Analogy between Ancient Techniques of Theatrical Scenography and Shipbuilding. Research Project: Iter Teatro - A Nautical, Nomadic Stage Using Water as Dramaturgical Element

The presentation outlines the initial idea behind this project, i.e., the similarity between theatrical dynamics, particularly on the stage, and the building of wooden vessels, which during years of research, from 2004 till today, have led to the production of eight different versions of movable and floating stages. Historical sources provide evidence of how theatre stagehands and sailors shared very similar skills since the times of ancient Rome, and how some of the rituals typical of fishing villages, like the tuna fisheries in Sicily, consists of highly dramatized behaviours and methods, in a unique mixture of spirituality and engineering, which was applied by seamen spontaneously. During the years of development of this project, the element of water has always had the greatest importance, and consequently it represents the main performative element. Another key element is the journey, or Iter (in Latin). The concept of mobility has been translated into a stagecraft design which can be very easily moved from town to town, or from one country to another. The second part of the presentation will focus on concept-theatre and its latest developments, highlighting its main characteristics, structural details, purposes and prospects. The conclusion will argue the specific reasons why this project – which has long been teetering between dream and reality - should now be realized, considering, in particular, the ethical and social values pertaining to scenic arts, which since the Greek theatre have always been a powerful medium for telling the story and life of people, and for renewing their cultural heritage. The conference proposal is divided into two phases: the research, and the concept. The research includes the historical context, the surprising analogies between theatrical architectures and ancient ships, theatrical construction techniques and fishing techniques, from the ancient Romans to the baroque theatre up to the contemporary theatre. The second phase consists in the presentation of the project Iter Teatro, a multi-purpose, mobile and nomadic space that can work on land and water (in special conditions), where water becomes a major dramatic element. The conclusion explains the reasons for building this mechanical wooden architecture, and its social, artistic, and ecological meanings and goals. During the speech, detailed pictures and videos will be displayed, together with a specific dossier showing the various planning stages from 2004 to 2021.

Keywords: Theatre - Scenography - Water - Travel - Itinerant

This paper is part of a study on mobile theatres which began in 2004. It is divided into two sections: a research and the consequent concept, which was developed into the project of a theatrical equipment.

The analysis is focused on the similarities that have been found between theatre and marine architecture. There seems to be a specific parallelism in relation to these two sectors.
To begin with, the subdivision of spaces in height: in the theatre there is the substage, in a ship the hold; the theatre stage is the meeting place of all the workers, just like the deck of a ship. Even the equipment used in a theatre shows many similarities with that of marine environments.

More significant than these technical/aesthetical affinities are the attitudes that characterised workers in their respective field, namely a widespread attitude of devotional respect.

Just like the theatre workers in ancient times - who considered the stage a mystical place, where man could come into contact with the word of the gods - sailors too regarded their boats and especially the sea as elements of spiritual nature. In both cases, man's relationship with these environments was deemed sacred.

These affinities, as simple as they may seem, are worthy of further analysis.

The next step of our investigation was to look for tangible traces of cooperation between theatrical and maritime craftsmen, to find out whether they had ever met for a common purpose. Specific similarities have emerged at various occasions during these years of study, such as the way full-scale technical drawings are made: set designers, who build the sets in the theatre workshop, and shipbuilders actually use a very similar method, so much so that they both draw standing upright on sheets of paper tens of metres long lying on the floor.

Historical examples of such collaborative encounters have been looked for at different times, and in different countries, from the theatres of Italian port cities, like Palermo, Genoa, and Venice, or along the coasts of the former Maritime Republics. We have also been looking abroad, in regions in close contact with water, in countries like Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands, as far as the Far East.

However, what we were looking for was right in the centre of the Mediterranean, in Rome, in the most famous place of spectacle ever: the Colosseum.

