
The Transplantation of Theatre-in-Education
from Britain to Taiwan

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Abstract

The British-born Theatre-in-Education (TIE) is now an international phenomenon. Theatre and education practitioners worldwide have come to recognise TIE as an important resource for the reinforcement of institutional or orthodox education. In Taiwan, by way of cultural exchanges and in accordance with the practice of the well meant, but not so well planned education reforms, TIE has also been gradually adopted by drama specialists and professional theatre groups over the last decade to provide young students with alternative experiences of active learning. During this process of transplantation, the representation of TIE has become an issue that demands careful deliberation in the island.

This dissertation surveys the development of Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan from a personal perspective, as well as demonstrating the interdisciplinary relationship between TIE and regional/community theatre through a case study on the encounter of the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT) and the Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe. By making use of first-hand experience of TIE transplantation (from Britain to Taiwan) and of interviews with TIE practitioners, the author intends to contextualise the Taiwanese TIE movement by relating it to an international trend of audience-oriented theatre. Within this framework, the author argues that the localisation of British TIE in Taiwan is best embodied, and therefore can be expected to find strength in the association of TIE and those Taiwanese theatre groups of or with a community-friendly nature; in addition, the continuing social, cultural and educational reforms will create a better environment for the growth of Theatre-in-Education in the island.

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Introduction

The whole concept of making theatre a useful tool to reinforce the integrity of institutional education is part of a powerful ideological trend that sprang up in the post-war English-speaking world, particularly in Britain, where the development of Theatre-in-Education (TIE) and educational drama has been leading the league since the 1960s. However, until ten years or so ago, and because of a very different political atmosphere and cultural background, it was still unfamiliar to most Chinese-speaking people, even for those who lived in a country as highly industrialised (and therefore, to some degree, 'Westernised') and multi-cultural as Taiwan. Over the last decade, consequent upon the abolition of martial law in 1987 and the social changes brought about by the practice of democracy, education-related theatre has been gradually introduced to the Taiwanese by independent-minded theatre practitioners and educationalists who look Westward for inspiration. In this process, a lot of issues have been raised and certain orthodox thoughts and governmental policies – such as the inclusion of drama in the newly launched Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum - challenged, as well as debated.

The British-born Theatre-in-Education (TIE) was first officially introduced to Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners in 1992 through an international workshop, organised by the Taipei-based Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association (中華戲劇協會) and led by NYU professors Lowell and Nancy Swartzell. Inspired by the experimental spirit of this alternative theatre, a few Taiwanese drama educationalists have since worked side by side with children's theatre groups and

normal school (teachers college) students to present TIE programmes – in accordance with their own definition – as well as to advocate the educational efficacy of drama/theatre. However, it was not until the spring of 1998, when another international workshop took place in Tainan that those who were interested in TIE got to witness and experience the participatory nature of British TIE. This workshop, entitled Green Tide (綠潮), was organised by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe (台南人劇團) and led by five members of the southeast London-based Greenwich Young People's Theatre (GYPT, now the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre). In addition to the demonstration of certain ideas and skills of interactive theatre, a fully participatory TIE programme, *A Pocketful of Promises*, was also performed by the GYPT team to give the workshop participants a real taste of the interactive nature of British TIE. Since then, some of the workshop participants have been applying what they learned from the GYPT team to their work, most memorably *Ah Liang's Magic Cube* (阿亮的魔術方塊), produced by Song Song Song Children and Puppet Theatre Company¹ in 1999. Among them, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, the host company of Green Tide, has also been trying to integrate GYPT's working methodologies with its own operational and devising machinery for the reinforcement of the troupe's community-friendly function. The exchange and cooperation between GYPT and

¹ Established in 1987 by Deng Zhi-hao in Taipei, Song Song Song Children and Puppet Theatre (九歌兒童劇團) is one of the most prestigious children's theatre companies in Taiwan. Ever since its establishment, the company has adopted a wide range of working methodologies, including puppetry and folk dancing, and devoted itself to the popularisation of theatre art among Taiwanese children. Over the last 16 years, Song Song Song has managed to work in a great number of local schools, communities, and cultural centres, as well as to build up an international network through the company's collaboration with European, American, Canadian, and Asian children's theatre workers.

Tainan Jen have therefore opened up a whole new chapter in the short history of the development of TIE in Taiwan, particularly in terms of the inter-disciplinary relationship between TIE and community/regional theatre. In December 1999, Tainan Jen presented its very first ‘official’ GYPT-modelled TIE programme, *The Completion of the Mansion* (大厝落定), and has so far toured it to more than ten high schools and junior colleges to the amazement of many teachers and students. Following the success of *The Completion of the Mansion*, two more participatory TIE programmes, *Dreams in the Wind* (追風少年) and *Nuclear Family* (何似歸去), were produced and presented in, respectively, 2001 and 2002 by Tainan Jen to further investigate the educational power of TIE. It is therefore fair to say that the seeds of TIE have been spread in Taiwan, and people’s interest in this new form of theatre are increasingly aroused on that remote Pacific island.

0.1 Journey of a Voyager: Shaping a Personal Perspective

On the fifth of July in 2002, I sat in a well-equipped studio of the Providence University (靜宜大學), where I have been teaching since September 2001, watching the last performance of *Nuclear Family*, the first fully participatory Theatre-in-Education (TIE) programme I wrote for and the third piece of TIE work I supervised and co-produced with Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe. The performing schedule of *Nuclear Family* was carefully arranged, so that the entire tour among schools would have come to an end at the college where the writer of the programme was based. The programme started. About fifty participants, a group of

second-year English majors, were invited to present a series of still images in accordance with an actor-teacher's instruction. They listen. They think. They do. They laugh. It was particularly amusing when they were given the opportunity to examine and comment on each other's tableaux. Some of them were so excited that the actor-teachers had to raise their voice to calm them down. The scene was, obviously, vibrant, noisy, and slightly chaotic. But for me, the scene was also familiar.

Nearly ten years ago, I had my very first chance to sit in a drama studio of the GYPT, observing the performance of the company's 1993 TIE work, *Knock, Knock, Who's There?* In the half-day programme, the young participants, a class of secondary students, were confronted with all sorts of mental and physical challenges, including individual thinking, group discussion, team work, presentation, and the appreciation of a one-hour long play on the theme of AIDS. During the process, many of them contrived to make their own voices heard. They raised their hands, eagerly and voluntarily, to answer the actor-teachers' questions. They spoke out their opinions about the issues reflected in the programme. They laughed and cried at the characters' sentiments when they watched the play. They expressed themselves, both emotionally and intellectually, to an extent that the adults present, including their teachers and myself, could only listen attentively and feel amazed. Indeed, the students' participation in the interaction-oriented programme was vibrant, noisy, and sometimes chaotic. But the door to the real human world had thus been opened for them.

As an overseas postgraduate student who had just arrived in England less than three

months earlier, witnessing the open and interactive nature of TIE was undoubtedly a ‘culture shock’. Given that I grew up and received my education mostly in a martial law-imposed Taiwan, this is not surprising, of course. In a country where education was purposefully manipulated by an authoritarian government to meet its political and economic needs, young learners never had the same opportunity to come face to face with the arts so closely. Instead, they were always asked to ‘kowtow’ to an educational mechanism that had everything to do with science and finance, but had almost nothing to do with arts and humanity. However, as some argued, what is wrong with the idea that food and high-tech should be placed before love and beauty? Is Humanity really *that* important when the entire nation is faced with the constant threat that comes from a neighbouring superpower – in Taiwan’s case, China? Why should the young be encouraged to indulge themselves in something as ‘useless’ as music or drama, when they can be trained for engineering or business, which ‘benefits’ the people and helps the nation strengthen itself in a most concrete way?

Arguments of this kind were often heard when I was in high school. It was the early 1980s. The reign of President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), Chinese generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s eldest son who succeeded his father to become Taiwan’s president in 1978, was at its peak. With the accomplishment of the Ten Great Constructions (十大建設), including the CKS International Airport and the first national freeway, Taiwan’s economy was looking good. Foreign investments began to flood in. Processed products began to fly out. Although the country was still isolated from international politics after the People’s Republic of China (PRC)

became the sole representative of China in the United Nations in 1971, Taiwanese people were re-gaining their confidence and self-esteem through the accumulation of money and property. Numerous young men abandoned their country homes and moved to big cities such as Taipei and Kaohsiung to pursue ‘a better future’. The continuous economic growth seemed to guarantee that Taiwan, or Chiang’s Republic of China (ROC),² would be the rising star of all Chinese. Nevertheless, in the real world, Chiang’s Nationalist (Kuomintang, or KMT) government in Taiwan never did anything to improve its official relationships with the Communist Chinese authority in the mainland; Chinese people across the Taiwan Strait were therefore forbidden to make contact in any way. Moreover, Chiang kept telling the Taiwanese people how crucial it was for them to ‘recover the motherland’ and save their fellow Chinese from the hellish communist rule. In other words, Taiwan and China had to be two incompatible rivals in every aspect until the Communists surrendered to the Nationalists. Under such circumstances, the nation’s key educational beliefs were inevitably built upon Chiang’s beautiful dream that one day Taiwan and China would be reunified and run by a ‘democratic’ Nationalist government. In this dream, Taiwan is not a country, a sovereign state, or a cultural entity. It is a ‘base’ (for recovering China), a ‘model’ (for re-building China), and, to sum up, an inseparable part of Great China. Accordingly, in school, young students were forced to learn and memorise all the provinces in the mainland, but only a few of them could correctly specify the location of Taiwan’s longest river. They were taught to respect Chinese culture, but none of them ever had the chance to see or talk about anything ‘mainland-Chinese’.

² ROC, Taiwan’s ‘official name’. For more information see Chapter Two.

Politics became taboo on every campus. The only ‘virtue’ they learned from their teachers was to keep their mouths, eyes, and ears shut, so that all the secrets and lies of the adults’ world would never be disclosed. Unsurprisingly, after going through the nine-year compulsory education, none of the students could tell, with confidence, where the capital of the ROC was: Taipei, Nanking, or Chung-king?³ Like many other students, I felt lost and confused.

I felt lost and confused not only because I could not build up a clear identity, and therefore a clear vision to see into my surroundings and myself, but also because I loved literature and the arts more than anything else. In those days, art- or literature-related subjects, such as Fine Art, Music, Arts and Crafts, and Chinese Literature, were not well taught at school. For most music or fine art teachers, teaching was a matter of making their students repeatedly sing or paint. No time for passion. No space for interaction. For most students, on the other hand, Chinese Literature Class was no more interesting or inspiring. It had very little to do with the appreciation of a writer’s language, style, or belief, but put a special focus on the kind of literature that propagates patriotism and filial piety. With the national entrance examination waiting ahead, none of our teachers dared to encourage us, even when some of us were really talented and enthusiastic, to pursue an artistic or literary life. What they kept saying to us was ‘literature or art can be one of your interests, but it cannot be taken as your life-long career’. Given that most Taiwanese parents did expect their children to perform well in the entrance examinations – which seemed to guarantee a bright future with financial security

³ Nanking (南京) and Chung-king (重慶) are Chinese cities where Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist government used to be based during the Chinese civil war. Both of them were called by the Nationalists ‘temporary capitals’.

and respectability, our teachers' 'politically correct' advice was inevitably taken for granted and hardly challenged. Moreover, the oppressive political atmosphere in Taiwan during that period of time did not give anyone much choice. Since the adult citizens were not entitled to speak out their minds freely in public under the threat of martial law, why, then, should young students be encouraged to develop their interest in art or literature and, in so doing, to become independent thinkers who may spread 'poisonous' thoughts or violate the law? Education, in this case, has a very limited definitional scope. It neither cultivates, nor develops, but only preaches and imposes. Being educated this way, the obedient part of me felt that it would probably be easier to follow the wave and flow with the tide. But the rebellious part of me refused to see the world compromisingly. I felt the world was hiding its face with its hands. I wanted to open its palms to disclose what was covered beneath.

