

**LOOKING FOR IBSEN IN *MANGFOLDSÅRET*:  
Investigating processes and barriers to multiculturalism in the Norwegian  
theatre**

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## PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Combining the social issue of integration with my studies in Ibsen was by no means a straightforward task. My sociological perspective to a field traditionally dominated by literary scholarship was met with uncertainty many times, not least from myself. Yet the challenging research process of this interdisciplinary study also turned out to be the most engaging and rewarding experience of my academic career. I came into contact with amazing individuals and organizations in the Norwegian theatre who, through unrelenting work, undying passion for the arts, and belief in the possibility for change regarding the theatre scene's lack of cultural diversity, *are* in fact creating change. I felt inspired to see that art truly can have a social and political impact.

I finish this thesis on *Mangfoldsåret* or The Norwegian Year of Cultural Diversity, however, at a time when the same government that declared this official year to celebrate Norway's multiculturalism tightens up exponentially on its immigration and asylum policies. I write at a time when vicious and ultimately constructed debates about so-called *snikislamisering* in Norway and whether or not police officers should be allowed to wear hijab on the job run abound in the Norwegian media. Immigration and integration has for years been a contentious issue in Norway, but I have watched with dismay and disappointment in my time here as the debate sinks to new levels of irrationality and disrespect—frighteningly, not only from the extreme right, and further worrisome, as Norway prepares for national elections this autumn. The work of exceptional organizations such as Nordic Black Theatre, and the voices of strong, passionate individuals such as Lavleen Kaur and Naziha Searle-Lien, thus become ever-more important in this aggressive political climate.

I thank immensely everyone in the theatre, from the independent to institutional scenes, who willingly made time to talk with me, with special thanks to theatre schools TITAN and Nordic Black Express who so warmly embraced both me and my research. I would also like to say that whether or not I ultimately agreed with every individual I spoke to does not matter: just, thank you. This thesis is about structures, about *the system*—it is not about individuals. As Anne-Britt Gran (2006) writes about the problem of “institutional racism,”<sup>1</sup> it is not the individual who is exclusionary, but rather, rules and norms of the field that lead to exclusionary consequences. Understanding this complex system of rules and norms in the Norwegian theatre is the first step to breaking it down.

I am greatly indebted to my advisor, Jon Nygaard, for his support, ideas, challenges, feedback (often ridiculously quick), and ultimately belief in my slightly unconventional thesis topic. Jon is one of the most intelligent, critical, and political people I have ever met—more than I could ever dare aspire to be—and I have nothing but the utmost respect for him. Tusen tusen takk.

Thank you to Osloforskning and the Canadian Institute of Scandinavian Studies for their generous research grants, and the Canadian-Scandinavian Foundation for their travel stipend. The Centre for Ibsen Studies also provided much-appreciated funding which allowed me to attend the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival, as well as the main *Mangfoldsåret* conference.

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<sup>1</sup> ”institusjonell rasisme”

On a more personal note, I thank my family and friends for their love and wholehearted support in this strange-seeming endeavour of moving to Norway to study Ibsen. A sharp three-blasted horn goes out to the lovely ladies of the lesesal, whose company, support, prepositional madness and other instances of ridiculousness made this process—dare I say it?—even fun at times. Kollektivet U20 and all of its members have been such an integral part of my life in Oslo, and have truly made me feel at home in this foreign land—thank you. And last but not least, I thank Mr. Jeffrey Allan Lugowe and Miss Malin Lenita Vik for continually propping me up—if not being my collective backbone altogether—during this (at least for Jeff and I) Norwegian, and quite possibly even Swedish, phase of our lives.

Peace and love  
*Lixian Cheng*  
*Oslo, May 2009*

# INTRODUCTION

## **Mangfoldsåret**

The Norwegian government declared 2008 to be Mangfoldsåret or “The Year of Cultural Diversity,” with the aim of the year to “transform the understanding of the dynamics of cultural life in Norway on a long-term basis” (Mangfoldsåret secretariat 2007). The year required all cultural institutions receiving government funding to plan initiatives and events focusing on cultural diversity, in an effort to better incorporate Norway’s growing cultural diversity into the arts, and “[to create] a greater understanding of and respect for cultural diversity in institutions, the media, politics, and society in general” (Norway 2008a).

Mangfoldsåret, while not the first of the Norwegian government’s multicultural arts initiatives, marks an important step forward in Norwegian cultural policy. The white paper on Mangfoldsåret (Norway 2006, 4) admits that there has lacked a systematic approach to integrating multiculturalism into ordinary cultural policy, as previous initiatives have been more project-based and thus less sustainable. Mangfoldsåret is therefore significant in that it was the first time the government initiated such a coordinated effort—in terms of that its stipulation spanned the entire arts sector, possessing direct bearing on all of the different cultural institutions receiving governmental funding—to integrate cultural diversity into the arts on both a short-term scale (the Mangfoldsåret year itself) and a long-term basis. With Mangfoldsåret 2008 as a precedent, the long-term goal is that cultural diversity become a natural part of the Norwegian arts scene and its institutions’ ordinary activities (Norway 2006, 7).

## **Personal motivation**

Coming from Canada, a country founded on immigration and where cultural difference is the norm rather than the exception—one could call every year a “Year of Cultural Diversity”—the concept of Mangfoldsåret immediately intrigued me when I arrived in Oslo the autumn of 2007. I had been looking for a way to integrate my passion for minority and multicultural issues with my love of Ibsen and the theatre, and Mangfoldsåret, with its political stipulation on the arts, fit the bill perfectly. I decided to study the year in the context of whether it could make an impact on Norwegian theatre and Ibsen performance.

I understood, however, the challenges of my decision, arising from the sheer fact that *I wasn’t Norwegian*: at the time I barely spoke the language, and had a lot of catching up to do in terms of the sociological issues. At times I felt that I should write about something from the

perspective of “my own culture” instead, as the Centre for Ibsen Studies encouraged us new students to do when we began the program. Was my topic then a contradiction?

The more I thought about it, however, the more I realized that this topic *did* stem from my own culture. After living in two Asian, three European, and one North American country, I realize that my culture is one of migration and multiculturalism. I feel that I can also call my culture “Canadian,” for it is in Canada—not the place of my birth—that I do not find a tension between being Chinese-Canadian, born in Singapore, and possessing a partiality towards Scandinavia to boot.

My history is not exceptional. Migration is a local and global, historical and current phenomenon. In Oslo, hyphenated identities such as mine are shared by a quarter of the city’s population. It is this culture of *multiculturalism* that I want to investigate; it is this culture that I know. So maybe my thesis topic is not such a contradiction after all. I may not be Norwegian, but such are the exact boundaries we are trying to break, to expose as the constructions they are.

### **Topic**

I investigate Mangfoldsåret 2008 through the lens of the institutional theatres in Oslo, with specific focus on Ibsen performance. Both of these fields possessed enormous potential to make meaningful political statement in Mangfoldsåret, and demonstrate that the government and Norwegian arts scene were truly committed to raising the level of cultural diversity in the arts: theatre is the government’s most heavily subsidized arts sector, with institutional theatres enjoying the majority of these subsidies, and Ibsen is one of Norway’s largest national and cultural icons.

### **Basic questions**

I began with a broad, overarching question: How would these national institutions—both the large institutional theatres and the cultural institution of Ibsen—respond to the government’s Mangfoldsåret demands, especially in Oslo, the Norwegian capital and city with the highest proportion of multicultural inhabitants?

The following sub-questions thus came to form:

- Would the government’s cultural diversity stipulation on artistic institutions be able to infiltrate Ibsen’s iconic figure?
- If so, *how* would theatres in Oslo interpret and incorporate cultural diversity into Ibsen performance in 2008?

And if, however, *nothing* multicultural were to happen with Norwegian Ibsen performance in Oslo in 2008:

- What were the reasons behind this situation should it be the case?

## **Design**

I begin with the chapter “Background,” discussing the reasons behind both Mangfoldsåret and my focus on theatre—especially the large institutional theatres in Oslo—and Ibsen performance in the cultural diversity year. What are the current social conditions in Norway that warrant such a year, why should the theatre be responsible to fulfil governmental political aims, and why is it important to examine Ibsen?

The following chapter, “Ibsen performance in Oslo, 2008,” goes through my empirical research observing Ibsen performance in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret, with concentration on the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial Ibsen Stage Festival held from August 24 to September 14, 2008, at Nationaltheatret (The National Theatre). The festival, arranged by one of Norway’s national theatre institutions—also its most heavily funded—provides telling indication into what is, or is not, happening with Ibsen in the context of multicultural theatre work in Norway. This chapter also investigates Norwegian precedents in multicultural Ibsen performance from previous years in Oslo, connecting such performances with intercultural performance theory or “cultural encountering,” as theatre director Kamaluddin Nilu (2007), whose theory I use, terms it. Researching these previous performances and the artistic methods behind them was essential to see whether I was actually justified in my expectations for multicultural Ibsen performance in Mangfoldsåret.

When expectations fail to come into fruition, what can be done but examine the reasons why. The next chapter, “Structural barriers: Acting education in Norway,” analyzes the structures behind the Norwegian theatre system, with emphasis on its acting education sector, that forward to this lack of multiculturalism not only in Norwegian Ibsen performance, but Norwegian institutional performance in general.

Finally, the last chapter comprises my conclusions of Mangfoldsåret 2008, as well as my assessments and hopes regarding the future of cultural diversity work in the Norwegian arts and theatre scene—and through this channel, also Norwegian Ibsen performance.

## **Sources and methodology**

The current and specific nature of my topic meant that the body of scholarly literature was small: much has been written about integration in Norway from a broader sociological and

political perspective, rather than an express focus on the arts. However, a few key researchers such as Anne-Britt Gran (2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2006) remain critical voices in the field, pinpointing barriers to cultural diversity in a Norwegian arts context. Odd Are Berkaak (2002), Eva Fock (2006), and Bergljot Baklien and Unni Krogh (2002), through their Norsk Kulturråd (Norwegian Arts Council) reports on various government-sponsored multicultural arts initiatives, also identify important problems and barriers to the diversity process in Norwegian cultural life.

The growing body of literature in the Theatre Studies field of intercultural performance, developed immensely with the help of key scholars such as Erika Fischer-Lichte (1990) and Patrice Pavis (1996), and in Norway, Gran in her doctoral thesis *Hvite løgner/sorte myter – det etniske på modernitetens scene (White lies/black myths – the ethnic minority on modernity's stage)* (2000), has been a useful resource when investigating artistic perspectives and methods of incorporating cultural diversity into the theatre. Nilu (2007) also emerges as an important figure in the Norwegian context, demonstrating how intercultural performance theory or cultural encountering can be practically applied to specifically Norwegian theatre performance.

Regarding the overall Norwegian theatre system, Jon Nygaard (1989, 1998, 2001) has written extensively on the complex funding schemes and politics behind the heavily government-funded Norwegian theatre scene, and Per Mangset (2004a, 2004b) provides useful research on the theatre education sector.

In general, however, I rely mostly on primary sources in my print materials. These include:

- Articles in Norwegian newspapers (such as *Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Dagsavisen*, *Klassekampen*, *VG*, and *Utrop*) and other media (such as *NRK* [Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation], *NTB* [Norwegian News Agency], and *Scenekunst.no*, a web portal for news concerning Norwegian theatre and orchestra activities)
- Official white papers (1997a, 1997b, 2006, 2008b) and other government publications (2008a)
- Reports and documents from organizations such as Statistics Norway (Mathisen 2007), Norsk Kulturråd (Baklien and Krogh 2002, Berkaak 2002, Fock 2006, Gran 2002), and Norsk teater- og orkesterforening (NTO, or the Norwegian Theatre and Orchestra Association) (2007, Okkelmo 2007)

This thesis is also heavily based on my own empirical research. I interviewed over 20 individuals/groups in the theatre field (both institutional and independent), from actors and

acting students to artistic directors and other theatre and theatre education personnel. The complete list of persons interviewed can be found under “Personal communication” in my list of references. The time-consuming process of conducting interviews—from formulating questions, arranging meetings, note-taking and transcribing, to follow-up and citation checks—became the most rewarding and eye-opening part of the research process.

I also kept an overview on all of the Ibsen performances running in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret 2008, attending as many as possible, and researching the ones I was unable to attend through media write-ups and reviews, as well as the theatres’ or theatre groups’ own websites and press releases.

My definition of Ibsen performance is broad, including not only performances adhering to Ibsen’s text, but also adaptations in dance and other stage mediums, as well as new works based on or inspired by Ibsen’s life and/or works. This conception allowed for a wider range of work to be analyzed. However, I did limit my field to stage productions, rather than including film. In addition, even though I did attend several student productions, I focused on professional Ibsen productions, as I felt it neither fair, nor in Mangfoldsåret’s scope, to subject amateur school productions to the government’s Mangfoldsåret demands.

I concentrate in this thesis on efforts of the institutional theatres in Oslo; however, I did also attend Ibsen productions by independent groups and Norwegian and international guest companies, in order to gain a more well-rounded picture of Ibsen activity in the Norwegian capital. In total, I attended 13 of the 20 Ibsen performances in Oslo in 2008; this includes all of the Norwegian Ibsen performances premiering in 2008 (institutional *and* independent), all of the Norwegian Ibsen performances<sup>2</sup> at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival (both Nationaltheatret’s and the Norwegian guest productions), as well as two international guest performances at the Ibsen Stage Festival. The exact performances, along with the dates attended, are marked in Appendix A.

I also delved into Nationaltheatret’s 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival, as it presented a living case study of my thesis topic and its intersections: a period of increased Ibsen activity in Oslo hosted by Norway’s largest institutional theatre, during a year of heightened multicultural

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<sup>2</sup> While the specification of “Ibsen performances” here may seem redundant considering it was the Ibsen Stage Festival, I underscore this because Nationaltheatret also put on a production of Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* at their Torshov stage, which was also included in the festival program. As this thesis focuses on Ibsen performance, I do not include this production in my research. To my knowledge, neither did it possess a multicultural profile.

The festival also hosted, as it traditionally does, the finals of *Ibsenstafetten* (*The Ibsen Relay*), an annual competition among Norwegian secondary school theatre groups that set up their own Ibsen performances. Although I did attend the show, I do not include it in my analysis due to my expressed limitation to professional productions.

consciousness in Norway. What kind of productions would Nationaltheatret set up, and what kind of performances would they invite from other Norwegian theatres (all also institutional—but not based in Oslo—except for an independent project by Inger Astri Kobbervik Stephens)? I attended the festival’s Norwegian Ibsen productions in hopes of finding some sort of adherence to the government’s cultural diversity demands. I also interviewed Nationaltheatret’s festival director and head of fundraising, Ba Clemetsen, to learn more about the organization, planning, and goals behind the Ibsen Stage Festival, as well as to find out whether the theatre had put any thought into connecting 2008’s festival with Mangfoldsåret.

I further began performance research before the cultural diversity year, cataloguing Ibsen performances in Oslo from recent years to see whether I could find any precedents of multicultural penetrations into Ibsen performance. The *Ibsen.net* repertoire database and staff were a huge resource in finding these historical performances. I took 2006 as my starting point, knowing that the celebrated Ibsen Year had led to a plethora of Ibsen arrangements in Oslo, and thus a diverse range of interpretations of the playwright’s works. Using the same criteria outlined for the Ibsen performances of 2008—the broad conception of Ibsen performance, the focus on professional stage productions—I compiled Appendix A, or “Ibsen performances in Oslo, 2006-2008.” I also obtained and viewed as many video recordings as possible of the previous multicultural Ibsen performances I found (the performances watched via recording are indicated in Appendix A), and researched unattainable productions through performance records on *Ibsen.net*, press releases, media write-ups, and theatre reviews.

In addition to Ibsen performances, I attended countless other theatre performances in Oslo during both Mangfoldsåret 2008 and my overall time as a Masters student, in order to achieve a broader understanding of theatre performance in the Norwegian capital. My self-immersion into the Norwegian theatre—not just for research purposes but also genuine interest—led also to other interesting avenues of engagement, such as being part of the ensemble of *Padox – All the World’s Misery*, a play and street theatre project highlighting the often tragic human experience of migration, and participating in the youth theatre project *Den mangfaldige scenen (The diverse stage)*, a project directed towards creating a new, more inclusive theatre space in the multicultural Oslo. I also volunteered at the multicultural theatre festival TWIST during Mangfoldsåret, and organized a Mangfoldsåret theatre event for Oslo Kristelige Studentforbund (Oslo Student Christian Movement) featuring a smith’s play *innvandreren (immigrant)*, followed by a debate on immigration and integration led by Mari Linløkken of the Anti-Racism Centre in Oslo. Through these activities I thus also became

involved in the Mangfoldsåret milieu, and in addition participated in conferences and seminars related to the cultural diversity year. A full list of these activities, along with the other theatre performances I attended during my research period, is outlined in Appendix B, “Participation in other theatre/Mangfoldsåret activities.”

My position as a foreigner in Norway presented some obstacles during the research process, especially in the initial stages when my Norwegian language abilities were very limited. Living in a country where generally everyone has an impressively high level of English was definitely an advantage, especially in the interviews which were all held in English. It was necessary, however, to learn Norwegian, as the majority of my written sources were primary materials in the language. In this thesis, all translations (English in the body text, the original Norwegian in footnotes) are mine, unless otherwise indicated. Learning Norwegian was also integral to keeping up-to-date with the discussions and debates surrounding Mangfoldsåret, issues in the Norwegian theatre and the socio-political climate regarding immigration and integration in Norway, as well as allowing me to more fully participate in the Norwegian theatre scene.

This thesis is consequently written from a kind of double perspective, stemming from my situation as simultaneously “insider” and “outsider”: living in Oslo and learning Norwegian allowed me better access to the system and sources, while my position as a foreigner meant that I had a different relationship to the system—I was investigating the Norwegian theatre for the first time, unsteeped in its longstanding rules and traditions. It is my hope that this double perspective lends itself to a more overall view of the system and its problems.

## BACKGROUND

I assess Mangfoldsåret 2008 through the efforts of the institutional theatres in Oslo, with particular concentration on Ibsen performance. Such focus is a tool in assessing whether Mangfoldsåret evolved into more than just political rhetoric, for if the government and the Norwegian arts sector were truly committed to promoting cultural diversity in the arts, this commitment should have been evident in *Oslo*, the Norwegian capital and city with the highest proportion of persons with immigrant background, in *theatre*, the government's most heavily subsidized arts sector—and where *institutional theatres* enjoy the majority of these subsidies—and in *Ibsen*, Norway's most famous and internationally-promoted cultural icon.

### *Oslo*

#### **i. The “new Norway”**

“The transition from a relatively homogenous society to a diverse and multicultural Norway is quite possibly the largest societal change of our time,”<sup>3</sup> claims Trond Giske (2006), the Norwegian Minister of Culture and Church Affairs and major instigator behind Mangfoldsåret. He argues that this “new Norway”<sup>4</sup> should not only be represented in the arts, but also, that the arts can and should play an integral role in dealing with this societal change.

The transition Giske speaks of began in the late 1960s, which saw the beginning of substantial non-Scandinavian and non-Western immigration into Norway. Today, Statistics Norway (Mathisen 2007) shows that the immigrant population totals 8.3% of the country's total inhabitants. When the criteria is expanded to include all persons of immigrant background—what Statistics Norway (Mathisen 2007, 15) defines as “first-generation immigrants with no Norwegian background, persons born in Norway with two foreign-born parents, persons born abroad with one Norwegian-born parent, persons born in Norway with one foreign-born parent, [and] persons born abroad with Norwegian-born parents”—the population of persons with immigrant background totals 13.5% of the Norwegian population. One third of the immigrant population lives in Oslo, and every fourth citizen in Oslo possesses an immigrant background.

The linguistic terms in this field are multiple and can be confusing due to incongruent usage in the public arena. In this instance, for example, I speak of persons of “immigrant background,” using the term in order to cohere with the language and statistics of Statistics

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<sup>3</sup> “Overgangen fra et forholdsvis homogent samfunn til et mangfoldig og flerkulturelt Norge er sannsynligvis den største samfunnsendringen i vår tid.”

<sup>4</sup> “det nye Norge”

Norway. Other terms heard to denote this group range from persons of *minoritets-* or *flerkulturell bakgrunn* (minority or multicultural background), to the more stigmatizing terms *fremmed bakgrunn* (foreign background), or even *ikke-vestlig bakgrunn* (non-Western background; in the migrant hierarchy of Norway, of course Western—read: white—immigrants are most accepted). Other times, people of immigrant background are simply called *innvandrere* (immigrants), regardless of whether or not they are in fact first-generation immigrants.

In this thesis, I use the terms “minority” and “multicultural” unless I need greater specificity, as in the above case, or if I quote someone who uses different terminology. Although I understand that theoretically the terms can also apply to other groups such as the indigenous Sami or Norway’s designated national minorities, I choose to use these expressions as I feel they are the least stigmatizing.

When referring to the majority—or white, to again put it bluntly—population of Norway, I use the term “ethnic Norwegian.” This term, although common in the Norwegian media, remains neither unproblematic: does “Norwegian” refer to a nationality, or an ethnicity? Is a person Norwegian because she is born in Norway, or because she coheres to the stereotype of the tall, blond, Viking-esque Scandinavian? What about a person of minority background who is born in Norway, or someone who is born abroad but comes to attain Norwegian citizenship? Such are the problems arising when the term “Norwegian” is used at once in both the national and ethnic senses. Consequently, I often leave this term in quotation marks when using it in this thesis.

## **ii. Location, location, location**

Oslo is the Norwegian city possessing both the highest proportion of residents of immigrant background, and the highest number of theatres. The city’s plethora of theatres, from independent to government-funded (also called “institutional”), allows for a broad overview of how different theatres are responding to *Mangfoldsåret*, as well as Ibsen, in their work.

In saying this, however, I do focus in this thesis mainly on the work of the institutional theatres in Oslo during *Mangfoldsåret* 2008. (The reasons for this decision are discussed in the following section.) Oslo is thus a fitting location to observe institutional theatre efforts in both *Mangfoldsåret* work and Ibsen performance, as the city is home to the majority of the fully State-funded theatre institutions (the only exceptions being *Den Nationale Scene* [The National Stage] in Bergen and the *Beaivváš Sámi Theatre* based in Kautokeino), as well as the municipally-funded *Oslo Nye Teater* (New Oslo Theatre).

Finally, Oslo is the location of the biennial Ibsen Stage Festival hosted by Nationaltheatret. The festival ran again in 2008, increasing the number of particularly institutional Ibsen productions in the Norwegian capital during Mangfoldsåret.

## *Theatre*

### **i. The Norwegian theatre system**

The Norwegian theatre system is one of the most highly subsidized in the world. Since 1972, theatre institutions in Norway have been financed by the State and/or by regional and municipal authorities (Nygaard 1998, 475). These theatres have thus garnered the name “institutional theatres” (in Norwegian, *institusjonelle teatre* or *institusjonsteatre*), the general term referring to theatres receiving public funding regardless of which level of government (or combination of levels of government) funding comes from. Even independent theatres in Norway are becoming increasingly reliant on public funding (Nygaard 1998, 475), although this funding is mostly channeled through the Norwegian Cultural Fund<sup>5</sup> administered by Norsk Kulturråd (Norwegian Arts Council)<sup>6</sup>, or arrangements outside of the established State, regional, or municipal funding schemes.

Public funding to independent theatres, however, cannot compare to the amount of funding institutional theatres receive, especially the State touring theatre, Riksteatret, and the four national institutions, Den Norske Opera (The Norwegian Opera)<sup>7</sup>, Det Norske Teatret (The Norwegian Theatre), Nationaltheatret and Den Nationale Scene. In 2008, these five performing arts institutions, funded on the State level, together received over 779 million NOK—over half of the total State budget for the performing arts, which in 2008 totalled 1.3 billion NOK (Norway 2008b, 82-83). Funding to institutional theatres is also given on a permanent, ongoing basis—these theatres have an established place in the annual State budget, meaning that funding is guaranteed—whereas funding to independent groups,

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<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian Cultural Fund is an annual endowment from the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs to fund creative literary and artistic activities, preserve cultural heritage, and increase accessibility to the arts (Norsk Kulturråd 2009b).

<sup>6</sup> Norsk Kulturråd is in charge of administering the Norwegian Cultural Fund. Although the Cultural Fund is funded by the State, Norsk Kulturråd “retains a largely independent position. The ministry is responsible for laying down general cultural policy guidelines and administering the operating funds granted to national and regional cultural institutions, while the Council takes decisions regarding allocation of support to artistic and cultural projects throughout the country” (Norsk Kulturråd 2009b). Norsk Kulturråd (2009b) also concentrates its funding onto “initiatives which otherwise tend to be missed out by regular local or central support schemes.” In specific regard to the performing arts sector, Norsk Kulturråd’s “programmes for the performing arts are primarily intended to support independent theatres and dance companies, to boost innovative contemporary dramatic art outside the institutional theatres and to stimulate contemporary dance activities” (Norsk Kulturråd 2009a).

<sup>7</sup> However, as I focus in this thesis on theatre, I do not review Den Norske Opera’s activities in Mangfoldsåret. Neither did they present any Ibsen in 2008.

although sometimes developing into permanent funding, is more often, and almost always initially, given out on a project or short-term basis.