The Flavian amphitheatre, built at the time of the emperor Vespasian, was a revolutionary work, because new technological models were developed for its construction, and still today it is regarded as a source of inspiration for contemporary entertainment architecture. The stage machinery of the arena represents a great example of theatrical engineering, and it is in this context that we found evidence of cooperation between theatre workers and sea workers. About a thousand sailors, due to their skills in the use of ropes and sails, were in charge of manoeuvring the awning covering the arena, called velarium, an enormous adjustable shade which sheltered the public from the sun during the games by means of a series of winches, which were quite similar to those that will be used in 18th century theatres.
It should also be noted that one of the most complex shows in Roman arenas involved the use of water, the so-called *naumachia*, spectacular historical re-enactments of naval battles, created by flooding the stage where stage boats had previously been mounted.

Another area of investigation that has given great impulse to this research has certainly been the *tonnare*, the tuna-fishing structures and facilities located in the province of Trapani, in Sicily.

In the vicinity of Greek or Roman theatres religious temples were often found, and also inside the *tonnare* there were religious spaces, small Christian churches where people prayed for protection against bad weather and for a good catch of tuna.

Like in the ancient theatre, ritualty was a major behavioural pattern of the life in the *tonnare*. The chorus songs of the Greek theatre carried out a social function, as an attempt to investigate both divine and earthly events; in the tuna fisheries, songs were used to accompany the hard manual work that required sustained efforts. Fishermen’s testimonies state that religious figures were also present during the fishing ritual, like monks who were in charge of blessing the nets, and the fishing season could not be considered to have begun without these blessings. In both cases, therefore, men resorted to rituals, particularly religious ones, and the concept of the sacred took the form of a ceremony of spiritual dialogue.

*Figure 1.* Illustration of a *naumachia* *Figure 2.* Etching “La mattanza in Sicilia” 1782

artist Flavio Bolla Artist Jean-Pierre Houël

Between the 1800s and the 1900s, the owners of the *tonnare*\(^{(1)}\) often asked their fishermen (*tonnaroti*) to be able to attend the last fishing phase. Wooden structures, scaffolds and grandstands were then mounted to allow the aristocrats to watch the *mattanza*, or the ‘slaughter’, a truly spectacular
representation, a violent act between man and nature reminiscent of the
games between gladiators and beasts in Roman arenas. Nowadays, this
practice has ceased, and the buildings where tuna fisheries used to be are now
abandoned examples of industrial archaeology, or they are used for other
purposes. The last instances of ritual tuna fishing in southern Italy date back
to the ‘80s and ‘90s, except for a few staged events, mostly for tourists, events
that are far removed from the ancient craft that was so important for the
whole Mediterranean, and that in Italy has now been lost, because of the
destructive practices of the big fishing companies, which led to the extinction
of a centuries-old ritual, rich in meaning.

(1) A clarification must be made: in Italian, the term *tonnara* (or *tonnare* in
the plural form) refers to two related but distinct items: the buildings and the
fishing nets and traps. The first are the architectural structures, i.e., the
complex of constructions on land used for processing the *tunìa* and storing
boats and fishing equipment. The second is the trap of nets that was stretched
out in the sea for hundreds of metres, forming a labyrinth that “deceived” the
tuna; this structure is technically called the “body” of the *tonnara*.

The concept of the theatre as a building is now changing: in the past it
was regarded as a sacred place, but this sacredness has apparently diminished
over the centuries. It remains something to be respected as a place of culture,
but its sacred aspect is in decline; in fact, it is often considered by the masses
as nothing more than a place of entertainment. This process may not be
ascribed to thematic content alone, because the public has changed its
interests and attention threshold, but it could probably be attributed to
 economical as well as political reasons.

Over the centuries, the function of theatre buildings has significantly
 contributed to the political and cultural changes of society, due the complex
dynamics that took place within and around them, at least until the late
Romantic Age. Now, it seems that these changes are taking place elsewhere: a
greater number of spaces and facilities have replaced the foyers of the great
European opera houses of the XIX and XX centuries.

