APPENDIX I

IMAGES

MANIPUR TRILOGY

BROCHURES OF THEIR EARLY PRODUCTIONS
CHORUS REPERTORY THEATRE ENTRANCE

THE SHRINE
THIYAM’S ART WORKS AT THE CRT ENTRANCE
1993 BROCHURE

The Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre
Calcutta
Presents
Chakravyuha
Karnabharam
Urubhangam
(A Mahabharata Trilogy)
Performed by
chorus repertory theatre, imphal
on
7th, 8th and 9th March 1993, 6.00 p.m.
at
Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Imphal

2017 BROCHURE

NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL 2017
Organised by
NATIONAL SCHOOL OF DRAMA, NEW DELHI
In Collaboration with
DEPT. OF ART AND CULTURE, GOVT. OF MANIPUR
and
chorus repertory theatre, imphal
RATAN THIYAM AT CRT, IMPHAL

Photographs by Subhash Chandra Das and Jyotirmoy Prodhani.

THE SCHOLAR WITH RATAN THIYAM AT CRT, IMPHAL
“Theatre by nature is a medium of constant experimentation”

An interview with RatanThiyam

Question: Indian theatre has come long way. There have been major experiments in contemporary Indian theatre, especially in the form of Theatre of Roots, a movement of which you have been one of the major pioneers. How do you look at contemporary theatre in India now, including your own theatrical works?

Ratan Thiyam: Well, I believe theatre is a continuous process, it is a laboratory where we as individuals, associated with theatre, keep exploring varied dimensions of theatre which of course keep evolving with the change of time, you see. Therefore it cannot get stuck anywhere, it cannot be stagnant water, it has to be always fresh and flowing.

Question: How do you accomplish that?

RT: Theatre is not a casual engagement; it is a daily kind of ritual. In order to keep theatre fresh, to bring in that fresh dimension and attitude one needs to make it happen from within- one needs to keep the very thought process associated with theatre ever alive and dynamic. Theatre evolves through our sustained attachment with it, which does not get over at one particular juncture. One thing or one production or one kind of exposition is not really enough to depict my ideas or can really portray my notion of theatre. So you have to keep renewing your mode of engagements, you must have the agility to adopt and adapt the changes. And I
firmly believe in the changing dimensions of theatre, after all, theatre by nature is a medium of constant experimentations.

**Question:** How do you think the other components of theatre lead to the changing dimensions of its form?

RT: Theatre is a composite art form, a composite totality and every component here has its own modes of evolutions and changes. You can see how, throughout the world, various art forms are undergoing changes and transformations. Theatre by default becomes a part of that dynamism, that mode of changes. In fact, many other composite art forms are changing world over. And theatre, as one of the composite art is no exception. So, naturally, theatre reflects, will reflect or any art form for that matter, those dynamics of changes. I mean, it strives to reach out to the elements of aesthetics all the time. Therefore for me it is not really one kind of exposition or description that one should think of in terms of theatre. At least I don’t think so.

**Question:** Sir, how do you look at Indian theatre now? After all, you, Panikkar, Badal Sircar have been the pioneers in evolving a new kind of a theatrical experiment in Indian context.

RT: I think technology has really come into Indian theatre though it came very slowly, gradually; but now it is a sudden kind of an advent of technology. And it has affected in a big way. It is, I would say, you know, a good thing and also a bad thing. I mean, merits and demerits of it because, so far as the creativity in theatre is concerned there may be technological advent with creativity, you see; but at the time, I believe, there should be a balance, there we need to work out to draw a
balance between technology and human(e) quality. That’s very important in order to understand art because art is all about, particularly in theatre, performance by human beings. It cannot be, you see, overshadowed by technology.

**Question:** In your plays violence is an abiding motive and violence keeps coming back to your plays, to your interpretations of experiences and Manipur is also one of the major haunting images in your plays. How do you think over the years your plays could affect the very consciousness, the Manipuri consciousness vis-a-vis......

RT: It is not really only Manipuri, it is about the entire human race. You see the turmoil everywhere, in any portion of this world, which is really violent. And one has to think about it because it is not something that is happening far away from us, at a distance, somewhere in another country. It is not. It affects us with its impact, the kind of vibration, the violent vibration, that we are getting around is very dangerous. So one has to be very much aware and alert which would naturally find reflections in various productions, in various art forms and in cultural expressions, in fact, in everywhere.

