offer to how they should be led. In addition to the political interference, there were local theatre critics mobilising negative opinion. The Regional Theatres strove to fulfil their mission, finding new ways to reach the local population, cooperating with the region's citizens. The local critics never bothered to review their many productions for children or youth. They simply didn't view these plays, nor the numerous productions taking up social issues and touring schools and community halls, as real theatre.

The local political bosses were critical of the leadership structures in their theatres, and also of the repertoire. The first regional theatres were taught in no uncertain terms that cabarets were at all costs to be avoided, as they didn't have a high artistic quality and contained an element of political satire that local government officials and industry leaders found irritating. Productions for children taking up issues like sexuality or drugs were similarly criticised. The reality witnessed by these theatre groups in schools and youth clinics was one that local politicians chose to remain blind to. There are many instances that showed how those responsible for the theatre had no idea of how theatre worked, for example, a government accountant refusing to authorise use of public funds to buy make-up! Things were more serious when the governing boards decided to question and even to steer repertoire, stopping for example a play that was critical of the police or deciding that a theatre's socially critical productions should be replaced with more entertaining fare. This sort of conflict was exceptional, but never the less, describes the sort of difficulties this new system was encountering. In using the national goal protecting freedom of speech as a cultural guideline, the politicians thought they were protecting these fledgling artistic companies from the political interference. It wasn't always enough. Here, it should be stressed that this period was one of strong political polarisation, and that the politicians were not alone to fault when conflicts did arise.

New Challanges

As time went on and political polarities diminished, along with the pioneering spirit of the new regional theatres, these institutions began more and more to resemble conventional theatres. Today, they are facing challenges from three principle areas. First; the national government rarely adjusts their support to completely counter rising costs. Second; critics representing national media and newspapers are increasingly negligent in writing about productions in the regional theatres. And finally; there are discussions in Sweden to redefine the geographical/political division of the country into larger regions. This could result in making many of the existing regional theatres needed. This final challenge could imply new possibilities for the regional theatres; as they can no longer all be expected to reflect these larger regions, they might well begin to find new ways in which to define them selves artistically, and to cultivate their individuality.





What is DramaDirectory?

DramaDirectory is one of Sweden's largest internet based play collections and contains in excess of 962 plays from over 423 playwrights and translators. DramaDirectory has existed under the auspices of Sveriges Dramatikerförbund (The Swedish Playwrights Union) since 1997, and is financed through funding from Statens Kulturråd (The Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs) and the theatres attached to Svensk Scenkonst (Swedish Performing Arts). DramaDirectory aims to increase the availability and distribution of Swedish dramatic writing.

In Sweden, where plays are rarely published, playwrights find it difficult to distribute their work. At the same time, theatres and professional independent groups have a hard time finding modern Swedish drama that they can produce. Our hope is to fill the breach, and that DramaDirectory can function as a link between playwrights, publisher/agents, theatre groups and theatres. Even private citizens are able to search through titles and read plays from our play library. This enables more people to read dramatic literature and may encourage more people to go out and see theatre.

We have chosen to start with modern dramatic literature, plays that are already available to us digitally, and work backwards in time. We have recently begun to scan older plays, plays which until now have only existed as paper manuscripts. In this way, some of the most often asked for classical Swedish texts will be available digitally on DramaDirectory. The website also contains some Swedish translations of foreign work.

Besides its plays, DramaDirectory has compiled an overview of Swedish contemporary playwrights and their work. These presentations of playwrights with synopsises of their plays are available in several languages. Playwright presentations are updated constantly.

DramaDirectory has initiated a co-operation with Swedish theatres in order to present, on the top of the page, a collage of photographs from current productions.

How does DramaDirectory operate?

The user can both look for plays in the play library, and read about playwrights and their work under Playwright/Translator.

He/she can also find agents, publishers and other information pertaining to the theatre world.

Searches in the play library can utilize a variety of criteria; titles, authors, languages available, number of actors or genre. Once you have located the play you can read a synopsis. If you desire then to read the whole play, there are two possibilities to do so. You can either download the entire play text, or you can order a print-on-demand paperback version. A large number of translations of Swedish plays are available on the site.

Reading plays directly on the screen

Theatres and theatre professionals are eligible to apply for an access code. With this access code they are able to read entire playscripts directly on their screens, or print them out themselves. Each time a play is downloaded, the user is registered and this information sent to the playwright and the agent/publisher. Thus, the playwrights and their agents can see who is showing interest in their work.