Consequently, while I keep an overview on the general theatre scene in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret as well as all Ibsen performances in the capital in 2008, in this thesis I concentrate on efforts from *institutional* theatres. As stated on the Mangfoldsåret website, “Cultural institutions with established funding in the State budget have a special responsibility to fulfil Mangfoldsåret’s vision to reflect the cultural diversity found in Norway, and expectations from the department are high”<sup>8</sup> (Mangfoldsåret secretariat 2008).

Along with this sense of responsibility deriving from the privileged funding set-up of the institutions, comes another sense of responsibility from the institutions’ position in Norwegian cultural life and heritage. Jon Nygaard (2001, 20) contends that the large State-funded theatres—“inefficient, large and costly,” as he describes—would never be able to survive without the government’s continual and fully-fledged support, but are maintained for their national symbolic significance. These institutions, as bearers of Norwegian culture and tradition—a culture and tradition that is rapidly evolving with increased immigration to the country—therefore possess the ability to make significant impact and political statement in Mangfoldsåret should they take the government’s demands seriously. As Giske (2006) declares, “It is...not enough to build up initiatives directed specially to conveying multicultural expression. It is just as important that the established national cultural institutions become truly multicultural.”<sup>9</sup>

## **ii. Cultural diversity in the theatre: A focus on actors**

Debates and discussions surrounding cultural diversity in the theatre have raged for years in Norway, as minority artists, forms of expression, audiences, and staff remain underrepresented in the Norwegian theatre scene, especially the institutional theatre scene. While I am a proponent of raising the level of multiculturalism within all of these sectors, in this thesis I focus primarily on the situation of minority actors. In the theatre, I see actors as forming the level most visible to members of the audience—members of *society*—and if the government truly believes that theatre can have a social impact in an integration context,

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<sup>8</sup> ”Kulturinstitusjoner som finansieres over statsbudsjettet har et særlig ansvar for å oppfylle Mangfoldsårets visjon om å gjenspeile det kulturelle mangfoldet som finnes i Norge, og forventningene fra departementet er høye.”

<sup>9</sup> ”Det er imidlertid ikke nok at vi bygger opp tiltak spesielt innrettet på å formidle flerkulturelle uttrykk. Like avgjørende er det at de etablerte nasjonale kulturinstitusjonene blir reelt flerkulturelle.”

increased representation of ethnic minorities on stage, and especially the institutional stage, is integral.

The situation surrounding minority actors, however, is especially difficult as colour-blind casting is still not normal practice in Norway. Actors of minority background often face ethnic stereotyping, as Anne-Britt Gran (2006) observes: “In Norway Pakistani actors largely play themselves: Pakistani immigrants.”<sup>10</sup> Skin colour, however, is not the only reason as to why actors of minority background continue to struggle in the Norwegian theatre. As I discuss later in this thesis, there remain many other factors behind particularly the institutional theatre system in Norway that hinder minority actors, such as ingrained ideas about “proper” accents, artistic styles, and educational backgrounds, as well as traditional patterns of recruitment. Gran (2006) terms these pervasive yet largely unwritten rules “institutional racism,”<sup>11</sup> noting that “even though the individuals in cultural life are not racist and exclusionary, rules, norms, and actions in the field lead to racist consequences.”<sup>12</sup>

### **iii. Cultural diversity and the institutional/independent divide**

Cliff Moustache (Berg 2007a), artistic director of Nordic Black Theatre, remarks,

Many small groups have long included cultural diversity. The important thing is that the cultural institutions get clearer thoughts on how they will manage to do the same. How will we get dark-skinned actors into parts other than supporting roles as “the African” or “the Pakistani” at Nationaltheatret or Den Nationale Scene?<sup>13</sup>

The discrepancy between cultural diversity efforts from the independent versus institutional theatre scene is often highlighted in debates regarding multiculturalism in the Norwegian theatre. Moustache’s Nordic Black Theatre in particular is a shining example of a small, independent theatre setting cultural diversity on the agenda. Nordic Black Theatre, founded in 1992 in Oslo by Moustache and Jarl Solberg, has been a pioneer in the Norwegian theatre scene by giving place to multicultural actors, other theatre practitioners, and theatrical work. The theatre has also established an acting school, Nordic Black Express—I discuss the school in greater detail in my chapter on acting education in Norway—that is dedicated to training aspiring actors of minority background.

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<sup>10</sup> “I Norge spiller pakistanske skuespillere stort sett seg selv: Pakistanske innvandrere.”

<sup>11</sup> “institusjonell rasisme”

<sup>12</sup> “Selv om individene i kunstlivet ikke er rasistiske og ekskluderende, fører regler, normer og handlinger i feltet til rasistiske konsekvenser.”

<sup>13</sup> “Mange smågrupper har allerede lenge inkludert mangfold. Det viktige er at kulturinstitusjonene må få klarere tanker om hvordan de skal greie å gjøre det samme. Hvordan skal vi få mørkhudete skuespillere inn i annet enn biroller som «afrikaneren» eller «pakistaneren» på Nationaltheatret eller Den Nationale Scene?”

Meanwhile, as Nygaard (Eidem 2007b) notes, the institutional theatres have a tradition of belonging to the white upper-class. This is not to say, however, that the situation is as simple as assuming an openness to cultural diversity on the part of the independent groups—not everyone is as multiculturally-oriented as Nordic Black Theatre—and conversely, associating all institutional theatres with an unwillingness to change. The independent, avant-garde Black Box Teater (Black Box Theatre)<sup>14</sup>, for example, readily admits that up until now they have presented contemporary art based exclusively in a modern Western artistic discourse (NTO 2007, 3). Alternatively, both the State-funded Riksteatret and municipally-funded Oslo Nye Teater have in recent years cultivated multicultural profiles. Incorporating cultural diversity into the theatre thus requires efforts from all ends of the Norwegian theatre spectrum, yet in general, the situation remains that it is moreso the institutional theatre that lags behind, from failing to hire actors of minority background, to keeping to a more Western repertoire and theatrical style.

The incongruity in cultural diversity efforts can be attributed in part to the larger divide between the independent and institutional theatres, or the often generalized and polarized artistic divide between experimentation and tradition. While the institutions feel more pressured by the weight of tradition, independent groups have the reputation of being more open and experimental, leading to greater artistic diversity—and artistic or aesthetic diversity, as the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (Norway 2008b, 164) maintains, can often lead the way to greater ethnic diversity.

While I agree with the Ministry's belief in artistic diversity as a door-opener to ethnic diversity (I give concrete examples of multicultural theatre productions using such diverse artistic methods in the next chapter), this should not be the only way that actors of minority background make it onto the stage. Multicultural actors should of course also be able to play Ibsen and other such “traditional” parts at the institutional theatres. Mangfoldsåret will never achieve anything if it is still the more experimental, independent companies that are framing cultural diversity, or if minority actors only appear in special events marked as “culturally-diverse” on institutional theatre programs. For it is still the institutional theatres standing influential in the Norwegian theatre; it is these theatres that need to make a meaningful demonstration in Mangfoldsåret. They receive better funding, more extensive media attention,

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<sup>14</sup> Black Box Teater in Oslo is an independent theatre focusing on contemporary stage art. The theatre does not have its own artistic staff, but rather presents independent guest artists and companies of various styles and genres in their program (Black Box Teater 2008).

and possess the reputation of being “serious” or “high-quality” theatres—another unfortunate repercussion of the institutional/independent theatre dichotomy.

There is also a general lack of cooperation between the institutional and independent theatre fields, attributed not only to their artistic differences but also to prejudices held by both sides. The independent theatres may be looked on negatively as of questionable or inconsistent artistic quality, but the institutional theatres are also often perceived as too rigid or traditional. Addressing this divide between the institutional and independent fields would be fruitful in terms of cultural diversity work, considering that the independent field does largely have more experience with a broader range of theatrical forms, as well as better contact with theatre practitioners of multicultural background.

#### **iv. Cultural diversity and the government: Previous initiatives**

In terms of governmental forays into the multicultural, Mangfoldsåret’s objective to reflect Norway’s cultural diversity in the arts is not a new concept. The government and associated bodies have long registered the need to better integrate multiculturalism into the artistic sphere, launching programs, to varying successes, in attempt to facilitate this transformation. In 1991 Norsk Kulturråd took the initiative to look into “immigrant culture”<sup>15</sup> and concluded there was need for a reviewing of subsidies to avoid discrimination, meeting places for artists both of multicultural and “ethnic Norwegian” background, and prioritization of the multicultural arena for a set period (Fock 2006, 13). In 1997, the government white paper *Kunstarane (The Artists)* (Norway 1997a), in accordance with another white paper *Om innvandring og det flerkulturelle Norge (On immigration and the multicultural Norway)* (Norway 1997b), included discussion on how to better integrate persons of minority background into Norwegian cultural life. *Kunstarane* (Norway 1997a, 3.5) promised to begin initiatives to promote equality for professional artists of minority background in Norwegian cultural life, encourage further cross-cultural collaboration in the development of contemporary art, and work towards a greater acceptance and understanding of non-Western artistic forms. It then announced the creation of a developmental program focusing on art and the multicultural society, to be headed by Norsk Kulturråd (Norway 1997a, 8.8). The plan resulted in the Mosaikk program, running from 1998-2001, with the aims to:

- promote and integrate both multi- and, to an even larger extent, cross-cultural expression, especially in the established art and cultural politics arrangements, and in the art institutions’ everyday work

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<sup>15</sup> “indvandrerkultur”

- strengthen minorities' opportunities for cultural expression on their own terms, and contribute to minority art and culture engaging in a fruitful interplay with the rest of the cultural sector<sup>16</sup> (Baklien and Krogh 2002, 53)

Khalid Salimi, then Vice Chair of Norsk Kulturråd and responsible for the Mosaikk program, further emphasized that even with these goals, Mosaikk should not be framed as an immigrant or integrationist initiative (Baklien and Krogh 2002, 53). Yet Bergljot Baklien and Unni Krogh in their evaluation of Mosaikk (2002) show that the program, although a success in many respects—it funded about 100 projects in its three-year period, stimulated awareness about the situation of minorities in the Norwegian arts scene, and initiated the beginnings of change in certain arts institutions—was hindered particularly by a lack of concrete clarity in the project's goals. Participants thus interpreted and operationalized the goals differently, sometimes to the detriment of major objectives such as the wish to avoid turning the program into an integration project. Baklien and Krogh (2002, 142) found this the case when comparing project approaches and outcomes on the local, regional, and central levels; in particularly the local projects they evaluated, they discovered that the aim of professionalization of minority artists often took a backseat to a focus on integration of minority groups.

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture in 1997 also earmarked funding to another project called Open Scene, which ran from 1998 to 2000. Open Scene held similar aims to Mosaikk, but worked specifically to open up the institutional theatre scene to multicultural actors through a series of auditions, workshops, and performances. Open Scene was led by Det Norske Teatret in partnership with Norsk Kulturråd; the project, however, was not officially connected to Mosaikk.

Open Scene was flawed in many ways, as Odd Are Berkaak's evaluation (2002) illustrates. Like the findings of the Mosaikk review, Berkaak discovered differently-interpreted goals and ideological inconsistencies to be major obstacles to Open Scene's success. This problem can be viewed through the organizational structure of the project, which Berkaak strongly criticizes. Instead of creating a neutral space for participants to collaborate, the project remained firmly situated in the established power structures of Det Norske Teatret. With the theatre maintaining what Berkaak (2002, 68) calls its "institutional hegemony,"<sup>17</sup> reciprocal and productive dialogue between participants became difficult, and

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<sup>16</sup> "- fremme og integrere både fler- og, i enda større grad, tverrkulturelle uttrykk. Dette særlig i de etablerte kunst- og kulturpolitiske ordningene, og i kunstinstitusjonenes daglige virke  
- styrke minoritetens muligheter for kulturell utfoldelse på egne premisser, samt (å) bidra til at minoritetskunst og -kultur går i et fruktbart samspill med kulturlivet for øvrig"

<sup>17</sup> "institusjonelt hegemoni"

in turn divided the multicultural participants from their “ethnic Norwegian” counterparts (Berkaak 2002, 67). Caught in this hierarchical structure, several multicultural actors voiced that they felt more taken care of than equally participative (Berkaak 2002, 46), and at times even racially typecast (Berkaak 2002, 42-44). In other situations, “Norwegian” theatre codes and values were imposed on the actors, several of whom had been trained abroad and/or in other theatrical traditions (Berkaak 2002, 67). Instead of employing the actors’ culturally-diverse backgrounds to create new theatre expressions, such cultural diversity became either absorbed into cultural clichés or treated as inferior.

In the end, Det Norske Teatret’s power structures remained unchanged by Open Scene. The theatre retained most of the artistic leadership of the project, and none of the multicultural actors became permanently connected to the theatre, as many of the participants had believed to be a goal of the project. Moustache (Østby 2002) of Nordic Black Theatre, who also participated in Open Scene, attests that Berkaak’s criticisms of the project and Det Norske Teatret are symptomatic of all Norwegian institutional theatres. Berkaak (2002, 72), wary of whether the institutional route is the best way to integrate cultural diversity into the Norwegian theatre scene, remarks, “As one of the central participants in the project expressed it, it seems that these institutions hold a certain resistance towards such integration”<sup>18</sup> (Berkaak 2002, 72). Can Mangfoldsåret break down this institutional resistance?

## ***Ibsen***

### **i. The man or the myth?**

There is something sacred about the conception of Ibsen in Norway, visible in the ubiquitous, almost subconscious way his name is raised in debates regarding the lack of cultural diversity in the Norwegian arts sector. Gran (2001b) remarks, “So-called blind casting is not normally practiced in Norway...Ibsen’s Solveig continues to be white and blonde.” Camara Joof (Tangvald-Pedersen 2008) is more forward: “A brown Solveig in *Peer Gynt*. Hello!! Have you ever seen that on Norwegian stages?”<sup>19</sup> Even culture minister Giske (2006) attests, “We have not reached the goal until a Pakistani actor can play Peer Gynt or Nora without anyone thinking that it’s anything special.”<sup>20</sup> My recurrent stumbling over such statements in the initial stages of my research helped shape my topic—why not, I thought, take up the challenge and see whether cultural diversity could penetrate Ibsen production in Mangfoldsåret 2008?

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<sup>18</sup> “Som en av de sentralt plasserte deltakerne i prosjektet uttrykte det, tyder det på at disse institusjonene har en viss resistens mot slik integrasjon.”

<sup>19</sup> “En brun Solveig i Peer Gynt. Hallo!! Har du noen gang sett det på norske scener?”

<sup>20</sup> “Vi er ikke i mål før en pakistansk skuespiller kan spille Peer Gynt eller Nora uten at noen tenker over at det er noe spesielt.”

For Ibsen is more than just a Norwegian playwright; he has been constructed to become *the* Norwegian playwright, even if he did spend more time abroad than in Norway, and held a generally distasteful view of the country and its people. As Knut Olav Åmås (2006), debate editor of *Aftenposten*, comments, during the 2006 Ibsen Year (the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ibsen's death), "the poet himself became more 'Norwegian' than he had ever been."<sup>21</sup> The physical remnants in Oslo of this massive celebration remain constant reminders of the playwright's national symbolic value, from the Ibsen quotes etched into the city centre's sidewalks, to the beginning of the road Drammensveien renamed to "Henrik Ibsens gate" ("Henrik Ibsen's Street").

Åmås (2006) views this Norwegian stereotyping of Ibsen in a larger context of what he sees to be a general rethinking and anxiety about what it means "to be Norwegian." As the concept of "Norwegianness" undergoes critical reflection in a period of increasing social diversity, there rise both movements towards recognizing this cultural diversity, such as Mangfoldsåret, and attempts to solidify a more stereotypical, narrow notion of Norwegian identity. As Åmås (2006) writes,

Some have wanted to make the whole Ibsen Year with 8000 arrangements in 81 countries into an advertisement for Norway. Those who recently demanded a Norwegian profile to the Peace Prize concert at Oslo Spektrum [live entertainment venue] thought the same. They wanted to use Nobel's Peace Prize as a profiling of—Norway!<sup>22</sup>

The Norwegian government has also capitalized on and contributed to Ibsen's cultural capital in this manner: in their cultural program, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken pains to export the playwright internationally, from initiatives such as *Nora's Sisters*, an international seminar series using Ibsen as a starting point for discussions on equality and women's rights issues in different countries and cultural contexts, to the now somewhat infamous *Peer Gynt* performance in Giza for the finale of the Ibsen Year. As such, I have some trouble believing Norway's foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre when he (2006) claims that the government is "not trying to 'use' Ibsen to 'sell' Norwegian goods and services" (translated by *Regjeringen.no*), instead agreeing with Nygaard (2007) when he asserts, "The 'brand' Ibsen and *Peer Gynt* is used by our central government in a soft diplomacy or soft neo-colonialism to promote the culture and values of Norway." How else could the "largest cultural *cooperation* ever between Egypt and Norway," as claimed by chairman of the

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<sup>21</sup> "dikteren selv er blitt så «norsk» som han vel aldri før har vært"

<sup>22</sup> "Noen har villet gjøre hele Ibsen-året med 8000 arrangementer i 81 land til norgesreklame. De som krevde en norsk profil på fredspriskonserten fra Oslo Spektrum nylig, tenkte likedan. De ville utnytte Nobels fredspris til profilering av - Norge!"

Norwegian National Ibsen Committee<sup>23</sup> Lars Roar Langslet (Selaiha 2006; emphasis added), become a *Peer Gynt* held in Egypt, but performed in Norwegian, by Norwegian actors and under Norwegian direction, for an audience of mainly Norwegians? As Nygaard (2007) further contends, the more global Ibsen becomes, the more local his branding turns.

## ii. International Ibsen

Despite attempts to reinforce the connection between Ibsen and Norway, the fact remains that Ibsen, like Shakespeare, has become culturally-versatile. Ibsen performance has been localized into numerous cultural contexts and theatrical styles—there have been everything from Iranian to Noh Noras; *Hedda Gabler* has been set in Chinese Yue opera style. Such performances indicate not only the timelessness and universality of Ibsen’s themes, but also the necessity of adapting his plays to local contexts and expressions. “The plays have to suit the socio-political conditions and the cultural conceptions of the audience in order to be understood,” attests Kamaluddin Nilu (2006), “...an adaptation has the potential of being more efficient—to be more relevant—than a translation.”

Examining Ibsen performance from this global perspective demonstrates how resistant Norway has been in adapting Ibsen to the country’s present social condition of growing multiculturalism. Foreign minister Støre (2006) speaks of Ibsen “[evoking] associations with Norway and Norwegian art” (translated by *Regjeringen.no*), yet somehow I do not get the feeling he is referring to a culture that includes Norway’s indigenous Sami, its national minorities, or its growing immigrant population. This is exactly why paying attention to Ibsen performance during Mangfoldsåret 2008 is so important. If cultural institutions have been commanded to become multicultural, so must the cultural institution of Ibsen. There have been precedents, as I discuss in the next chapter; however, such multicultural castings of Ibsen, especially on the institutional stage, are generally the anomaly, and when set up never fail to attract attention to their multicultural character. Again, there remains a long road to the colour-blind stage in Norway—a condition that may even be linked to Ibsen.

## iii. The “Ibsen tradition”

If Ibsen represents—or is constructed to represent—Norway, he also represents a particular and pervasive theatrical tradition *in* Norway. This “Ibsen tradition” broadly implies a realistic

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<sup>23</sup> The Norwegian National Ibsen Committee was the body appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture in 1997 to plan and coordinate work aimed at the promotion of Ibsen during the period leading up to the 2006 Ibsen Year (Ibsen.net 2001).

tradition—Ibsen is after all hailed as the father of modern realistic drama—that is often regarded negatively as a barrier to innovation, and even inclusion, in the Norwegian theatre. “The fact that we don’t see Pakistani actors in Norwegian Ibsen productions,” writes Gran (2006),

owes not least to the fact that realism on stage is the norm. Both Peer Gynt and Nora were white and Norwegian in Ibsen’s plays. A black Peer Gynt is quite simply not realistic in the artistic conception.<sup>24</sup>

Keld Hyldig (2006) provides comprehensive overview of Ibsen performance history in Norway, demonstrating the dominance of psychological realism which remained largely unchallenged until the 1970s. More unconventional and expressionist interpretations have since confronted the country’s Ibsen performance tradition, although this development has been slower in Norway than in other countries, a phenomenon that can also be attributed to the Norwegian conception of Ibsen. Even Eirik Stubø, former artistic director of Nationaltheatret, the self-proclaimed “Ibsen’s own theatre”<sup>25</sup> (Nationaltheatret 2009a), “[declared] himself uncomfortable with the ‘Ibsen-tradition’—the Norwegian master, he suggested, had become much too much of a national symbol” (Bjørneboe 2006). Stubø (2008) relates that he never considered directing Ibsen until he saw how Ibsen was produced internationally: abroad, Stubø realized, the plays were treated like any other play, instead of suffering under the weight of cultural heritage.

Much of Stubø’s international experience with Ibsen comes from working with Nationaltheatret’s Ibsen Stage Festival, inaugurated in 1990 to showcase both international and Norwegian Ibsen performance. Hyldig (2006, 11) notes that the festival has contributed to a further loosening of the Norwegian Ibsen tradition, by demonstrating through Ibsen productions from both Western and non-Western countries that a variety of theatrical styles can be applied to the dramas. However, there is still a ways to go yet: it is one thing to invite international guest artists to perform at the Ibsen Stage Festival, but another to actually integrate this multiculturalism into Norwegian Ibsen performance. The concept of multiculturalism in the Norwegian theatre must be expanded to include not only internationalism, but also the wealth of multiculturalism already present *within* Norwegian society.

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<sup>24</sup> “Når vi ikke ser pakistanske skuespillere i norske Ibsen-oppsetninger, skyldes det ikke minst scenerealismen som form og norm. Både Peer Gynt og Nora var hvite og norske i Ibsens skuespill. En svart Peer Gynt er rett og slett ikke realistisk i kunstnerisk forstand.”

<sup>25</sup> “Ibsens eget teater”

## IBSEN PERFORMANCE IN OSLO, 2008

### Multicultural precedents

During my research into past Ibsen performances in Oslo (see Appendix A), it was no surprise to find that the vast majority of multicultural Ibsen work came from abroad, primarily in the form of international guest performances at the Ibsen Stage Festival. While such international cultural exchanges are valuable, I am more interested in multicultural efforts within *Norwegian* Ibsen performance, due to my concern regarding the continuing underrepresentation of minority actors on the institutional stage, especially in Ibsen production. The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs too stresses this point that although the theatres' international work and engagement of foreign guest performances is positive, such efforts do not substitute for work within Norway's cultural diversity sector: "The Ministry wants to emphasize that diversity work first and foremost have a focus on the near at hand, meaning it should reflect the cultural diversity that is found in present-day Norway" (Norway 2008b, 164).<sup>26</sup>

My research, however, did also show several Norwegian productions, particularly during the 2006 Ibsen Year, incorporating multiculturalism into their work.<sup>27</sup> The classical Indian dance school and professional dance company Damini House of Culture, for example, set up an Indian and modern dance-drama version of *A Doll's House* in 2006. The Oslo-based POS Theatre Company remounted their 2004 production *TanGhost*, a *Ghosts* combined with tango dance and music, for an international tour that also had a stop in Oslo in 2006. Akershus Teater, the theatre serving the Akershus area just outside of Oslo, produced as their Ibsen Year marking *Nora...!* "*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*" (*Nora...!* "*I am first and foremost a human being*"), a monologue written by Naziha Searle-Lien and Stefan Thomas Lien that frames my thesis topic exactly: the one-woman show deals with an actress of minority background finally breaking through the institutional theatre system to play Nora in a major production of *A Doll's House*. The performance was put on again in Oslo in 2007, for one night at the independent Black Box Teater.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> "Departementet vil understreke at mangfoldsarbeidet først og fremst har et fokus på det nære ved at det skal avspeile det kulturelle mangfoldet som finnes i dagens Norge."

<sup>27</sup> The following includes some findings already discussed in my paper, "Norwegian Intercultural Ibsen Performance," (2008a), but also contains further examples and new research.

<sup>28</sup> As a result, I list the performance record in the 2007 section of the appendix, as it was technically in 2007 that the performance was played in a theatre in Oslo. Akershus, however, is the area just outside of Oslo, and the play was toured extensively through schools and cultural centres in the area in 2006 and 2007.