One of the keys to understanding this change may perhaps be found in
the revolution brought about by the consumer society. Around the middle of
the last century, the shopping ritual was invented, a celebration of the
possession of objects, made even more widespread by the mass media, and
today grown exponentially with the Internet and the e-commerce giants,
which made the ritual even faster and remote. This trend is causing increasing
environmental issues. In spite of the many green movements around the
world proposing alternative solutions, the phenomenon is on the increase,
greatly strengthened by industrial automation. The circumstances that have
generated this phenomenology in the West, and for some decades in the East
as well, seem to have taken a dogmatic character: acquired comforts and
wealth must not be put at risk, like it was in the post-war years when the
middle and lower middle classes achieved some prosperity.

If Greek or Roman men attended the theatre to satisfy a social need,
participating in a ritual which began with taking care of their aspect, selecting
the clothes to wear, meeting other people to discuss the value of the play or
tragedy, nowadays’ men and women, in a tendentially greater percentage, no
longer feel the same, because their needs can be satisfied from a wider variety
of sources, even from a vocal command on a mobile phone, without having to
move from their homes. This is true not only for the theatre, but also for the
cinema, which faces similar consequences as a result of streaming or pay TV
platforms, or the libraries, because of web encyclopaedias, etc.

Greeks and Latins handed down plays from memory, people in the
Middle Ages copied them down; later, with the invention of the printing
press, theatre scripts began circulating the world in a pocket-size format, and
then moved faster when they were typewritten, and faster still when stored on
USB drives; today they can be archived on the Cloud: all it takes is a device,
and the large part of the world’s theatrical literature is made available to the
user in a fraction of a second.

To guarantee this extraordinary achievement though, we need the supply
of an unprecedented flow of resources, infinite resources in a world that
possesses finite ones, in an accumulation of data that has proceeded unabated
since the age of the industrial revolutions.

In the current “age of consequences”, we are faced with unprecedented
challenges, and all intellectual forces should work together and take action.
The theatre and all the Arts, which have always promoted the development of
man and society at large, prove to be more necessary than ever.

In the pandemic period of 2020, it became evident that technology saved
the integrity of our society, that computer engineering made it possible to
deliver urgent information instantly, that the Internet guaranteed the right to
education, and so much more, in many areas.

However, the proposal to do theatre work online appears questionable.
Unlike cinema, the theatre still lives and breathes through the age-old ritual of
being together; for a performance to be successful, actors and audience must
face each other, must look at each other.

If in the ‘60s and ‘70s, the Western world had the improvement of the
conditions of the middle class as its main objective, in a confrontation between
bourgeoisie and proletariat that was passionate, violent and deeply felt, taking
rather precise directions, today the new objectives seem to be less clear, even
blurred, except for the economic growth, the defence of profits at all costs,
even if the model of economy to which all this should refer to seems quite
elusive. This is a rather relevant question because every form of art, including
the theatre, cannot and could never assert itself without a flourishing
economy.
By taking a syncretic approach that mixes technique and spirituality, both connected to movement and water, a mobile equipment was designed that could be quickly installed in specific locations. Its name is Iter, because it is part of an “itinerary” of continuous research.

The function of this equipment is essentially that of a multi-purpose container, a physical vehicle for the dissemination of cultural information, from drama to academic and scientific conferences.

The operation of this structure has been inspired by various historical examples, starting from Thespis’ wagon, to Renaissance and Baroque stage machines, always adding water as a structural and dramaturgical element.

Iter Teatro may seem ephemeral, being installed in pre-established locations for a fixed period of time, but once in place it becomes a meeting point open 24 hours a day, because, ideally, access to proven cultural, artistic, and scientific contents, should be available to all in an egalitarian society, a resource for everybody and not a service to be commodified, nor a luxury for the rich few.
Figure 4. Iter Teatro - rendering axonometric view

The operation of the apparatus will be illustrated more specifically in a personal project report.

Personal Reasons Related to Design

I grew up in Sicily until the age of twenty. Later, I started to travel frequently in different countries, and the theme of the journey became an integral part of my research. The city where I belong is Palermo, which the Greeks called “the all-harbour city”, and water is another element I have always been interested in, probably because I am an islander.