If it is not, it is not like the time when the entire Europe or even the oriental factor in the Orient had expressed common concerns. The impressionist or expressionist painters were coming up. The kind of painting that artists like Pablo Picasso did were something to protest against war. They reflected the time in their paintings irrespective of whether something was good or not very good at that time. But they were reflected in the paintings, in various expressions of culture. They also came to theatre, opera... In everything you see. Therefore, it is very natural...
that it automatically finds its reflections in our mind which is also an expression of the time.

**Question:** Epic is one of the most powerful and profound metaphors in your plays. As you keep reinterpreting epics, epic motives. How do you relate your experiences of the epic to that of modern theatre?

RT: See epic is a very big thing. It carries many dimensions. So when you work with an epic that means you can work in multifaceted layers that unfold layers after layers. Therefore it is very interesting and you try to portray its varied dimensions through the portrayal of its characters. These characters are really very, very strong. They are a powerful lot of characters that emerge in the epics whether it is in the *Mahabharata* or in the *Ramayana*. All these aspects are enormously interesting. Human beings or human civilizations though often thought to have changed a lot, I don’t think human mind has travelled much. It remains a kind of mind that dwells in many aspects of the epics. Therefore we enjoy the epics, they make such impact upon us. It talks about morality, the high moral values, it talks about philosophy, it talks about arts, it talks about everything. So it becomes an important imperative to explore the idea of an epic. If one is exploring that, I think it’s a beautiful thing.

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This is a transcription of the interview taken by Subhash Chandra Das and Jyotirmoy Prodhani at the sideline of the National Theatre Festival held at the Chorus Repertory Theatre, Imphal, on 26-31 March, 2017.
APPENDIX III

Ratan Thiyam: A Brief Bio Sketch

A versatile genius – poet, novelist, playwright, critic, director, actor, musician, costume designer, painter and architect – Ratan Thiyam is one of the most influential and respected theatre personalities in the international theatre scene. Almost perfect and flawless performance, captivating aural impact, mesmerizing visual aesthetic, and potent thematic concerns of his productions place him alongside the contemporary theatre gurus like Tadashi Suzuki, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski and Eugino Barba.

Emerging from a remote North-eastern state of India, Manipur, to dominate the national and international theatrical scene over the past forty years, Ratan Thiyam was born in 1948 at Nabadwip, Nadia district of West Bengal, and brought up at Haobam Dewan Lane, Imphal, Manipur. His father, Tarun Kumar Thiyam, was a renowned guru of Manipuri classical dance and his mother, Bilasini Devi, was an accomplished dancer of that dance form. During his childhood days, Thiyam accompanied his parents to performances and had to travel from one place to another following them. As a result, he had to suffer on the academic front, but such an early exposure to performing arts introduced him to the perception of the finer taste of it and appreciation of different aspects of one’s culture. However, recalling his childhood, he says, “My parents were dancing partners and I used to tour with them. Invariably I found myself sleeping in the costume box during performances. It was a bitter experience and the idea of becoming a performer was never given a thought” (Qtd. in ‘Pre-Text’, Chakravyuha, xxiii).

Of course, he developed an interest in painting and creative writing. He attended an art school in Imphal to learn painting. He had a mind to go outside Manipur to
pursue further study in painting, but his desire remained unfulfilled because his parents could not afford the expenses and finally gave up his study of painting. He wished to take up writing as a profession. He wrote first of his six novels at the age of 22. He also wrote a number of short stories and poems. His first association with theatre was, in fact, as a writer, when he was asked to adapt a novel for the stage. He had also to act as the assistant director and play a role in the same play. Eventually, Thiyam decided to pursue a new career and got himself admitted to the National School of Drama which turned out to be a turning point in his illustrious career. The period of his stay in the NSD from 1971 to 1974 was the shaping and formative period in his life. There he had the opportunity to get formal training on the dramatic art under doyens of Indian theatre like Ebrahim Alkazi. He learnt formal aspects of the Western theatre tradition and the classical *Natyashastra* tradition. He had also an exposure to the great Japanese theatre traditions like Noh and Kabuki as well as to the Chinese theatre tradition.