I would have greatly liked to discuss Akershus Teater and Searle-Lien and Lien's *Nora...!* "*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*" in greater detail in this thesis; however, they fell just outside the scope of my focus on

Neither were such multicultural Ibsen productions only set up by independent or private groups, or in the case of Akershus Teater, a small institutional theatre outside of Oslo. Two large institutional theatres in Oslo also made multicultural statements in their Ibsen Year productions. Oslo Nye Teater's *Fruen fra Det indiske hav* (*The Lady from the Indian Ocean*) was a *Lady from the Sea* gone Bollywood, the production running to wide critical acclaim and even receiving the Hedda Award—Norway's most prestigious theatre commendation—for the year's best theatre project.<sup>29</sup> Riksteatret<sup>30</sup> set up a *Hedda Gabler* featuring an interracial marriage between Hedda and Jørgen Tesman<sup>31</sup>, and in addition toured *Peer Gynt nr 371*, a modern dance version of *Peer Gynt* by Øyvind Jørgensen Produksjoner (Øyvind Jørgensen Productions) featuring three dancers of multicultural background, as part of their spring 2006 season.<sup>32</sup>

These findings from the 2006 Ibsen Year strengthened my resolution that something meaningful could in fact be done with Ibsen in Mangfoldsåret. They demonstrated that the national cultural symbol of Ibsen could be expanded to include Norway's multicultural reality, even during the iconic playwright's own celebratory year, and even within the large institutional theatres in Oslo. As Oslo Nye Teater (2006) declared, "We have chosen the Indian Bollywood film narrative form as the external framework for our contribution to the Ibsen Year."<sup>33</sup> Riksteatret's *Hedda Gabler* was also a deliberate multicultural move, in line with the multicultural mandate artistic director Ellen Horn established upon taking the

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institutional theatres in Oslo. Personally I do not in any way privilege the large, established institutional theatres in Oslo over such smaller theatres or projects; however, I do feel that the Oslo institutional theatres and their productions generally have a larger influence over the theatre scene in Norway, and it is therefore important to concentrate on what they are doing in terms of cultural diversity work—or conversely, what they are *not* doing, and call them on it. I do commend Akershus Teater immensely, however, for doing an amazing job in the field of multiculturalism: Akershus Teater is an institutional theatre, although it is a smaller operation and, located outside of Oslo, does not get much attention in the Oslo or national press. *Nora...! "Jeg er først og fremst et menneske"* is just one example of how the theatre has consistently, since its establishment in 2002, worked to include cultural diversity and culturally-diverse actors and theatre practitioners into their work. In fact, blind casting has been artistic director Bjørn Birch's philosophy and practice all along (Birch 27.01.09).

Working towards a fairer and more equal theatre scene is something that Naziha Searle-Lien and Stefan Thomas Lien are also fiercely passionate about; much of their play is in fact based on Searle-Lien's own experiences and struggles as an actress of visible minority background in the Norwegian theatre (Searle-Lien and Lien 11.01.09). *Nora...! "Jeg er først og fremst et menneske"* is a play that dares to speak openly and honestly about the situation of actors of minority background in Norway—a play that both hopes and works for change in the system.

<sup>29</sup> I discuss this production in more detail in my paper, "The Intercultural Ibsen: A comparison of two contemporary Oslo productions of *The Lady from the Sea*" (2007).

<sup>30</sup> Riksteatret, although the national touring theatre, also performs and has its headquarters in Oslo.

<sup>31</sup> I discuss this production in more detail in my paper, "Riksteatret's *Hedda Gabler* (2006): A milestone for Norwegian theatre?" (2008b).

<sup>32</sup> This tour, however, did not include a stop in Oslo and is therefore not included in the appendix. However, *Peer Gynt nr 371* originally premiered in Oslo in 2004 at Black Box Teater. For more information on the production, see the production's performance records on *Ibsen.net* (2009a, 2009b).

<sup>33</sup> "Vi har valgt den indiske Bollywood-filmens fortellerform som ytre ramme for vårt bidrag til Ibsen-året."

position in 2005: “Riksteatret has in its new strategy plan a section that says that the theatre will reflect the cultural diversity in society”<sup>34</sup> (Horn cited in Sletbakk 2006, 28). Horn promised that the theatre would expand its repertoire and choice of actors under the direction of this new mandate; “therefore,” she (Riksteatret 2005) asserted, “I choose such an interpretation of Hedda Gabler when we choose the pieces that will mark the 2006 Ibsen Year.”<sup>35</sup> I was hopeful that such productions and statements would pave the way for further such efforts in 2008, the year dedicated to furthering cultural diversity in the arts.

I became further expectant as the productions named above demonstrate the diverse artistic methods available to incorporate cultural diversity into Norwegian Ibsen performance, forming a sort of practical guide or reference for future work. The productions exemplify several of the categories of cultural encountering techniques that theatre director Nilu describes in his paper, “Cultural diversity within professional theatre: Possibilities and challenges” (2007), a practical response to the government’s Mangfoldsåret demands.<sup>36</sup>

First of all, however, Nilu (2007, 2) states that Norwegian theatres must adopt the broader goals of:

1. [Increasing] the recruitment of non-ethnic Norwegians to the theatres.
2. [Developing] theatre productions with new artistic expressions.

In regards to the first goal, Nilu (2007, 2-3) insists that such recruitment take place in all levels of the theatre, from artistic to administrative and support staff. When it comes to actors, he notes the practice of blind casting, common in North America and the UK, but unfortunately not yet in Norway. Nilu, however, focuses primarily in his paper on his second outlined goal of creating works with new artistic expressions, which he (2007, 2) believes “should be the major [goal] for the theatres since it deals with artistic challenges.” Nilu (2007, 4) in fact sees the connection between the two goals as weak: “Recruitment of non-ethnic Norwegians might be useful—but is not a prerequisite—for creating such new artistic expressions. In fact, new artistic expressions through cultural encountering *may* also be done entirely with ethnic Norwegian artists.”

The new artistic expressions Nilu (2007, 4) speaks of are specifically expressions created through “cultural encountering” or the “blending of content, forms and elements from

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<sup>34</sup> “Riksteatret har i sin nye strategiplan et avsnitt som sier at teatret skal speile det flerkulturelle mangfoldet i samfunnet.”

<sup>35</sup> “Derfor velger jeg en slik tolkning av Hedda Gabler når vi plukker ut stykkene som skal prege Ibsenåret 2006.”

<sup>36</sup> I have used Nilu’s ideas as a theoretical framework during the course of my time at the Ibsen Centre, and as such, have brought them up in previous papers. I continue to use Nilu’s ideas as a theoretical basis here in this thesis.

different cultural traditions,” and breaks down methods of cultural encountering into the following categories<sup>37</sup>:

1. Modern or contemporary Western plays can be reinterpreted and adapted to mirror the present multi-cultural Norway.
2. Translations or adaptations of modern or contemporary non-Western plays can be staged.
3. New plays relevant for the present multi-cultural Norway can be staged.
4. A non-western traditional text or epic can be used with western contemporary techniques and styles along with elements and devices.
5. A western dramatic text (modern or classical) or epic can be blended with a specific traditional theatrical form from a non-Western country.
6. A western dramatic text (modern or classical) or epic can be blended with elements or devices from one or more non-western traditional theatrical forms or other living art forms like music, movement, dance, etc.

When looking at how such methods can be related to Ibsen production, categories 1, 5, and 6 are the most clearly applicable. Category 3 is also relevant to Ibsen production, although in a less obvious, but as important way.

Each of the multicultural Ibsen productions of 2006 exemplifies one of these categories.<sup>38</sup> Riksteatret’s *Hedda Gabler*, with its depiction of interracial marriage, an increasingly common situation in Norway, complies with the first category. Oslo Nye Teater’s *Fruen fra Det indiske hav* fits into the fifth category by blending Ibsen with the Indian Bollywood form. Damini, POS Theatre Company, and Øyvind Jørgensen’s productions exemplify the sixth category by incorporating diverse dance and musical forms with Ibsen texts (I set all three in this category regardless of Nilu’s Western/non-Western divide; I am not as rigid in this classification). Finally, Akershus Teater/Searle-Lien and Lien’s *Nora...!* “*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*” demonstrates the third category, as it is a new play portraying issues relevant to the present multicultural Norway, yet taking root in and inspiration from Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Such radical adaptations of Ibsen may often combat the question, “Can this really be called Ibsen performance?”, but ultimately, all productions of Ibsen present something new and different, even if adhering closely to the original text. Directors choose to highlight certain themes, or cut others out completely. Such adaptations are integral for the Ibsen tradition to continue a living tradition, and for Ibsen’s works to remain relevant to our time and situation.

I have so far only discussed the multicultural artistic elements of the performances; however, it is just as important to note that each of these works also led to an increased level of multicultural actors on stage—each production had a multi-racial cast. In some cases, such

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<sup>37</sup> I have adapted the following list to only include Nilu’s category headings. For the full explanations of these methods, refer to Nilu 2007.

<sup>38</sup> The following includes some connections already made in my paper, “Norwegian Intercultural Ibsen Performance,” (2008a), but also contains further examples and new research.

as *Fruen fra Det indiske hav*, *Nora...!* “*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*”, and Riksteatret’s *Hedda Gabler*, the reasons for such multicultural castings were based in the productions’ specific interpretations or textual references: Oslo Nye claimed that for *Fruen fra Det indiske hav*, “all [of our actors] have multicultural backgrounds because we seek a specific style”<sup>39</sup> (Ulfsby cited in Orref 2006), *Nora...!* “*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*” is about an actress of minority background, and Riksteatret premised their *Hedda Gabler* on an interracial marriage between Hedda and Tesman. In the dance-drama productions, recruitment of minority artists was less based on interpretation, but moreso talent and technique: the productions sought out dancers who would best fit the styles of the performances; some of these artists turned out to be of multicultural background<sup>40</sup>.

Nilu may claim that the correlation between the goals of creating theatre through cultural encountering techniques and increasing recruitment of theatre practitioners and personnel of minority background may be weak, but the above examples of multicultural Ibsen performances demonstrate that the two can correspond and have influence over one another. In this regard my focus diverges from Nilu’s: even if recruitment of minority artists may not technically be necessary to achieve new and culturally-diverse artistic expressions, the utilization of multicultural artists, and especially multicultural actors, is of primary importance to me due to the problem of their continuing underrepresentation.

Of course I would like to see actors of minority background being blindly-casted to just play Hedda rather than a Hedda-of-minority-background. But in Norway, a country where blind casting is not common practice, Nilu’s cultural encountering ideas, when connected more strongly to the goal of recruitment, form a good framework of other ways to incorporate culturally-diverse actors into Ibsen performance. If the theatres “are more interested in making good theatre than in fulfilling political goals,” as Nilu (2007, 1) believes, such theatre productions created through cultural encountering techniques provide a good *artistic* challenge to theatres in response to the government’s *political* Mangfoldsåret goals. Cultural encountering practices have also in general been a hot topic in the theatre world, demonstrated by the growing Theatre Studies field of intercultural performance studies.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> ”alle har flerkulturell bakgrunn fordi vi ønsker et spesifikt uttrykk”

<sup>40</sup> Damini’s *A Doll’s House*, in addition to local practitioners of multicultural background, also included some international guest artists.

<sup>41</sup> Intercultural performance, Patrice Pavis (1996, 8) writes, “creates hybrid forms drawing upon more or less conscious or voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas.” For further reading, look to leading scholars in this discipline of Theatre Studies such as Pavis and Erika Fischer-Lichte.

## **The 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival**

I eagerly attended all of the Norwegian productions at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival, in hopes of finding an Ibsen production that would adhere to Mangfoldsåret's demands. I hoped such a production would include actors of minority background, ideally blindly-casted, but otherwise through using cultural encountering techniques. I felt further justification in these expectations as multicultural Norwegian Ibsen performance *has* had precedent at the Ibsen Stage Festival: two of the productions I named above—Damini's *A Doll's House* and Riksteatret's *Hedda Gabler*—had been presented at 2006's festival. How would Nationaltheatret follow up in their 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival coinciding with Mangfoldsåret 2008?

I also noted that Nationaltheatret even seemed to contribute to the intercultural performance discussion by affiliating other Ibsen arrangements touching on the subject with their festival program. The conference *Artistic freedom – myths and realities*, organized by the municipality of Skien, Ibsen Awards, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Dance and Theatre Centre, was included in the festival program; this conference investigated as one of its major topics the “challenges and opportunities in cross-cultural endeavours within fields of art” (Nationaltheatret 2008a, 21). Nationaltheatret also hosted the awarding of the first-ever International Ibsen Award, a prize of 2.5 million NOK to honour artistic achievement embracing the spirit of Ibsen's work. Stubø, then artistic director of Nationaltheatret, is also vice-chair of the awards committee whose final decision was internationally-renowned British theatre director Peter Brook. The choice of Brook is interesting: selected not for his achievements within Ibsen performance—Brook has only set up Ibsen once in his career—the director was instead chosen for his universalist theatre views and practices. Brook is one of the leading theatre directors in the field of multicultural theatre, in 1970 establishing the International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris, which brings together actors of different backgrounds and cultures. One of Brook's most famous works remains the epic, multicultural production of the *Mahabharata*. “Few theatre directors have reached as far in their strides to break down boundaries, whether national, ethnic, or religious,” maintained the International Ibsen Award committee (Nationaltheatret 2008c), continuing, “Peter Brook is awarded the 2008 International Ibsen Award because he has so convincingly demonstrated that all great drama and theatre has a unique ability to unite people, that culture belongs to everyone, and

that no one group or nationality can claim ownership to a work, whether written or set up on stage.”<sup>42</sup>

If the International Ibsen Award is awarded based not necessarily on an individual or group’s accomplishment in Ibsen production, but rather in following the playwright’s spirit, then the International Ibsen Award committee, including Nationaltheatret’s then artistic director, sends out the message that the spirit of Ibsen and his works is universal and inclusive—which in essence is the same message of Mangfoldsåret: the arts is, or should be, an inclusive space. I was therefore disappointed to discover that none of the Norwegian performances at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival complied with Mangfoldsåret’s demands to reflect Norway’s cultural diversity.

The professional Norwegian Ibsen performances at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival were as follows:

- *Rosmersholm*, Nationaltheatret
- *Brand*, Nationaltheatret
- *En folkefiende (An Enemy of the People)*, Nationaltheatret
- *I skyggen av Nora (In the Shadow of Nora)*, Nord-Trønderlag Teater
- *Hvite hester (White Horses [Rosmersholm])*, Teater Ibsen, Skien
- *Hedda Gabler*, Nationaltheatret<sup>43</sup>
- *Bloody Dramatic Rooms*, by Inger Astri Kobbervik Stephens

At the most visible level, there were no productions to be seen using actors of minority background. On the artistic level, none of the productions incorporated the cultural encountering techniques earlier discussed. And in only one production was there a director of different background: Nationaltheatret’s *Brand*, directed by Catalan director Calixto Bieito. Bieito, however, was an international guest director invited to work with Nationaltheatret’s ensemble; in other words, he did not stem from the local Norwegian multicultural environment.

This of course is not to discount the value of such international collaborations. Nationaltheatret festival director Ba Clemetsen (05.08.08) notes that one of the most fruitful aspects of the festival for the theatre comes in the establishment of international contacts and

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<sup>42</sup> “Få teaterregissører har nådd like langt i sin streben etter å bryte grenser, de være seg nasjonale, etniske eller religiøse. Når han tildeles Den internasjonale Ibsen-prisen er det fordi han så overbevisende har demonstrert at all betydelig dramatik og teater har en unik evne til å forene mennesker, at kulturen tilhører alle, at ingen gruppe og ingen nasjonalitet kan kreve eierskap til et verk, diktet i ord eller gestaltet på scenen.”

<sup>43</sup> This production is a remount; I actually saw it in November 2007 and not at the festival. The cast remained unchanged.

the resultant expansion of their theatre network that forward to such guest director opportunities. At the 2008 festival, Bieito's highly avant-garde treatment of *Brand* was a testament to the fact that international cooperations contribute to the artistic furthering of the Ibsen performance tradition.

The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (Norway 2008b, 164) also notes that international collaboration can be useful in the area of local cultural diversity work, as it has the potential to attract new audiences and develop repertoire in different directions. I have no doubt, for example, that cultural exchange played a role in creating the daring artistic expression—even if not tied to a specific cultural area—of Nationaltheatret's *Brand*, with Bieito as director. However, the Ministry (Norway 2008b, 164) underlines the importance of including *local* multicultural practitioners in such international cooperations, an aspect which remained wanting in the all-white Nationaltheatret ensemble that Bieito directed.

I am not, however, so one-sided as to not have been able to appreciate the productions on the basis of other criteria. I enjoyed Nationaltheatret's *Brand* immensely and was impressed by its bold, maximalist interpretation. It was heartening to also see none of the other Norwegian Ibsen performances conforming to traditional, realistic interpretations of the playwright's works, with each taking artistic risks in one way or another. Nationaltheatret's other productions, for example, ranged from Eirik Stubø's characteristically minimalist productions of *Rosmersholm* and *Hedda Gabler*, to a more physical theatre-influenced *En folkefiende*. In terms of the Norwegian guest performances, Teater Ibsen's *Hvite hester* presented a *Rosmersholm* that emphasized the sexual power relations between the characters, and Nord-Trønderlag Teater's *I skyggen av Nora*, a play based on the life of Laura Kieler (Ibsen's real-life inspiration for Nora in *A Doll's House*), employed a demanding acting style where its single actress was challenged to play all of the storyline's characters. Finally, Inger Astri Kobbevik Stephens presented *Bloody Dramatic Rooms*, a performance lecture based on a project she conducted that investigated how young people today are interpreting specific events in Ibsen's plays.<sup>44</sup>

The question of cultural diversity, however, still remains, as none of these performances in Mangfoldsåret 2008 reflected the government's mandate. *Rosmersholm*, *En folkefiende*, *Hvite hester*, and *Brand* were all produced for premiere in 2008; the first three debuted at the festival, and *Brand* in May 2008 at the Bergen International Festival. *I skyggen av Nora* and *Hedda Gabler* were remount productions, premiering in 2003 and 2006

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<sup>44</sup> A similar summary of these Norwegian contributions to the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival also appears in my paper, "Norwegian Intercultural Ibsen Performance" (2008a).

respectively, but this then points to the question of why there weren't any remounted multicultural productions invited to the festival. At the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival, the multicultural contributions came expectedly, and stereotypically, from the international guest performances.

### **Nationaltheatret's Mangfoldsåret program**

Clemetsen (05.08.08) states that the Nationaltheatret productions weren't culturally diverse because they hadn't asked the directors to keep this aspect in mind. Rather, the festival director points out that it is better to look at Nationaltheatret's Mangfoldsåret efforts through their broader 2008 repertoire rather than their Ibsen Stage Festival program. The theatre, for example, collaborated again with Damini House of Culture to host Damini's dance production and seminar on *The Game of Dice*, an episode of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. Nationaltheatret also hosted Oslo's annual Urdu Poetry Festival, for the first time at the theatre instead of its usual location at the Intercultural Museum in Oslo. They also participated in the project Nye Scenetekster (New Dramatic Texts), a manuscript competition for multicultural dramatists initiated by the Mangfoldsåret secretariat.

In terms of their own productions, Nationaltheatret kept in their 2008 repertoire two plays they premiered in 2007, *Neger og hunder i kamp* (*Black Battles with Dogs*), Bernard-Marie Koltès' play exploring racial tensions, colonialism, and exile, and *En lykkens mann* (*A man of luck*) by Sami writer Rauni Magga Lukkari. They then set up specifically for 2008 the Jewish play *Dybbuk*, as well as *Verdensfortellinger* (*World Stories*), a production that deliberately brought together three actors and a musician of different cultural backgrounds to answer the question, "What do you want out of Mangfoldsåret?"<sup>45</sup> (Nationaltheatret 2008b).

While it is encouraging to see an institutional theatre such as Nationaltheatret putting effort into diversifying their partnerships, repertoire, and actors, these efforts seem unfortunately hindered by a sense of hesitation—these more culturally-diverse productions were, except for *Neger og hunder i kamp*, *En lykkens mann*, and *Dybbuk*, one-time or short-run engagements, and all except *The Game of Dice* played on the theatre's smaller stages. This tentativeness was most apparent with *Verdensfortellinger*: the production that most explicitly marked itself as a Mangfoldsåret event struck me as a half-hearted attempt. The performance, comprised of a series of vignettes touching on the actors' different backgrounds and individual experiences as well as themes such as migration, integration, colonialism, and

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<sup>45</sup> "Hva vil du med mangfoldsåret?"

violence, contained a few poignant moments but was scattered at best. In trying to address so many issues in its short running time of 45 minutes, the piece failed to convey a coherent message on one. *Verdensfortellinger* furthermore only ran for three performances on Nationaltheatret's Malersalen stage (the smallest of the theatre's three stages<sup>46</sup>) and received little publicity. On the night I attended—April 26, 2008, the third and last performance of the show's run—the 60-seat hall was far from full.

Nina Borgersen and Elin Owrenn Rekdal, students at Handelshøyskolen BI (BI Norwegian School of Management), also attended *Verdensfortellinger* for research purposes in connection to their Bachelor thesis on strategies to develop a more culturally-diverse audience base for Nationaltheatret. Borgersen and Rekdal (2008, 7) observed that the audience on the night they attended—opening night—was mainly composed of people who seemed to have been invited to the performance, as many knew both the actors and others working at the theatre. Such an audience make-up could have been in connection with the performance's opening, as Borgersen and Rekdal (2008, 7) note, yet in a performance run of only three shows—and in which the night I attended was half-full—I cannot say this Mangfoldsåret effort was particularly successful in terms of providing exposure for its multicultural actors, reaching a more culturally-diverse audience, and ultimately showing that Nationaltheatret as an institution was willing to open up for cultural diversity.

Nationaltheatret (2008b) also called *Verdensfortellinger* a “theatre stunt”<sup>47</sup>, which begs the question, why couldn't the theatre's Mangfoldsåret activities be larger projects with bigger budgets, longer runs, and more publicity? Why couldn't such Mangfoldsåret projects, for example, cross over into Ibsen production? Should Nationaltheatret have made an effort to cross the national cultural icon of Ibsen with today's multicultural reality at their prestigious Ibsen Stage Festival, they would have sent the most meaningful signal that the institutional theatre was truly on its way to becoming a more inclusive and culturally-diverse space.

### **Other Ibsen performances in Oslo, 2008**

Outside of the Ibsen Stage Festival, the outlook for multicultural Ibsen performance in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret was also bleak. There were a few remounted productions from both

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<sup>46</sup> I speak of the three stages in Nationaltheatret's main building located in the centre of Oslo: Hovedscenen (the grand main stage with 741 seats), Amfiscenen (a more intimate and modern space with roughly 200 seats), and Malersalen (the smallest and most experimental stage of the building, holding around 60 seats). Nationaltheatret also has another venue, Torshovteatret, located in Oslo's East end and with a capacity of 130-200 people. This stage also presents more experimental work. Every two years, a new group of actors applies for artistic leadership of Torshovteatret (Nationaltheatret 2009b).

<sup>47</sup> “teaterstunt”

institutional theatres and independent groups, but none were multiculturally influenced, and neither did they use multicultural actors. Oslo Nye Teater was the only institutional theatre in Oslo besides Nationaltheatret to premiere an Ibsen production in 2008; after their success with their last Ibsen production, the Bollywood *Fruen fra Det indiske hav* in 2006, I looked forward to seeing how they would present and interpret *A Doll's House*. I knew, however, that Oslo Nye had named Sophocles' *Electra* as their biggest Mangfoldsåret project, setting the play in a modern-day Pakistani-Norwegian home—the choice actually quite controversial considering the violent story and the connotations dispelled by setting it in an “immigrant” environment—with the interpretation calling for a cast of actors of multicultural background. Yet I still expected something more than what I found in their *A Doll's House*, an extremely traditional production in all senses except the theatre-in-the-round staging, with a by-the-book interpretation of the text, a realistic set and costumes harkening back to Ibsen's time, and a cast of all white Norwegian actors.

In fact, the only Ibsen performance in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret 2008 seen to include cultural diversity, and culturally-diverse actors, was *Det vidunderlige* (*The Marvellous*). As the title suggests, the play takes inspiration from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. *Det vidunderlige* premiered at MS Innvik, the home of Nordic Black Theatre, in November 2008 under the multicultural theatre festival TWIST, a Mangfoldsåret project organized by Riksteatret, Det Åpne Teater (The Open Theatre), and Nordic Black Theatre.

*Det vidunderlige* is the product of an Oslo Intercultural Museum initiative from 2004, where writers of multicultural and ethnic Norwegian background were paired off to produce new work inspired by Ibsen's plays (Det Åpne Teater, Nordic Black Theatre and Riksteatret 2008, 13). The partnership between Zakhia Karihoum, an author from Morocco living in Norway since 1990, and Norwegian Lena Steimler, resulted in this play dealing with culture clash: *Det vidunderlige* revolves around the main character Aron and his struggle to reconcile the differing values of his Iraqi upbringing and his new life in Norway or “the West.”<sup>48</sup>

*Det vidunderlige*, like Searle-Lien and Lien's *Nora...!* “*Jeg er først og fremst et menneske*”, demonstrates that Ibsen can provide the basis for new work relevant to the multicultural Norway, as well as create space for actors of minority background—the script specifically contained parts for minority actors. However, as I conclude in “Norwegian Intercultural Ibsen Performance” (2008a), while I applaud this effort to update Ibsen through cultural encountering and give place to local artists—not only actors, but also writers—of

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<sup>48</sup> A more detailed analysis of the play—along with further explanation of its connections to *A Doll's House*—can be found in my paper, “Norwegian Intercultural Ibsen Performance” (2008a).

multicultural background, the problem remains that the production falls into the unfortunate pattern of theatre in Norway: “If immigrants go on stage in a classic Ibsen role, it is part of a special project and doesn’t get onto the big national stage, but onto small experimental stages on the outskirts of the city”<sup>49</sup> (Fock 2006, 32). A production like *Det vidunderlige*, a small-budget performance running only five performances at an independent theatre, simply cannot have the same impact as a well-funded and publicized full-season performance at one of Oslo’s large institutional theatres.