In the eighties and nineties, I used to spend the summer in my mother’s hometown, Castellammare del Golfo. It is a fishing village in the province of Trapani that has its own architectural icon, a castle, overlooking the sea.

For fifteen years now, I have been based in Milan, a city where waterways have always been important.

These regular movements, from the city to the countryside, and from the south to the north of Italy, have always been a source of inspiration. I think
that living in Palermo is like watching an endless theatrical performance, while being part of it at the same time: works of art are everywhere, and everything in the city, even the mere sale of fish in the local market, becomes a performance, visually framed in a melting pot of iconographic stratifications.

So, the theatre, the journey, and water are the connecting elements that have characterized this and my previous projects, in contrast to my academic years, when, I must admit, I had some difficulties in approaching the space of the Italian theatre. For example, the plaster lines of the stage, of the wings and of the backdrop, challenged my ability to remain within the useful space, that rectangle of stage where emptiness can be created by using the black colour. I felt similarly uneasy in the other parts of the theatre; the foyers and its surroundings, for example, are areas where you do not normally spend much time, while I would have liked to stay there for hours, to debate and discuss, as it used to happen decades ago. Today, in the era of technology, and of virtual rooms, people are no longer used to stay after the show to talk about it. Everybody just goes away, as though the theatre was a go-through area.

This is clearly to be understood as an opinion I wish to express in relation to my personal experience of Italian theatres in recent years.

My dream is a theatre that lives 24 hours a day, that is always accessible, and multifunctional, where at five in the morning a new event begins, taking advantage of the cosy atmosphere of the night. Iter Teatro is far removed from the nineteenth century austerity: it is dynamic, moving from town to town, using the port areas as dramatic environments of encounter, because the theatre can live between land and water, like an amphibious creature.

Design Rationale

Besides the artistic studies, the scenography and the costumes for the show, I have always been interested in the spaces that host the performances: the theatrical architectures, especially the movable ones, like those used in the “ephemeral theatre”.

I have always been fascinated by the works of art that are centred on environmental contrasts, such as James Turrell’s Skyspaces, Edoardo Tresoldi’s sculptures, or the many, exciting projects of utopian architecture, like the Arcosanti city by Paolo Soleri, or the Earthships; the unrealized ideals of social experimentation, such as the Venus project by Joseph Fresco, or the studies of Lebbeus Woods, Carlo Scarpa, the Walking city by Archigram, the urban works of Banksy. These ideas or ideologies actively challenge the consumerist logic, which in the last century radically transformed the purpose of every human action, including artworks.

In the essay “Vers une Architecture” Le Corbusier says that the house, in the early twentieth century, is no longer the mere self-representation of its owners, but it must adjust to the new functional parameters requested by a
time that has just taken a giant step forward, separating itself from centuries
of mannerism. The house then becomes a “machine”, and it is compared to a
steamship that refuses to comply with traditions and only complies with the
forces of nature, heading towards a world organized according to the new
spirit. Just like the house must respond to new needs, so theatre spaces
should, particularly in the age of “the theatre outside the theatre”. The stage
must be at the service of the designated space, and its aesthetics should not be
simply mechanical, as it was the case with the mobile side vans of propaganda
shows in the twenties, or the theatres on British trucks in the sixties.

Since 2004 I have designed several structures, some of them have had
different versions, but the elements that characterized them all have often
been the same.

I was greatly inspired by the studies of the Tetiteatro of Alberto Martini,
by the brilliant reasoning of Gropius and Piscator around the Total Theatre. I
also find particularly poetic Aldo Rossi’s Theatre of the World, the spectacular
performance of the "Ulysses and the White Whale" at Renzo Piano’s Bigo in
Genoa, which was staged during the celebrations for the 500th anniversary of
Columbus’ discovery of the Americas.

I believe that my projects, as to their aesthetic and construction values, are
marked by the close relationship that I have always observed and studied
between techniques of marine construction and theatrical techniques. In the
navy there are the sails and in the theatre the backdrops; on ships yards and
shrouds, and on stage battens and pin rails, the hold and the substage, not to
mention lines and strops, and knots, of course.