Author's rights

All work included in the play library is protected by laws governing copyright. Permission from the playwright is mandatory before performing any of the plays represented on the site. Permission can be granted by the playwright him/herself or through their publisher/agent. In the case of translation, permission must be granted both by the original playwright and by the translator or the publisher/agent.



From: Olof Lindqvist [mailto:olof.lindqvist@regionteatervast.se] Sent: den 30 april 2008 14:18 To: Med Reventberg Subject: Re: News...mailkonversation

Dear Med! being encouraged to converse with you am about the distinguishing characteristics of our regional theatres ... What do our regio-

nal institutions look like today? What defines them? How will they look in the future? When I took over as artistic director for Regionteater Väst I did so with the intention of performing the greatest possible number of dance and theatre performances throughout the whole of the Western Götaland region, and to keep in mind all of those lacking communities lacking performance spaces. This was a big change for us as these new arenas turned out to be antique village halls, well-worn classrooms and stuffy auditoriums in tiny communities! It was a painful process but the result was incredibly uplifting. In 2006 we visited a mere 30 of the 49 townships in our region but the following year we played performances in 46 townships. And our audience numbers exceeded results from earlier years when we concentrated on larger venues in the bigger towns! So a defining feature of work has been our desire to reach out to all those who don't take advantage of the culture being offered in the region's big towns; the sociological aspects have dominated - theatre as a community event in which both audience and actors share an experience, with the role of culture being the focal point, rather than the role of art.



Olof Lindqvist Artistic Director Regionteater Väst

all the best, Olof

From: Med Reventberg [mailto:mrg@vasterbottensteatern.se] Sent: den 7 maj 2008 11.32 To: Olof Lindqvist Subject: Re: News...mailkonversation

Dear Olof!

We have a lot in common!

I became artistic director for Västerbottensteatern in 2005 just as we had begun a project called Room for Theatre in cooperation with Riksteatern. The primary goal was to play a larger number of small theatre productions on an increasing number of small stages in the region. As new artistic director I made a tour of the region, which for me was a real adventure. As we travelled mile after mile with nary a castle or a cabin in sight, seldom even another passing car, I began to understand just where it was I'd landed! Västerbotten is the home of a quarter of a million people, but the land area is greater than that of the whole of Denmark! And we were scouting this place for new venues! Would we find the audience? Yes, they were there! And they were overjoyed that we came out to play in villages called Stöcke, Fällfors, Sävar, Byske, Tavelsjö, Kasamark and so on. Some of these villages housed populations numbering less than forty or fifty persons! But when we rolled up with our performances there were 60 in the audience!

A year later the projects objective was reformulated. Room for Theatre should result in 40 new performance spaces in localities outside the regions major population centres. Out ambition was to present the audience with what we called genuine theatre; more than one actor in full costume and make-up, with a set, lights, sound and - of course - an interval, in the interval the local arranger can sell coffee and cakes and most importantly: to give people a chance to meet and to talk together! We have already passed our goal of locating 40 new arrangers and come to the realisation that the project is above all about creating relationships. And as in all relationships, this network demands continuous attention in order to function well. This takes time and of course costs money. Add to that the fact that during this entire project period the



Med Reventberg Artistic Director Västerbottensteatern

Photo page 25: Anders Iirås Fart! Regionteater Väst Patrik Degerman Djävla karl! Västerbottensteatern theatre offered performances at heavily subsidised prices. The question is really this: does society see a value for the inland people of Västerbotten to be entertained by a visit from Västerbottensteatern or do the powers that be believe that these people can manage just as well without the benefits of culture? Best wishes, Med

From: Olof Lindqvist
[mailto:olof.lindqvist@regionteatervast.se]
Sent: den 8 maj 2008 00:18
To: Med Reventberg
Subject: Re: SV: News...mailkonversation

Dear Med!

Thanks for you letter!

I am completely convinced that the work Västerbottensteatern invested in Room for Theatre will create some rings on the water - I mean, what other public event has engaged 100% of the local population? The presence of theatre adds not only cultural value, there are social and economic benefits as well - though we must admit that finding a model to assess these values in any relevant sort of way is quite complicated.