After his graduation with distinction from the NSD, Thiyam returned to Manipur and set up his own company Chorus Repertory Theatre in 1976 which is “the only one of its kind in India” (Kavita Nagpal in ‘Pre-Text’, *Chakravyuha*, xvi). Initially, the company functioned from Thiyam’s house and the open space of the house was used to rehearse. There was no money, the only capital was Thiyam’s determination and the enthusiasm of a group of young amateur theatre workers. In 1977, Repertory came to Delhi to perform *Shanarembi Chaishra*, a play written and directed by Ratan Thiyam, which created a sensation in Delhi. However, critics’ recognition came with *Uchek Langmeidong* staged at the 1979 Shri Ram Centre National Drama Festival.

In 1980, the Repertory got a token grant from the SNA, and a grant from the Department of Culture covering salaries for seven members and an ad hoc grant for new
production. The grants motivated them to look for a piece of land of their own. With funds accumulated from performances, they bought adjoining plots of land bit by bit. Now the company has a 2.75 acres sprawling campus in a picturesque surroundings at the outskirts of the city of Imphal accommodating a self-sufficient way of life, with housing and working quarters for the company. It has ever since become the centre of Thiyam’s theatrical experimentations and innovations. It is now an important regional and national centre for contemporary theatre studies.

In the Repertory, Thiyam has evolved a special training method for his group consisting of people who want to study theatre as an art as his mission is to design an ongoing training programme for contemporary theatre. Every actor has to learn carpentry, tailoring, light design, stage design in addition to their regular training in Thang-ta, Pung-cholum, Wari-leeba and Raslila. He also arranges for lectures by painters and architects to enhance the knowledge of the performers to such domains. Moreover, each member has administrative as well as management duties. Such duties and responsibilities give them a sense of belongingness which is a strong force behind the success story of the Repertory.

In commemoration of its 25 years of formidable existence, in 2001, another feather was added to the cap. It was The Shrine, a 200 seat theatre complex built solely by the members of CRT. It was designed by Thiyam himself and was inspired by the architecture of Southeast Asia specially the house design of tribal of Manipur, Thailand and Myanmar. It is, as Thiyam says at the inaugural function, a dream come true for him and other members of the CRT.

Ratan Thiyam has directed more than 50 productions including the original, adapted and translated plays. Some of his major productions include:
• Uchek Langmeidong (1978)
• Karanabharam (1979) (by Sanskrit playwright Bhasa)
• Urubhangam (1981) (by Sanskrit playwright Bhasa)
• Imphal Imphal (1982)
• Chakravyuha (1984)
• Lengshonei (1985) (An adaptation of Sophocles’ Antigone)
• Imphal Karusi (1993)
• Andha Yug (1994) (by Hindi playwright Dharamvir Bharati)
• Uttar Priyadarshi (1994) (by Hindi playwright Agyeya)
• Hey Nungshibi Prithvi (2004) (My Earth, My Love)
• Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama (2006) (Nine Hills One Valley)
• Ritusamharam (2002) (by Kalidasa)
• Wahoudok (2008) (Prologue)
• Ashibagee Eshei (based on When We Dead Awaken, by Henrik Ibsen) (2008)
• The King of Dark Chamber (2012) (based on Raja (1910) by Tagore)
• Macbeth (2014)

In recognition to his devotion, dedication, hard work, sacrifice and his contribution to the World Theatre Movement, he has been conferred with a number of prestigious national and international honours and awards some of which are:

• National Academy Award (Sangeet Natak Akademi), 1987
• Padmashree, 1989
• Nandikar, 1992
• La Grande Medaille, 1997 (France)
• International Man of the year in the field of Theatre and Humanism, 1998-99
• B.M. Shah Award, 2000
• Ganakrishti Award, 2002
• B.V. Karanth Smriti Puruskar, 2004
• One India One People Award, 2006
• Kalidas Samman, 2006
• NETV People’s Choice Award, 2006
• SIU-KA-PHA National Award, 2006
• Late Hawaibam Nilamani Singh Award, 2007
• Theatre Centre Award, 2007
• John D. Rockefeller Award, 2008
• First Alkaji Foundation Award, 2008
• He has been conferred Degree of Doctor of Literature (Honoris Causa) by Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, 2008
• Bharat Muni Samman, 2011
• Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (Akademi Ratna), 2012
• Bhupen Hazarika Foundation Award, 2013
• DLit doctoral degree by Assam University, 2013
• Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META, 2016
• Outlook SpeakOut Award for Best Artist, 2017