### **The theatre and its audience**

So far I have looked primarily at what—or rather, what has *not*—been happening in terms of multiculturalism in Ibsen performance *onstage*. Just as important, however, is what is happening *offstage*, in terms of the audience at such performances. I touched on this subject slightly in my discussion of *Verdensfortellinger*, but I want to further emphasize that working to transform especially the institutional theatres into more inclusive arenas is important not only to give place to artists of minority background but also to an *audience* of multicultural background. Urdu Poetry Festival organizer and poet Jamshed Masroor (Gjerstad 2008, 28) relates that many people of minority background never come to Nationaltheatret, attributing it to too high of a respect for—one could also say intimidation of—the building. After Masroor’s initiative, the Urdu Poetry Festival was held at Nationaltheatret for the first time in 2008 since its inauguration in 1989, an arrangement in part to attract new audiences to the theatre: “The Urdu Poetry Festival is something many know of from before, and something that people go to quite naturally...When one first comes through the doors, it becomes easier to come back”<sup>50</sup> (Masroor cited in Gjerstad 2008, 28).

The same sentiment is expressed by Richa Chandra, administrative director of Damini House of Culture which collaborated with Nationaltheatret to put on their *A Doll’s House* and *Game of Dice* productions. Chandra (05.12.07) explains that performing their *A Doll’s House* at Nationaltheatret was of great importance to Damini. Shikha Chandra, Richa’s mother and founder of Damini, had for years dreamt of setting up Ibsen’s play in the form of Indian dance, and on the grand Nationaltheatret main stage. The ambition fits squarely into Damini’s philosophy; the dance school and professional dance company also calls itself an “integration

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<sup>49</sup> ”Hvis indvandrere går på scenen i en klassisk Ibsen-rolle, er det som led i et særligt projekt, og det bliver ikke på den store nationale scene, men på en lille eksperimental-scene i udkanten af byen.”

<sup>50</sup> ”Urdu poesifestival er noe mange kjenner til fra før, og noe some folk går på helt naturlig...Hvis en først har kommet seg innenfor dørene, blir det enklere å komme tilbake.”

project”<sup>51</sup> (Damini House of Culture 2009) as they make Indian dance accessible to the broader public. Although the word “damini” means “lightning” in Hindi, in their conception Damini also stands for *Dance, Art, Music, Indian, Norwegian, and Institute* (Damini House of Culture 2009), consciously bringing parts of Indian and Norwegian culture together.

In 2006 Shikha’s dream finally reached fruition, with the agreement to run two performances of their *A Doll’s House* on Nationaltheatret’s main stage under the Ibsen Stage Festival. During production, however, Nationaltheatret decided to move Damini to Riksteatret’s Oslo stage, where the other Norwegian guest productions were taking place. Damini refused on principle: performing at Nationaltheatret was to them also a political statement. They wanted, like Masroor with the Urdu Poetry Festival, to open up the institutional theatre for their audience and community who did not usually visit the theatre.

In the end, however, Damini’s *A Doll’s House* did not get to play on the main stage but instead on Nationaltheatret’s small Malersalen stage. Both performances sold out. Damini then organized another performance at a community hall in Stovner, a borough in North-east Oslo, which drew another 150 people. In 2008, Damini finally got their wish to perform on Nationaltheatret’s main stage with their production *The Game of Dice*.

NTO (2007, 6), or the Norwegian Theatre and Orchestra Association, reports that although none of their member institutions have formally surveyed their audiences in regards to cultural and ethnic diversity, certain theatres have observed higher proportions of audience members with minority background at performances either about cultural diversity or using practitioners of minority background. Such was the case with Den Norske Opera’s 2006 production of *Izzat*, an opera about life in the multicultural society and involving students from six middle schools in Oslo (NTO 2007, 6). Oslo Nye Teater also estimated that 10 percent of the audience of *Fruen fra Det indiske hav* came from the Indian and Pakistani community (NTO 2007, 6).

Creating works that appeal to a broader spectrum of the public is thus not only an important social duty for theatres, but also one that makes increasing economic sense. That 1 in 4 inhabitants of Oslo are of minority background should be of high vested interest to theatres in Oslo, when performances with culturally-diverse profiles carry the ability to attract more culturally-diverse audiences.

Based on my observations at the Norwegian performances at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival, the audience on the nights I attended still consisted primarily of white Norwegians.

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<sup>51</sup> “integrasjonsprosjekt”

This is a hardly a surprise given that the productions failed to be culturally-diverse in both artistic interpretation and recruitment, with the exception of guest director Bieito. Yet had the festival chosen to stake on a multicultural Ibsen performance, the culturally-diverse performances of 2006 indicate that there would have been audience interest from both minority and majority milieus. As Erik Ulfsby (2007), director of *Fruen fra Det indiske hav*, asserts, “The goal with Bollywood Ibsen was to present another theatrical style than our own for a Norwegian audience, and to make Ibsen interesting for an audience who seldom or never goes to Norwegian theatres.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Summing up**

The lack of culturally-diverse Ibsen performance in 2008 cannot be attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding methods on how to incorporate cultural diversity into the theatre: Nilu’s paper on incorporating cultural diversity into Norwegian theatre, combined with the concrete examples of multicultural Ibsen performances from 2006, provide comprehensive overview of cultural encountering techniques. Nilu’s paper was further presented at the autumn 2007 Norwegian Theatre Leader Forum (NTLF) seminar on the topic of increasing cultural diversity in the theatre. NTLF organizes two seminars per year; these professional development seminars are open to leaders of theatres in NTO (whose long list of member organizations range the independent and institutional scale, and includes all of Norway’s national performing arts institutions). NTLF in fact dedicated not only this seminar but also the two prior to the theme of cultural diversity (Okkelmo 2007), demonstrating their determination to build up competence in the area. The autumn 2007 seminar even worked specifically to familiarize its members with different world theatre traditions, again supporting the position that aesthetic diversity can lead to greater cultural diversity.

So why is it that with so much discussion around cultural encountering in the Norwegian theatre world, and even at the 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival with the affiliated conference in Skien and the awarding of the International Ibsen Prize to Peter Brook who “thought of and made...multicultural theatre long before Trond Giske came up with the concept”<sup>53</sup> (Rossiné cited in “Om Brook” 2008), was the multicultural factor in the Norwegian Ibsen performances of 2008 practically non-existent? It seems ironic that the multicultural possibilities of Norwegian Ibsen performance were better realized in the 2006

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<sup>52</sup> “Målet med Bollywood Ibsen var i sin tid å presentere en annen spillestil enn vår egen for et norsk publikum, og å gjøre Ibsen interessant for et publikum som sjelden eller aldri oppsøker norske teatre.”

<sup>53</sup> “Der tenkte og gjorde Brook fleirkulturelt teater lenge før Trond Giske kom på omgrepet.”

Ibsen Year than in Mangfoldsåret 2008. Further, with no follow-up to these productions in 2006, does this mean that multicultural Ibsen productions are, like Nationaltheatret's *Verdensfortellinger*, simply one-off “theatre stunts”? By failing to pair the national icon of Ibsen with today's multicultural reality, the theatres have missed a golden opportunity to make a meaningful display in Mangfoldsåret.

There may not have been as many Ibsen performances in 2008 as there were in the 2006 Ibsen Year, but this does not mean that there weren't opportunities to make this important multicultural statement with Ibsen in Mangfoldsåret 2008—it just means that the government's cultural diversity demands were not prioritized in Ibsen performance. Nationaltheatret, for example, not only organizes the Ibsen Stage Festival, but also tends to have at least one Ibsen play on the bill every season, whether a new production or remount. As the theatre (2009a) itself proclaims, they are “Ibsen's own theatre”<sup>54</sup> and have “throughout the years been Ibsen's theatre before anyone else.”<sup>55</sup>

Norway's largest institutional theatre—its *national theatre*—thus had all the opportunity to make a powerful statement about Norway's current national multicultural reality with Ibsen, but as Clemetsen (05.08.08) stated, Nationaltheatret's 2008 Ibsen productions weren't culturally diverse because they hadn't asked the directors to take this element into consideration.

If Nationaltheatret is the institutional theatre in Oslo most consistently setting up Ibsen plays—and this indeed held true in 2008, with the theatre producing three out of the four institutional Ibsen projects—then it is not surprising as to why Ibsen performance in the capital remains played by “ethnic Norwegian” or all-white casts. The theatre's ensemble, including both permanent and short-term actors, has always been, to marginal exception, completely white. Neither is this conduct only symptomatic of Nationaltheatret—all of the large institutional theatres in Oslo can be accused of such behaviour, although some have in recent years made more of an effort in the cultural diversity department. I therefore realized that if I truly wanted to find out why there was there was such a lack of Ibsen productions in 2008 incorporating not only cultural diversity but also culturally-diverse *actors*—especially on the part of the institutional theatres—I had to broaden my scope from just Ibsen production, to look more holistically at the situation of theatre in Norway. For as discussed in the Background chapter, actors of minority background struggle not only with accessing Ibsen performance, but the Norwegian institutional theatre system in general. What are the

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<sup>54</sup> “Ibsens eget teater”

<sup>55</sup> “Nationaltheatret har i alle år vært Ibsens teater framfor noen.”

structures behind this institutional system that make it so difficult for minority actors to penetrate? The following chapter investigates this pressing question, with focus on the acting education system in Norway.

## STRUCTURAL BARRIERS: Acting education in Norway

The more I started researching the reasons behind why we see so few actors of minority background on stage at the institutional theatres in Oslo, the more I realized how large a role education plays in the issue. Increased representation of minority actors is of course dependent on a variety of factors other than just increased professional employment, and in this regard, education is vital: if persons of minority background are to be represented on the Norwegian stage, they must of course also be represented in the theatre schools. More so than a year to highlight cultural diversity, it is education that will deliver the most effective and long-lasting results in the issue of increasing cultural diversity in the Norwegian theatre.

The Mangfoldsåret secretariat also recognized the fundamental role of education in the diversity process with the cultural diversity year's main conference, *Alle kunstens regler – Veier til mangfold i utdanning og kulturliv* (*All the rules of the arts – Paths to diversity in education and cultural life*), held in Oslo on November 6-7, 2008. In addition, the secretariat launched the project *NYORGE*, an information campaign directed towards youth to stimulate interest and awareness surrounding career opportunities, along with the educational paths to get there, in the arts. With advertisements using young people of minority background to represent different arts careers, the campaign highlighted the multicultural nature of the younger generation, and the consequent importance of increasing multicultural representation in the cultural sector of, as the campaign title's play on words, the *ny Norge* (new Norway).<sup>56</sup>

This matter of representation thus fuelled my first question, seemingly simple enough: Are acting students of minority background being represented in Oslo theatre schools? As I started to dig deeper, however, I came to realize that this was only part of the problem in what I discovered to be a highly complex and extremely hierarchical field of actor education in Norway.<sup>57</sup> Multicultural representation becomes contingent on so many different factors when the field is difficult to navigate not only for aspiring actors of minority background, but for aspiring actors in general. In this chapter, I investigate the structural and conceptual divides between Norwegian theatre schools, finally relating how such divisions affect the continuing problem of lacking of minority representation on the institutional stages of Oslo.

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<sup>56</sup> For more information on *NYORGE* and pictures from their campaign, see [www.nyorge.no](http://www.nyorge.no).

<sup>57</sup> As I later note, many aspiring actors also seek education abroad. I focus, however, on the hierarchy of theatre schools *in Norway* as I am especially concerned with the divide between State and private schools, as well as the continuing dominance of KHiO in the field of Norwegian theatre education. Norwegian actors educated abroad, however, often face the same prejudices and difficulties in the Norwegian institutional theatre scene as actors educated at non-approved Norwegian acting schools.

### **Acting education in Norway: A diversifying landscape**

For years acting education in Norway has been dominated by one school: Statens Teaterhøgskole (The State Theatre Academy), established in 1953, in 1996 becoming the performing arts faculty at the *høgskole* or university college Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo (KHiO, or Oslo National Academy of the Arts).<sup>58</sup> The oldest and most prestigious theatre school, for a long time it was the *only* professional theatre school in Norway, contributing to a monopoly effect on the Norwegian theatre scene: graduating acting classes from this State school fed more or less directly into the permanent ensembles of the State institutional theatres.

Norwegian theatre, however, has expanded beyond just the institutional scene, with the rise of independent theatres and theatre groups, along with the sharp growth of the film and television sector. The market for actors has grown, while the acting education line at KHiO remains capped at 8-10 students per year—with anywhere between 400 and over 800 applicants applying to get into the program each year (Mangset 2004b, 16). As a result, many aspiring actors have chosen to seek formal education abroad, often in Denmark or the UK. In recent years, alternatives to the acting education offered at KHiO have thus also arisen in Norway. There are now two other State schools, like KHiO also part of the university college system<sup>59</sup>: Akademi for Scenekunst (Norwegian Theatre Academy, in Fredrikstad and a part of Høgskolen i Østfold [Østfold University College]), and the acting and theatre production program at Høgskolen i Nord-Trøndelag (HiNT, or North-Trøndelag University College). In addition, there are private schools: Nordisk Institutt for Scene og Studio (NISS, or Nordic Institute for Stage and Studio, in Oslo), and Det Internasjonale Teater Akademiet Norge (TITAN, or The International Theatre Academy Norway, also in Oslo). Finally, there is Nordic Black Express (NBX, based out of Nordic Black Theatre in Oslo); I set it in a different category as it is publicly funded, but not through the Ministry of Education and Research. Rather, it receives funding together with Nordic Black Theatre from the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs via Norsk Kulturråd.

While the fierce competition to get into KHiO is a large factor as to why many aspiring actors seek acting education elsewhere, Per Mangset (2004b, 16) writes that the phenomenon can also be attributed to students desiring a different artistic expression than what is taught at KHiO. In Norway, the newer theatre schools possess different profiles to the acting line at KHiO, where the three-year Bachelor program based in Stanislavski,

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<sup>58</sup> Even though Statens Teaterhøgskole became the performing arts faculty at KHiO over ten years ago, it is still common practice in the Norwegian theatre field to refer to the school as Statens Teaterhøgskole or simply, “Teaterhøgskolen.” As such, I use the names quite interchangeably in this thesis.

<sup>59</sup> *Høgskoler* or university colleges are Norwegian higher education institutions entitled to award degrees.

psychological realism, and text-based theatre, has traditionally been oriented towards the institutional stage (Fock 2006, 28).

NISS, for example, while also basing itself out of the realistic tradition, incorporates to a greater degree film and television work into their acting program. The acting program, established in 1998—the school also offers other fine arts programs such as music, visual art, and sound engineering—is a two-year education with the possibility for a third production year, in which students produce a film, play, and independent production created and developed by the group. The first and second years of the education have the respective capacities of 32 and 24 students; the third has a maximum of 12 students. As a private school, students pay fees for their education, with varied support from Lånekassen (the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund). With formal status as a *videregående skole* (upper secondary school), NISS students are only eligible for Lånekassen support during the first two years of the program. However, head of the acting line Bente Lavik (23.10.08) insists that the education is of a much higher level, more comparable to the university college level of KHiO and the other State schools. NISS is currently applying to NOKUT (Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen or The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) for approval of the total three-year acting program to warrant a Bachelor degree in the Norwegian university college system, and consequently full Lånekassen support. In the meantime, the school has established its own stipend for students.<sup>60</sup>

TITAN, the other private acting school in Oslo, was established in 2004 and offers a two-year acting program with capacity for 28 students.<sup>61</sup> The two-year program at TITAN sets strong focus on the actor as “the key artistic contributor to the creative process” (TITAN 2009a)—actors are taught to be self-sufficient, capable of producing independent work rather than just working within the frames of the established theatre. TITAN director Brendan McCall (04.02.09) describes TITAN as an “artist-entrepreneur education program” that offers a more complete theatre education: while acting (both onstage and on film—McCall [04.02.09] relates that TITAN offers the most extensive on-camera acting training in Norway) is the main focus, students are also taught skills in directing, writing, and producing. The second year of the program is also a production year in which students run an independent for-profit theatre company, TITAN Teatergruppe (TITAN Theatre Group), where they stand

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<sup>60</sup> Information on NISS is gathered primarily from an interview with Bente Lavik, head of the acting program, and Anne-Marthe Lund Engnes, acting teacher, at NISS, held on 23.10.08. Supplementary material from NISS’ website (NISS 2009b), as well as overviews of the program in Mangset 2004b and Fock 2006.

<sup>61</sup> The current (2008-2010) and the previous (2006-2008) classes have however had an enrolment of 17 and 18 students respectively.

in charge of all aspects of production from artistic to administrative duties. TITAN is an approved *fagskole* by NOKUT, meaning that it offers post-secondary vocational education (but not leading to a Bachelor degree). Students are eligible for Lånekassen support.<sup>62</sup>

Akademi for Scenekunst at Høgskolen i Østfold, like the performing arts faculty at KHiO, offers a three-year acting education leading to a Bachelor degree. Their program, however, follows a more interdisciplinary, contemporary approach, with strong incorporation of visual and performance art and physical theatre. Akademi for Scenekunst also offers a Bachelor in scenography; collaboration between the two programs is emphasized. The language of instruction is English, and there are many foreign applicants. As a State school, education is free and students are eligible for Lånekassen support. In 2007, the acting program took in 9 students.<sup>63</sup>

HiNT is the third State school or university college offering acting education. The newest on the scene, the program Teaterproduksjon og skuespillerfag (Theatre production and acting) was established in 2006 as a three-year Bachelor program after a previous two-year education in Teaterensemblevirksomhet (Theatre ensemble work). HiNT takes the more physically-based Lecoq method as its point of departure, although they still largely work with text and realistic theatre. There is strong emphasis on ensemble work as well as the creation of new, independent work—as the name of the program suggests, the education at HiNT focuses on production work in addition to acting technique. Like TITAN, HiNT sees the actor as capable of working in the traditional, practicing actor role (i.e. in conjunction with a director) as well as in a more creative, producing position. There is currently an admission capacity of 20 students per year.<sup>64</sup>

NBX, established in 2003 (a furthering of the Nordic Black Theatre School, 1993-2001), is at once an artistic and socio-political project with the goal to train actors who reflect Norway's cultural diversity: NBX targets recruitment to young people of multicultural background and/or multicultural experience and understanding<sup>65</sup>. Funded by Norsk Kulturråd and not the Ministry of Education and Research, the two-year program is not subject to

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<sup>62</sup> Information on TITAN is gathered from their website (TITAN 2009b), an interview with former director Jim Hart (01.02.08), and various correspondences with current director Brendan McCall (09.01.09, 13.01.09, 14.01.09, 04.02.09) and acting teacher Hilde Hannah Buvik (20.11.08, 06.01.09).

<sup>63</sup> Information on Akademi for Scenekunst is from their website (Høgskolen i Østfold 2009), the government white paper on the performing arts *Bak kulissene* (Norway 2008b), and overviews of the school in Mangset 2004b and Fock 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Information on HiNT is based on their website (Høgskolen i Nord-Trøndelag 2009), the Norsk Skuespillerforbund article "Første kull ut fra HiNT" (Willassen 2008), and *Bak kulissene* (Norway 2008b).

<sup>65</sup> I.e. "Ethnic" Norwegian students are also welcome to apply. "The important experience is that you need to have had the experience of being the Other," explains Ann-Magritt Børresen, administrative leader of NBX (06.11.07).

NOKUT demands and thus has more artistic freedom and flexibility. On the flipside, this setup draws less funding and resources to develop the program, leading to the question of whether the program is sufficient professionalizing education in itself, and the program has oscillated between whether it is more of a theatre school or a theatre project. NBX (2008) also advertises itself as “a good preparatory school for other higher theatre education,”<sup>66</sup> rather than a complete professionalizing education. Eva Fock investigates this question in her evaluation of NBX (2006); she (2006, 33) concludes, “The Express is not an actual theatre school, but a place where talented youth are taught a range of the methods and tools considered necessary should they wish to later work as professional theatre artists.”<sup>67</sup> NBX students, along with students from its predecessor the Nordic Black Theatre School, have however gone on to work professionally. The program is open to approximately 10 students.<sup>68</sup>

The rise of such different theatre schools speaks not only to the expansion but also the diversification of the Norwegian theatre scene away from just the institutional theatre—which, though still steeped in text-based and spoken theatre, is also to some extent diversifying with more cross-over or interdisciplinary productions. Certain theatres such as Oslo Nye Teater, Det Norske Teatret, and Riksteatret have also traditionally had a musical line in their repertoire, with Riksteatret also touring dance performances. “In the past Statens Teaterhøgskole had nearly a monopoly, and thus we got very similar actors,”<sup>69</sup> states previous Teater Ibsen artistic director Inger Buresund (Eidem 2007a). Anne-Marthe Lund Engnes, an acting teacher at NISS, also believes that the increase in acting education opportunities in Norway is positive: “We need versatile actors,” she (23.10.08) asserts. In general, NISS, TITAN, HiNT, and Akademi for Scenekunst all maintain that they are professional educations preparing their students to work both within and outside the established theatre, with acting programs that also educate students on how to create their own productions and work as independent artists. NBX, even without the status as a professional school, also has students who have gone on to work in different sectors of Norwegian theatre.

KHiO too is catching on; in 2009 they begin a supplementary year after the Bachelor with the goal to “educate actors who can contribute to the artistic development of the theatre

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<sup>66</sup> “NBX er en god forskole for annen høyere teaterutdanning.”

<sup>67</sup> “Expressen er ingen egentlig teaterskole, men et sted hvor talentfulde unge undervises i en række af de metoder og værktøjer, som anses for at være nødvendige for, at de på længere sigt kan fungere som professionelle scenekunstnere.”

<sup>68</sup> Information on NBX is gathered primarily from an interview with Ann-Magritt Børresen (06.11.07) and Eva Fock’s evaluation of NBX, *Fremtidens scenekunstnere?* (2006).

<sup>69</sup> “Før hadde Statens teaterhøgskole nærmest monopol, og da fikk vi veldig like skuespillere.”

field in Norway”<sup>70</sup> (KHiO 2007, 2). The course, which hopes to eventually become a Masters program, delves into interdisciplinary work, alternative acting techniques, and independently-created productions. “While the BA in acting is a program that focuses on the actor as a practicing artist, the supplementary year shifts the focus to the actor as a creating and co-creating artist”<sup>71</sup> (KHiO 2007, 2). Entrance, however, is by audition and limited to one class (it is not part of the Bachelor program), with anyone, not just graduating KHiO students, holding an approved Bachelor degree or equivalent in acting eligible to apply.

Camilla Eeg (2007), head of the acting department at Akademi for Scenekunst, remarks, “The point is that we must stop building artificial divisions between what it is to get a job in an institutional theatre and what it is to work with independent projects.”<sup>72</sup> It is already normal practice, she (2007) continues, for actors to switch between working in a theatre, on independent projects, in film and television, or even in business. Such working across disciplines also reflects another significant change in the Norwegian theatre: previously, actors tended to receive permanent contracts at an institutional theatre, but it has become much more common now for theatres to hire on either shorter contracts or by production. According to Ida Willassen (21.10.08), information consultant at Norsk Skuespillerforbund (Norwegian Actors’ Equity Association), the number of permanent positions at Norwegian theatres has decreased from about 250 in 1994, to 180 in 2008. Meanwhile, the number of freelance actors has gone up from about 200 out of the 600 members in 1994, to 750 in the close to 1100 members of the association in 2008 (Willassen 21.10.08 and 31.10.08). Mangset (2004b, 28-29) writes that “there is talk of a transformation *from* a strong institutional- and profession-regulated ‘Norwegian’ regime directed towards the institutional theatres’ needs, *to* a more open, more competition-based, ‘international’ regime directed towards the needs of a much more diverse performing arts market.”<sup>73</sup>

While this is the direction of development, total transformation is slow to happen, held back by norms—largely tied to education—that have governed the Norwegian theatre for decades. Is the Statens Teaterhøgskole/KHiO monopoly truly no longer? Carl Morten Amundsen (2006), leader of NTLF and artistic director of Teatret Vårt (Our Theatre) in

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<sup>70</sup> “Den overordnede målsetningen for påbyggingsstudiet innen skuespillerfag er å utdanne skuespillere som kan bidra til kunstnerisk utvikling av teaterfeltet i Norge.”

<sup>71</sup> “Mens BA skuespiller er et studium som legger vekt på skuespilleren som utøvende kunstner, rettes søkelyset i påbygningsåret mot skuespilleren som en skapende og medskapende kunstner.”

<sup>72</sup> “Poenget er at vi må slutte å skape kunstige skiller mellom det å få jobb på et institusjonsteater og det å jobbe med selvstendige prosjekter.”

<sup>73</sup> “Det er snakk om en omdanning *fra* et sterkt institusjons- og profesjonsregulert ‘norsk’ regime innrettet mot institusjons-teatrenes behov, *til* et åpnere, mer konkurranseorientert, ‘internasjonalt’ regime innrettet mot behovene på et langt mer mangfoldig scenekunstmarked.”

Molde, notes that with the increase of theatre schools in Norway, “the reality has changed. The monopoly we once had with Statens Teaterhøgskole is broken.”<sup>74</sup> I argue, however, that the diversification of theatre education in Norway has not led to a breakdown of the monopoly, but rather to a complex hierarchy within the field—a hierarchy that is actually two-fold, with on the first level a divide between the State and private theatre schools, and on the second, and perhaps more cutting level, a division between KHiO and the rest of the theatre schools in Norway, regardless of whether State or private.