I believe that the regional theatres are at present in a phase where not only the artistic dimensions should be considered, but even and especially the social dimensions. We need this common ground! What unites us? What differentiates us? What are our common problems? My feeling is that there exists a general consensus regarding the public funding divided amongst us annually - but that new models, current and relevant models, need to be introduced first politically. During the period between 2009 and 2011, thanks to a creative dialogue between The Culture Office (the owners of Regionteater Väst) and The Regional Arts Council, we will focus on four goals that do not at all stipulate how we will function, but which dictate a set of perspectives we must keep in focus. These guidelines define our role clearly and visibly, and give us a stabile foundation. When the governing bodies have defined what they want with culture and more specifically what they want with the regional theatres, it will be easier to motivate them to support the costs of maintaining a travelling theatre company. Then one can ask; is the price really so steep? What about when you measure it in respect to all the immeasurable gains these performances provide in areas like health and social and intellectual stimulance? All the best, Olof

From: Med Reventberg
[mailto:mrg@vasterbottensteatern.se]
Sent: den 13 maj 2008 kl. 10.42
To: Olof Lindqvist
Subject: Re: News...mailkonversation

Dear Olof!

Thanks for your letter and your many thoughts and provoking viewpoints. Yes, even politicians in Västerbotten demand that we measure the value of culture; they want numbers, numbers and more numbers. And prognosis. How many more citizens of Skellefteå will be how many percentage points healthier next year if they see what amount of theatre? How many might be persuaded to move to the region if we played how much more theatre? I am of course exaggerating but I sometimes find all this talk about measurable gains to be exhausting. Let us get on with the thing we do best - producing and playing theatre!

But today I wanted to focus on Västerbotten - Land of Storytelling, a project for development and cooperation that every day binds us more closely to the region. We have been travelling with tape recorders and asking the oldest citizens to tell us about their lives, to tell stories they've heard, sometimes ghost stories and sometimes things that actually have happened. And it turns out that people have been doing this ever since the first tape recorder came to Västerbotten. Every nook and cranny has a need to tell it's story, revealing at the same time an growing desire to hear these stories told. There are courses, workshops and study circles about storytelling, story telling cafes, a story telling academy and at the Västerbotten Regional Museum they have created a position for a curator of stories. The educational aspect is important, as storytelling is a way of preserving the local cultural heritage and spreads knowledge of local history. Smack in the middle of this hodgepodge of storytellers is Västerbottensteatern. We are co-creators, arrangers, and we can provide contacts and expertise. The important thing is that this movement has completely grown up from the grass roots. Sure, I can tell our sponsors "Tell us what to do and we'll do it." But a movement that has grown up on its own, with its own momentum, has another meaning socially and culturally. And I suppose economically as you yourself suggested. It's rings on the water.

All the best, Med From: Olof Lindqvist
[mailto:olof.lindqvist@regionteatervast.se]
Sent: 19 maj 2008 kl 12.25
To: Med Reventberg
Subject: Re: SV: News...mailkonversation

Med!

Of course I share the exasperation you feel when constantly confronting the word measurable - perhaps we should talk in terms of visible instead? How then does one measure visibility? Number of hits on the website? Number of published articles? Number of...

I believe that it is fundamentally important that we take advantage of our potential to grow. The Regional theatres create an added value that is absolutely necessary to those wanting to live outside the big cities. But this might demand that we become a little more extraverted. The we need to open up to others who want and dare to live outside these cities, those who share the same references, have the same target audience that we do. We might just need to get down and play with these people a little more often than we've done in the past?

Right in the middle of the plains of Västgötaland the little town of Vara has just built a new concert hall, a place of pilgrimage for both farmers and shopkeepers, everyone's climbed on the bandwagon, no one wants to be left behind. This is growth without chemical fertiliser, 100% organic and in my eyes brilliant theatrical art on these flat plains where the winter wind blows colder than any storm wind from the North.

Best wishes, Olof From: Med Reventberg
[mailto:mrg@vasterbottensteatern.se]
Sent: den 20 maj 2008 kl 16.08
To: Olof Lindqvist
Subject: Re: News...mailkonversation

Dear Olof!

Today we had an exciting meeting with Umeå's Chief Cultural Officer. Umeå is one of the six Swedish candidate cities competing for the honour of being Europe's Cultural Capital in 2014. Västerbottensteatern is naturally a part of this candidature. And we are optimistic regarding our chances to win this competition. The Culture Capital General has chosen to focus on the storytelling traditions up here! At the same time, he wants to bring forth our unique attributes; "The Northern Spaces in the House of Europe". All the folks up here in the Northern Spaces will have a chance to tell their story! It gets me so enormously excited, and even if another Swedish city becomes European Cultural Capital, it is wonderful to know that we were part of launch-

is wonderful to know that we were part of launching something quite unique, something we've not seen anywhere else. Today I am excited to think about our future!