The seemingly irreconcilable conflict between my obedient self and rebellious self was lessened after I attended the Taipei-based Chinese Culture University, majoring in English, in 1986. Like many of my fellow students who left home for the pursuit of higher education, I had my first taste of freedom – not only in the sense that I was no longer subjected to the mental scrutiny of an authoritarian fashion, but also in the sense that the political atmosphere in Taiwan was beginning to loosen as a result of the abolition of Martial Law and the establishment of DPP.⁴ As an English major, I was exposed to a great amount of English writers and Western thinkers, many of whom explored the meaning of life and the value of arts and humanity in their writings. I felt greatly inspired by their visions and

⁴ DPP, Democratic Progressive Party, the first opposition party ever established in Taiwan.

perspectives, which were colourful, straightforward, a little exotic, and very different from what I had learned in high school. For an eager young man like me, the West, particularly English-speaking Britain, provided, quite ironically, a sense of belonging. I thought it was the only place on this globe where I could eventually develop a better understanding of the arts and the capability of free thinking, especially when the newly launched 'democratic revolution' seemed to be going nowhere on home turf. However, what made my university life even more interesting and liberating was that I finally came across the power and charm of Western-style spoken drama. By taking drama courses, I gradually learned how theatre – from a worship ritual in ancient times to an artistic form today – had influenced human life through different periods in history. Meanwhile, the deep interpretations of humanity and unique creativeness of style in the works of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Wilde, and Brecht taught me another lesson: the exploration of people's states of mind from their relations or reactions and developing original styles should be the real objective and joy of theatre arts. Outside of university, I was a member of the National Film Archives. It gave me the chance to see the films of Bergman, Fellini, Derek Jarman and Theo Angelopoulos, some of my personal favourites. Among them, Ingmar Bergman was especially an inspiration to me: not only because of his incisive observations of human relationships, which helped to improve my analytical ability, but also for his frank and open attitude towards handling the personalities of different characters, which encouraged me to look deeper into the true features of human beings. In addition, I managed to see a lot of theatre performances in Taipei, including the mime of Marcel Marceau and some theatrical pieces presented by Taiwanese experimental theatre groups or college students. All these experiences showed me a dramatic world that was both true and

false. In this world, so much could be said and done, but nobody would actually get harmed. In this world, personal confusions could be suspended, put aside, or even forgotten, as a more complete picture of all the thoughts, feelings, and emotions shared by human beings would be displayed in front of one's very eyes. In this world, I did not have to agree or identify with anything in particular, and I was able to find my pains and happiness expressed and channelled through the actor's body and voice. Indeed, drama reflects life but rises above life. It became my shelter. I felt protected, soothed, and enlightened whenever I came under its roof. Since then, I have developed a strong interest in exploring all the different aspects of drama and theatre. I know drama/theatre can guide and instruct a person in a way that is extremely different from the kind of education I used to receive. I want to spend most of my time researching and investigating the potential of this artistic form.

0.2 TIE: A Sense of Homecoming

In September 1993, I arrived in London and began my postgraduate studies in Theatre Education at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Under the instruction and supervision of my tutor, Brian Roberts, I came to realise how much more there still was for me to learn about drama and theatre. Despite the fact that I had already made a lot of effort to read and see as many plays as possible in Taiwan, I felt like a novice when I was placed in London's theatre scene for the first time. Everything was new and fresh. Nothing could ever bore me or frustrate me. That, in retrospect, is because I was absolutely thrilled by the fact of being in England and fulfilling my cultural fantasies. But, more importantly, I knew I had to seize every opportunity to absorb as quickly and thoroughly as a sponge, so that I would be

better equipped with the kind of knowledge and training I needed for my research.

During those early days, my first encounter with GYPT and the company's TIE work had a decisive impact on my searching soul. While observing the students' participation in GYPT's *Knock, Knock, Who's There?*, I felt that my rebellious self and obedient self had been integrated all of a sudden: On the one hand, GYPT's TIE programme was stimulating and thought-provoking enough to make me think, question, and challenge, and therefore become an independent thinker with my own views and perspectives. On the other hand, its focus on human life and concerns over social value provided me, as well as those who took part in the participatory session, with a sense of belonging – or, more precisely, a sense of homecoming - as we were bound together like a big family by the thoughts and emotions shared by humankind, despite our differences in race, age, and gender. For me, that was a moment of awakening. There and then, I realised why most Taiwanese people – myself included – are so nervous and uneasy whenever asked to express their personal feelings or opinions in public. There was hardly any chance for us to learn to share, communicate, and connect this way during the process of receiving education. TIE, as I could see with my limited experiences in theatre and education at that time, was theatre at its most instructive, informative, and affecting. It opened up the world's palms and showed me what was covered beneath, which is exactly what I thought had been missed out from Taiwan's education system. I had a strong desire to know more about it, and therefore asked to be placed at GYPT as an intern in order to further examine the company's work. Since then, TIE and my research life have been inseparable. GYPT became my spiritual home in England. With the guidance of Vivien Harris, then the artistic

director of GYPT, I felt really at home working with the company's TIE team and getting involved in the devising and touring process of several TIE productions.

This particular sense of homecoming reached its peak when I returned to Tainan, my hometown, from London in 1995 after starting new research for my PhD degree. Until then, I had already been studying drama and theatre education in England for nearly two years. Out of my research interest and with some nostalgia, I was hoping to visit some local theatre groups in order to cultivate a better understanding of the development of theatre culture in Taiwan. So I approached the Tainan-based Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe (then called Hua Deng Theatre Troupe) and had a couple of long conversations with the company's artistic director, Hsu Rey-fang, about the company's history, development, and future plans. Immediately our conversations generated sparks of inspiration and made the two of us ponder upon some very challenging issues. For me, Hsu and her company seemed to be standing at a crossroads, knowing not much about where to go or what direction they should take. Being a club-like drama group founded by amateur theatre enthusiasts and based in a city where Western-style spoken drama was unpopular, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe had to live on the financial support of Father Don Glover's Hua Deng Arts Centre (華燈藝術中心), as well as the funding programme set up by the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA, 文化建設委員會) with the aim of encouraging the development of 'community theatre'⁵ in

⁵ Here 'community theatre' is a misapplied term. The Council's purpose was to encourage the growth of theatre culture outside the capital city of Taipei. The misapplication of such a theatrical term has led to some misunderstandings and caused subsidy-related problems. For more information see Chapter Two.

Taiwan. Its reliance on charity and governmental subsidy made it extremely difficult for the troupe to establish any distinctive characters or a clear identity. Consequently, the troupe's drama works were largely neglected by theatre critics and local audiences alike, despite the fact that Hsu and her colleagues did work very hard to write new plays and have them produced. However, even though the company's achievement in cultivating new local theatre culture was not widely recognised, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe still appeared to be vibrant and full of potential. Given that Hsu Rey-fang had just returned from Taipei to take her job after receiving an MA degree in Theatre Arts, she was more than willing to get the theatre company reformed, and was therefore eager to adopt new ways of theatre-making whenever opportunity knocks. Under such circumstances, it was only natural that what I told her about TIE and GYPT greatly inspired her. For her, TIE seemed to be an immediate way that could help her company build up a more interactive relationship with its audiences. Since Tainan Jen had been based in Tainan and subsidised by CCA as a 'community theatre company', Hsu felt that it would be a positive development if the company could learn the skills of TIE and serve the local community – particularly the young, who might be more interested in what the company did – by inviting them to 'participate' in the company's issue-based performances. In Hsu's mind, Tainan Jen would certainly benefit a lot by associating itself with something as refreshing as TIE. On the one hand, TIE could bring a new dimension to the community-related works that the company was expected to do in accordance with the CCA's subsidising policy. On the other hand, if the ideas and skills of TIE could be absorbed and internalised, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe would be able to shake off the image of being an amateur drama group and move a step forward to professionalise itself. More importantly, Hsu and

I shared the same kind of feelings that the value of drama and theatre had long been mercilessly brushed aside by Taiwan's education system. Through TIE, we believed at that time, the function of drama/theatre could be installed in young people's daily life and a closer relationship between local schools and Hsu's theatre troupe could be gradually formed. In my view, Hsu's concern over a possible combination of TIE and her company's operation was surely an embodiment of a collective anxiety shared by most Taiwanese theatre workers: what can theatre do or what role can theatre play in a society where different individuals do not connect in the same way as their ancestors used to? Can theatre still offer to its audience anything substantial or meaningful? How exactly can a theatre company like Tainan Jen fulfill its social obligations and reach out to meet the needs of its audiences – in reality, the majority of Taiwanese theatre groups were as amateurish and clueless as Tainan Jen, no matter where they were based? Hsu Rey-fang was obviously keen to find out the answers to these questions. In 1997, she asked me to help her make a plan to invite GYPT to lead a TIE-oriented workshop in Taiwan, as that was the only way for her company and those who were interested in the alternative usage of theatre to witness and experience what TIE was like. Her invitation was graciously accepted by Vivien Harris, who then underwent a year-long process of planning, devising, and coordinating with us. The result was a four-day workshop for interactive theatre entitled 'Green Tide', which took place in Tainan between 29 April and 2 May in 1998. This workshop, although not the first one of a TIE nature to be held in Taiwan, did give its fifty participants, most of whom were school teachers and theatre workers, their very first taste of participatory theatre. With several intense working sessions dedicated to the exploration of key concepts such as decision making and problem solving, as well

as to the demonstration of useful techniques such as hot seating and dilemma forum, the working methodologies developed by GYPT's TIE team over at least two decades were systematically introduced to the workshop participants. These participants then became the 'seed-carriers'. They returned to their workplaces afterwards and began applying what they had learned from the GYPT team to their own work – be it teaching, acting, theatre devising, or social services. Although it would be naïve to say that TIE has since been heartily embraced by Taiwanese theatre and education specialists, I am sure that the Green Tide project did help to shed new light on these people's understanding of TIE and further open up the possibilities of transplanting TIE from Britain to Taiwan.