### **The State school vs. private school divide**

In 2007, debate flared up in the theatre community around worries that the increase in acting education opportunities in Norway, along with the increase of Norwegian actors seeking education abroad, had led to a situation where there were “too many” actors in Norway. NTLF discussed the issue at their spring 2007 meeting, with Amundsen declaring,

We must find a way to tackle the situation at hand. I think we’ve reached a limit now. There are definitely too many [actors], if one thinks that everybody should have a job<sup>75</sup> (Eidem 2007a).

Both Amundsen and Agnete Haaland, leader of Norsk Skuespillerforbund, had since 2006 expressed fears that the increase in acting education opportunities in Norway would forward to increased actor unemployment (Larsen 2006), and the same concerns were expressed again: “There has been an enormous change in the last 20 years—from a pure monopoly situation of Statens Teaterhøgskole, to a situation where we are almost swimming in actors”<sup>76</sup> (Amundsen cited in Eidem 2007a).

Such attitudes do not seem to take into account, however, the grounds to such an enormous change in recent years—namely the growth and diversification of acting opportunities in Norway. Nor do they acknowledge the different natures of the acting programs, which cater to this increasingly diverse performing arts sector. There are of course “many more who wish to be actors than the market is capable of absorbing”<sup>77</sup> (Mangset 2004b, 40), but I do not think that anyone pursuing a career in acting is under any illusion that they are entering a totally secure profession. “When it comes to work, it depends a lot on what

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<sup>74</sup> “Virkeligheten har endret seg. Det monopolet vi engang hadde i Statens Teaterhøgskole er brutt.”

<sup>75</sup> “Vi må finne en måte å takle situasjonen på. Jeg mener vi har nådd et tak nå. Det er definitivt for mange, hvis man mener at alle skal få jobb.”

<sup>76</sup> “Det har vært en enorm forandring de siste 20 årene—fra en ren monopolsituasjon ved Statens teaterhøgskole til at vi nesten svømmer over av skuespillere.”

<sup>77</sup> “Men det er fortsatt langt flere som ønsker å bli skuespillere, enn markedet greier å absorbere.”

you make of it. The jobs don't just fall in your lap, no matter where you're educated,"<sup>78</sup> attests former NISS student Tone Skaardal (Eidem 2007a). "Those who don't get work on the stage or in front of the camera do not end up begging on the street," stresses TITAN founder and former director Jim Hart (2007), "[actors] are resourceful, inventive people and find jobs."<sup>79</sup> Further, with the newer acting programs in Norway emphasizing the importance of and providing training on how to create independent productions as well as work within the framework of an established theatre, many actors are now capable of *creating* jobs. As former TITAN student Unn C. Fyllingsnes (2007) writes,

It's nice that [Amundsen] worries himself over not being able to give all newly-educated actors work, but we will be able to create work too, since the market is such that one can't always wait to get permanent work in the established theatre or film and television. TITAN has its main focus on acting technique, but in addition we learn among other things to write our own material, direct, produce and set up our own theatre performances. Currently we're working to set up 'The Dispute' by Marivaux at Grusomhetens Teater [an independent theatre in Oslo]. We do everything regarding the production ourselves.<sup>80</sup>

Amundsen and Haaland, however, held fast to their opinions regarding the situation of increasing actors and acting educations in Norway, with Haaland (Eidem 2007a) even remarking, "I don't recommend anyone to go to private schools in Norway. Go abroad instead and go to approved schools there."<sup>81</sup> The statement caused a wave of backlash, with representatives from NISS and TITAN speaking out. "This is an attitude that hinders Norwegian cultural life, creates conflict and is disrespectful towards all Norwegian theatre artists that have not gone to Statens Teaterhøgskole,"<sup>82</sup> fumed Lavik and Anne Tveitan Ferignac of NISS (2007). Hart (2007) attested,

When one holds such a leading position, writing off private theatre schools is the same as practicing censorship. The majority of teachers at private schools in Norway have educations from the private schools abroad or from Statens Teaterhøgskole. In addition are most of them members of Skuespillerforbundet. Haaland is clearly not concerned about these members. By warning future actors against studying at private schools, she puts their jobs in danger.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Når det gjelder jobb, blir det mye hva du gjør det selv. Jobbene faller ikke i fanget på deg, uansett hvor du er utdannet."

<sup>79</sup> "De som ikke får arbeid på scenen eller foran kamera sitter ikke på gaten med en tiggekopp. De er ressurssterke, oppfinnsomme mennesker og finner stillinger."

<sup>80</sup> "Det er hyggeleg at han uroar seg for at han ikkje kan gje alle nyutdana skodespelarar jobb, men me vil verta i stand til å skapa arbeid også, sidan mark-naden er slik at ein ikkje alltid kan venta å ha fast arbeid innan det etablerte teatret, film og fjernsyn. TITAN har hovudfokus på skodespelarteknikk, men i tillegg lærer me mellom anna å skriva eige materiale, regissera, produsera og å setja opp våre egne teaterframsyningar. For tida arbeider me med å setja opp 'The Dispute' av Marivaux på Grusomhetens teater. Me gjer alt kring produksjonen sjølve."

<sup>81</sup> "Jeg anbefaler ingen å ta private skoler i Norge. Dra heller til utlandet og gå på godkjente skoler der."

<sup>82</sup> "Dette er en holdning som hemmer norsk kulturliv, skaper konflikt og er respektløs overfor alle norske scenekunstnerne som ikke har gått på Statens teaterhøgskole."

<sup>83</sup> "Når man innehar en slik lederposisjon er det å avskrive private teaterskoler det samme som å utøve sensur. Flertallet blant lærerne som underviser ved private skoler i Norge har sin utdanning fra de fremste, private skolene i utlandet eller fra Statens Teaterhøgskole. I tillegg er de fleste av disse medlemmer av

Hart (2007) also noted that the timing of Haaland's comments—March 2007—was especially detrimental as the private schools were in the midst of student recruitment.

Haaland's statement highlights the first level of the Norwegian theatre education hierarchy: the distinction between "approved" and "non-approved" schools, in Norway equating to State versus private schools. The criteria for membership into Haaland's organization, Norsk Skuespillerforbund, represent this divide. In order to become a full member of the actors' union, actors must either possess an approved acting degree, or have for three consecutive years worked professionally as an actor. In Norway, these approved acting educations are currently only the three-year Bachelor programs at the State university colleges KHiO, HiNT, and Akademi for Scenekunst. If one completes education abroad, the program must correspond to the Norwegian education in terms of entrance requirements, level, and duration. Actors without the approved education or the three-year professional experience can become associated members if they can prove that acting forms their primary source of income. They must renew their membership each year on the basis of this requirement, and after three years become eligible to apply for full membership.<sup>84</sup>

Hart (2006b) calls this "the three-year dictatorship"<sup>85</sup> in Norwegian theatre. "Within the theatre," he (2006b) writes, "...I have been repeatedly told that the definition of a professional is one who has completed a three-year education, or has a minimum of three years of paid work within the profession."<sup>86</sup> If membership to Norsk Skuespillerforbund is indication of a professional actor, the association's membership criteria becomes problematic when it excludes actors from certain theatre schools that also consider themselves as offering professional educations, but without the three-year Bachelor degree of the university college system. These schools are namely the private schools NISS and TITAN.<sup>87</sup>

"I run a two-year professional theatre school in Oslo called TITAN Theatre School," Hart (2006b) asserts,

...I am educated at Yale University School of Drama, MFA. I offer comparable quality in the education at TITAN. Last year our students set up six productions, one of them toured in Turkey. The students received income from these productions they developed and presented at professional theatres in Oslo (Det Åpne Teater and Nordic Black).

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Skuespillerforbundet. Disse medlemmene er Haaland tydeligvis ikke opptatt av. Ved å motvirke at tilkommende skuespillere studerer ved private skoler setter hun arbeidsplassene deres i fare."

<sup>84</sup> Information from Norsk Skuespillerforbund (2008a).

<sup>85</sup> "treårsdiktaturet"

<sup>86</sup> "Innen teateret...har jeg gjentatte ganger blitt fortalt at definisjonen på en profesjonell er en som har fullført en treårig utdanning, eller som har minimum tre års betalt yrkeserfaring."

<sup>87</sup> As mentioned earlier, the two-year acting program at NBX possesses a profile still uncertain between professionalizing education and foundation to further higher education. As a result, I do not include it here.

Why aren't our students considered professional? The State has approved us as a fagskole, which is by definition a professional school. Is this not enough?<sup>88</sup>

Lavik and Ferignac (2007) note that NISS' acting line, established in 1998, has students undergoing rigorous professional education complete with a teaching staff including some of the most well-known figures in the Norwegian theatre field. Respected director Stein Winge, for example, has taught at both KHiO and NISS, and attests that he finds no difference in quality between actors from the respective schools: "NISS students do not stand behind [Teaterhøgskolen] students"<sup>89</sup> ("Vil ikke bli" 2006). NISS' program even provides the possibility for a three-year education; however, since the school does not have formal educational status at the university college level, students completing the total three-year acting program remain ineligible to join Skuespillerforbund upon graduation.

As mentioned, Skuespillerforbund membership is open to graduates from non-approved schools once they gain the supplementary professional experience. Such criteria would seem fair to private school students if their State school colleagues were also subject to the same demands; however, acting students from the three State schools become eligible for full membership immediately upon graduation, without first having to prove themselves on the professional stage. Students from State schools are also allowed to become student members of Skuespillerforbund during their education, with benefits such as getting listed in Skuespillerforbund's catalogue of members already during the last six months of their education (Willassen 21.10.08). The catalogue, bought by theatres and casting agencies, is a resource in actor recruitment.

Every year, Norsk Skuespillerforbund, along with NTLF and NTO, also host an audition at Nationaltheatret aimed primarily at actors educated abroad. The yearly audition, beginning in 1998, was established due to the high numbers of aspiring actors seeking actor education abroad, as such having fewer opportunities to establish theatre contacts in Norway during their studies. Recent graduates are given priority. The audition is well-attended, with most of the country's theatres represented. In addition, casting agencies, directors, producers, and film personnel are invited. Students trained at institutions in Norway other than KHiO—

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<sup>88</sup> "Jeg driver en toårig profesjonell teaterskole i Oslo kalt TITAN Teaterskole...Jeg er utdannet ved Yale University School of Drama, MFA. Jeg tilbyr en lignende kvalitet på utdanningen ved TITAN. I fjor skapte studentene våre seks forestillinger, en av dem turnerte i Tyrkia. Studentene hadde inntekter på forestillinger som de selv utviklet og fremførte ved profesjonelle teatre i Oslo (Det Åpne Teater og Nordic Black). Hvorfor anses ikke våre studenter som profesjonelle? Staten har godkjent oss som fagskole, som per definisjon er en profesjonell skole. Er ikke det nok?"

<sup>89</sup> "Du har arbeidet med skuespillere utdannet på Statens Teaterhøgskole og med skuespillere utdannet på NISS. Merker du kvalitetsforskjeller? Jeg synes ikke det. NISS-studentene står ikke tilbake for teaterskolestudentene."

the audition is specifically not for KHiO students as they have the most contact with Norwegian theatre leaders (Willassen 21.10.08)—may be allowed to participate provided there is room, but this has not been very common. In any case, the criteria to audition are the same as membership to Norsk Skuespillerforbund: completion of an approved acting education, or if coming from a non-approved school, a minimum of three-year's work experience in addition to their education (Norsk Skuespillerforbund 2008b). This clause thus presents another barrier for new graduates of private theatre schools, although Skuespillerforbund information consultant Willassen (21.10.08) notes that they have had some actors with a background from NISS, with the required work experience, at previous auditions.

The distinction between approved and non-approved schools is thus not only a matter of status—on who has the right to call themselves “professional”—but also of advantage. With fresh graduates of private theatre schools in Norway facing such structural barriers as not being able to immediately join Norsk Skuespillerforbund or attend the yearly audition at Nationaltheatret on the basis of their education, I can see the logic behind Haaland's recommendation to aspiring actors to seek approved educations instead of private schools. At the same time, however, such statement fails to address the real problem at hand: the hierarchy between State and private schools in Norway. Hart (2006a) calls for organizations such as Norsk Skuespillerforbund to update their membership criteria, and for State theatres to hold regular auditions for actors with non-State educations. Simply warning students against going to private theatre schools in Norway is not an effective solution, but one that accepts the status quo, and contributes to its perpetuation.

### ***The State school vs. the rest: The second tier of the educational hierarchy***

In addition to the division between State and private schools, there exists another level to the theatre education hierarchy that is governed by rules not as visible as the membership criteria to Norsk Skuespillerforbund. Rather, this hierarchy, which places KHiO above all of the other theatre schools in Norway—both State *and* private—rests on the more invisible, and perhaps more aggressive, rules of tradition.

Traditionally there has been a strong tie between Statens Teaterhøgskole/KHiO and the institutional theatres. Mangset (2004b, 27) writes of a system of mutual exchange where KHiO educates actors for the institutional theatres; in return the theatres are to give these actors a chance by hiring them for at least a period of time. Representatives from the institutional theatres are supposed to follow the students during their education through

internal performances at KHiO, keeping in mind the possibility of later recruitment; there is strong criticism against theatres that fail to follow this norm (Mangset 2004b, 26-28).

While the arrival of the newer Norwegian theatre schools and the increase of Norwegian actors educated abroad has put pressure on this system, it has not broken it down completely. During my research I talked to representatives<sup>90</sup> at the institutional theatres in Oslo (Nationaltheatret, Det Norske Teatret, Oslo Nye Teater, and Riksteatret<sup>91</sup>); it became clear that the majority of the theatres—the main exception being Riksteatret—still look primarily to KHiO acting graduates in their recruitment processes.

There is no strong audition tradition in the Norwegian theatre; all of the theatres acknowledge that auditions are uncommon. “We almost never have auditions for non-musical productions,” relates Det Norske Teatret dramaturg Ola Bø (04.11.08 and 10.11.08). Oslo Nye Teater’s public relations manager Erik Årslund (14.10.08) and Riksteatret artistic director Ellen Horn (03.12.08) agree, maintaining that auditions are usually only for dance and musical parts.<sup>92</sup> For spoken theatre productions, the traditional mode of casting would be to first look to the theatres’ permanent ensembles. However, this system is changing, at certain theatres more rapidly than others, as the number of permanently-contracted actors decreases while the number of freelancers increases. At Det Norske Teatret there is about a 50/50 ratio between actors on permanent contracts and actors on short-term contracts (Bø 04.11.08 and 10.11.08). At Nationaltheatret, the current company breakdown is also approximately 50% permanent ensemble and 50% other contracts (Aaby 05.02.09). Meanwhile, Oslo Nye Teater has stopped hiring actors on a permanent basis (Hungnes 2008), and at Riksteatret there is almost no permanent ensemble to speak of with currently only six permanent artists (four actors and two puppeteers) on the roster (Horn 03.12.08).

The theatres must therefore increasingly look outwards—in this case, the theatres indicated that the common practice is to approach actors they are interested in directly, rather than go through an open audition process. (Auditions, although better utilized by particularly Riksteatret and Oslo Nye Teater, are still not commonplace even there.) Such actors are generally either 1) professional actors they’ve worked with or know, or seen and liked in other productions, or 2) graduating acting students from KHiO.

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<sup>90</sup> Margrethe Aaby, producer and *mangfoldskordinator* (diversity coordinator), Nationaltheatret  
Ola Bø, dramaturg, Det Norske Teatret  
Erik Årslund, public relations manager, Oslo Nye Teater  
Ellen Horn, artistic director, Riksteatret

<sup>91</sup> Riksteatret, although the national touring theatre, also performs and has its headquarters in Oslo.

<sup>92</sup> Det Norske Teatret, Oslo Nye Teater, and Riksteatret have a tradition of including musicals in their repertoire.

The categories are closely linked. KHiO graduates are still preferred by the majority of institutional theatres; as Nationaltheatret producer and *mangfoldskoordinator* (diversity coordinator) Margrethe Aaby (13.10.08) relates, the theatre generally goes to KHiO when they need new actors. Bø (04.11.08 and 10.11.08) reaffirms that “there is an unwritten contract between the academy [KHiO] and the theatres.” Årslund (14.10.08) agrees that “Teaterhøgskolen is the eye of the needle” to get into the institutional theatre scene in Norway. Riksteatret, however, is the exception: although Horn (03.12.08) notes that KHiO is “still the preferred place to follow up,” this pattern is changing. Riksteatret is “also interested in the other schools,” asserts Horn (03.12.08), who in 2008 could be seen hiring actors with educational backgrounds from schools such as Akademi for Scenekunst and NBX/the former Nordic Black Theatre School.

Several of the theatres also noted Norsk Skuespillerforbund’s member catalogue as a resource in recruitment, although as discussed, actors with non-State educational backgrounds face difficulty in becoming union members and thus getting listed in the catalogue. The same goes for Norsk Skuespillerforbund’s yearly audition at Nationaltheatret, also named by the institutional theatres as a potential hiring ground. When including actors from Norwegian theatre schools, the audition again excludes new graduates of private theatres schools in Norway.

Ultimately, Aaby (13.10.08) states that it is hard for actors educated at schools other than KHiO to get on the Nationaltheatret stage “if [they] don’t prove [themselves] in other productions.” But if it is still KHiO graduates, compared to new actors with different educational backgrounds, that are the ones most often getting recruited at the institutional theatres, how will these alternatively-educated actors get the chance to prove themselves? When the unwritten rule is largely still, as Aaby (13.10.08) states, “When you come from Teaterhøgskolen, you will easier get a chance to prove yourself on the Nationaltheatret stage,” it becomes these KHiO actors getting noticed on stage, and thus more easily hired either back again, or by other institutional theatres.

The question is, why do such unwritten rules still exist, when KHiO is no longer the only theatre school in Norway, and KHiO-educated actors not the only ones on the market? As discussed, tradition plays a large role, with most of the institutional theatres in Oslo adhering to the KHiO-institutional theatre system of mutual exchange by looking primarily to KHiO-graduates during actor recruitment. Status, notions of quality, and convenience are also strong factors: KHiO may not be the only acting school in Norway, but it is the most established, with an education that is trusted to consistently produce good actors. It becomes

convenient to hire actors from this school—Årsland (14.10.08) notes that although Oslo Nye does also hire actors from other theatre schools both abroad and in Norway, it is harder to keep track of all of the actors coming from these different schools. The pool of actors at KHiO, meanwhile, is easily distinguishable and thus easy to follow, with such practice also supported by the tradition of institutional theatres following KHiO students throughout their education.

In terms of quality, Bø (04.11.08 and 10.11.08) considers the KHiO program to be the only full actor education in Norway. Horn's opinion, however, is quite different: "We now have serious educations like NISS, Fredrikstad [Akademi for Scenekunst], Trønderlag [HiNT]," she (03.12.08) states, in similar sentiment to Winge who contended that he found no difference in quality between actors from KHiO and NISS. Such range in opinion demonstrates that the newer theatre schools have a lot of catching up to do in terms of establishing themselves and securing their reputations—a difficult task, however, in a theatre system containing structural barriers against private schools, where open auditions at institutional theatres are not commonplace, and where tradition, although being challenged to a degree by theatres such as Riksteatret, continues to play a large role. Such structures forward to fewer opportunities for non-KHiO-educated actors to "prove" themselves—and thus the quality of their educations—on the institutional stage, and continue the multi-layered hierarchy of the theatre education field in Norway. As Lavik (23.10.08) asserts, while acknowledging that NISS is slowly becoming more recognized in the Norwegian theatre field, "When we started the *skuespillerutdanning* [acting education line] in 1998, I said that it would take 10 years to be recognized. Now it's been 10 years, but it will take even more time."

### **How this all connects to minority actors**

Examining the hierarchy of theatre education in Norway is useful in analyzing the reasons behind why we see so few actors of multicultural background on the institutional stages of Oslo, for if we go back to my original question—Are acting students of minority background being represented in Oslo theatre schools?—the answer is yes, to a certain extent. The problems arise when looking at *which* theatre schools in Oslo these students are attending, *to what extent* they are being represented, and *where* they are ending up after completing their educations. I would also like to note that I limit my focus in this section to the theatre schools in Oslo—KHiO, NISS, TITAN, and NBX—despite my discussion of all the Norwegian theatre schools in the previous section. This is due to issues of accessibility and time

limitations—living in Oslo, I could more easily establish contact with these schools. Oslo is also home to the majority of theatre schools in Norway.

Common in the debate surrounding the lack of minority actors on the institutional stage is the argument that KHiO is neither training nor taking the responsibility to recruit acting students of minority background. KHiO maintains that they are open to and want students of different ethnic backgrounds in the acting program, but in its now over 50-year history, the school has only accepted a handful of acting students of minority background. Given the school's status and continuing role as a major feeder into the institutional theatre scene, such deficiency is detrimental.

The idea of setting quotas to secure spots for minority applicants has been discussed, but to no avail. The school has always allocated quotas for male students in order to keep a gender balance in each year's class, as the proportion of female applicants usually greatly outweighs the number of male applicants—female applicants in general comprise around 75% of the applicant pool (Løddesøl 2007a). However, the idea of setting quotas for minority students attracts greater controversy. Former Nationaltheatret artistic director Stubø, for example, publicly supported the idea of quotas (Aagedal and Bruvik 2007), while KHiO representatives remain against the idea. The use of quotas is neither desired by everyone in the minority field: "If I would get a role because I'm an immigrant, I would lose a bit of my passion for being an actor,"<sup>93</sup> contends Toni Usman, an actor of Pakistani background (Løddesøl 2007c).

Even Lynne (22.10.08), head of the acting line at KHiO, cites that KHiO does not allocate quotas for minority students because talent is the main criterion for acceptance into the program. Further, Lynne (22.10.08) notes that there are so few applicants of minority background, around 10-20 per year. Former dean of KHiO's performing arts faculty Harry Guttormsen (Aagedal and Bruvik 2007) thus insisted in 2007 that the school was more preoccupied with trying to first attract more *applicants* of multicultural background. The school, however, has been promising to set concrete measures to draw minority applicants for years. "Statens Teaterhøgskole promised almost a year ago to establish measures to get more Norwegians with immigrant background to apply to Teaterhøgskolen. But after one year there are still no concrete measures in place,"<sup>94</sup> reads an *NRK* article (Braate 2001). The article is from 2001.

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<sup>93</sup> "Hvis jeg skulle få en rolle fordi jeg er innvandrere, ville jeg miste litt lysten på å være skuespiller."

<sup>94</sup> "For nesten et år siden lovet Statens Teaterhøgskole å sette i gang tiltak for å få nordmenn med innvandrerbakgrunn til å søke Teaterhøgskolen. Men etter ett år er fortsatt ingen konkrete tiltak satt i gang."

Lynne (22.10.08) relates that the school currently has no formal initiatives to attract applicants of multicultural background. The only more concrete initiative he can remember is from 2006, when the acting program invited NBX students to the school in an attempt to encourage them to apply to KHiO. A few of the students did, but none were accepted. Lynne (22.10.08) remarks that maybe it is time for KHiO to establish contact with NBX again. He does note, however, that there are currently two students of minority background in the acting program—one in the first-year class of 8 students, and one in the second-year class, also of 8 students. There are none in the graduating third-year class.

The acting program at KHiO may be behind in minority student recruitment, but other schools in Oslo have seen higher numbers of both applicants and students of multicultural background to their programs. NBX of course has multiculturalism as a core mandate and recruiting consideration, but NISS and TITAN, without the explicit focus, have also developed more multicultural profiles. For NISS, this development was not specifically planned, but rather just happened in recent years, as more people of minority background started to apply (Lavik 23.10.08). Lavik is pleased with the development: “We can’t just say that *mangfold* [diversity] doesn’t exist,” she (23.10.08) states, adding that the Norwegian theatre system is compelled to become colour-blind for the arts to continue to grow. For the 2008/09 school year, NISS currently has five students of minority background in the first-year class (30 students in total), one in the second-year class (total 24 students), and two in the graduating third-year class (total 8 students) (Lavik 23.10.08).

At TITAN, three of the 17 students in the current 2008-2010 class are of minority background. In the previous class of 2006-2008, six of the 18 students were of multicultural background (Buvik 06.01.09). TITAN—*The International Theatre Academy Norway*—was started in 2004 by Hart, an American, and while the “international” in the name refers more to the program’s educational scope, with its bilingual instruction, international (as well as local) faculty and guest artists<sup>95</sup>, and instruction about more than just Western theatre forms, perhaps this international profile is also attracting more multicultural applicants. Current director McCall (04.02.09) also notes that the school is actively looking to attract students for the new 2009-2010 academic year from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The rise of multicultural applicants and students to NISS and TITAN could also be connected to other factors. NISS acting teacher Lund Engnes (23.10.08) speculates that the

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<sup>95</sup> For the 2008/09 school year, TITAN has faculty and staff from Israel, Norway, USA, Poland and Chile, and guest artists from Norway, Denmark, USA, UK, New Zealand, and Iceland (McCall 09.01.09). The influence of different cultures has also increased dramatically under current director McCall, who has expanded the range of international guest artists to the school.

increase of multicultural applicants to the school could be due to applicants understanding how slim the chances of getting into KHiO are. With hundreds of people applying for the 8-10 yearly spots, the KHiO application process is without a doubt intimidating. At NISS and TITAN, fewer applicants<sup>96</sup> and larger class sizes mean that there is a greater chance of being accepted. The recruitment criteria, especially in regards to language, seem also to play an influential factor. NISS and TITAN of course hold talent to be their primary concern, but have more open policies when it comes to language than KHiO.