Best regards from, Med



DANCE from north to south

by Lis Hellström Svenningson, Theatre and Dance Critic

THE PAST FEW decades have seen a pronounced development in dance as an art form in Sweden. These days Sweden dances from its top, miles above the Arctic Circle, down to its toes where it joins Europe by bridge. An interest in dance is today evident in the media, in other performance disciplines and in the audience.

Still, dance is regarded as a small realm in the arts world. In large measure this is a result of an underdeveloped infrastructure, which was never built up to the same extent as that of theatre or music. The Swedish dance institutions are a mere seven in number and largely varied in size. In Stockholm, The Royal Opera houses a ballet company that dances everything, from 18th century ballets performed in authentic 18th century environments, to new works by the world's leading choreographers. The Royal Ballet in Stockholm is the only ensemble in the country with classical ballets in its repertory. For the Göteborg Opera, on the west coast, the mission these days is to dance a purely modern program. Modern choreography dominates even Skånes Dansteater, whose home stage is in Malmö, in the very south, as well as Norrdans, situated in Härnosand in the north, and employing a small company of only eight dancers. The dance ensemble at Regionteatern Väst is even smaller.

Over and above these five, Cullberg Ballet – the foremost ambassadors of Swedish dance; and Dansens Hus, a receiving venue opening our doors to the international dance scene, can be regarded as institutions.

Expansion in the Swedish dance world is primarily seen outside these structures, among the independent choreographers and dancers creating movement throughout the country. Instead of building new performance spaces, politicians and funding bodies are looking for other ways to encourage the spread of dance. Almost every region in the country now supports a dance consultant charged with the task of co-ordinating, encouraging and developing dance in their region. Dansnät Sverige is the name of a growing network with state support. This is a diverse collection of arrangers who together work to increase knowledge and understanding of dance and to present performances. Every year this network chooses a number of productions engaged to tour all the participating localities or venues. For those artists chosen, the number of performances played will be greatly increased.

Artist's residencies is another method of spreading dance throughout the country, where regional and local residencies are now often arranged.

In 1996, Dance was given its own heading in the national culture budget and in 2005 a national program for the development of professional dance was adopted. Alongside this, Dance in the Schools was launched as a country wide campaign to make dance an active and essential ingredient in the normal school curriculum.





Photo page 10: Anna Diehl Voices Skånes Dansteater

Photo page 11: Lesley Leslie-Spinks Aluminium Cullbergbaletten Bengt Wanselius Gojorna Norrdans



by Lotta Brilioth Biörnstad Co-ordinator ANSTEATRARNA I SVERIGE (LTS), roughly translated, The Swedish League of Regional Theatres, is a non-profit organisation of regional theatres in Sweden. The overall mission of the organisation is to work for a thriving theatre environment in the whole of our country. To achieve this, our organisation supports cooperation, the exchange of ideas and the initiation of developmental projects that will increase regional culture's visibility.

The artistic directors and theatre managers from each theatre, along with political appointee in their governing boards, meet twice every year to discuss questions that concern us all. LTS has an office and a co-ordinator who works fulltime.

LTS cooperates with Riksteatern to make theatrical productions accessible to more people throughout the country, for example; through a project designed to develop local arrangers at several regional theatres. Another example is the project "Room for Theatre" designed to create theatre performances that can fit on to the tiniest of town hall stages in sparsely populated regions like Västerbotten, in the very north of Sweden. The project promotes a tighter dialogue between the producer, the arranger and the audience, through meetings and coordinated work efforts.

Several of the Regional Theatres employ youth coaches, working to increase the number of young arrangers. The coaches encourage, educate, coordinate and support new initiatives in the arrangement of cultural events or activities in the local region This project is led by Plural, a network of arrangers cooperating with Riksteatern and LTS.

The Nationella Dramaturgiatet, is a network of dramaturges employed at the country's regional theatres and at Riksteatern. This office is a resource for reading plays, discussing repertoire and keeping abreast other country's and other culture's dramatic and literary production. It is also a think tank, designed to contribute information, inspiration, to arrange seminars and to stay informed on international developments in theatre. All this in an effort to deepen and renew our work in the literary aspects of theatre. The Nationalla Dramaturgiatet strives to ensure an exciting development in Swedish theatre, even outside the larger metropolitan areas.