On my part, my relationships with GYPT, Tainan Jen, and TIE have certainly been strengthened through the organisation of this international workshop. After the workshop ended, I was invited by Hsu Rey-fang to be Tainan Jen's TIE advisor. Although I was still based in London then, I tried to fly back to Taiwan on a regular basis to work with Hsu and her TIE team – not a permanent team, but a small group of actor-teachers recruited and trained for each TIE production. Meanwhile, I kept following and observing GYPT's TIE works in London and played the role of a mediator to help the two theatre companies establish access for ongoing dialogue, until the youth theatre group of Tainan Jen arrived in London to perform their show, *Our Spirit: Waves over Generations*, in the Millenium Youth Theatre Festival, initiated and organised by GYPT, in 2000. Moreover, with the assistance of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe and Mr. Yu Shan-lu (于善祿), an enthusiastic participant of the Green Tide workshop who worked for Yang Chi Books Co., Ltd. (揚智出版公司).

Hsu and I managed to compile all the articles we had written for and the data we had collected from the workshop and turn them into the first Chinese-written book on the theory and practice of TIE. The book, *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE* (在那湧動的潮音中: 教習劇場TIE) was published in 2001, and suddenly TIE was all over my life. After spending more than seven years working and researching in this field, I was now a ‘TIE expert’, a ‘TIE advocate’, and a ‘TIE writer’ in Taiwan – particularly in Tainan. My sail seemed to have finally returned to the harbour, and TIE was the wind that helped to blow me home. Time, however, makes the most innocent and passionate people become sophisticated and calm. In my heart, I felt happy and content that I was able to make contributions to the development of TIE in Taiwan. But in my mind, I knew I had to be someone more than just an ‘expert’ or an ‘advocate’ of TIE in order not to get myself trapped in a self-celebratory kind of ecstasy. In other words, I was fully aware of the fact that there were confusions, conflicts, and problems during the process of transplanting TIE from the U.K. to my home country. TIE has gone through a long history of evolution often following the social, political, economic, and educational developments in Britain. It cannot be transplanted from the cultural entity that breeds it to an entirely new environment and then be expected to grow beautifully on some people’s blind faith. As a TIE researcher, my job was much more complicated than what I had already done. Even though I was deeply involved in the difficult tasks of finding proper soils for TIE to grow in Taiwan, I had to remind myself, constantly, of keeping an intellectual and emotional distance from these mentally disturbing missions, so as to analyse and evaluate my personal engagement with these theatre companies and TIE followers from a more objective point of view. That is to say, my ‘first person’ involvement with GYPT, Tainan Jen,

the TIE works they (we) do, and the problems they (we) have needs to be examined by and balanced with my ‘third person’ perspectives on the questions raised over the period of studying TIE theories, devising TIE programmes, and evaluating TIE works both in the U.K. and Taiwan. Only through a thorough and critical investigation into the Green Tide project, as well as the important issues surrounding this international workshop’s attempt at broadening the usage of TIE in a Taiwanese context, that my goal of conducting research on TIE out of my academic training and practical experience could be reached.

0.3 Key Questions, Working Methodology, and Refernces

Two questions about the transplantation of TIE from Britain to Taiwan – or, more specifically, from GYPT to Tainan Jen – have occupied my mind ever since an agreement was reached between Hsu Rey-fang and myself that I was going to help her organise an international workshop through which the ideas and skills of TIE would be introduced to Taiwanese educationalists and theatre workers. Of course I was delighted at first when given the opportunity to materialise my dreams of bringing home something I had learned in England and valued highly. But soon afterwards I was caught up by an inexplicable feeling of bewilderment after pondering more carefully what I had got myself into. TIE, as far as I could see at the moment of planning for Green Tide, was obviously not at its most fashionable peak – it would be cruel to say ‘going downhill’ – during the 90s, despite the new working methods intermittently introduced by persistent British TIE practitioners to re-activate the liveliness of this thirty-something theatrical wonder. Why, then, should we work so hard to bring the seeds of this seemingly ailing ‘flower’

overseas and try to sustain its vulnerable beauty there? Furthermore, if the same kind of beauty was not guaranteed to blossom in front of Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners' very own eyes, why should we bother to transplant this 'exotic species' from the British Isles to that remote Pacific island in the first place? These are not two mathematical questions that can be answered simply by doing lots of measuring, converting, and calculating. Essentially, the key to their answers is closely linked with the true value of TIE, which, on the basis of my own theorising, is a universal belief in and a desire to look for a more humanity-oriented approach to education and a more community-conscious way of theatre-making. That is why GYPT has devoted itself to preserving the traditions of and creating new possibilities for TIE for more than thirty years. That is also why Hsu Rey-fang and Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe were willing and ready to go through so many troubles to discover the distinctive features of TIE. The most challenging task of my research, therefore, is to explore the rich implications embodied in the exchange scheme initiated by Tainan Jen, GYPT, and myself, so as to demonstrate what the 'true value' of TIE is and how this value has been understood and interpreted by GYPT and Tainan Jen in relation to the way theatre and education are perceived in, respectively, the U.K. and Taiwan. For me, this is not just an act done to complete my role as a theatre researcher, but also a crucial way to set up a theoretical background by which the newly transplanted TIE can be expected to grow more healthily in Taiwan with the kind of nutrition – theory and discourse – it needs.

To accomplish such a task, a set of working methodologies has to be chosen and applied to support my research. As the main purpose of this research is to explore,

conceptually, the definition, function, and value of TIE in order to answer the questions above, the working methodology adopted to conduct this research is inevitably more qualitative than quantitative. This is not to say that estimation or calculation of any kind has been altogether excluded from the research work. Neither is it true that, as a researcher, I put my dialectical interest high above a scientifically inclined research attitude. As a matter of process, a survey had been carried out among the workshop participants right after the Green Tide project came to an end to elicit their comments on and responses to the content of the workshop. Questionnaires about how the TIE programmes devised by Tainan Jen and myself between 1999 and 2002 were perceived by the audience had also been given out, completed, and returned after each performance of these programmes to invite opinions from the young participants. Being one of the key coordinators for the workshop and the advisor to all the three TIE programmes produced by Tainan Jen, however, I certainly know that, no matter how well received the workshop and the TIE programmes appeared to be, the results of these questionnaires can only be taken as a reference to evaluate the things we do. Given that most of these questionnaires were filled in by our participants on the spot after going through a dramatic experience, it has to be noted that many of them were still emotionally affected by that experience at the time of answering the listed questions. As theatre is famous for having the power of inspiring its audiences and uplifting their spirits to a different level, I have to be very careful when dealing with something as delicate as a touched audience's reaction to a performance. Moreover, as the majority of the Green Tide workshop participants were school teachers and theatre workers, whose work ethic is very much about being supportive and encouraging, the survey was very likely to be responded to [!]the same kind of manner. Therefore,

it would be nothing more than navel-gazing if I chose to base the key points of my argument upon a diagrammatic analysis of these questionnaires. Instead, I am more interested in giving realistic details about what has been done in these workshops and TIE programmes, and then contriving to form a clear perspective to pin down the true value of TIE with the evidence shown in the results.

This dissertation is written with an aim of evaluating the possibilities of transplanting TIE from Britain to Taiwan and investigating what is gained and lost in the process of translation and transplantation. It evolves out of two key notions proposed by Tony Jackson in his TIE-centred book, *Learning through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education* (London: Routledge, 1993). First, TIE as an inter-disciplinary practice of community theatre and, second, the growing influence of TIE on other cultural entities beyond the boundaries of the British Isles. Ever since the revised second edition of this book was published in 1993, Tony Jackson's *Learning through Theatre* has been widely recognised as an unofficial textbook for those who are interested or involved in TIE. Given that there are still relatively few literary works fully dedicated to the movement of TIE both in and out of the British Isles, Jackson has succeeded in collecting fifteen different articles, written by an international group of TIE experts such as Chris Vine, John O'Toole and Wayne Fairhead, in addition to synthesising the development of TIE phase by phase in his own contribution to the book. *Learning through Theatre* therefore not only covers a wide range of working methodologies exercised by TIE practitioners in Britain (see, for examples, David Pammenter's *Devising for TIE* and Chris Vine's *TIE and the Theatre of the Oppressed*), but also offers a deep insight into the developments and current practices in TIE or TIE-related work across the

world (see, for examples, John O'Toole and Penny Bundy's *Kites and Magpies: TIE in Australia* and Wayne Fairhead's *Establishment or Alternative? Two Canadian Models*). It is on these grounds that I find this book a rightful inspiration. As the second half of this thesis is mainly concerned with the newly emerged trend to make theatrical activities an integral part of the orthodox education system and local community culture in Taiwan, Jackson's propositions of TIE being an offshoot of community theatre and an international phenomenon have certainly served as a backdrop for me to give his research on the evolution of TIE in Taiwan a local touch as well as a global dimension.

In order to relate the development of interactive/participatory theatre in Taiwan to a wider context of an international TIE movement, this research begins with an investigation into the continuously rising status of the theatre audience in modern times, as TIE is, like many other genres of alternative theatre, characterised by its ideal of serving a carefully chosen 'target audience'. Today, it is commonly agreed that the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht's theatrical visions have made an immeasurable impact on the development of audience-participatory theatre in post-war Europe. His endeavour to pull down the invisible wall between the stage and the auditorium in a realistic theatre has ignited a full interrogation of the role of the theatre audience over the second half of the twentieth century. Being a director, a playwright and a left-wing political activist all through his youth and adulthood, Brecht's life is in itself dialectical enough to draw parallels with his revolutionary discourses on the complicated and multi-layered relationship between theatre, education and society. The collection of writings, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, translated and edited by John Willet (London: Eyre

Methuen, 1978), covers a wide range of Brecht's personal observations and opinions on the practice of theatre. In the light of Brecht's demands for a new theatre and his observations on Chinese theatre, I set up the foundation of my research by looking at the transitions of the presenter-recipient relationship over the last fifty years and their impact on the formation of TIE in the first chapter, and then go on to argue in the second chapter how the recent movement of education-related theatre in Taiwan can be deemed a branch of Brecht's dynamic thoughts.

In response to Bertolt Brecht's plea for a dialectic 'epic theatre', Brazilian director Augusto Boal gives in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto, 1979) a step-by-step instruction on why the word 'spectator' is inadequate for the theatre we need today, and how theatre audiences can be empowered to 'take part' in a conventionally actor-dominated space. With reference to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which the contradictory relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed is radically defined as the powerhouse for social change, Boal ventures to present the world with 'forum theatre', a device that is meant to open up a new dimension of theatre practice. By breaking down the barriers between the stage and the auditorium, the spectators are transformed by Boal into what he calls 'spect-actors' and invited to air their long suppressed voices through role play in a dramatised, problem-solving process. In Boal's own words, 'spectator' is less than a man and it is necessary to 'humanise' him, to restore to him his capacity for action in all its fullness. It is therefore no surprise that many TIE practitioners have gained strength from this very brainchild of Augusto Boal, and found their respective ways to make forum theatre an integral part of the programmes they

devise (as described by Chris Vine in Tony Jackson's *Learning through Theatre*). In this thesis, Boal's intention to give back to the audience his power is used to illustrate why an alternative educational approach like TIE should be introduced to change the environment and atmosphere of state education and, in so doing, to make young learners feel more empowered and in control.