I found another important confirmation to my assumptions about ten
years ago, when I had the chance to do a show at Drottningholm’s Slottsteater,
the court theatre at Drottningholm Castle in Stockholm, where the theatrical
machinery is still working after three hundred years. For that occasion, I used
every kind of machine available, from traps to elevators, from wave machines
(burloni in Italian) to all the special effects of the baroque theatre. It was in
Stockholm that I was finally convinced that stage manoeuvres have
undoubtedly many similarities with the work of seamen, from the spaces to
the dynamics that develop in both contexts.

I wanted to focus my research on a nomadic device that could satisfy, like
the legendary Thespis’s wagon, one of the basic postulates of human nature:
the need to keep telling stories.
Figure 5. Iter Teatro - Overview

Concept

In the beginning, going to the theatre was somehow a way for the audience to relate to the universe.

In ancient Greece, where everything began, temples used to be built nearby theatres. Messages from the gods reached the audience through the *skene*, and were repeated by the coryphaeus and the rhapsodes, while the replies and prayers of the people crossed the stage in the opposite direction, towards infinity.

Going forward in time, after the religious theatre, the court theatre and the revolutionary innovations introduced by Monteverdi, Goldoni, Wagner, and Pirandello, in short when the curtain, the “fourth wall” was invented, the questions that the members of the audience asked themselves began to be directed to a defined and frontal space.

All the avantgarde movements, or the great experimentations of the XXI century, including the Odin Theatre, the Living Theatre, Peter Brook, the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, the Fura del Baus, Pina Baush, and Enrique Vargas, just to mention a few, have focused on a new definition of “space”, and their research has not ended, and it is still going through great changes.

On the other hand, I believe that the most interesting performances I have seen in the last decade were not played in theatres.

This moving theatre has to be a communication link, like it was for the ancient Greeks with their gods, so that an authentic connection with nature can be re-established by reaching rural places, collecting data and bringing...
them back to our towns. This dialogue should start from the basic element of our lives, water, by overturning the fourth wall and forming a pool.

As mentioned earlier, the Flavian amphitheatre was key to my research, because it allowed me to analyse different stagecraft concepts, and particularly the multifarious relation between the work of the first stage machinists and that of seamen.

My machine can be seen as a vehicle for a conceptual journey that will start from a mythical place: the island of Sicily, in the middle of the Mediterranean, where the sea allowed the development of different civilizations over the centuries.

Technical Specifications

The structure is mainly built with parts made of wood, fabric, and ropes, as it has been for centuries for the construction of boats. Wood, a solid and durable material, is the base on which contemporary components are attached, like wheels of solid rubber to absorb the loads. For buoyancy, I have chosen to use approved modular floats, which can be illuminated internally to obtain an evocative lighting effect when the structure is set on land, and especially when it is on water.

The fabrics for the roofs are of a synthetic yarn that can filter air currents and shield UV rays. Rigging and strops are of different types, depending on their function: from hemp and nylon, to steel rods.

Bollards, cleats, pulleys and other metal parts are made of steel, aluminium, and copper. The ballasts are PVC, water-loaded.

Stage Specification

As it probably happened in Roman amphitheatres, where the famous naumachias were staged with prepared boats, or sea legends were told, an equally ancient ritual was performed in the tonnare of the Mediterranean. The body of the fishing trap, and above all the death chamber, formed a sort of aquatic stage where, season after season, a ceremony full of different functions and meanings was repeated.
The architecture of the Sicilian *tonnare* has had a decisive influence on the dramaturgical use of water. The unique social dynamics that developed in this environment, which survived until the ‘80s, tell us the story of behavioural patterns that are still of great interest: from the way in which people worked, with enormous efforts and an almost religious devotion, to the hierarchies that were created inside the workplace; from the tales of the *tonnaroti* in the *vicaria*, the common space where workers lived for more than a month, to the famous *cialome*, not just songs but an alternative code of communication that was used only near the sea. Syllogisms of this kind can be applied to the Vietnamese theatre, that originated from the efforts of the peasants immersed in the rice fields, or to black music that was born in the plantations of the southern states of America.
Figure 7. Plan of an Italian theatre