Regional Theatres in Sweden

Byteatern – Kalmar läns teater www.byteatern.se

2 Dalateatern www.dalateatern.se

3 Folkteatern i Gävleborg www.gavlefolkteater.se

4 FolkTeatern i Göteborg www.folkteatern.se

5 Helsingborgs stadsteater www.helsingborgsstadsteater.se

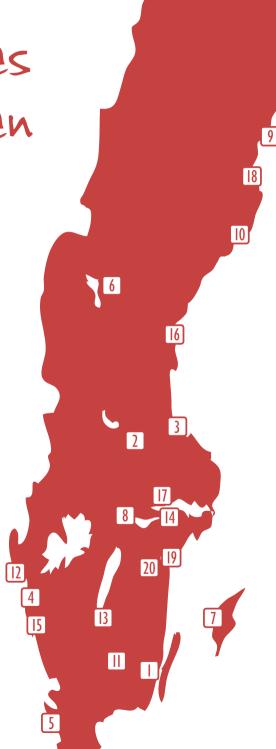
6 Jämtlands läns teater www.lanskulturen.se

7 Länsteatern på Gotland www.ltpg.se

8 Länsteatern i Örebro www.lansteatern.se

9 Norrbottensteatern www.norrbottensteatern.se

10 NorrlandsOperan www.norrlandsoperan.se



II Regionteatern Blekinge Kronoberg www.regionteatern.se

12 Regionteater Väst www.regionteatervast.se

B Smålands Musik och Teater www.smot.nu

[4] Sörmlands Musik & Teater www.sormlandsmusikoteater.se

I5 Teater Halland www.teaterhalland.se

16 Teater Västernorrland www.teater-vnorr.se

17 Teater Västmanland www.teatervastmanland.se

 Västerbottensteatern

 www.vasterbottensteatern.se

Östgötateatern www.ostgotateatern.se

20 ung scen/öst www.ungscen.nu

Cover Photos (left to right): 1) Johan Lyckaro Malla Handlar Teater Halland 2) Trollkarlen från Oz Teater Västmanland 3) Musikalkomedin Sugar Norrbottensteatern 4) Marknadsafton Jämtlands läns teater 5) Malin Arnesson Poet and Prophetess NorrlandsOperan 6) Lia Jacobi Luckan Teater Västernorrland

Photos page 16 (left to right): 1) Anders Kratz Hunden som kom in från kylan Sörmlands Musik och Teater 2) Lia Jacobi Dan då Dan dog Teater Västernorrland 3) Kari Jantzen Karins krig Gunilla Witt 4) Per Eriksson Timmarna med Rita Dalateatern 5) Stig Hammarstedt Skvaller Länsteatern på Gotland 6) Henrik Hedenius Re:Union ung scen/öst

Photos page 17 (left to right): 1) *Lars Kroon* BIRDS Fuse 2) *Peter Westrup* Farliga förbindelser Helsingborgs Stadsteater 3) *Anders Kratz* Röda Nejlikan Östgötateatern 4) *Anna Diehl* We dream of simple lives Örjan Andersson Dance Company Back Cover Photos (left to right): 1) Ola Kjelbye Halvvägs till himlen Folkteatern Göteborg/ En halv trappa ner 2) Ola Kjelbye Ängel och hästen Blå Regionteater Väst 3) Anders Kratz Romeo och Julia Östgötateatern 4) Bengt Wanselius Sweet Pecado Norrdans 5) Urban Jörén **Empty House** Cullbergbaletten 6) Peo Olsson Pers Planet Skånes Dansteater

News from Swedish Theatre

published by Svensk Teaterunion • Swedish Centre of the ITI, 2008 In collaboration with Länsteatrarna i Sverige Editorial office: *Ann Mari Engel Jenny Fogelquist* Graphic design: *Johannes Linde* Translation: *Edward Buffalo Bromberg* Printed by: Strokirk-Landströms AB ISSN 1653-7637

Svensk Teaterunion • Swedish Centre of the ITI Kaplansbacken 2 • SE-112 24 Stockholm Tel: +46 8 462 25 30 • Fax: +46 8 462 25 35 info@teaterunionen.se • www.teaterunionen.se