It is therefore natural for me to draw inspirations from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), one of those rare masterpieces that really make a difference, to back up the framework of this thesis. The influence of Freire's book on a speedily divided world – such as the poor and the rich, the oppressed and the oppressor – is both deep and far-reaching, no matter whether viewed from a political, pedagogical, sociological, philosophical or even ethical perspective. With a clear vision that penetrates the contradictory relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed like a sharp knife, Freire makes a clear statement that people, particularly those underprivileged and illiterate peasants who live in the poorest areas of Brazil, suffer because they tolerate in silence what is imposed on them. It is only when they stand on their feet to take control of their lives that a real sense of 'purpose' and 'identity' can be restored to their own being. Theatre observer and theorist Eugene van Erven has obviously expanded this argument in his book *The Playful Revolution* to justify the development of 'theatre of liberation' in Asia as a real and meaningful 'cultural awakening'. As reflected in my own learning experiences depicted earlier, young learners elsewhere have shared the same status with the 'oppressed', as they are often told what to think and how to behave in order to meet the needs of the society. TIE helps them take active control of what they learn and, in so doing, makes them feel liberated from the

stagnant world of academic disciplines. From this point of view, the definition and function of TIE could be made clear, and then taken as a basis to further explore the international phenomenon of TIE.

As mentioned by Tony Jackson in *Learning through Theatre*, definitions of TIE differ. Researchers and practitioners around the world have been seeking a most acceptable way to define TIE since this unique form of theatre became well known in the seventies. Being one of the earliest attempts to theorise the practice of TIE in Great Britain, John O'Toole in *Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre - New Techniques in Education* (Kent: Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1976) manages to contextualise his observations on the evolution of this education-oriented theatrical method. O'Toole begins this book by giving a full account of three TIE programmes, devised by Durham TIE Company between 1970 and 1974, and then contrives to build up an analytical framework around these facts to further explore the meaning and value of TIE. However, his approach is never dogmatic or high-handed. On the contrary, he shows a genuine concern about how the many different sides involved in the operation of TIE, including the pupils, the teachers, TIE practitioners and education authorities, can all work together to reach their respective goals, and depicts the benefits and conflicts with well-measured objectivity. Without a hint of preaching, O'Toole calmly demonstrates how children's development in cognitive, affective, imaginative and social areas can be enhanced by playing games or participating in TIE-related activities. He then dedicates the whole fifth chapter to analysing the key notion of 'participation', in accordance with three different degrees, namely extrinsic, peripheral and integral. The book has therefore helped me build up a basic and

clear understanding of the ‘classical’, or ‘orthodox’ forms of TIE; its strength and insight are best embodied in the first chapter of the thesis, where an attempt is made at giving TIE a better-defined status alongside a full exploration of the presenter-recipient relationship.

Each of the above-mentioned books has helped me shape the framework of this dissertation and proceed to explore the disciplines of Theatre-in-Education in a broader context. However, the true soul of this dissertation lies in my personal, and therefore very original experiences in transplanting TIE from Britain to Taiwan and in translating TIE from English into Chinese. Being one of the key organisers of the Green Tide project, I have contrived to introduce the ideas and skills of TIE to Taiwanese theatre practitioners and educationalists by way of working closely with GYPT and Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe over the last decade. As a theatre practitioner and researcher, I get to process all the useful information and materials I collected in the past, such as GYPT’s workshop programme and the questionnaires Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe carried out on those who took part in *The Completion of the Mansion*, *Dreams in the Wind* and *Nuclear Family*, and look at them from a critical point of view. My own involvement in the transplantation of TIE gives me a sense of self-awareness and the privilege of sharing ideas with the GYPT team and a group of Taiwanese TIE enthusiasts. Their personal experiences and opinions have provided me with precious source materials and helped me contextualise the developments of TIE and community/regional theatre, in Taiwan. Among these materials, three interviews conducted between myself and three hard-working and well-established TIE specialists have, in particular, clarified my views on the key questions stated above. The three interviewees are Bryan Newton,

former director of administration and finance of GYPT, Hsu Rey-fang, former artistic director of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, and Lin Mei-chun, professor of drama at Tainan Teachers College. Newton, now a retired veteran who used to serve in the field of TIE for more than thirty years, gives in his interview a clear picture of the kind of problems that faced the management of GYPT during the 90s, when Britain's subsidising bodies were no longer in favour of giving public money to theatre companies that relied heavily on funding for their survival. Hsu, now a full-time lecturer at Wen Zao Junior College, discusses with me in her interview the reasons why she was eager to learn the ideas and skills of TIE from GYPT, as well as the way how she would like to see theatre education understood and developed in Taiwan in the future. Professor Lin, well connected with Taiwan's education authorities and international drama/theatre education circles, explains in her interview why TIE should be given a higher profile on the basis of her personal academic training and practical experiences in DIE and TIE. As one of the Green Tide workshop participants, Professor Lin also analyses the importance of this international project and how the 'seed-carriers' trained by the GYPT team can go on making a difference by working closely with the drama graduate school she has just helped to establish at Tainan Teachers College. The full texts of both Newton's and Professor Lin's interview are attached to this dissertation as Appendix I and Appendix II for primary reference. Even though the kind of financial issues regarding the development of TIE proposed by Newton in his interview did not incite me to look more specifically into the funding problems faced by Taiwanese TIE workers – as there is no subsidising policy purposefully made for the cultivation of a new TIE culture in Taiwan – his honest attitude and sincere statement still carry a historical weight in themselves and speak so much for the

past glory of ‘classic’ TIE. Hsu’s interview has been treated differently. Unlike the other two interviews, the topics disclosed and explored in the conversations between Hsu and myself are deeply related to the centre issues of this research. The full text of Hsu’s interview is therefore inserted into Chapter Three as an independent section and used as a basis to support the argument to come in the concluding chapter. With the juxtaposition of these three interviews, I would hope that I have managed to avoid personal prejudice or narrow-minded judgement of any kind by balancing my subjective observations with the objective views provided by these three diligent, outspoken interviewees.

After attending the 1992 TIE workshop led by the Swortzells, Huang Mei-shu (黃美序), a distinguished Taiwanese English and Drama scholar, claimed that ‘we (in Taiwan) should work hard to catch up with the advanced development of TIE (in the West) and would therefore need to cultivate the sort of people who know how to do it’ (for more information see Chapter Two). Since then, the value of TIE has indeed been closely observed and enthusiastically discussed by a group of Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners at drama conferences and international symposiums, such as ‘2001 New Vision: Drama, Theatre, Education’, organised by the Taipei-based Assignment Theatre (差事劇團) and participated in by renowned TIE and DIE experts John Somers and Jennifer Simons. In September 2001, the long planned ‘Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum’ was carried out by Taiwan’s Education Ministry on the first-grade students for the first time. The so-called education reform (jiao gai, 教改) has moved a big step further since. At

this crucial moment, TIE is expected to be given a role to play in the making of a more flexible and diverse learning/schooling and teacher-training system. With reference to the writings of intercultural theatre specialists such as Erika Fischer-Lichte and Clive Barker, this research concludes with a critical examination of the TIE work produced by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, as well as of how this innovative work can be associated with and utilised by a community-friendly theatre group to enrich young people's learning experiences in Taiwan.

0.4 Structure of Thesis

In addition to this introduction, there are three chapters and a conclusion in this dissertation. Each of these chapters contains particular themes and research topics. They are structured as follows:

Chapter One looks at the evolution of TIE in Great Britain and its unique quality of being a participatory form of theatre, in the light of the transitions of the actor-spectator relationship over the last five or six decades and a case study dedicated to GYPT's work. It serves as a backdrop for the chapters to come.

The second chapter sets out to examine the phenomenon of community-related and education-oriented theatre being introduced to a post-martial law Taiwanese society through cultural exchanges made by theatre practitioners of Taiwan and Western countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. A case study on the Tainan-based Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, with special reference to the

troupe's encounter with TIE, provides a perspective of this quietly revolutionary process.

Chapter Three focuses on the organisation of 'Green Tide – Theatre for Interaction Workshop', in which I was an active contributory member. It depicts how the working methodologies of GYPT, and therefore of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, are transplanted and installed in Tainan Jen's devising machinery, as well as explains why this particular international project is a milestone in Taiwan's relatively short history of the development of Theatre-in-Education.

In the concluding chapter, the TIE-related issues raised in previous chapters are reviewed and used as a basis to answer the key questions proposed in this introduction. In my view, if the transplantation of TIE from Britain to Taiwan is ever going to succeed, the very essence of this theatrical device – its capability of empowering the participants and forming a sense of 'community' among them – has to be embodied in and represented by those who are willing to work for the growth of TIE in Taiwan. Moreover, even though TIE is no longer taken as seriously in Britain as it used to be, its distinguished potency of making different individuals communicate and connect is still worth being probed and adopted to re-innovate the over exhausted education system in Taiwan.

*All books, journals, magazines and newspapers published in Chinese and all quotations from Chinese sources are my translations, unless otherwise indicated.

*As the Taiwanese government has not yet decided which system will be used in Taiwan for the romanisation of Chinese names and words, I have chosen to romanise the Chinese names and words that appear in this dissertation in the most widely accepted way and have them followed by the Chinese characters, so that the readers who are interested in these names or words can find out more information about them on the basis of these Chinese characters.

Chapter 1

Theatre-in-Education in Context

TIE stems from a number of distinct but related developments in theatre and in education evident throughout the twentieth century: the movements to re-establish the theatre's roots in the community and in so doing broaden its social basis - manifested since the war in the revival of regional theatre and the rapid growth of community, 'alternative' and children's theatre; the theatre's search for a useful and effective role within society and an exploration especially of its potential both as an educational medium and as a force for social change - seen most notably in the work of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal and in the wide spectrum of activity ranging from children's theatre to political theatre; and, in education, the recognition during the 1960s and 1970s of the importance of the arts (and drama particularly) in the school curriculum, together with the increasing stress given to the functional role that the arts have to play in helping children to understand, and operate in, the world in which they live.⁶

1.1 Introduction

Over the last few decades, the ever-increasing research conducted into the many different aspects of theatre can generally be traced back to two fundamental questions: *what is theatre made of?* and *what can be made out of theatre?*. The former, referring to the evolution of theatre, is substantially engaged in the exploration of theatrical elements such as space, audience, actor and text, as well as the combination of them. It often prompts theatre specialists to further their knowledge of the composition of theatre as a prelude to define, or re-define the essence and purpose of this specific art form. By contrast, the latter is centred upon the great potency of theatre that allows it to function multi-dimensionally in its own

⁶Tony Jackson(ed.), *Learning through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education*, London: Routledge (1993), p.3-4

right, which is to entertain, instruct, soothe, incite, initiate, and to communicate all at once. It thus helps different theorists and practitioners go on developing alternative strategies for theatre-making.