Source: spazioscenico.altervista.org

Figure 8. Tonnara of Favignana, the quatratu enclosure

Source: Adapted from “La pesca del tonno in Sicilia” V. Consolo, ed. Sellerio

Theatre on Water

The whole installation can become a docking place, where the boats may function as the boxes of Italian-style theatres, thus creating an immersive relationship between the spectators and the environment around them, whether an artificial lake or a harbour.
Figure 7. Iter Teatro – Illustration of a performance on water

Figure 8. Iter Teatro – The waterlogged stage

In this reduced view of the stage, right in the middle, there is a space obtained by raising the central modules of the planking. In this way, it is possible to insert a PVC net tank, reinforced with aluminium frames.

Travel Theatre

In times of widespread nihilism, which stifles the enthusiasm of the new generations in particular, for whom dedicated spaces are almost absent, this
project would like to provide a temporary facility for cultural socialisation, with the goal of intercepting needs “on site”, highlighting and confronting the tangible urgencies that threaten to get out of hand.

Iter Teatro, this ephemeral outpost, can reach town squares or any other meeting point and turn them, for a few hours, into a space where the experience is first of all physical, like it used to be, and where we can pause the devices that force us to fast relations, fast and ill-formed answers, and even faster and instinctive reactions. We should stop, and maybe think about what Kant identified as the basic categories - space and time - and question the goals of us all who live inside them; or we may simply allow our body and soul to breathe some fresh air, while listening to a piece of music or the reading of a sonnet, without leaving our urban setting or having to enter a cinema or a museum; or we may experience “a suspension of time”, like it happens when we sit in the park to clear our mind.

Traveling Machine System

Iter Teatro can be seen as the evolution of the many installations that have left a “moving” mark through history, like the baroque machines, Santa Rosalia’s wagon in Palermo, or the Sicilian carts, real travelling stories; like the hawkers who loaded goods on their vans in the most peculiar way, and created their own lingo by shouting out the goods for sale, or like the travelling funfair companies who move from one territory to another.

Figure 9. Iter Teatro – Model of the machinery assembled like an itinerant machine

![Image of Iter Teatro model](image_url)
The theatre arrives disassembled in a suitable peripheral area of a town, far from the public. A few stagehands quickly reassemble the components of the moving machine, which can easily travel through the city streets given its reduced overall dimensions. The route, the Iter, is already a performance in itself, as the machine morphology becomes an advertisement in its own right. After the parade, the appointed location is reached, and it is here that the metamorphosis into a polyvalent scenic space takes place.

*Figure 10. Iter Teatro - Model, overall view*

### Covered Installation

When the structure is set outdoor and left unused for some time, it may be useful to protect it from sunlight, particularly the stage, or make it inaccessible at night. For this reason, the entire structure can be closed, by folding the petal-shaped structures that are connected to the grid. The curtain and the masking flat, by means of strops and pulleys connected to the mast, are used for different purposes: they act as dramaturgical elements by opening and closing the proscenium and, together with the side shades, they protect the whole stage floor from the sun, separating the planking from the outside.

Laterally and below the stage, along the entire perimeter, there are bollards and cleats that work as locking rails to support pictorial scenes and other scenic elements, and move all the machinery of the grid.
Environmental Dialogues

Shopping centres are environments that provide a clear reflection of the cultural changes that are happening around us. These modern non-places have taken on the function of places of worship. After all, if consumerism is celebrated so loudly by the advertisements that mark obsessively our daily lives, it is a predictable consequence to spend a lot of time in places where there is a huge quantity of goods on sale. We are clearly ignoring the cultural impact that this has on society.