Language, like skin colour, is a frequently stated reason as to why actors of minority background face discrimination in the Norwegian theatre. In Norway, Oslo West end dialect, closely resembling *bokmål* or the written form of Norwegian based on Danish, is most considered stage language. The establishment of Det Norske Teatret, with its principle of staging plays in *nynorsk*—the written form of Norwegian based on Norwegian dialects and emerging out of the nationalist movement of the 1800s—was a great boost to the use of *nynorsk* and different dialects on the Norwegian stage, yet the tradition of Oslo West end dialect as stage language can still be seen to linger, most prominently at Nationaltheatret. Nationaltheatret performs almost exclusively in Oslo West end dialect, with actors generally asked to perform in this dialect even if they come from another part of the country (Clemetsen 05.08.08). Language can therefore be a factor in inclusion or exclusion; Nationaltheatret's Clemetsen (05.08.08) notes that the theatre's preference towards Oslo West end dialect, having influenced their quality criteria, has unfortunately excluded many actors unable to speak "perfect" Oslo West end dialect from the Nationaltheatret stage.

The language issue is thus also connected to accent, and having an accent, as shown, can be crippling. "Cultural diversity on the stage presents certain challenges," relates actress Asta Busingye Lydersen (Løddesøl 2008), "If we want an actor who speaks another language, it can also lead to an actor who speaks Norwegian with an accent."<sup>97</sup> Yet the theatre scene seems at varying stages of accepting this kind of linguistic diversity. If a different skin colour can lead to typecasting in the form of *innvanderroller* or parts as "the immigrant," so can accent: "When you don't speak perfect Norwegian, you quickly get 'typecast,'" actor Irasj

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<sup>96</sup> Lavik (23.10.08) notes that each year there are around 150-200 people applying to NISS. TITAN director Brendan McCall (13.01.09) notes that there were around 100 people applying to TITAN for the 2008-2010 class.

<sup>97</sup> "Mangfold på scenen gir noen utfordringer...Ønsker man en skuespiller som snakker et annet språk, kan det også gi en skuespiller som snakker norsk med aksent."

Asanti (Aubert 2007b) relates, “I’ve had several roles as an aggressive gangster, but really wish to play more things than that.”<sup>98</sup>

Having an accent, although most applicable to actors whose first language is not Norwegian—which then in public debate makes the leap to refer to actors of minority background—of course does not apply to *all* multicultural actors. “I can handle not getting a job because I’m not good enough. But I can’t take hearing that I don’t speak good enough Norwegian,”<sup>99</sup> fumes actress Isabell Sterling (Braate 2001) who, of Trinidadian background, was in fact born in Oslo. Lavleen Kaur (29.05.08), another Norwegian actress of multicultural background, reports that she has faced discrimination on the basis of her accent, even though she too speaks fluent Norwegian, having been born and raised in Oslo (but in the East rather than West end of the city—in other words neither does she speak the prestigious Oslo West end dialect). Kaur, like many others of the younger generation in Norway, has grown up replacing the Norwegian *kj* sound with an *sj* pronunciation<sup>100</sup>. She (29.05.08) relates that this speech pattern became an issue when she played Hedda in Riksteatret’s 2006 production of *Hedda Gabler*—a deliberately multiculturally-cast performance—receiving constant, condescending remarks about it from the rest of the crew.

While a general pattern amongst younger Norwegians, the linguistic shift from a *kj* to an *sj* sound has become associated with the rise of immigration (leading to more Norwegian-as-a-Second-Language speakers) and the development of *kebabnorsk* (Kebab Norwegian), a youth slang connected largely with Oslo’s multicultural East end, which blends words and expressions from languages such as Urdu, Arabic, and Farsi into Norwegian. Kaur’s *sj* pronunciation was thus assumed to be connected to her minority background by others in the *Hedda Gabler* production, despite the fact that she does not speak *kebabnorsk*, and despite her argument that her slip from *kj* into *sj* was part of a widespread generational shift not necessarily connected to her parents being immigrants (Kaur 20.03.09). Kaur (20.03.09) adds that “the most interesting part for [her] in this matter was that [she] was expected to reach for the West end goal, while all the other ethnical Norwegian actors were allowed to speak their own dialect.” The director of the production had made a point that all of the actors be free to speak their own dialects, breaking the traditional Oslo West end stage language rule. Therefore, in addition to Oslo West end dialect, spoken by two of the actors brought up on the

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<sup>98</sup> “Når du ikke snakker perfekt norsk, blir du fort ’typecastet.’ Jeg har hatt flere roller som aggressiv gangster, men ønsker jo å spille flere ting enn det.”

<sup>99</sup> “Jeg kan godt tåle avslag på en jobb fordi jeg ikke er god nok. Men jeg kan ikke tåle å få høre at jeg ikke snakker bra nok norsk.”

<sup>100</sup> For more information on this linguistic shift, see Løvhaug 2005.

West side of Oslo, the production had actors speaking dialects from Trønderlag and Sandnes (Kaur 20.03.09). Yet Kaur's accent—and maybe it is time for the *sj* sound to be considered as part of a *dialect* rather than stigmatized as an accent, considering its ubiquity—was not recognized and instead treated as a speech problem, making her feel that her “difference”—already an actress of a different skin colour—was reinforced and even problematic (Kaur 20.03.09). When Busingye Lydersen notes that a possible consequence of the theatre opening up to ethnic diversity is such linguistic diversity, she (Løddesøl 2008) also asks whether the theatre is ready to accept such consequences. The criticism Kaur received from her colleagues would suggest a negative answer.

Since the *Hedda Gabler* production, however, Riksteatret seems to have developed a more open attitude when it comes to accents on stage. In their 2008 production of the classic Norwegian children's book-turned-play *Folk og røvere i Kardemomme by* (*People and Robbers of Cardamom Town*), Riksteatret had a cast of not only ethnically but also linguistically diverse actors: the actors had, like the *Hedda* production, different dialects; some also had accents. The play's reviews were overwhelmingly positive; while generally all the reviews commented on—and applauded—the ethnic diversity on stage, remarks about the linguistic diversity were few, with Lillian Bikset's (2008) review in the newspaper *Dagbladet* one of the only mentioning the issue, or rather, *non-issue*:

This is a Cardamom Town with people of all shapes and colours. Some are light-skinned, some are dark, and others in between. Some speak with accents and some in dialect. Kamomilla (Marte Wexelsen Goksøyr) has Down syndrome. But in this town, the way you talk, how you look, or how many chromosomes you have doesn't matter. Such things actually matter so little that not once are they commented upon throughout the performance, something which just emphasizes how unimportant they are, and how they only become an issue if you make them into one.<sup>101</sup>

It would seem that the language issue—both in regards to dialect and accent—is not as big a deal, especially to theatregoers, as those working in the theatre might think.

At KHiO, however, Lynne (22.10.08) emphasizes that applicants must “have a good command of the Norwegian language.”<sup>102</sup> The statement is a bit vague—what about a person fluent in Norwegian but possessing an accent?—but KHiO's reputation, like Nationaltheatret's, is that one must speak “perfect” Norwegian. Lund Engnes (23.10.08) notes that in this respect, NISS' acceptance criteria is perhaps more lenient in that they take people

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<sup>101</sup> ”Dette er en Kardemommeby der mennesker finnes i alle farger og fasonger. Her er noen lyse i huden, noen er mørke og noen midt imellom. Noen snakker med aksenter og noen snakker dialekt. Kamomilla (Marte Wexelsen Goksøyr) har Downs syndrom. Men i denne byen har det ingenting å si hvordan du snakker, hvordan du ser ut, eller hvor mange kromosomer du har. Det har faktisk så lite å si at det ikke engang bemerkes eller kommenteres underveis, noe som bare understreker hvor uviktig det er og hvordan det bare blir et tema om man gjør det til ett.”

<sup>102</sup> ”beherske det norske språket”

who may have an accent, provided that they have talent: “We take them if they’re good,” she (23.10.08) states, adding that it is exciting for the school’s environment to have multilingual students.

At TITAN, applicants can choose to audition in either Norwegian or English—education at the school is held in both languages<sup>103</sup>, and they have even had students in the program with no prior knowledge of Norwegian. This linguistic openness does not mean, however, that TITAN is not training actors for the Norwegian stage; such students are more the exception than the rule. In the 2008-2010 class, for example, there is only one student, Joshua Speers, who does not speak fluent Norwegian. Speers, a Canadian, is very candid about his future acting prospects; he (TITAN students 14.01.09) acknowledges that his career prospects, until he masters the language, lie more internationally. However, the other students (14.01.09), all Norwegian speakers, while also open to and interested in working internationally, generally express ambitions to act in Norway—some dream of the big institutional theatres such as Nationaltheatret, Det Norske Teatret, and Den Nationale Scene, others want to go the independent route, establish their own theatre companies, explore film and television, or do a combination of all of these things. Hilde Hannah Buvik (20.11.08), an acting teacher at TITAN, maintains that having both English and Norwegian as languages of instruction provides students the opportunity to work both in Norway and overseas, with both national and international artists.

The higher rates of students of minority background and the more open linguistic policies—I refer more to accent than dialect in this case—of NISS and TITAN are in my opinion not mutually exclusive. Linguistic diversity is often a part of cultural diversity, and both of these schools have adopted acceptance criteria that allow room for this. Again, I stress that not all actors of minority background necessarily have accents, but it can be a factor especially for actors not having Norwegian as a native language. A prerequisite for increased ethnic diversity on stage is an openness on the part of both the theatres and the theatre schools to the possibility of this form of linguistic variation.

### **Further issues**

Although actors of minority background are being educated to a growing extent at Oslo theatre schools, they are more commonly being educated at NBX, TITAN, and NISS—schools lower in the theatre education hierarchy—rather than at KHiO. Students from such

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<sup>103</sup> The bilingual education is a rather new development, beginning when McCall became director of the school in 2008. Previously under Hart, all of the classes were held in English (McCall 04.02.09).

schools are increasingly getting engagements on the institutional stage<sup>104</sup>, but as the representatives from the institutional theatres I spoke with indicated, KHiO students for the most part still receive preferential treatment and easier access to the institutional stage. In such a theatre system, where which school one goes to plays such a decisive role in what kind of work one gets afterwards—“Maybe the Norwegian institutional theatre is too educational-based,” muses Bø of Det Norske Teatret (04.11.08 and 10.11.08)—it is no wonder as to why there remains a lack of actors of minority background on the institutional stages of Oslo.

Bø (04.11.08 and 10.11.08), along with Årslund of Oslo Nye Teater (14.10.08) and Aaby of Nationaltheatret (13.10.08), all claim that they experience difficulty in finding qualified actors of minority background, but perhaps this can be linked to the way they seek out actors. A KHiO preference, coupled with a lack of open auditions, in a theatre system with structural barriers against non-State schools and conceptual barriers against non-KHiO schools, is hardly giving actors educated elsewhere than KHiO—in this context of most detriment to those of minority background—a chance.

Oslo Nye Teater, however, still experienced problems finding a suitable actor of Pakistani/Indian background when they used an open audition process for a role in their 2008 production of Sophocles’ *Electra*. Set in a modern-day Pakistani-Norwegian home, this version of *Electra* was the theatre’s main Mangfoldsåret project. Only 12 actors showed up to audition for the role of a Pakistani-Norwegian man; the theatre went on to lament in the newspaper *Aftenposten* the lack of qualified actors of multicultural background in general.

The article (Christiansen 2007) sparked immediate debate, most loudly from the Nordic Black Theatre community. “There are many hungry, good multicultural actors in Norway without jobs,”<sup>105</sup> refuted Nordic Black artistic director Moustache (Aubert 2007b), noting however the responsibility of the theatres to in addition follow up with these actors and give them further opportunities to develop their skills and experience. Actor Banthata Sidzumo Mokgoatsane (Aubert 2007b) noted that the Pakistani/Indian background criterion was too narrow: “There aren’t that many male actors in Norway with that background. Why can’t a Kurd, an Arab, or an Afghani play the role?”<sup>106</sup> Others speculated that Oslo Nye may not have been thorough enough in their advertising of the part, although the audition was

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<sup>104</sup> The news section of NISS’ website (NISS 2009a) shows members of the graduating acting class of 2008 getting engagements at for example Oslo Nye Teater, Den Norske Opera, and Teatret Vårt (in Molde). In 2008, NBX/the former Nordic Black Theatre School graduates were especially visible at Riksteatret in such productions as *Zivil* and *Folk og røvere i kardemomme by*.

<sup>105</sup> “Det er mange sultne, gode flerkulturelle skuespillere i Norge uten jobb.”

<sup>106</sup> “Det er ikke så mange mannlige skuespillere i Norge med den bakgrunnen. Hvorfor kan ikke en kurder, en araber eller en afghaner like gjerne spille rollen?”

posted in two major newspapers as well as on the theatre's website. However, the debate in *Aftenposten* did spark greater awareness of the role, with the theatre receiving a new round of applications from interested actors after all the media attention. "We think we'll find what we're looking for,"<sup>107</sup> *Electra* director Erik Ulfsby (Aubert 2007a), also the director of *Fruen fra Det indiske hav*, commented, and they did: the part was cast, and the show went on.

Riksteatret's Horn was the only theatre representative I talked to who did not mention a difficulty in finding actors of multicultural background. Although Horn (03.12.08) relates that Riksteatret does not normally hold auditions, she explains that the theatre has an extensive network of actors of minority background. This network includes actors Horn has previously used or seen in auditions, when held: since 2005, when Horn came into the position of artistic director at Riksteatret, the theatre has made a conscious effort to cast certain productions more multiculturally; some of these productions have used an audition process, such as their 2006 production of *Hedda Gabler*. Horn (03.12.08) also highlights Nordic Black Theatre as a large part of Riksteatret's network. The artistic director knew Moustache from her days as Minister of Culture (2000-2001), and Nordic Black Theatre, its community, and contacts have remained an important link for her to the multicultural scene. In 2008, Riksteatret partnered with Nordic Black along with another independent theatre, Det Åpne Teater, to put on the multicultural theatre festival TWIST, further strengthening this partnership.

It is interesting that Oslo Nye came out with such a critique of multicultural actors when they, like Riksteatret, have developed a more multicultural profile:

Oslo Nye Teater has in the last few years produced, and will continue to produce, performances that in different ways reflect and take up the diverse cultural picture that exists in Oslo. We have in the past few years used actors, dancers, and other theatre artists of multicultural background to a degree that stands alone in Norwegian theatre, to great joy and artistic benefit for our theatre. This is not the result of long, strategic assessments and political decisions, but a direct consequence of an artistic need and interest from our theatre and its leadership. We need the multicultural artists to make the kind of theatre we as an institution wish to create (Årsland 2007).<sup>108</sup>

Oslo Nye's multicultural network would therefore seem as extensive as Riksteatret's, and the theatre has indeed had successes with their more multiculturally-influenced and/or multiculturally-casted productions such as *Fruen fra Det indiske hav*. Yet the theatre still

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<sup>107</sup> "Vi tror vi skal finne den vi er ute etter."

<sup>108</sup> "Oslo Nye Teater har de siste årene, og vil også fremover produsere forestillinger som på ulikt vist reflekterer og tar opp i seg det mangfoldige kulturbildet som eksisterer i Oslo. Vi har de siste årene engasjert skuespillere, dansere og andre scenekunstnere med flerkulturell bakgrunn i et antall som er helt i særklasse i norsk teater, og har som teater hatt stor glede og kunstneriske utbytte av dette. Dette er ikke resultat av lange, strategiske vurderinger og politiske beslutninger, men en direkte følge av et uttrykksbehov og interesse fra vårt teater og dets ledelse. Vi trenger de flerkulturelle kunstnere for å lage det teateret vi som institusjon ønsker å lage."

claimed a lack of qualified actors of minority background, with artistic director Svein Sturla Hungnes (Christiansen 2007) further stating, “What we often see, is that they are a bit more careful in their expression, more polite.”<sup>109</sup> The word “they” here refers to actors of multicultural background, a statement both uncomfortable in its generalist tone, and a discount to the talent of the multicultural actors the theatre has engaged in previous productions.

Yet if Oslo Nye truly cannot find actors of the level they are looking for, even if they are opening certain roles to auditions and thus looking beyond actors trained in the KHiO system, then, as Moustache asserts, they—and the other institutional theatres—must take charge in the matter. “Norwegian theatres cannot complain about a lack of good multicultural actors if they do not take the responsibility to nurture them,”<sup>110</sup> Moustache (Aubert 2007b) maintains.

In this chapter I have so far discussed theatre education from a more formal perspective, in terms of that I overview theatre schools. However, there are of course other modes of education, and Moustache (Aubert 2007b) brings forth an interesting suggestion:

A few years ago there was a lack of female directors. The theatres then took action and let women apprentice at institutional theatres. Why isn't it possible to do the same to get in more people multicultural background?<sup>111</sup>

This type of training would be beneficial in a number of ways. First of all, apprenticeships provide practical, on-the-job education, and participants would receive the invaluable, firsthand experience of working in a professional theatre. Secondly, participants could establish contacts within the institutional theatre and in the best case scenario be hired back, or at least become a part of the theatre’s network after the project’s close. Further, they would get the opportunity to develop professionally by acting a more diverse range of parts—as Moustache (Aubert 2007b) highlights, “Many multicultural actors are easily picked out for typical ‘immigrant roles’ on the basis of their skin colour, and therefore do not get the broad experience they need.”<sup>112</sup>

Oslo Nye Teater took Moustache’s proposal seriously, announcing in *Aftenposten* (Aubert 2007a) that they would establish two one-year apprenticeships at the theatre for actors of multicultural background, with the plan that the actors be involved in three to four

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<sup>109</sup> “Det vi ofte ser, er at de er litt forsiktigere i uttrykket, mer dannede.”

<sup>110</sup> “Norske teatre kan ikke klage over mangel på gode flerkulturelle skuespillere hvis de ikke tar ansvar for å dyrke dem frem.”

<sup>111</sup> “For noen år siden var det mangel på kvinnelige regissører. Da tok teatrene grep og lot kvinner hospitere på institusjonsteatre. Hvorfor går det ikke an å gjøre det samme for å få inn flere med flerkulturell bakgrunn?”

<sup>112</sup> “Mange flerkulturelle skuespillere lett blir valgt ut til typiske ’innvandrerroller’ på grunnlag av hudfargen sin, og dermed ikke får den brede erfaringen de trenger.”

productions during the year. “Oslo Nye Teater is moving in the right direction,” cited a pleased Moustache (Aubert 2007a), and hoped that the theatre’s efforts would challenge other theatres to do the same. When I spoke to diversity coordinator Aaby at Nationaltheatret, she mentioned a similar idea. However, Aaby (13.10.08) pointed out that such an apprentice program would require more resources, both in terms of time and money, than the theatre has capacity for. Oslo Nye noted the same problem, and applied for funding from both the Oslo municipality and Fritt Ord (The Freedom of Expression Foundation) to fund the project (Årsland 14.10.08). Unfortunately, both applications were turned down, demonstrating even further barriers to achieving cultural diversity on stage.

### **Recommendations**

So what can be done? How can education actually be used to forward to an increase of minority actors on the institutional stages of Oslo?

Identifying the underlying structures of the Norwegian theatre education system is important in understanding how such structures have and continue to contribute to the remaining lack of minority actors on the institutional stage today. Being aware of such structures is also the first step to creating change. Yet there are two different ways to proceed: one can choose to work within the established system and its boundaries to try and forward such change, or one can reject the inhibiting structures and set in motion new ideas and methods of how to really use education to increase minority representation on stage.

If one chooses to accept the status quo of a continuing KHiO-dominated system, then the most obvious solution is to quota students of minority background into the acting line at KHiO. Controversial or not, as Berkaak (2002, 71) writes,

The necessity of establishing quotas is proposed as a way out of the vicious circle we seem to have ended up in. People of multicultural background are not accepted on the basis of lacking qualifications, as they simultaneously fail to get the opportunity to raise these qualifications when they remain shut out of the education system.<sup>113</sup>

If KHiO remains *the* way into the institutional theatre scene in Norway, then they must start accepting more students of multicultural background.

Although KHiO’s Lynne notes that multicultural applicants to the program are few, the fact is that some are making it to the third and final round of auditions, where the applicant pool is drastically reduced to approximately 30 people. In 2006, there was one applicant of minority background in the third round—but was in the end not accepted—and in

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<sup>113</sup> ”Nødvendigheten av kvotering foreslås som en vei ut av den onde sirkel man ser ut til å havne i. De flerkulturelle tas ikke opp på grunn av manglende kvalifikasjoner, samtidig som de ikke får mulighet til å heve disse kvalifikasjonene hvis de blir stående utenfor utdanningssystemet.”

2007, there were four, out of which one was accepted (Løddesøl 2007a). Aaby (13.10.08) states that by this point of the KHiO audition process, all of the applicants are at a certain level: they all have potential, and one cannot foresee how one applicant will develop compared to the other. Forming quotas for multicultural students would therefore not run against the school's main acceptance criteria of talent and quality, when applicants of multicultural background are indeed making it to this final round of auditions.

In addition, KHiO should make good on their word and work concretely to encourage more youth of multicultural background to apply to the program.

Such working within the established system, however, accepts the unjust structures of the Norwegian theatre education system. This is a system, as I have tried to show, that is unfair to students who remain outside the State-approved and especially KHiO modes of education. What really needs to happen, in my opinion, is a breakdown of old attitudes and traditions so that students outside of the State system—an increasing number of whom are of minority background—can compete on a more level playing field with State-school educated actors.

This break is slowly happening, with the diversification of the Norwegian theatre scene and the erosion of the institutional theatres' permanent ensemble tradition; however, the traditional system is still being protected by restrictive mechanisms such as Norsk Skuespillerforbund's membership and audition criteria, as well as the residual recruitment patterns and preferences of the majority of the institutional theatres in Oslo. Such rules, both written and unwritten, are in dire need of being re-examined and assessed.

With the exception of NBX, the newer theatre schools—and here the newer State schools also face the same challenge—maintain that they are competitive alternatives to KHiO in terms of quality of education. As demonstrated, however, there is much disagreement about such statement in the Norwegian theatre community. Yet when those in the institutional theatres generally do not feel the same kind of duty and responsibility to follow the development of students enrolled in these newer programs as they do with the students at KHiO, I cannot help but wonder to what extent their opinions on these newer educations are informed by thorough firsthand experience and knowledge. I would challenge theatre leaders to pay as much attention to non-KHiO students as they do KHiO students before passing judgment on the quality of education at these other theatre schools.

Another possibility in the hopes of increasing ethnic minority representation on stage is to build up the education at NBX, as Berkaak (2002, 71) also recommends in his evaluation of the Open Scene project, to become a recognized and full professionalizing education.

Berkaak (2002, 72) contends that the institutional field may not be the most effective arena to direct efforts right now, as he finds a prevailing resistance towards the integration of minorities into the institutional scene. Rather, “if one supplied Nordic Black Theatre significantly larger means and developed a fully upgraded theatre school there, one would more quickly and with the use of less resources achieve the goal of a higher level of professionalism in the area”<sup>114</sup> (Berkaak 2002, 72). The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (Norway 2008b, 164) too seems in favour of such an approach, making a point in their latest white paper on the performing arts to give extra funding to both Nordic Black Theatre and NBX:

The department has the intention to contribute to secure and develop Nordic Black Theatre and Nordic Black Express’ strength and potential. This theatre shows a diversity of ways to develop, strengthen, and make visible the multicultural performing arts, and in this diversity lies the theatre’s strength and potential.<sup>115</sup>

Yet developing the education at NBX into one which more resembles or fits into the State education system seems a long way ahead, if even desirable or in line with the intention of the school in the first place. As NBX administrative leader Ann-Magritt Børresen (06.11.07) notes, the school retains a lot of freedom when it receives funding from Norsk Kulturråd rather than the Ministry of Education. NBX, for example, can accept students on the basis of their own criteria and truly just on the basis of whether they think the applicants have talent. If they were under the Ministry of Education, the students would have had to first go through the Norwegian school system or its equivalent, a potential barrier should applicants have more informal education or foreign degrees not recognized in Norway (Børresen 06.11.07). Børresen (13.02.09) does note, however, that the difference in funding sources contributes to the school’s lower status in the acting education chain: NBX cannot develop a competitive education to KHiO without the equivalent resources and funding. KHiO, as an established State school, of course gets a much more significant amount of funding from the government—and from the Ministry of Education, which too has a much larger budget than Norsk Kulturråd. This is an amount that neither NBX, nor the private theatre schools, can compete with.

The establishment of the newer theatre schools, each with very different artistic and educational profiles, suggests however that this previous system of having only one school—

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<sup>114</sup> ”Hvis man tilførte Nordic Black Theatre betydelig mer midler og utviklet en fullt oppgradert teaterskole der, ville man raskere og med bruk av mindre ressurser nå målet om en høyere profesjonalitet på området.”