However, being simply another artificial categorisation, the statement above is by no means trying to suggest that either of the two studies is self-sufficient enough to be cut off from the other. They are, to all appearances, rather like the two hemispheres that make a globe; each supports and reinforces its co-ordinate half: the anterior study serves as a basis for the development of the posterior scheme, while the posterior works up to provide the anterior with different interpretations and novel meanings. Along with many other examples, a description of the once very fashionable application of primitivism to theatre, given by Christopher Innes in his introduction to *Avant Garde Theatre*, is perfectly illustrative of this interdependent relationship:

In avant garde drama, as the widespread use of a term like ‘theatre laboratory’ in the 1960s and 1970s indicates, primitivism goes hand in hand with aesthetic experimentation designed to advance the technical progress of the art itself by exploring fundamental questions: ‘The questions are: What is a theatre? What is a play? What is an actor? What is a spectator? What is the relationship between them all? What conditions serve this best?’ On this level, the scientific ethos of the modern age parallels the return to ‘primal’ forms, equally signalling an attempt to replace the dominant modes of drama - and by extension the society of which these are the expression - by rebuilding from first principles.⁷

As Innes hints in this account, each ‘revolution’ in theatre is brought about within a certain socio-political context in the light of some revealed or re-shaped source materials, as a gesture to challenge the mainstream of theatrical thought. By clever

⁷ Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre 1892-1992*, London: Routledge (1993), p.3

manipulation of this formula, theatre practitioners have contrived to keep pace with, or even managed to speed up the cultural progress of human society through the whole wealth of dynamics embodied in their work. Consequent upon the vitality it repeatedly receives and emits in the process of social transitions, theatre has survived a long existence along with human history, and is still fighting its way to maintain harmonious relations with a world that has become heavily reliant upon technological inventions.

This chapter, designed to carry out an all-round investigation into the nature, function and purpose of Theatre-in-Education (TIE) and its practice in Britain with an emphasis on its re-construction of the actor-spectator relationship, is therefore due to gain greatly from a select exploration of the two above-mentioned studies and, in this way, to justify how they are meant to benefit each other. TIE, as theoretician Tony Jackson points out, needs to be seen as a new form of theatre.⁸ Like any genre of alternative theatre, TIE originated from people's desire for change, and has indeed contributed to the de-centralisation of theatre by re-defining, re-shuffling and re-constructing the three key components of theatre, namely the actor, the audience and a theatrical space. Given that TIE is obviously something 'made out of theatre' but not quite *the* theatre known to the public, it seems inevitable to start this integrated research by posing a couple of simple questions: What is TIE and where does it come from? How does it work? Why does it matter? Is there a future for it? The answers to these questions are certainly not easy ones, as there is a long history of unsettled disputes over the efficacy and

⁸ Tony Jackson (ed.), *Learning through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education*, London: Routledge (1993), p.3

legitimacy of TIE. However, by way of this identity-searching and future-seeking process, as well as a case study that focuses specifically on the work of the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT), an acclaimed professional TIE company based in southeast London, a much bigger context of the multi-layered development of TIE in Britain will, step by step, be pieced together towards the end.

There has long been a prevailing view that all theatre is educational, in terms of the assumption that people learn, spontaneously, from what they see. Theatre, as its Greek origin *theatron* suggests, is a spectacle-place or a viewing-place.⁹ Under most circumstances, people come here to witness a 'happening' in expectation of being 'affected', no matter in what sense of that word, and thus begin an experience that would, consciously or unconsciously, expand their *knowledge* of life afterwards. Intriguingly, what we call 'education' today may well be all theatrical in view of its fundamental structuring of the teacher-student relationship. Imagine a primary school teacher giving a lesson in front of a class of thirty pupils with a piece of chalk in his or her hand. Whatever the subject is, the first thing he or she is expected to achieve is to secure the attention of these pupils. He or she therefore needs to be very aware of how a specific piece of material is *presented* to his or her *audience*, in order to make them learn well. In other words, there is indeed an overlap between the concepts of education and theatre, although they appear to belong to two very different institutions in modern days. It is therefore valuable to take a careful look at the essence of theatre and, in so doing, to examine the

⁹ John Russell Brown (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, Oxford University Press (1995), p.14

socio-educational meanings of the word ‘theatricality’ before diving deeper to excavate the true value of TIE.

1.2 The Nature of Theatre

While theatre is notoriously a ‘one night stand’ that happens only when the spectators feel motivated to come and join the performers in a theatrical space at a fixed time, its intrinsic worth lies in its *interact-ability*. Eugenio Barba, a Grotowskian and an initiator of theatre anthropology, once suggested that the essence of theatre can be reduced to one basic thing as tangible as ‘a particular relationship in an elected context: First between people who gather together to create something, and then, later, between a creation made by this group and its public.’¹⁰ Like many of his contemporaries, Barba thinks theatre *is* ‘the men and women who do it’,¹¹ which, of course, should include those who *work to* present a theatrical piece and those who *come to* receive the presentation. On this basis, there is little difficulty in assuming that, essentially, theatre is about the organic fusion of different human forces rather than the skilful arrangement of technical innovations. It epitomises the social behaviours of human beings, as well as contextualises their interpersonal communication through the way it functions. This is why theatre, more than anything else, is so closely allied to human society, as within the realms of sociological practice human life is frequently likened to a ‘social theatre’.¹²

Unlike the newly emerged cinema or television, where the audience is exposed to

¹⁰ Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre*, London: Routledge (1995), p.30

¹¹ Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe*, London: Routledge (1995), p.101

¹² See, for example, David Booth and Alistair Martin-Smith (ed.), *Re-cognizing Richard Courtney*. Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited (1988), p.141

‘a recorded picture or an electronic transmission of human deeds’,¹³ theatre confronts its audiences with the deeds themselves. With live actors staging a performance within the presentational area, theatre speaks to its spectators in a manner that is both primitive and original. By means of the codes shared and used by these two groups of people in their real life, the spectators observe the actors’ performance, interpret it in their mind, and then send out their reactions right on the spot - unless they are given the opportunity or incited to take action against what is happening before their eyes. The experience is therefore immediate, authentic, and most likely to be taken as one’s own. In other words, the simultaneous presence of actors and spectators in a shared space and the possibilities engendered by their mutual confrontation have made theatre a unique form of artistic expression. Accordingly, it is only when the ‘energy’ - or ‘chi’ (氣), as the Chinese call it, which means ‘a breath of life’ - derived from the interaction between actors and spectators is fully exploited and effectively channelled through the unfolding of ‘text’¹⁴ that a most accomplished theatre can be achieved.

As early as 1907, Meyerhold ‘posited an actor who stands face to face with the spectator... and *freely* reveals his soul to him, thus intensifying the fundamental

¹³ Oscar G. Brockett, *Perspectives on Contemporary Theatre*, Louisiana State University Press (1971), p.8

¹⁴ As suggested by Tony Goode and Jonothan Neelands in their definition of theatre (see *Playing in the Margins of Meaning: The Ritual Aesthetic in Community Performance*, *Drama Journal*, Vol. 3 No.2, Spring 1995), the word ‘text’ used in this thesis should not be limited by its literal sense. Instead, it refers to a ‘performance text’. This is especially true at a moment when a lot of theatre theorists/practitioners (eg. Richard Schechner and Eugenio Barba) and theatre companies (eg. Theatre de Complicite and Graeae TC in the U.K.) are devoted to the exploration of the physical possibilities and the ritualistic charm of theatre. Therefore, regarding the many different sides of a theatrical text, it seems more adequate for us to agree with a definition of the term that allows multi-layered interpretations. Hence, in theatre, we have to bear in mind that actors and their spectators communicate not only through a written or verbal text, but also through a physical or visual text. It means that ‘happenings’ ranging from an actor’s gestures or movements to the settings seen on stage are usually deemed as parts of a theatrical text.

theatrical relationship of performer and spectator'.¹⁵ No matter how outmoded that may sound today, its success then had exemplified what he claimed in the same year that a 'clear flame' can be kindled from 'the friction between the two unadulterated elements, the actor's creativity and the spectator's imagination.'¹⁶ In Meyerhold's terms, the audience 'was the vital fourth dimension without which there was no theatre.'¹⁷ In the absence of the audience, the other three 'dimensions' - namely the playwright, the director, and the actor - would work to no avail, as it is somewhere between them and their audience that theatre 'happens'. It thus leads him to conclude that:

Nowadays, every production is designed to induce audience participation: modern dramatists and directors rely not only on the efforts of the actors and the facilities afforded by the stage machinery but on the efforts of the audience as well. We produce every play on the assumption that it will be still unfinished when it appears on the stage. We do this consciously because we realise that the crucial revision of a production is that which is made by the spectator.¹⁸

Nearly a century later, while in conversation with his interviewer Jean Kalman, Peter Brook argued that theatre can only be deemed an 'event' when each of the audience has become attuned to what happens on stage. Basing his theories on the notion that actors and audience are the two fundamental elements of theatre, Brook claimed that the interaction between these two groups of people is a crucial factor in the making of a 'theatrical occurrence'. Resonant with Grotowski's idea that theatre is in essence an 'encounter', he asserted the *meeting* of the two dynamic bodies, one of which, the audience, has 'undergone no preparation' and the other, the actor, more or less prepared, as the root of any theatre tree. In order to give

¹⁵ Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, Cambridge University Press (1989), p.30

¹⁶ Edward Braun (ed.), *Meyerhold on Theatre*, London: Methuen (1991), p.62

Kalman, a lighting designer, a clearer picture of his exposition, Brook chose to take the lighting of a carbon-arc lamp as an example, and compared it to the way theatre works as an artistic medium:

In a carbon-arc lamp, two poles touch, there's a change in temperature, then combustion, and a thoroughly useful and wonderful result - light. That's a schematic account of the event.¹⁹

Like the carbon-arc lamp, Brook suggested, the theatre audience 'has no intensity in itself'. It is intrinsically unprepared and outwardly conditioned to be inactive on most occasions. However, if each spectator's diffuse and dispersed attention can be effectually held, gathered, and then conducted to converge at the same level of tension by the actor's capable and sensitive performance right from the beginning, the 'combustion' will be brought about and, finally, an intensive piece of theatre - the 'light' - created. At times, under the circumstances that a specific approach is properly set up and well rehearsed in advance, this 'invisible interaction' can be taken a step further with the spectators encouraged to 'intervene' in a purposefully developed scene, as in forum theatre²⁰. In this case, the 'spect-actors' must be continuously driven to engage themselves in the actors' strategic actions and *vice versa* that a lively touch of theatricality, or a real happening, can be generated from a theatrical space. Thus the experience *becomes* one's own; not only mentally, but

¹⁷ Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, Cambridge University Press (1989), p.30

¹⁸ Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, London: Methuen (1991), p.256

¹⁹ Peter Brook interviewed by Jean Kalman, Any Event Stems from Combustion: Actors, Audience, and Theatrical Energy, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.29-32, 1992, p.108

²⁰ According to Augusto Boal, spectators can be transformed into 'spect-actors' when they are strategically induced to take action against what is happening in front of them. For more details please see the next section of this chapter (From Epic Theatre to Forum Theatre), or see Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge (1992), p.17~21 (Forum Theatre)

also physically. In virtue of this particular performer-spectator relationship, Oscar Brockett ranks theatre as the most explicit and the most public of the arts. In his view, the explicitness and public-ness of theatre have made it *controversial* and, in this sense, attractive to those who are seeking an artistic medium that can be used as a weapon in the struggle over political and social issues:

Although both television and film have a wide range of means available to them and may present problems more graphically than can the theatre, they cannot match the psychological relationship between performer and spectator created by the live theatrical situation. A confrontation may be shown on television or film, but a direct confrontation between the doers and the watchers cannot be achieved in those media.²¹

With this endorsement, many social revolutionists, political enthusiasts, and educational practitioners of this century have endowed theatre with a more society-rooted role to play in the drama of human civilisation.