In the ‘70s, Pier Paolo Pasolini harshly warned us against the paradigmatic revolution that had taken place in the space of about ten years. Now that we are facing the dire consequences of this revolution, there does not seem to be any cultural strategy to address the phenomenon: proposals are being criticized, audacious ideas are rejected as utopistic, and international summits have proved ineffective.

Nonetheless, nature’s messages speak clearly. Iter Teatro intends to promote a debate of thinkers and experts that can help us reconnect with green spaces, especially far from urban centres, so that we can find answers, and share proposals, ideas, and solutions, a momentary experience to think about an alternative way of living and acting, to ask ourselves useful questions, consider the differences between development and progress, and also reconsider our motives to attend a theatre, in search of a personal renovation.

Figure 11. Iter Teatro – Illustration of an event
Global warming is the most urgent challenge that mankind has to face. Since we live in the “age of consequences”, the whole world of entertainment has a moral duty to contribute to the fight against climate change, in terms of both artistic and technical contents, by taking advantage of the new energy technologies to become self-sufficient.

An episode of the excellent Italian television drama of the ’70s, “The Age of Cosimo de’ Medici” by Roberto Rossellini, metaphorically describes a radical change of values:

"[...] at this rate, we will all go mad” says a philosophical old man about the ways of the world. In an era dominated by markets and profits, it is urgent to return to communicate with nature and listen to its clear messages, which science is translating into a call for action that cannot be postponed, as in the case of the dramatic consequences of plastic pollution in our oceans.

Thematic Content

The months between 2020 and 2021 have certainly put a strain on the emotional state of entire generations, from childhood to old age. More worrying than the pandemic, however, is the general condition of human intelligence. One relevant example of how this is evolving is suggested by our relationship with today’s web infrastructures. The more powerful the medium, the more the end user should be aware of the actions/reactions involved in its use. What is the current orientation of intelligence? Throughout history, theatres have been crucial places for such questions and investigations, thanks to the works of extraordinary intellectuals and masters of the art of storytelling. If what Victor Hugo said is true, “Who opens the door of a school closes a prison”, then the same could probably be said of the theatre, because a single, simple idea can make a difference and remain with the spectator after the show, and maybe contribute to his/her personal renewal, so that he/she can direct his/her gaze to higher social aspects, reappropriate of public spaces through culture and not violence, take to the streets and use Internet platforms as means of organisation, not as means for reprogramming unified thoughts. The theatre can probably help to investigate the importance of human actions in this often-confusing time.

It took only two months of pandemic to send the world’s stock markets plummeting, but nature immediately started to breath more freely, offering spectacular animal appearances, clear skies and rivers, and recording a positive drop in pollutants across the planet.

This is a lesson which, if read correctly, offers rich insights into the shift of paradigm that needs to be completed as soon as possible.

Ultimately, this theatre would like to spread a message of resistance, in territories that are immune to the burdensome logic of belonging, and ideally
there is no place more neutral than water. Water has no colour, it does not say
where it comes from or where it will go, unlike soil or rocks, and the currents
can take it in any direction. Water is international and knows no border.

It is important to use every means at our disposal to put human
intelligence, through art and science, back at the forefront, contributing to the
necessary cultural change, fighting against what threatens a real progress, first
and foremost climate change, which is the greatest challenge man has faced
since it took its first steps on this planet.

In this respect, the idea of the sacred needs to be renewed. In ancient
times, the stage and the sea were places of devotion, where people offered
prayers and pleas and asked for something back. Similarly, we should become
contributors to our planet and not just parasites.

Nature must once again be perceived as a sacred entity in our everyday
life, because our entire existence and our future depend on it. And if theatre is
basically a group of people who come together to listen to a story, a rite that
has been performed for thousands of years, our travelling machine wants to
spread a message that can improve the age-old relationship with what is our
only home, so that we can realign ourselves with that delicate but
extraordinary system that is planet earth, incredibly interconnected by a
universal language that speaks to everything and everybody, from the leaves
of the trees, to animals and stars, a language which, for thousands of years,
has been telling life.

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