<sup>115</sup> ”Departementet har som intensjon å bidra til å sikre og utvikle Nordic Black Theatre og Nordic Black Express’ styrke og potensial. Dette teatret viser et mangfold i valg av veier for å utvikle, forsterke og synliggjøre den transkulturelle scenekunsten, og i dette mangfoldet ligger teatrets styrke og potensial.”

Statens Teaterhøgskole/KHiO, and thus only one style and method—was not sufficient for the needs of a growing and diversifying theatre sector. McCall (14.01.09) explains, for example, that TITAN was created in reaction to the established Norwegian theatre system, what founder and former director Hart saw as

a control over who is allowed to be an artist in Norway in the theatre arts. So [Hart] had a mission to establish a school that would empower actors to make their own work. Rather than trying to break into the system that exists, it was to empower actors to have the tools to create their own systems for their own needs, and that they would have more creative authority over their work.

McCall (14.01.09) mentions that many have suggested to him to move the school in line with the State or three-year Bachelor system, yet it is precisely this system that TITAN reacts against, and it is not their intention to become part of it.

The greater issue then is not to try and mould these newer theatre programs into KHiO equivalents in terms of style or system, but in terms of status and recognition (and in a perfect world, also in terms of funding), most importantly from the established theatre community—in other words, the students' future employers. Not every acting student wishes to play on the institutional stage, but all of them, regardless of where they are educated, should have a chance at it should they so desire.

Finally, the theatres must expand their patterns of recruitment to include ideally more open auditions—even though Oslo Nye complained about a lack of qualified applicants of minority background, with more publicity surrounding the role they did end up finding suitable actors—or at least, like Riksteatret, establish a wider network that includes both actors of non-KHiO educational background, and actors of minority background.

The Decibel project, led by Dominic Wilson of Nordic Black Theatre, hopes to address this latter point. Based on the British Decibel project (2003-2008), an Arts Council England initiative that worked to raise the profile of minority artists and arts organizations in England<sup>116</sup>, the Norwegian Decibel aims to create “a network where experienced theatre practitioners can meet fresh people with theatre ambitions. The Decibel Project will establish a group of experienced theatre leaders and younger, multicultural actors and groups, to see what both parties can do for one another”<sup>117</sup> (Det Åpne Teater, Nordic Black Theatre and Riksteatret 2008a). Concretely, the project aims to create a catalogue, both online and in paper form, of theatre artists and groups of different genres (e.g. circus, mask) as well as theatre

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<sup>116</sup> For more information on the British Decibel project, see:  
[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project\\_detail.php?rid=3&id=79](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project_detail.php?rid=3&id=79).

<sup>117</sup> ”et nettverk hvor erfarne teaterfolk møter ferske folk med scenekunstambisjoner. Decibel Project skal opprette en gruppe bestående av erfarne teatersjefer og yngre, transkulturelle skuespillere og grupper, for å se hva disse kan gjøre for hverandre.”

schools and amateur theatres. The project will also organize industry nights twice a year where people in the theatre, such as artistic directors, directors, actors, and producers, can meet and network with artists in the Decibel project and view presentations of their work. Finally, the project aims to create opportunities for exchanges and resource-sharing between theatres, for example of actors and directors. One of their ideas is to set in place the apprenticeships that Oslo Nye Teater and Nationaltheatret hoped to.<sup>118</sup> Decibel had its first planning and brainstorming sessions during the TWIST festival in November 2008, with representatives from not only the multicultural and independent scene, but also from institutional theatres such as Riksteatret and Det Norske Teatret. The project is set to launch officially in May 2009, and will hopefully come to attract the attention and involvement of more institutional theatres as it becomes more established.

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<sup>118</sup> Information on the Decibel project gathered from the project's preliminary reports from Dominic Wilson (*Decibel project 2009, Decibel prosjekt Jan '09 2009*).

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis, I discussed how looking at Ibsen, being the acclaimed Norwegian cultural icon, and the way his plays were being produced in Oslo during Mangfoldsåret would give insight into whether the year evolved into more than just political rhetoric. Yet as also discussed, there was a gaping lack of culturally-diverse Norwegian Ibsen performance in Oslo in 2008. What can then be concluded from this?

It would be too narrow to dismiss the year based on my initial criteria. For positive things did come out of Mangfoldsåret within, or in conjunction with, the institutional theatre scene outside of Ibsen performance, most prominently the TWIST festival, the multicultural theatre festival hosted by Riksteatret, Nordic Black Theatre, and Det Åpne Teater. Rather than being a “cultural festival,” as TWIST project manager Beate Svenningsen (19.11.08) relates, referring to a more stereotypical method of presenting different cultures such as having “an African playing the drums” (Svenningsen 19.11.08), the theatres worked to showcase high quality theatre involving artists of multicultural background and/or dealing with multicultural issues. They were successful: the program presented an impressive and diverse collection of local and international acts, from Peter Brook’s internationally-acclaimed *Sizwe Banzi is dead* to new Norwegian drama. Especially impressive was the unprecedented partnership between a large institutional theatre like Riksteatret and two smaller independent theatres such as Nordic Black Theatre and Det Åpne Teater. Svenningsen (19.11.08) notes that cooperation between the three theatres went very well—it was an equal cooperation of mutual respect, especially noteworthy as it was Riksteatret that had initially thought up the idea of having a *mangfoldsfestival* (cultural diversity festival), and had set aside funds from their budget to finance it. As Svenningsen (19.11.08) continues, a large part of Riksteatret’s agenda for Mangfoldsåret and TWIST was to *share power*.

The concept is important: as I worked to demonstrate in the previous chapter, the plight of actors of minority background is not just connected to more obvious or clear-cut discrimination on the basis of skin colour, but also to rigid power structures that lie behind the Norwegian theatre system. While I chose to focus on the hindering structures of the acting education system, there are power structures underlying all layers of the Norwegian theatre—such as the status and funding differences between institutional and independent theatres—and the Norwegian arts scene in general, such as the fact that in 2008 only 17 out of 320 leaders in the arts had non-Scandinavian backgrounds (Brække 2008), with only two out of 28

board members of the major national cultural institutions possessing minority background (Kofstad 2008).

Certain Mangfoldsåret projects worked to address these power structures: the institutional-independent partnership of the TWIST festival, for example, can be seen as a step in breaking down or at least uncovering the prejudices and power structures dividing the institutional and independent theatre scenes, and its successful precedent will hopefully pave the way towards further such collaborations. In terms of the issue of lacking minority representation on the boards of cultural institutions, the Mangfoldsåret secretariat in 2008 initiated the project *Styrende mangfold*, with additional funding and support from Norsk Kulturråd and *Du store verden!*<sup>119</sup>, a project providing training in effective board membership for participants of minority background to increase competence, and ideally representation, in the area.<sup>120</sup>

Yet the body most capable of making inroads into these power structures—the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, from which the majority of arts institutions receive funding—seems hesitant to take a firm grip. Every year, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs issues letters to the government-funded cultural institutions documenting the subsidies they will be granted for the coming year. In 2009, these letters—*tildelingsbrev* for State institutions, and *tilskuddsbrev* for other institutions and organizations—included a new section requiring the institutions to continue work in integrating cultural diversity into their operations.

The new paragraph in the government’s subsidy letters to the institutions reads as follows:

Mangfoldsåret 2008 marked the start of a development where cultural diversity is included as a natural part of Norwegian cultural policy. The goal is a cultural life that facilitates different experiences and perspectives through broad and diverse participation in all aspects, among practitioners as well as decision-makers and audience. The Department assumes that the institutions work out long-term strategies to address cultural diversity in their ordinary activities. This dimension should be rooted in personnel profile, program profile, and audience outreach work<sup>121</sup> (Mangfoldsåret secretariat 2009).

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<sup>119</sup> “Du store verden! is a cooperative network of organisers, NGOs, artist groups and resource persons; uniting cultural and organisational life in the promotion of intercultural artistic and cultural cooperation both within Norway and between Norwegian and international partners” (Du store verden! 2009). For more information, see: [www.du-store-verden.no](http://www.du-store-verden.no).

<sup>120</sup> For more information on the project, see: [www.styrendemangfold.no](http://www.styrendemangfold.no).

<sup>121</sup> ”Mangfoldsåret 2008 markerte starten på en utvikling der det kulturelle mangfoldet inngår som en naturlig del av norsk kulturpolitikk. Målet er et kulturliv som formidler ulike erfaringer og perspektiver gjennom bred og sammensatt deltakelse i alle ledd, så vel blant utøvere som beslutningstakere og publikum. Departementet forutsetter at institusjonene utarbeider langsiktige strategier for å ivareta det kulturelle mangfoldet i sin ordinære virksomhet. Denne dimensjonen bør forankres gjennom personalprofil, programprofil og publikumsarbeid.”

Institutions and organizations receiving the tilskuddsbrev were also required to “give a report on activities in Mangfoldsåret 2008 and strategies to address cultural diversity in their ordinary activities”<sup>122</sup> (Mangfoldsåret sekretariat 2009). The deadline to submit these reports was March 2009.

There are two problems, as I see it, with the letters’ insertions. First of all, the Ministry’s requests are, as outlined here, altogether too vague for the institutions to truly understand what the government is looking for in terms of cultural diversity work, and second of all, consequences, should the institutions fail to comply with the Ministry’s requests, are non-existent.

### **Unclear criteria**

The first issue of unclear aims is not a new theme in discussions about Mangfoldsåret—and neither in terms of previous governmental initiatives in the field of cultural diversity and the arts, as discussed in the Background chapter regarding the resultant operational problems with Mosaikk and Open Scene from unclear and thus variously-interpreted goals. Yet concerning Mangfoldsåret, arts institutions had already before the year expressed confusion and anxiety in regards to the lack of clarity surrounding the initiative, as the Ministry’s orders were that the institutions were to themselves define how they would carry out the government’s cultural diversity goals.

NTO declared that it was difficult to assess which activities should be considered as incorporating cultural diversity when they attempted to catalogue their member organizations’ previous and existing multicultural initiatives in response to the government’s announcement of Mangfoldsåret, as each organization, the association (NTO 2007, 1) found, held a different conception of what the term “cultural diversity” actually meant. Julie M. Løddesøl (2007b), editor of *Scenekunst.no*, wondered how the government would measure success in Mangfoldsåret with such a lack of specific criteria:

Does the culture minister intend to count the number of actors on stage with skin colours other than white after Mangfoldsåret 2008? Is it the number of productions of non-Anglo-American drama on the Norwegian stage that will be counted? Is it the ethnic background of the employees in the institutions that will be counted? Or does the culture minister think that the theatres should tally their audiences’ ethnic backgrounds?<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> ”gi ein rapport om aktivitetar i Mangfaldsåret 2008 og strategiar for å ivareta kulturelt mangfald i den ordinære verksemda.”

<sup>123</sup> ”Mener kulturministeren å telle antall kunstnere på scenen med annan hudfarge enn hvit etter Mangfoldsåret 2008? Er det antall oppsetninger på norske scener av ikke-anglo-amerikansk dramatik som skal telles? Er det den etniske bakgrunnen til de ansatte i institusjonene som skal telles? Eller mener kulturministeren at teatrene skal tallfeste publikums etniske bakgrunn?”

Løddesøl's questions may be facetious, but do highlight the lack of concrete criteria to evaluate the institutions in their attempts to better incorporate cultural diversity both during Mangfoldsåret and in the years to come. How can the institutions satisfy the government's cultural diversity goals when they have no concrete measures to hold themselves to, and how can they be evaluated by criteria that is not even clearly outlined to them?

Former Nationaltheatret artistic director Stubø (Berg 2007b) expressed another important concern: "I think Mangfoldsåret has a bit of a vague profile. We've been requested to ourselves define what we will do, and that's fine, but there also lies something potentially non-binding in that."<sup>124</sup> It is this potential lack of commitment and thus *concrete action*, stemming from the missing specificity not only in the Mangfoldsåret profile as Stubø names, but also in the subsidy letters denoting expectations for after the year, that I am especially concerned about.

The Ministry's latest white paper on the performing arts, *Bak kulissene* (Norway 2008b), includes a chapter on cultural diversity which helps to fill in *some* of the blanks of the new cultural diversity clause in the 2009 subsidy letters (which then also leads to the question of why the subsidy letters were so vague in their wording). In the white paper, the Ministry (Norway 2008b, 164) encourages the institutions to update their repertoires such that they become more relevant to a minority population, train and recruit actors and other types of practitioners of minority background, cooperate with local, regional, and national practitioners and organizations with competence in the multicultural field, and develop strategies to attract a more diverse audience to the institutions. While these suggestions provide a bit more insight into the ways the government expects the institutions to work with cultural diversity, they could, however, still be more specific: how large of a proportion of multicultural practitioners does the Ministry expect? What kind of repertoire is considered "relevant" to minority groups? Upon what criteria will the strategies the institutions are supposed to develop be evaluated? In other words, the government's expectations are still not outlined specifically enough for the institutions to have a clear idea about what, and how much, they have to do to satisfy the government's cultural diversity intentions.

What is further strange about this lack of clarity and firmness is the Norwegian government's track record of great displays of resolution in issues regarding other marginalized groups. This can be seen most prominently in the area of gender, such as the recent government legislation which demanded that all publicly traded companies in Norway

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<sup>124</sup> "Jeg synes Mangfoldsåret fremstår med en litt vag profil. Vi er blitt bedt om å selv definere hva vi skal gjøre, og det er for så vidt bra, men det ligger også noe potensielt uforpliktende der."

make sure that 40% of all boardroom positions be held by women by January 1, 2008, or else face closure. The concrete target, fixed deadline, and strong threat worked; in 2008, the proportion of women on boards had risen to 44.2%, compared to 6% in 2002, making Norway the country with the highest representation of women on boards in the developed world (Williamson 2008).

In the previous chapter I noted that KHiO stands against the idea of establishing quotas for minority students in the school's acting line, even though they quota men into the program each year. Giske also holds this double-standard when it comes to quotas: he remains against the idea of setting quotas for minority actors—"We only succeed when actors of minority background get roles because they are good actors, and not because they belong to one ethnic group or another"<sup>125</sup> (Giske cited in Brække 2008)—but interestingly does not hesitate to set such quotas when it comes to the gender issue in the arts. Giske, dissatisfied with the lack of women in key positions in the Norwegian film industry, demanded in 2008 that women's representation in areas such as screenwriting, directing, and producing increase to 40% by 2010, or quotas would be installed to achieve this desired gender representation (Larsen 2008). *Bak kulissene* (Norway 2008b, 164) does mention that the Ministry will "contribute to people of minority background getting appointed to the institutions' boards,"<sup>126</sup> but again, provides no further specifications. Without set numbers or targets, I do not perceive this a quota tactic.

Establishing quotas is of course not the only method available to achieving greater minority representation, especially when it comes to my focus on increasing the number of multicultural actors on the Norwegian stage. My survey of recent Oslo multicultural Ibsen productions in the chapter, "Ibsen performance in Oslo, 2008," and the different artistic methods they used, each forwarding—whether intentionally or not—to greater minority representation on stage, demonstrate that artistic style and method, dramaturgical interpretation, and new writing are also viable ways of attaining a more culturally-diverse cast. The Ministry (Norway 2008b, 164) too has stressed this point that aesthetic diversity can open the door to ethnic diversity, and that the institutions' repertoires must be expanded. In 2008, such methods leading to more diverse casts were used, to varying degrees (but still not in Ibsen production), by the institutional theatres in Oslo. Oslo Nye Teater's Pakistani-Norwegian version of Sophocles' *Electra* called for a cast of actors of minority background

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<sup>125</sup> "Vi lykkes først når skuespillere med minoritetsbakgrunn får roller fordi de er dyktige skuespillere, og ikke fordi de tilhører en eller annen etnisk minoritet."

<sup>126</sup> "bidra til at personer med minoritetsbakgrunn blir oppnevnt til institusjonenes styrever."

(although as mentioned, their very traditional *A Doll's House* used an all-white cast of actors, all of whom were also Statens Teaterhøgskole-educated). Riksteatret, in addition to the TWIST festival, blindly-cast their production of *Folk og røvere i Kardemomme by* (*People and Robbers of Cardamom Town*), showing that the classics can indeed also incorporate multiculturalism. The theatre also commissioned the new work *Zivil*, designated to be acted specifically by a cast of multicultural actors.

Det Norske Teatret experienced great success with *Jungelboka* (*The Jungle Book*), which they updated with hip hop, street dance and pop music. The theatre used some of the best dancers and choreographers in the business, many of whom come from culturally-diverse backgrounds. The production truly encapsulated the Ministry's belief that aesthetic diversity can lead to ethnic diversity, both on and off the stage: the production attracted a new audience to the theatre comprising mainly of youth from 12 to 19 years of age, many of whom were also of minority background (Løddesøl 2009). Det Norske Teatret artistic director Vidar Sandem (Rydne 2008) asserts that *Jungelboka* was the theatre's most important production of 2008, and promises to continue to work to attract this new audience back to the theatre.

I summarized in the chapter on Ibsen performances in 2008 Nationaltheatret's Mangfoldsåret efforts, noting my disappointment with the fact that the majority of their Mangfoldsåret engagements were one-off or short-run events, and my frustration with *Verdensfortellinger*, the theatre's most self-consciously Mangfoldsåret effort that turned out a haphazard performance. Nationaltheatret, however, did appoint a diversity coordinator and wrote up a cultural diversity strategy plan for 2008-2012, with plans to develop a cross-cultural stage expression, help nurture multicultural artists, cooperate further with other theatre institutions (including independent groups), and attract audiences of minority background to the theatre (Nationaltheatret 2007). Only time will tell how far Nationaltheatret comes with this plan, and how high of a priority cultural diversity truly stands for the theatre.

In general, it really is only time that will tell how the Oslo institutional theatres proceed from their Mangfoldsåret work in 2008, for the lack of concrete governmental demands could lead to inaction on the part of the theatres. Oslo Nye Teater and Riksteatret have for the past several years before Mangfoldsåret set cultural diversity high on the agenda, so it can be assumed that they will continue in this direction. After *Jungelboka*, it seems that Det Norske Teatret is motivated to carry on efforts to target a younger and more multicultural audience, and one can only hope that Nationaltheatret brings its cultural diversity plan into fruition.

## Unclear consequences

My fears of inaction, however, are further compounded by Giske and the Ministry's ambivalent position on the subject of punishment should institutions fail to achieve the government's (unclear) cultural diversity goals. In 2007, Giske warned several times<sup>127</sup> of budgetary penalties should arts institutions fail to comply with the cultural diversity demands of Mangfoldsåret. In February 2008, however, Giske denied having made this threat ("–Mangfoldsåret" 2008). The subsidy letters sent out to arts institutions in early 2009 neither mention the possibility of punishment, economic or otherwise, instead just stating the cited vague requests. I am curious as to why Giske is sending such confused signals instead of making firm demands on the cultural institutions, when he and his department are so insistent that Mangfoldsåret work continue after 2008, and that cultural diversity become a part of the institutions' normal activities.

Even though Giske has been so contradictory in his penalty warnings, and the 2009 subsidy letters contain no such threat, Ellen Stokland (04.02.09), advisor in the Mangfoldsåret secretariat (instated by and working for the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs), acknowledges that "there is only one way the institutions can be punished, and that is on the budget." This makes sense in an arts system dominated by government funding. However, Stokland (04.02.09) also notes that "it is not common that subsidies are reduced, so it is rather the level of/lack of increase in subsidies that can be considered 'punishment'."

I understand of course that inflation is an economic concern and often reality, so not receiving or just receiving a minimal increase in subsidies does have the potential of hurting institutions financially. Yet I cannot help but view such penalties more as slaps on the wrist than effective punishment actually forwarding to increased motivation to work for cultural diversity. Where is the government's conviction—how can they demand the arts scene to truly incorporate cultural diversity when they fail to lay down real consequences for institutions that fail to perform? As seen in the case of the quotas instated for women on company boards, strict and clearly-outlined consequences were a huge motivating factor for companies to comply, and in a timely manner, to the government's stipulations. Sigrun Vageng (Toomey 2008), an executive director of Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon (NHO or the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, the main representative body for Norwegian businesses), admits, "We thought that the threat of closing companies if they did not comply

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<sup>127</sup> See for example Løddesøl 2007a, 2007b, and 2007c.

was quite ridiculous. But now we have to acknowledge that *it is only because of the law and the public debate it provoked that real change has happened*” (emphasis added).

For although I do agree with Stokland when she (04.02.09) asserts that “there has definitely been a raise in consciousness around these issues [about cultural diversity], and more people in the sector talk about it,” no *structural* changes have been imposed by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs to ensure that such focus on cultural diversity issues continue. However, after observing the Ministry’s reluctance to impose concrete demands that would lead quicker and more effectively to changes in the system, I have to content myself with this raise in awareness, and hope that the institutions are self-motivated and disciplined enough to continue with cultural diversity work. In this regard Stokland does provide some encouraging examples, such as the institutions’ commitment to the Lederforum initiative started by the Mangfoldsåret secretariat in 2008. Lederforum is a series of meetings with the directors of the large State-funded arts institutions in Oslo, held to discuss strategies on diversity, conceptions of quality, and how to re-innovate modern institutions (Stokland 04.02.09). Stokland (04.02.09) relates that the institutions involved have decided to continue this forum after Mangfoldsåret with biannual meetings, and I hope this is a symbol that the institutions truly wish to keep up not only a dialogue, but also efforts to incorporate cultural diversity on a long-term basis. Further, with projects such as Styrende Mangfold and the Decibel project, resources for arts institutions are being built up, and practitioners of multicultural background are gaining greater visibility.

It is not only, however, these structures more clearly connected to and affecting cultural diversity that must be addressed. As I went through in the chapter, “Structural barriers: Acting education in Norway,” there are structures underlying the greater Norwegian theatre system that impinge on actors in general, meaning that those of minority background are affected in a more indirect, yet as acute way. These structures, ranging from institutional theatre traditions to more visible rules set by established bodies such as Norsk Skuespillerforbund, are too in dire need of reassessment. More than a “Year of Cultural Diversity,” such a holistic re-examination and restructuring of the Norwegian theatre system would not only make the theatre a fairer and more balanced place for these actors, but for *all* actors working in the system.

## Ibsen and cultural diversity

And what about Ibsen—where does he fit into this picture?

It is clear that Ibsen was not made out to be important in the context of Mangfoldsåret. None of the institutional theatres in Oslo produced a multicultural Ibsen performance in 2008; the only multiculturally-influenced Ibsen production during the cultural diversity year remains the independent project *Det vidunderlige*, which unfortunately cannot have the same effect as a major institutional theatre Ibsen project would have had due to budgetary, publicity, and status circumstances.

So why were there no multicultural Ibsen performances produced by Oslo institutional theatres in Mangfoldsåret 2008? The institutional theatres have, as outlined, undertaken other Mangfoldsåret projects, to varying degrees of effort and success, yet by failing to connect the national icon of Ibsen with today's multicultural reality, they have missed a golden opportunity to demonstrate that they are truly willing to open up to cultural diversity. I think back to the proclamations before Mangfoldsåret—Trond Giske's especially, when he (2006) claimed, "We have not reached the goal until a Pakistani actor can play Peer Gynt or Nora without anyone thinking that it's anything special."<sup>128</sup> It becomes impossible to achieve this goal when none of the institutional theatres dared to even try anything multicultural in relation to Ibsen in Mangfoldsåret 2008. And why not? I am reminded also of the strong statements of those institutional theatres in 2006 who multiculturalized their Ibsen Year contributions: Horn's follow-up on her cultural diversity promises for Riksteatret with, "Therefore I choose such an interpretation of Hedda Gabler when we choose the pieces that will mark the 2006 Ibsen Year"<sup>129</sup> (Riksteatret 2005), and Oslo Nye Teater's statement, "We have chosen the Indian Bollywood film narrative form as the external framework for our contribution to the Ibsen Year"<sup>130</sup> (2006). Oslo Nye may have denied that the motives behind their multicultural choice were political—"Our goal is to create art, not politics,"<sup>131</sup> stated director Ulfsby (Orref 2006)—yet they cannot avoid the fact that such action, especially in the contemporary socio-political situation of Norway, inadvertently makes a political statement. It is an important statement, indicating that the theatre and Ibsen are open to everyone—that Norwegian cultural life and heritage belong to everybody, not least because it can be updated. Yet such statements

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<sup>128</sup> "Vi er ikke i mål før en pakistansk skuespiller kan spille Peer Gynt eller Nora uten at noen tenker over at det er noe spesielt."

<sup>129</sup> "Derfor velger jeg en slik tolkning av Hedda Gabler når vi plukker ut stykkene som skal prege Ibsenåret 2006." From hereafter, all translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

<sup>130</sup> "Vi har valgt den indiske Bollywood-filmens fortellerform som ytre ramme for vårt bidrag til Ibsen-året."

<sup>131</sup> "Målet vårt er å skape kunst, ikke politikk."

need continual follow-up to be able to carry any sort of weight—one-time stunts do not create long-lasting change.