1.2 From Epic Theatre to Forum Theatre: The Influence of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal

In retrospect, it is clear that the big-scale theatrical revolution carried out in the West by Bertolt Brecht and his fellow theatre workers during the 1920s has substantially changed and diversified the features of theatre on this side of the planet:

The work of Brecht, both as playwright and theoretician, is clearly important for any study of audience/play relations. His ideas for a theatre with the power to provoke social change, along with his attempts to

²¹ Oscar G. Brockett, *Perspectives on Contemporary Theatre*, Louisiana State University Press (1971), p.8~9

reactivate stage-audience exchange, have had a widespread and profound effect not only on theatre practice, but also on critical response to plays and performance.²²

In reaction to a society that was undergoing political and economical upheaval, the very nature of theatre - the presenter-recipient relationship as stated above - had been deliberately put under scrutiny by Brecht, as well as his colleagues and followers, and manoeuvred to meet some specifically fixed *socio-educational purposes*.²³ So self-evident are the terms such as 'political theatre', 'people's theatre', 'popular theatre', 'civic theatre', 'regional theatre', 'community theatre', 'children's theatre', 'drama-in-education', 'theatre-in-education', 'alternative theatre', 'black theatre', 'gay theatre', and, more recently, 'theatre for development' that have been invented one after another and employed to justify, sometimes overlappingly, the utilisation of theatre over the last five or six decades. In each of these cases, theatre, a medium that conveys strong physical languages and rich conversational conventions, is consciously made a vehicle of 'propaganda'²⁴ under the presumption that it can do much more for the human beings than what it has already achieved. In so doing theatre practitioners of this category are not all that intolerant of a global reality in which the significance of theatre has long been reduced to its recreational level. Rather, they are suggesting that theatre should be applied to *serve* people in a way that is like how a pineapple

²² Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audience: A Theory of Production and Reception*, London: Routledge (1990), p.22

²³ Here I choose to use the term 'socio-educational purposes' rather than 'socio-political purposes' because I believe the former is more neutral and capacious in terms of these theatre practitioners' motive for initiating a new style of theatre and what they have actually achieved. More information can be found in the second half of this section.

²⁴ According to Zygmunt Hubner, one of Poland's leading directors, the Latin etymology of the word 'propaganda' makes us 'think of noble and sublime goals'. The Latin *propagare* means 'to graft, to spread, to grow'. Thus the word is used here to emphasise the message-carrying and -spreading side of theatre. See Zygmunt Hubner, *Theatre and Politics*, edited and translated by Jadwiga Kosicka, Illinois: Northwestern University Press (1992), p.84

is used in our daily life: it can be sliced to eat, diced to cook, squeezed to drink, or even presented to worship, as observed by the Chinese; all depends on who needs it and why it is needed in the first place.

Such a user-friendly attitude towards theatre-making has certainly borne a great deal of relation to the re-organisation of social and theatrical hierarchy. In the wake of the interwoven expansion of certain ideologies such as capitalism, socialism, and communism at the early stages of the twentieth century, an intention to search for a welfare state where equality and democracy would be allowed to prosper had been strongly expressed by people from all walks of life. Revolutionary spirits were in almost every corner of the society and soon a 'class war' declared. It was under these circumstances that Brecht announced the death of the old 'dramatic theatre'. In a world that was always radically changing, a new type of theatre was, as he contended, needed to reflect people's perspective on a by then still-in-embryo 'scientific age':

Brecht argued for a completely new type of theatre on the grounds that this was demanded by certain large-scale historical changes: 'the old form of drama does not make it possible to represent the world as we see it today. What we nowadays regard as the typical course of a man's fate cannot be shown in the current dramatic form.' By this Brecht meant both that the world had changed, and was still in the process of changing, objectively, and that this was accompanied by a process of subjective change in the way men looked at the world. This 'objective' change Brecht had in mind was the historical transition from the age of bourgeois capitalism to a socialist, and ultimately communist, society in which ownership of the means of production would be in the hands of the working class.²⁵

As soon as the 'class war' was on its way, the 'fourth wall' in theatre, invisibly

²⁵ Brian Dochery (ed.), *Twentieth-Century European Drama*, London: Macmillan (1994), p.26

erected between the stage and the auditorium with the advent of nineteenth century realism, was made inessential by Brecht's advocacy of 'epic theatre' and, by so doing, the theatre audience was asked to think more actively and independently about what they see. Here, a piece of theatre called *The Red Revue (Revue Roter Rummel)* that 'began with what appeared to be a fight in the audience: two men pushed and argued their way onto the stage, ... enabling a running commentary on the action from both bourgeois and proletarian standpoints'²⁶ is exemplary of this newly launched philosophy. Produced by Erwin Piscator, one of Brecht's comrades-in-arms who contributed a good deal to the establishment of 'political theatre' and 'epic codes', in 1924 and performed at some locations around Berlin, this theatrical event had helped to augment the possibility of the actor-spectator relationship and change the destiny of theatre. This was mainly due to the dilated usage of a theatrical space and the dialecticised construction of the presenter-recipient relationship. Obviously the debatable social issues embodied in this production concerned not only the two characters, a master butcher and an unemployed worker, but also the general public who had brought their own social backgrounds and personal political perspectives into the theatre. As the pre-arranged argument stemmed, rather unconventionally, from the auditorium, the usually unprepared audience would soon be alarmed at the unexpected outburst, and aroused to identify with the politics-oriented conversation between the two actors who were, by now, falsely assumed to be their fellow spectators. A cognitive interaction between the presenters and the recipients had thus been triggered off by a deliberately arranged 'spatial disorder' and a purposefully devised 'situation

²⁶ Graham Holderness (ed.), *The Politics of Theatre and Drama*, London: Macmillan (1993), p.105

conflict'.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, *The Red Revue* was a huge popular success. It was seen by tens of thousands of proletarians in a fortnight, thanks to the strong 'propagandistic effect' backed up by the three principles, namely simplicity of expression, lucidity of structure, and a clear effect on the feelings of a working-class audience,²⁸ to which Piscator had dedicated his efforts. This early experiment led to the formation of theatre groups all over Germany and by the late twenties there were several hundred in existence.²⁹

The partial demolition of the invisible barrier between the stage and the auditorium had made it convenient for Augusto Boal to subvert the definitions of 'actors' and, more decisively, 'spectators'. In line with Brecht's attempt to de- and re-construct this presenter-recipient relationship, the Brazilian theatre director and drama theorist announces in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* that the word 'spectator' is theatrically improper and changes it into 'spect-actor'. The role of the theatre audience has thus been further revolutionised. In this new role, the theatre audience is not expected to sit in the auditorium passively, waiting for the actors to serve them a feast of drama. On the contrary, they are asked to try their best to 'play a part' to a specifically defined 'forum theatre' by way of verbal or physical participation. But what is a 'spect-actor'? What is he or she expected to do? What

²⁷ This, intriguingly, might have served as an inspiration for 'invisible theatre', another invention of the Brazilian theatre director and theoretician Augusto Boal, which plays with the idea of an 'unaware audience'. For more information see Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, London: Pluto (1979), p.143-147

²⁸ Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre*, edited and translated by Hugh Rorrison, London: Methuen (1980), p.45

²⁹ Edward Braun, *The Directors and the Stage*, London: Methuen (1982), p.147

conventions of theatre does Boal want to break up with the invention of ‘forum theatre’ and, after all, why is this idea so ‘revolutionary’? To be brief, being active is all Boal asks of the conventionally passive theatre audience; and it is in this sense that forum theatre has further changed the social function of theatre. Forum theatre, as Boal puts it, is ‘a sort of game and fight’ and, like all forms of game or fight, there are rules for it. In order to put this fight or game in action, two rival sides must be present and given their fair grounds. As the actors are somehow more dominant on the playing area, Boal maps out a whole set of directives to equip the audience with the offensive force to fight back: each of the audience in front of the playing area is now turned into a ‘spect-actor’. After witnessing a play in which a problematised dilemma is conveyed, the spect-actor can shout ‘stop’ whenever he or she deems proper, and then approach the playing area to intervene, trying to change things by stepping into the oppressed character’s shoes while the actors re-perform the same play that was previously presented ‘as if it were a conventional one’.³⁰ Meanwhile, the actor who has been replaced should stay at the sideline as a supporter to ‘encourage the spect-actors and correct them if they start to go wrong’³¹. In response to the actors’ attempt to hold them back on behalf of ‘forcing them to accept the world as it is’, the spect-actors articulate what they think about the situation and act out their solutions with the backing of the Joker,

³⁰ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge (1992), p.19

³¹ Here Boal gives an example in the book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (p.20): in Portugal a peasant who was replacing the actor playing the part of the Boss started shouting ‘Long Live Socialism!’ The replaced actor had to explain to her that, generally speaking, bosses are not great fans of socialism.

who works as a facilitator and is in charge of the performance game³². On these grounds, people of different backgrounds and personalities are allowed to bring their own ideas onto the playing area and challenge one another through the debating and quasi-performing process. As a result, no matter whether the original play is led to a better ending, the spect-actors are no longer the silent and passive recipients in the theatre. They are now empowered to stand on their feet and air their voice in public.

Here a crucial issue is how to make these re-born spect-actors feel motivated to take action in this participatory theatre. According to Boal, the play presented in the forum theatre must be well-constructed, characters must be especially clearly delineated as much as the problems reflected in the text, under the premise that nothing surrealistic or irrational would be introduced on the playing area:

The original solutions proposed by the protagonist must contain at least one political or social error, which will be analysed during the forum session. These errors must be clearly expressed and carefully rehearsed, in well-defined situations.³³

Obviously Boal wants to use the political or social error made by the protagonist as a key to open the door for the spect-actors. Since every spect-actor is actually a

³² Joker, as interpreted by Boal himself in *Theatre of the Oppressed* and by those who are specialised in the operation of forum theatre and TIE, is mainly a facilitator in the forum game. Similar to the 'joker' in poker games, he is a magical reality; he creates it. If necessary, in Boal's own words, 'he invents magic walls, combats, soldiers, armies. All the other characters accept the magic reality created and described by the Joker. To fight, he uses an invented weapon; to ride, he invents a horse; to kill himself, he believes in the dagger that does not exist. ... In this way, all the theatrical possibilities are conferred upon the Joker function: he is magical, omniscient, polymorphous, and ubiquitous. On stage he functions as a master of ceremonies, *raisonneur*, *kurogo*, etc. He makes all the explanations, verified in the structure of the performance, and when necessary, he can be assisted by the coryphaeus or the choral orchestra.' For more information see Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p.180-190

³³ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge (1992), p.18~19

member of human society, he or she would naturally feel confronted by and become involved, both emotionally and intellectually, in this performance game when witnessing a 'human error', as this error made by the protagonist might be identical to his or hers in real life. Hence the spect-actors have two choices: to shout 'stop', or not to. If they do, the forum starts to work. What if they do not? Then the actors will repeat the error again and bring the play to the same conclusion, which leads the spect-actors to face the fact that the world would continue exactly as it is if they do not take the chance to improve or change things. Thus, a discussion between actors and spect-actors can still be undertaken after the presentation, even though no real intervention has ever happened.