Office/membership held in various prestigious national and international organizations. Some of them are:
• Chairman Chorus Repertory Theatre, Imphal
• Member of the Society and the Governing Body of the National Science Museum (NCSM), Kolkata
• Chairman, Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Culture, Manipur
• Council Member, Manipur State Kala Akademi, Imphal
• Advisor, All India Radio Imphal
• Member, Programme Advisory Committee, All India Radio, Imphal
• Member Manipur University Court
• Senate Member, Manipur University
• Member of the First Court of Nagaland University, Nagaland
• Member of the Governing Council, ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations), New Delhi
• Chairman, Review Committee, North East Zone Cultural Centre, Dimapur
• Director, National School of Drama, New Delhi
• Executive Council Member, Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Theatre, Dance & Music), New Delhi
• Member of the Advisory Board, National School of Drama, New Delhi
• Member of the Advisory Committee, National Handicraft & Handloom Museum, New Delhi
• Member of the National Tribal Development Committee, New Delhi
• Member of the Advisory Committee of the Rangamandal, Bharat Bhavan,
• Advisor, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Imphal
• Member of the Academic Council, National School of Drama, New Delhi
• Vice-Chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Imphal
• Currently he holds the prestigious position of the Chairman of National School of Drama, New Delhi
• Faculty as theatre director/teacher in Fordham University, New York (USA) and Orvieto Theatre Institute, Italy.

Chorus Repertory Theatre has so far participated in various National and International Theatre Festivals in India and abroad including:

• Pan-Asiatico Festival, Rome, 1984
• Indo-Greek Symposium, Delphi, 1984
• East-West Encounter, Mumbai (India), 1986
• Edinburgh International Theatre Festival, Edinburgh, 1987
• Festival of India in USSR, 1987
• Cardiff International Theatre Festival, Cardiff, 1987
• Glasgow Festival, Glasgow, 1987
• Dublin Festival, Dublin, 1987
• Cervantino International Festival, Mexico, 1990
• Mitsui International Festival, Japan, 1990
• Toga International Festival, Japan, 1992
• Festival d’ Avignon, France, 1995
• Festival of India in Thailand, 1996
• South Asian Theatre Festival, Dhaka (Bangladesh), 1997
• 50-years of Indian Independence Day celebration in Sri Lanka, 1997
• Festival of Perth, Australia, 1998
• New Zealand International Festival of the Arts, 1998
• 7th International Festival of Scenic Arts, Sao Paulo (Brazil), 1998
• Indian Trade Fair Exhibition in Dhaka (Bangladesh), 1999
• 50-years of Indian Independence Day Celebration in Nepal, 2000
• Fall 2000 American Debut Tour, 2000
• Barbican International Theatre Event (BITE:01), London (United Kingdom)
• BeSeto International Theatre Festival, Togamura (Japan), 2001
• 3rd Spring Arts Festival, Shizuoka (Japan), 2002
• Toga International Festival, Toga (Japan), 2002
• Third Asia-Pacific Arts Forum (Taiwan), 2005
• IIC Experience- A festival of the Arts (New Delhi, India), 2005
• Biennale Bonn: Indien 2006, Germany
• Fall 2006 American Debut Tour
• Barbican Theatre Event, 2007, London
• Toga Festival, 2007, Japan

Some of the places where his plays were performed:

Tokyo, New York, London, Delphi, Kalamata, Thessaloniki, Kavala, Athens, Yaroslav, Leningrad, Minsk, Brisova, Southampton (South London), Amsterdam, Gainsborough, Bradford, Omag, Querentaro, Guanajuato, Curz-A-Zul, Guaquil, Quito, Cuba,
Awards and Recognitions to CRT:

- “Indo-Greek Friendship Award”, Greece, 1984
- “Fringe Firsts Award, 1987” from Edinburgh International Theatre Festival
- “Diploma of Cervantino International Theatre Festival”, Mexico, 1990

Major seminars and conferences attended:

- International Theatre Conference, Novisad (Yugoslavia)
- East-West Encounter, Mumbai (India)
- International Seminar on Greek tragedy, Delphi (Greece)
- Indo-Soviet Conference, Moscow
- International Seminar, Poland
- Indo-Greek Symposium, Greece
- India-Greece 2500 years of Cultural Exchange Symposium, 1995 New Delhi (India)
- International Conference on “Culture of Peace - The Experience and Experiments”, 1996 New Delhi (India)