As I have tried to demonstrate in this thesis, the continuing case of white-washed Ibsen performances is not just a clean-cut case of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, but rather, discrimination also on the basis of firm traditions in regards to hiring procedures, conceptions of quality, and educational background, with consequences that are harshly felt by actors of minority background. Therefore, in order to achieve a more sustainable and meaningful multicultural penetration into Ibsen performance, we must begin looking at the system as a whole. Ibsen has been a useful framework in my investigation into Mangfoldsåret and the institutional theatre system in Norway, as the rules governing the production of his works are also the rules of the wider Norwegian theatre system. The institutional theatres in Oslo may have loosened a bit of their grip on these rules in their Mangfoldsåret projects of 2008—although again: *with no imposed structural changes, how this development will proceed remains uncertain*—but they are still holding fast to Ibsen.

Immediately after Mangfoldsåret, however, there came a promising signal, not from an institutional theatre in Oslo, but an institutional theatre in northern Norway. Hålogaland Teater, the regional theatre based in Tromsø and serving the North Norway region, premiered a *Vikings of Helgeland* in January 2009 with Issaka Sawadogo, an actor originally from Burkina Faso, in one of the play's leading roles. Sawadogo in fact first came to Norway in connection to Ibsen—Nationaltheatret had a cooperation with Sawadogo's theatre group in Burkina Faso, and invited them to Norway to perform their *Peer Gynt* as an international guest act at the 1992 Ibsen Stage Festival—and in 2009 finally got the chance to play Ibsen again on the Norwegian stage.

Sawadogo, however, is one of the few actors of minority background making it regularly onto the institutional stages of Norway, seen previously for example at Det Norske Teatret, Nationaltheatret, and Riksteatret. His breakthrough has of course taken much time and effort, and he (Østrem 2009) speaks of his initial struggles in the Norwegian theatre scene largely due to the issue of language: "It was a strange experience to see how not being able to speak the Norwegian languages excluded...In Norway it was like I didn't exist until I cracked the language code."<sup>132</sup> Fortunately for Sawadogo, he met people in the institutional theatre field who offered him opportunities. "Therefore," he (Østrem 2009) notes, "I don't struggle

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<sup>132</sup> "Det var en rar opplevelse å se hvordan det å ikke kunne de norske språkene ekskluderte...I Norge var jeg som luft inntil språkkoden var knekt."

anymore as an African actor in Norway. Now I know how I can make myself more visible.”<sup>133</sup>

They are precisely these issues of visibility, networking, access, and credentials that continue to hinder actors of minority background, in Ibsen production and in the greater Norwegian theatre scene. For Sawadogo’s success to be repeated by others of multicultural background, the hierarchical theatre system in Norway must be addressed. It is this system that has stood the central obstacle hindering official governmental cultural diversity policy, unfortunately policy that has neither been clear nor firm enough to spur structural change in the system. Mangfoldsåret thus became only as successful as the institutions’ efforts; now after the cultural diversity year, the future of the multiculturalization process in the Norwegian theatre still lies in institutional hands. It remains up to them to rise up to the challenge, and address the unjust theatre system in which they stand complicit.

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<sup>133</sup> ”Derfor sliter jeg ikke lenger som afrikansk skuespiller i Norge. Nå vet jeg hvordan jeg kan gjøre meg selv synlig.”

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### **Personal communication**

**(name, title, organization, date of interview [dd.mm.yy.])**

### **Interviews**

Margrethe Aaby, *mangfoldskoordinator* (diversity coordinator) and producer, Nationaltheatret, 13.10.08

Bjørn Birch, artistic director, Akershus Teater, 27.1.09

Hilde Hannah Buvik, acting teacher, TITAN, 20.11.08

Ola Bø, dramaturg, Det Norske Teatret, 04.11.08 and 10.11.08

Ann-Magritt Børresen, administrative leader, NBX, 06.11.07

Richa Chandra, administrative director, Damini House of Culture, 05.12.07

Ba Clemetsen, festival director and head of fundraising, Nationaltheatret, 05.08.08

Jim Hart, former director, TITAN, 01.02.08

Ellen Horn, artistic director, Riksteatret 03.12.08

Lavleen Kaur, actress, 29.05.08

Bente Lavik, head of the acting line, NISS, 23.10.08

Anne-Marthe Lund Engnes, acting teacher, NISS, 23.10.08

Brendan McCall, director, TITAN, 14.01.09

Naziha Searle-Lien and Stefan Thomas Lien, actress and writer respectively, 11.01.09

Ellen Stokland, advisor, Mangfoldsåret sekretariat, 22.10.08

Beate Svenningsen, project manager, Riksteatret, 19.11.08

TITAN students (2008-2010 class), 14.01.09:

Christine Albertsen

Dushinka Andresen

Anette-Marie Bakkerud Antonsen

Jahn Gorakh Bremdal  
Tone Malina Brustad  
Ellen Thuve Dahm  
Kristina Eikebråten  
Mette Fjæreide  
Hanne Greger  
Inger Beathe Tangen Kvalnes  
Christine Økland Larsen  
Wenche Margrethe Lyngstad  
Renate Hansen Reinsve  
Janne Helen Reum  
Siri Skjelbred  
Joshua Speers

Ida Willassen, information consultant, Norsk Skuespillerforbund, 21.10.08

Erik Årslund, public relations manager, Oslo Nye Teater, 14.10.08

### **Telephone conversations**

Even Lynne, head of the acting line, KHiO, 22.10.08

### **Email correspondence**

Margrethe Aaby, *mangfoldskoordinator* (diversity coordinator) and producer, Nationaltheatret, 05.02.09

Hilde Hannah Buvik, acting teacher, TITAN, 06.01.09

Ann-Magritt Børresen, administrative leader, NBX, 13.02.09

Lavleen Kaur, actress, 20.03.09

Brendan McCall, director, TITAN, 09.01.09, 13.01.09, and 04.02.09

Ellen Stokland, advisor, Mangfoldsåret secretariat, 04.02.09

Ida Willassen, information consultant, Norsk Skuespillerforbund, 31.10.08

## APPENDIX A

### Ibsen performances<sup>134</sup> in Oslo, 2006-2008<sup>135</sup>

#### 2006

Play	Company	Venue	Performance run (Oslo <sup>136</sup> ) [dd.mm]	Notes
<i>Nora – The Moving Picture Show</i>	Teater Fusentast	University of Oslo	03.01	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
		Nationaltheatret	26.08	
<i>Peer Gynt – Verdensborger av gemytt / Peer Gynt – World citizen by nature</i>	Peer Gynt as	Hurtigruten ship MS Midnatsol, docked in Oslo	21.01 – 22.01	
		Oslo Nye Teater	24.08 – 04.11	
<i>Past is Simulation: The ladies of the sea vs. Nora, and other stories of the society</i>	herStay	herStay Studio	10.02	
		Rådhuset	28.04	
		Slottsparken	29.04	
		Senter for Ibsen-studier	15.07	
		Rådhusgalleriet	18.08	
		Universitets Aula	21.08	
		Kulturnatt Oslo	15.09	
		Black Box Teater	23.11 – 26.11	
<i>Hærmennene på Helgeland (The Vikings of Helgeland)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	26.02	

<sup>134</sup> When I speak of Ibsen performances I use a broad conception, including productions adhering to Ibsen's text, adaptations in dance and other stage mediums, as well as new works based on or inspired by Ibsen's life and/or works. I do, however, limit the listing to stage productions, rather than including film.

<sup>135</sup> I have only included professional productions. The following lists also present a combination of Oslo theatre and theatre groups' own productions, as well as national and international guest performances (international companies are indicated by citing their countries in parentheses). Data is from the repertoire database of Ibsen.net, Ibsen.net's listing of "øvrige scenekunstproduksjoner" ("other theatre productions") (Ibsen.net 2008), as well as my own records during the time I lived in Oslo relevant to the research (August 2007 – December 2008).

<sup>136</sup> If touring productions, I list the dates performed in Oslo.

<i>Ibsen kvinner – Sett en ørn i bur / Ibsen women – put an eagle in a cage</i>	Visjoner	Nasjonalbiblioteket	08.03	
<i>Peer Gynt</i>	Teater Manu	Teater Manu  Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	16.03 – 18.03  20.04 – 23.04  29.08	
<i>Fruen fra Det indiske hav (The Lady from the Indian Ocean)</i>	Oslo Nye Teater	Oslo Nye Teater	24.03 – 31.05	<i>Video recording viewed 07.11.07</i>
<i>Gildet på Solhaug (The Feast at Solhaug)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	02.04	
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Kraftlaget	MS Innvik  Sandermosen stasjon	30.04 – 02.05  21.10 – 05.12	
<i>Peer Gynt</i>	Oslo Barne & Ungdomsteater	Kulturkirken Jakob	08.05 – 10.05	
<i>Et dukkehjem i Wesselsgate 15 (A Doll's House in 15 Wessel Street)</i>	Visjoner	Norsk Folkemuseum	20.05 – 17.09	
<i>En aften med Peer Gynt</i>	Toralv Maurstad	Nationaltheatret	26.05 – 01.06 25.10 – 26.10	
<i>Ibsenvariasjoner (Ibsen variations)</i>	Kulturarena Bærum	Holmlia Bibliotek	08.06	
<i>“Markblomster og potteplanter” – Ibsens dikt i ord og toner (“Wild flowers and potted plants” – Ibsen’s poetry in words and tones)</i>	Ola B. Johannessen	Kammermusikk-festivalen  Nasjonalbiblioteket	16.08  15.09	
<i>Hedda Go Lucky!</i>	Cirkus Khaoom	Kulturkirken Jakob	22.08 – 29.08	
<i>Sancthansnatten (St. John’s Night)</i>	Nord-Trønderlag Teater	Parkteatret	23.08 – 24.08	
<i>Lille Eyolf (Little Eyolf)</i>	Den Nationale Scene	Riksteatret	24.08	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Henrik Ibsens samlede verker på 68 minutter (Henrik Ibsen’s collected works in</i>	Andre Buskevekster AS	Victoria Teater	24.08 – 18.11	

<i>68 minutes)</i>				
<i>Gengangere (Ghosts)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	24.08.2006 – 13.02.2007	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Et dukkehjem (A Doll's House)</i>	Vegard Vinge / Ida Müller	Grusomhetens Teater	25.08 – 26.08	
<i>TanGhost</i>	POS Theatre Company	Christiania Theatre	25.08 – 2.09 02.10 – 04.10	Premiered 2004  <i>Video recording viewed 03.12.08</i>
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	25.08.2006 – 14.06.2007	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Når vi døde... (When we dead...)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	26.08 – 16.11	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Byggmester Solness</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	26.08.2006 – 19.03.2007	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Når vi døde våkner (When We Dead Awaken)</i>	Rogaland Teater	Riksteatret	27.08	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Kobieta Z Morza (The Lady from the Sea)</i>	Teatr Dramatyczny (Poland)	Nationaltheatret	28.08 – 29.08	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Double Nora</i>	Natori Theatre (Japan)	Nationaltheatret	29.08 – 30.08	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Historien om den ville anda (The Story of the Wild Duck)</i>	Pocketteatret	Riksteatret	31.08	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Petur Gautur (Peer Gynt)</i>	Thjodleikhúsid (Iceland)	Nationaltheatret	31.08 – 01.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>John Gabriel Borkman</i>	Dramaten (Sweden)	Nationaltheatret	01.09 – 02.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Et dukkehjem (A Doll's House)</i>	Damini House of Culture	Nationaltheatret  Stovner Bydelssalen	01.09 – 02.09  03.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Video recording viewed 05.12.07</i>

<i>Villanden (The Wild Duck)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	02.09 – 14.10	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz (Germany)	Nationaltheatret	05.09 – 06.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Nora</i>	The Dostoyevskiy Museum/Bjelij Teatr (Russia)	Nationaltheatret	05.09 – 06.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Brand</i>	Teatrul National Radiofonic (Romania)	Kulturkirken Jakob	06.09 – 07.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Gynt</i>	Betty Nansen Teatret (Denmark)	Nationaltheatret	07.09 – 09.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Riksteatret	Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	07.09 – 09.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Video recording viewed 23.04.08</i>
<i>Etter Hedda (After Hedda)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	07.09 – 14.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Der borte (Over There)</i>	Det Åpne Teater	Det Åpne Teater	08.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	China Hangzhuo Yue Opera (China)	Nationaltheatret	08.09 – 09.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Henrik og Emilie (Henrik and Emilie)</i>	Riksteatret & Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	08.09 – 09.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Ibsen International Short Text Challenge</i>	Det Åpne Teater	Det Åpne Teater	09.09 – 10.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Come Freedom, Come / Freedom</i>	Nanzikambe (Malawi)	Det Åpne Teater	11.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  Plays from Ibsen International Short Text

				Challenge
<i>Peer Gynt</i>	Compañía Teatre Romea (Spain)	Nationaltheatret	12.09 – 13.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>O Pequeno Eyolf (Little Eyolf)</i>	Talu Produções & Marketing (Brazil)	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	12.09 – 13.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Pause/The Chair/Afternoon of the Hussars/Damage</i>	Artistas Unidos (Portugal)	Det Åpne Teater	13.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  Plays from Ibsen International Short Text Challenge
<i>Tretten år på skrå – Henrik Ibsen i teatret 1851-64 (Thirteen years on a slant – Henrik Ibsen in the theatre 1851-64)</i>	Morten Jostad	Teatermuseet i Oslo	13.09 – 14.09	
<i>The Ibsen Hut</i>	a smith	Nationaltheatret	14.09 – 15.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>The Death of Little Ibsen</i>	Wakka Wakka Productions (USA)	Nationaltheatret	14.09 – 16.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hedda – En erotisk dødsrute (Hedda – An erotic road to death)</i>	Betty Nansen Teatret (Denmark)	Nationaltheatret	14.09 – 16.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Lille Eyolf (Little Eyolf)</i>	Nationaltheatret & Riksteatern (Swedish national touring theatre)	Nationaltheatret	14.09 – 16.09 21.11 – 29.11	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Vildanden (The Wild Duck)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	16.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  Premiered 2004
<i>Utflukt (Evasion)</i>	Kazantsev Centre for Contemporary Drama and Staging (Russia)	Det Åpne Teater	16.09	Part of 2006 Ibsen Stage Festival  Play from Ibsen

				International Short Text Challenge
<i>Nóra</i>	József Attila Színház	Bygdelagssam- skipnaden konferansesenter	16.09	
<i>Ibsens smårips + September (Ibsen's little girls + September)</i>	Opera Vest	Black Box Teater	06.10 – 10.10	
<i>Suzannah</i>	Cinnober Teater	Black Box Teater	14.10 – 15.10	
<i>Når vi døde våkner (When We Dead Awaken)</i>	ARW Prosjektteater	Adamstuen Omsorgssenter  Cathinka Guldberg- senteret  St. Hanshaugen Eldresenter  Grusomhetens Teater	23.10  31.10  07.11  10.12	
<i>Keiser og galileer (Emperor and Galilean)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	11.11 – 22.12	

## 2007

Play	Company	Venue	Performance run (Oslo)	Notes
<i>NoNameDance</i>	herStay	Senter for Ibsen- studier  Nasjonalmuseet  Volapüks Vårfestival	27.04 – 29.04 12.06 16.08 – 17.08  03.05 – 13.05  26.05	
<i>NORA...! "Jeg er først og fremst et menneske!"</i>	Akershus Teater	Black Box Teater	13.05	Premiered 2006 (in Akershus)  <i>Excerpt of monologue attended live 08.03.08 (presentation at International Women's Day</i>

				<i>celebration organized by Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet [The Directorate of Integration and Diversity]), also in possession of manuscript</i>
<i>Nora's Freedom</i>	Jhuma Basak	Det Åpne Teater	26.05	
<i>Gengangere (Ghosts)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	24.08.2006 – 13.02.2007	Premiered 2006
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	25.08.2006 – 14.06.2007 7.11.2007 – 3.06.2008	Premiered 2006 <i>Attended live 13.11.07</i>
<i>Når vi døde... (When we dead...)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	05.01.2007 – 13.01.2007 13.04.2007 – 20.04.2007	Premiered 2006
<i>Byggmester Solness (The Master Builder)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	26.08.2006 – 19.03.2007	Premiered 2006
<i>Vildanden (The Wild Duck)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	23.02 – 09.05	Premiered 2004
<i>Gengangere (Ghosts)</i>	Vegard Vinge / Ida Müller	Black Box Teater	15.09 – 23.09	
<i>Kaldt produkt (Cold Product)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	16.11.2007 – 19.01.2008	
<i>Peer Gynt / Bergljot</i>	Den Norske Opera	Den Norske Opera	27.11	
<i>Ibsens engler (Ibsen's angels)</i>	Nordland Teater	Christiania Teater	27.11 – 28.11	

## 2008

<b>Play</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Performance run (Oslo)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Kaldt produkt (Cold Product)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret (Torshovteatret)	16.11.2007 – 19.01.2008	Premiered 2007

<i>Vildanden (The Wild Duck)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	25.01 – 23.02	Premiered 2004  <i>Attended live</i> 23.02.08
<i>Peer Gynt – Verdensborger av gemytt (Peer Gynt – World citizen by nature)</i>	Peer Gynt as	Oslo Konserthus	16.04 – 18.04	Premiered 2006
<i>Et dukkehjem i Wesselsgate 15 (A Doll's House in 15 Wessel Street)</i>	Visjoner	Norsk Folkemuseum	06.05 – 13.06	Premiered 2006
<i>Brand</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	02.05 – 18.05  18.09 –	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live</i> 06.09.08
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	The Great Pretenders	MS Innvik	05.08	<i>Attended live</i> 05.08.08
<i>Bloody Dramatic Rooms</i>	Inger Astri Kobbevik Stephens	Det Åpne Teater	27.08 – 03.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live</i> 02.09.08
<i>Rosmersholm</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	28.08 – 28.10	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live</i> 04.09.08
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Stockholm Stadsteater (Sweden)	Nationaltheatret	29.08 – 30.08	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Et dukkehjem (A Doll's House)</i>	Oslo Nye Teater	Oslo Nye Teater	29.08 – 08.11	<i>Attended live</i> 30.09.08
<i>Ghosts</i>	Mordad Theatre Group (Iran)	Nationaltheatret	01.09 – 02.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>The Wild Duck</i>	Katona József Theatre (Hungary)	Nationaltheatret	02.09 – 03.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live</i> 03.09.08

<i>En folkefiende (An Enemy of the People)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	03.09 –	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live 10.09.08</i>
<i>Nora's Daughters</i>	Mutumbela Gogo (Mozambique)	Nationaltheatret	04.09 – 05.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival <i>Attended live 05.09.08</i>
<i>I skyggen av Nora (In the Shadow of Nora)</i>	Nordtrønderlag Teater	Nationaltheatret	08.09 – 09.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live 08.09.08</i>
<i>The Wild Duck</i>	Deutsches Theater (Germany)	Nationaltheatret	09.09 – 10.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hvite hester (White Horses)</i>	Teater Ibsen	Nationaltheatret	11.09 – 13.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  <i>Attended live 13.09.08</i>
<i>Matthäuspassion (St. Matthew Passion)</i>	Centraltheater Leipzig (Germany)	Nationaltheatret	12.09 – 13.09	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival
<i>Hedda Gabler</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	7.11.2007 – 3.06.2008  12.09.2008 – 13.09.2008	Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival  Premiered 2006  <i>Attended live 13.11.07 (remount production)</i>
<i>Det vidunderlige (The Marvellous)</i>	Project initiated by the Intercultural Museum in Oslo	MS Innvik	02.11 – 12.11	<i>Attended live 03.11.08</i>

## APPENDIX B

### Participation in other theatre/Mangfoldsåret activities

#### Performances

##### 2007

Play	Company	Venue	Date attended (dd.mm)	Notes
<i>Fordi jeg fortjener det (Because I deserve it)</i>	Maritea Dæhlin Sitchet-Kanda	MS Innvik	12.09	
<i>Eg er vinden (I am the wind)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	03.10	
<i>Lola and her red shoes dancing with Cirkus Polski</i>	Enstad & Nilseng	Black Box Teater	06.09	Part of Nationaltheatret's biennial Samtidsfestivalen (Contemporary Stage Festival), organized in conjunction with Black Box Teater and Det Åpne Teater
<i>innvandrere (immigrant)</i>	a smith	Unge Kunstneres Samfund	24.10	
<i>Romeo og Julie in Rap! (Romeo and Juliet in Rap!)</i>	Nordic Black Theatre	MS Innvik	25.10	
<i>Glassmenasjeriet (The Glass Menagerie)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	27.10	
<i>ME NO YOU</i>	a smith & Rasmus Jørgensen	Black Box Teater	03.11	
<i>Vi har en drøm (We have a dream)</i>	Nordic Black Express	MS Innvik	19.12	

##### 2008

Play	Company	Venue	Date attended (dd.mm)	Notes
<i>Vaginamonologene (The Vagina Monologues)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Torshov Teatret (Nationaltheatret)	08.02	

<i>Hvem var Eugene Obiora? (Who was Eugene Obiora)</i>	Nordic Black Theatre	MS Innvik	07.03	
<i>Verdensfortellinger (World Stories)</i>	Nationaltheatret	Nationaltheatret	26.04	Part of Nationaltheatret's Mangfoldsåret program
<i>En pluss en er en ett</i>	Nordic Black Express	MS Innvik	28.05	
<i>Babelprosjektet (The Babel Project)</i>	Det Åpne Teater and Artistas Unidos (Portugal)	Det Åpne Teater	02.09	
<i>Urdu Poetry Festival</i>	Jamshed Masroor (organizer)	Nationaltheatret	26.09	Part of Nationaltheatret's Mangfoldsåret program
<i>Panikk i Kulissene (Noises Off by Michael Frayn)</i>	Senior class, NISS	NISS	24.09	
<i>Sizwe Banzi is dead</i>	C.I.C.T / Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord (France)	Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	31.10	Part of TWIST festival
<i>Fabrik – The legend of M. Rabinovitz</i>	Wakka Wakka Inc. (USA)	MS Innvik	02.11	Part of TWIST festival
<i>Folk og røvere i kardemomme by (People and robbers of Cardamom Town)</i>	Riksteatret	Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	04.11	Part of TWIST festival
<i>Zivil</i>	Riksteatret	Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	07.11	Part of TWIST festival
<i>Tre Nye Stemmer (Three New Voices)</i>	Project initiated by Mangfoldsåret secretariat	Riksteatret (Oslo stage)	07.11	Part of TWIST festival  Reading of winning manuscripts of competition Nye Scenetekster (New Dramatic Texts)
<i>Hvem er norskest? (Who is the most Norwegian?)</i>	Kari Jenseg	Det Åpne Teater	09.11	Part of TWIST festival

**2009**

<b>Play</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date attended (dd.mm)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Vaktmeisteren (The Caretaker by Harold Pinter)</i>	Det Norske Teatret	Det Norske Teatret	03.02	
<i>Klassefiender</i>	NBX	MS Innvik	25.04	

**Other Ibsen performances (outside of Appendix A criteria<sup>137</sup>)**

<b>Play</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date attended (dd.mm.yy)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Fruen fra havet (The Lady from the Sea)</i>	Nordic Black Express	MS Innvik  Stamsund International Theatre Festival	Performance run in 2005  <i>Video recording viewed 16.11.07</i>	Student performance
<i>Nora versus Torvald</i>	Senior class, Acting line, KHiO	KHiO	25.02.08	Student performance taking inspiration from <i>A Doll's House</i>
<i>Gatas Gynt (The Street's Gynt)</i>	Cooperation between NRK and Frelsesarmeen (The Salvation Army)	NRK 1	Viewed on television 23.03.08	Film dramatization of the fifth act of <i>Peer Gynt</i> , also social commentary/ documentary on drug addiction and homelessness in Oslo: uses cast of amateur actors recruited through Frelsesarmeen's drug rehabilitation program
<i>Peer Gynt</i>	TITAN Teatergruppe	Grusomhetens Teater	19.04.08	Student performance

<sup>137</sup> This category includes all Ibsen performances I attended live or watched on video recording that fall outside of my performance criteria for inclusion in Appendix A, namely, performances outside of the 2006-2008 period, amateur productions, and film productions.

<i>Ibsenstafetten (The Ibsen Relay)</i>	St. Hallvard Secondary School, Ringve Secondary School, Lundehaugen Secondary School	Nationaltheatret	09.09.08	Student performances  Part of 2008 Ibsen Stage Festival
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### Personal engagement

- Participant, Den mangfaldige scenen (theatre project directed towards minority youth), February – May 2008
- Actor, *Padox – All the World's Misery*, Compagnie Dominique Houdart – Jeanne Heuclin (France) & Nordic Black Theatre, April 2008
- Organizer, “Innvandrer/Immigrant” (theatre and debate session) at Oslo Kristelige Studentforbund (Oslo Student Christian Movement), April 2008
- Volunteer, TWIST festival, November 2008

### Conferences and seminars

- *Henrik Ibsen: Transcultural Perspectives*, organized by the Centre for Ibsen Studies, November 8-9, 2007
- *Nora's Sisters*, organized by Nationaltheatret, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Centre for Ibsen Studies, August 30, 2008
- *Alle kunstens regler – Veier til mangfold i utdanning og kulturliv (All the rules of the arts – Paths to diversity in education and cultural life)*, organized by the Mangfoldsåret sekretariat, November 6-7, 2008
- *Perspektiver på Mangfoldsåret (Perspectives on Mangfoldsåret)*, organized by CULCOM (Cultural Complexity in the New Norway), January 26, 2009

### Publications

Cheng, L. 2008. The Politics of Performance: Ibsen and Cultural Diversity in Norway. *Samora*. 2008(4), 16-17.