With the set-up of forum theatre, the first convention of traditional theatre that Boal wants to break up is the spatial segregation: not only to diminish the demarcation line that assigns the stage to the actors and the auditorium to the audience, but also, ideally, to create an open playing area that gives spect-actors all kinds of freedom to utter their opinions. As interviewed by Michael Taussing and Richard Schechner, Boal mentions that he was once invited by a producer to make forum theatre for television under the condition that the spectators had to be selected in advance. He did not accept because 'in that case it is not forum theatre'³⁴ and proposed to make forum theatre on the streets, which was turned down by the producer owing to the unpredictable situations. An important point revealed here is that a strictly defined space can only accommodate an audience of similar social experiences, but an open space will widely extend the possibility of this theatrical forum, as people from all classes are welcome to express their thoughts and feelings and

³⁴ Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz (ed.), *Playing Boal*, London: Routledge (1994), p.22

communicate with each other here. Secondly, the function of the actor is altered. In forum theatre, an actor must act with the knowledge that the stage is not to be monopolised by anyone. Being a link between the spect-actors and the character, he or she is expected to perform in a very concrete way in order to make the others feel resonant:

Forum theatre demands a different style of acting. In certain African countries the people measure the talents of singing by the extent to which they can seduce their audiences into singing along with them. That is what should happen with good Forum Theatre actors.³⁵

But things become even harder when an actor is also responsible for leading the spect-actors to create a good intervention during the forum session. He or she must know his or her character well and, at the same time, be flexible enough to stimulate the spect-actors' motivation to participate, as well as to defeat their 'magic' ways of solution:

If the actor is too firm, it can discourage or, worse still, frighten the spect-actor. If the actor is too soft and vulnerable, with no counter-argument or counter-actions, it can mislead the spect-actor into believing that the problem posed by the play is easier to resolve than he or she thought.³⁶

Therefore, if the main issue of the play is about a woman's domestic oppression from her husband, the actor who plays the husband has always to keep his dominant status in order to challenge the spect-actor whoever comes to replace the actor who plays the woman. He cannot suddenly stop being a chauvinist or domestic dictator only because he is treated more tenderly or badly by any of the

³⁵ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge (1992), p.237

³⁶ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge (1992), p.237

spect-actors. He must *be* the husband from the beginning to the end, which is a very difficult skill to develop and master. Thus the actor's task is complicated. He or she is no longer a 'performing machine' or 'emotional channel' on the stage. He or she should have a good understanding about how to be a specific type of human beings both on the playing area and in the real life. In other words, the 'third person' aesthetics proposed in Brecht's analysis of 'alienation effect' is brought in to nourish an actor's sense and sensibility of role-playing on stage. At this point, the intrinsic structure of traditional theatre is substantially changed. The triangular relationship between the actor, the stage, and the audience is now substituted by the new system composed of the analytical actor, the playing area, and the spect-actor. Under these circumstances, theatre is no longer a 'refuge' where people get to cut off their links with the outside world for a couple of hours and indulge themselves in pure imaginations and illusions; it is now a place in which an audience is asked to deal actively with what happens in front of him or her in accordance with his or her own identity and standpoint, and thus perceive and internalise the theatrical experience as an uninterrupted part of his or her real life.

Ideologically speaking, forum theatre is a very different genre from people's general perception of theatre. It is not even qualified to be called a 'pure theatre', if John O'Toole's definition of 'theatre' in respect to its context of setting is to be agreed:

A theatre is a physical environment designed to assist the creation of drama, by neutralising the messages of the real context - in a standard theatre, by the concentration of focus upon a specially recreated location, while the rest of the space is temporarily suspended in silence and darkness.³⁷

³⁷ John O'Toole, *The Process of Drama*, London: Routledge (1992), p.55

Forum theatre obviously cannot be categorised as such. Being an instrument that conveys Boal's intention of putting an audience's presence at the theatre back to the continuity of his or her daily life, it is more similar to what O'Toole calls a 'classroom':

A schoolroom, which is where the vast majority of drama in education and TIE events take place, is entirely different. The expectations of the participants are that non-fictional events are what normally take place, that the 'learning' which goes on in a classroom is part of the 'real life'.³⁸

To make it more specific, certain parallels can be further drawn between forum theatre and the classroom: First of all, they are both open areas where opinions of a wide range can be articulated and exchanged; secondly, teachers have to use certain materials as the 'text' to 'inspire' the students in a classroom, just like a 'play' should be presented by the actors to 'stimulate' the spect-actors in forum theatre; thirdly, the students have the rights to raise their hands as a signal to deliver their questions, where as in forum theatre the spect-actors can shout 'stop' and then express what they think; and finally, teachers are responsible to help their students find a proper answer, as are the actors in assisting their spect-actors to try out their solutions. The most important thing, however, is that both the students and the spect-actors, or generally, the response-givers, should always be invited to deal with the problems, be they academic or social, actively in accordance with their own knowledge and experiences. On this basis, some TIE companies, most notably the southeast London-based Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT), have come to make the ideas and skills of forum theatre integral to the

³⁸ John O'Toole, *The Process of Drama*, London: Routledge (1992), p.55

TIE programmes they devise. In terms of the coaching of personal development and interpersonal communication at school, the combination of forum theatre and TIE has led to a very fruitful outcome.

1.3 Definition and Function of TIE

The evolution of TIE in the United Kingdom is in itself a course full of inspiration and enlightenment. In terms of its formation, this relatively new theatrical form was invented in the hope of serving a specifically targeted audience - in this case, mainly the young students of different age ranges or key stages³⁹ - by re-interpreting and re-arranging the above-examined presenter-recipient relationship; as for its development, this education-orientated theatre has been joined by political, community and children's theatre and, in particular, by progressive child centred and democratic approaches to education. According to Tony Coult, the educational principles of TIE are based on a new trend of thinking in pedagogy that originated in the forties and fifties:

It was probably the 1944 Education Act, establishing free, compulsory schooling for all, that was most responsible for the sixties' liberalisation of educational theory and practice. What was good for the individual took the place, gradually, of what was good for the Nation. In colleges of education, new ideas, formulated by theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky, gave a sound basis of theory to child development, rooting it in the processes of socialisation. If a child is made by its society, and is not determined by pre-ordained gifts and limitations, important implications follow – for

³⁹ As recorded in *Arts Council Guidance on Drama Education*, pupils of different age ranges can be divided into four key stages: key stage 1 (5 to 7 years), key stage 2 (7 to 11 years), key stage 3 (11 to 14 years) and key stage 4 (14 to 16 years). Each of them is expected to master certain ideas and skills of drama at school. This reflects the changes brought about by the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1980, which introduced the National Curriculum and the notion of Key Stages (KS).

society and for the teachers who find themselves, in effect, the shapers of future society.⁴⁰

Hence a thorough inspection on the nature of education and child development had led to a liberalisation process. During the fifties and sixties, drama began to be installed in the British schooling system as a result of the efforts made by people like Brian Way, Peter Slade and Caryl Jenner, who believed that children understand better by acting things out. The social nature of human beings was extensively emphasised in the practice of teaching and learning, although their belief in the cultivation of children's 'creativity' and 'spontaneity' did not seem to help young learners build up connections with one another or with the society very much. This school of thought was then taken a step further by theorists such as Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, who began developing the methods of 'drama-in-education' (DIE)⁴¹ along with the establishment of Drama Advisors. At this stage, drama is not just utilised to generate children's naturalness or creativity, but also treated as a possible agent for expanding their cognitive and emotional experiences. It provides the young with something that is not dogmatic or monotonous, as the subjects they learn at school so often are. With the assistance of innovative approaches such as drama games and role play, school pupils are able to explore how they think and *feel* at the same time. Their sense of being as an individual and as part of a bigger world is reinforced by their interaction with each other through some purposefully chosen and arranged life-reflecting materials

⁴⁰ Tony Coult, Agents of the Future: Theatre-in-Education, collected by Sandy Craig in *Dreams and De-constructions*, London: Amber Lane Press (1980), p.76

⁴¹ According to Tony Jackson, DIE is 'drama as taught in schools, sometimes with a theatrical bias, involving the preparation of a play for public presentation and/or learning about theatre styles and techniques; now more usually concerned with the exploration of themes and problems through role play and improvisation, with emphasis upon developing the child's imagination, self-awareness and expressiveness and upon the social skills involved in group work.' See Tony Jackson, *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.8-9

The fresh air brought in by this open window – in many ways a direct result of the 1944 Education Act - made school teachers seek outwardly for more inspiration. Their needs were soon met by the also newly emerged repertory theatres, established since the late fifties as a response to ‘a renewal of bourgeois civic pride rather than to any obvious popular demand’.⁴² Through the collaboration of school teachers and these community-friendly repertoire theatres, the idea of professional theatre practitioners working in schools for the young communities was formed and a unique genre of theatre thus invented:

The first new post-war repertory theatre was the Belgrade at Coventry, and its director was Tony Richardson. Together with Gordon Vallins, a teacher employed by the theatre to forge links with schools, he envisioned and brought into being the very first Theatre-in-Education team.⁴³

Ever since the pilot scheme was set up by Ann Garrett, Gordon Vallins, Jessica Hill, and Dicken Reid in September 1965 at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, TIE has gone through ups and downs in Britain in the past thirty-five years and, more recently, ventured forth onto a worldwide acknowledged status. Although many theorists and playwrights, among them Baz Kershaw and Edward Bond, recognise that the emergence of TIE did help to open up a new dimension for and broaden the horizon of the theatre, they tend to believe that the considerable diversity of TIE programmes has made the definition of this theatrical device elusive and its function difficult to categorise. While a lot of these TIE theorists are eager to emphasise the participatory nature of this particular theatrical form, others are

⁴² Tony Coult, *Agents of the Future: Theatre-in-Education*, collected by Sandy Craig in *Dreams and De-constructions*, London: Amber Lane Press (1980), p.77

⁴³ Tony Coult, *Ibid.*

more keen to boost its power at making drama and theatre integral to the so-called institutional education or the National Curriculum. Meanwhile, the wide range of working methodologies adopted by different TIE groups - in many cases a direct result of the scale of funding they receive from the subsidising bodies such as London Arts Board and local educational authorities (LEA) - have further complicated the situation: some are committed to engaging the young in the exploration of life-related issues through an interactive framework (such as GYPT); some are in favour of developing a consistent link with certain academic subjects in order to meet the needs of their 'customers' (such as Durham TIE Company); some have 'post-modernised' TIE by setting up narration-orientated web-sites on the internet, which enable and encourage trans-scholastic communication without demanding the physical presence at a particular venue of all the parties involved (such as Collar and TIE Theatre-in-Education Company); and some are, frankly, just about to do them all. In short, 'no simple watertight definition of TIE is possible, or desirable', as Tony Jackson rightly claims.⁴⁴

In spite of its ambiguity, certain distinctive features can still be found in the field of TIE. In *Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre - New Techniques in Education*, one of the earliest attempts made to theorise the practice of TIE in Great Britain, John O'Toole manages to contextualise his observations on the evolution of this education-oriented theatrical method. O'Toole begins this book by giving a full account of three TIE programmes, devised by Durham TIE Company between 1970 and 1974, namely *The Happy Land* (1970), *Ghost in the Village* (1974), and

⁴⁴ Tony Jackson (ed.), *Learning through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education*, London: Routledge (1993), p.15

The Ballad of Billy Martin (1973), and then concludes that the three of them, though different in devising approaches, do share some similarities:

The three programmes have in common a number of immediately obvious factors:
all take place in school;
all comprise a group of actors, working in role and in costume, for and with children;
each play, like any other, centres round definable characters in a state of dramatic conflict;
all involve areas of theatricality and performance combined with areas where the members of the audience are directly and personally spoken to, even personally embroiled in the dramatic conflict;
the subject matter of each play is clearly relevant to part of the curriculum in most English schools (imaginative story-telling in the infants' school, local history research projects for eleven-year-olds, exploration of social problems by senior pupils);
each has a specifically educational aim.⁴⁵

Intriguingly, in *Learning through Theatre*, Tony Jackson also depicts what he thinks a TIE programme should be, before he proceeds to give a brief description of three different TIE projects done, respectively, by Perspectives, Pit Prop Theatre and Cockpit TIE:

The TIE programme is not a performance in schools or a self-contained play, a 'one-off' event that is here today and gone tomorrow, but a co-ordinated and carefully structured pattern of activities, usually devised and researched by the (TIE) company, around a topic of relevance both to the school curriculum and to the children's own lives, presented in school by the company and involving the children directly in an experience of the situations and problems that the topic throws up. ... There is, however, no set formula. The shape, style and length of the programme will vary enormously depending upon the subject tackled and the age range catered for.⁴⁶

In view of O'Toole's and Jackson's summaries, there are clearly some shifts in the

⁴⁵ John O'Toole, *Theatre in Education*, Kent: Hodder and Stoughton Educational (1976), p.9

⁴⁶ Tony Jackson, *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.4

way a performance is presented to affect its audience, if a comparison is to be made between TIE and conventional Western theatre. Unlike most theatrical events, TIE takes place in classrooms, school halls or, occasionally, other user-friendly venues such as community centres and theatre studios, where the participants are not always bound to their seats and the space can be utilised in an intimate way. This distinguishing feature of TIE echoes people's continuously changing perception of space utilisation:

Human consciousness of space is changing. The fixed grandeur of the proscenium stage with the audience as voyeurs has less appeal to young audiences than fifty years ago. In contrast, flexible and intimate spaces allow them to participate more in the created meaning. Scenery of three-dimensional realism leaves less meaning to be created by the audience than a minimal setting on a bare platform. The interpersonal space of actor and audience allows young people to create maximum meaning. This not only varies between groups in our multi-cultural society, but also most modern audiences demonstrate a need to decrease distance and increase closeness.⁴⁷

In this intimate space, the usual relationship between actors and spectators in an 'orthodox' theatre is, as in forum theatre, converted to something exploitable for creating an alternative learning environment. By locating 'dramatic conflict' or 'problems thrown up by a chosen topic' at the centre of the programme under the guidance of a purposefully fixed educational aim, TIE is meant to engage its target audience in a learning process at a *participatory* level from the outset:

TIE's characteristic formal device, and an actual innovation in theatre technique, is some form of active participation by the audience. There is a whole spectrum of degree and effectiveness of participation, from a discussion following straight theatre display through to engineered situations which, to the child, are indistinguishable from 'real life'. The

⁴⁷ David Booth and Alistair Martin-Smith (ed.), *Re-Cognizing Richard Courtney: Selected Writings on Drama and Education*, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Ltd. (1988), p.41

function of participation will be to allow each member of the class to experience a dramatic situation set up by the actors, to make judgements and take action within the dramatic situation, and to experience the consequences of those judgements. The particular form of participation chosen will depend on the age-group, the size of class, the content of the programme, and on the traditions and collective experience of the company.⁴⁸

Although the statement above was made by Tony Coult more than two decades ago, the special emphasis it lays on active participation signifies the audience-centred practice of today's TIE. Again, as in forum theatre, drama is not an end but the means. It is treated by TIE practitioners as an agent of *empowerment*, by which a group of young people – customarily a classful - can be directly involved in a simulated situation where they are confronted with life-related issues such as racial prejudice, personal health and bullying, and are encouraged to make decisions or solve problems. In order to accomplish the task, they need to work closely with the actors as well as with their peers; they have to watch, listen, think, express and act not only as individuals but also as a group. Their participation in a TIE programme therefore allows them to test their personal beliefs or visions of life in a safe environment through their interaction with the actors and, meanwhile, get to know each other's different thoughts and standpoints through their mutual communication.⁴⁹ It gives them an opportunity to relate to one another as 'social

⁴⁸ Tony Coult, *Agent of the Future: Theatre-in-Education*, collected by Sandy Craig in *Dreams and De-constructions: Alternative theatre in Britain*, London: Amber Lane Press (1980), p.80

⁴⁹ In *Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre – New Techniques in Education* (1976), John O'Toole divides children's participation in TIE into three different levels: extrinsic participation, peripheral participation and integral participation. The first is 'the simplest and most traditional way to involve the audience actively', such as holding a discussion after the performance. The second can be represented by 'warm up', the simplest and most peripheral participation, where a character, often identifiable as the 'Link' or storyteller, comes and talks to the children, eliciting simple responses like clapping, or ritual replies. In the third, small audiences are essential, small enough for the actors to control the participation sufficiently closely for the focus to be kept clearly on the central drama all times; and for children's individual or small group contributors to be registered, considered and sometimes acted upon. Nowadays, as the state subsidy is going down, many TIE companies in Britain can only afford to engage their audiences in the first or second kind of participation, although groups like GYPT are still trying to devise fully-participatory TIE.

animals' rather than confined and well-trained 'learning machines'. A sense of 'community' is thus forged by their shared experiences in this theatrical ride and the learning process becomes one of doing rather than being spoon-fed.

In the circumstances, a whole set of innovative approaches are required in the devising process of TIE. While in conventional theatre the crew, including the director, the producer, the actors and the designers, tend to rehearse in an isolated environment before their show is seen by the public, and are generally more aware that they work at the director's command, the members of a TIE team - a director, an education officer, a technician and a small group of actors - usually need to build up connections with their target audiences during the devising period, and are more likely to improvise together and share the responsibilities of creating a piece. In most cases, the education officer is in charge of co-ordinating and co-responding with the schools, preparing school teachers for the TIE team's visit and, on the whole, taking care of the customers' needs. Sometimes the actors have to do the same. They visit schools before a programme is fully developed, so as to try out some ideas on their future audiences and see how they respond to certain issues or working methodologies. All this hard labour is added up to form a solid ground for the growth of mutual trust and understandings between the team and the schools, as well as between the actors and the participants. Possibilities of a better-equipped interaction between all sides can thus be encouraged.

Although all the members of a TIE team are important and specialised in some way, the most crucial and distinguishable of them are certainly the TIE actors, or the so-called actor-teachers. As put forward by Cora Williams, when Coventry

Education Authority and the Belgrade Theatre started TIE, they, rather unknowingly, invented a new breed of actor. Some were employed from theatre, some from teaching; they were called actor-teachers:

The term encapsulates the very nature of the then new theatre form, a hybrid, one species emanating from educational drama and the other from a traditional British theatre background.⁵⁰

The nature of an actor-teacher is in many ways an extension of that of an analytical actor, as in forum theatre. His or her duty as an actor is complicated by the fact that he or she works in a predominantly educational environment. However, he or she is not expected to 'teach' in the same manners as of school teachers, who tend to give lessons under the protection of a given hierarchy. Rather, he or she should be working with the young participants as a socially more experienced human being. The genuine concern of his or her job is not the transfer of theatrical or academic knowledge, but the exposition of social structure and interpersonal communication within the framework of drama. When a TIE programme is presented to its target audience, actor-teachers are the vehicles that spearhead the action: they carry their sets and props into and out of schools; they put on and take off their costumes; they step in and walk out of their roles; they speak to their audience both as characters and as themselves. They are the bridge that crosses over the gap between the children's and the adults' worlds. They initiate, encourage and inspire the young, who in their eyes are the possible agents of social changes, and help them form a bond with society through theatre, the mirror of life. They therefore should be inspirational and non-judgemental:

⁵⁰ Cora Williams, *The Theatre in Education Actor*, collected by Tony Jackson in *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.91

The TIE actor has an extra quality: her character is dedicated to the inspirational idea and sustained by the wealth of research and creative experiment. There is a power in this actor which will become evident in performance. TIE is a radical wing of the arts industry. In the rehearsal stage actors and director are preparing to entice the audience into engagement with the theatre event and finding the means to challenge the audience into thinking for itself. This is manifest in the way the ensemble of actors plays the scenes. The art form rejects the notion of complete, well-rounded characters; instead it sets out to puzzle and disorientate its audience, for their emotional journey with the characters is the essence of the educative experience.⁵¹

In line with the actor-teacher's unique qualities, TIE can be briefly defined as **professional theatrical activity set up with certain educational objectives to be participated in, both physically and mentally, by school pupils under the guidance of several actor-teachers who would lead them to deal with some problematised life issues or dramatised academic subjects in a user-friendly space, which act usually involves decision-making and problem-solving, in an interactive scheme especially devised and rehearsed for them.** Its function is mainly dedicated to provide the young with a dynamic social dimension through dramatic conflicts where the real world is interpreted and represented, and that is where the strength of this theatrical form lies:

TIE lets children come to know themselves and their world and their relation to it. That is the only way that they can know who they are and accept responsibility for themselves... It is TIE that has returned to the true basics. TIE performs education's most fundamental duty. Today education is being reduced to learning how to make money and fit into the economy. These things are necessary but they will never teach children what a civilised society is - what moral sanity is - what responsibility for others is.⁵²

⁵¹ Cora Williams, *The Theatre in Education Actor*, collected by Tony Jackson in *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.101

⁵² Edward Bond, *The Importance of Belgrade TIE*, *SCYPT Journal*, No.27 (April 1994), p.37-38

Under this prerequisite, TIE can well be related to the rhetoric and aesthetic of human ritual and the latter's capability of forging a sense of 'community' amongst its participants; practitioners like Geoff Gillham have come as far as to advocate a 'curriculum for living' on the basis of TIE's links with a community-conscious and ritual-inclined pedagogy. These links, complex but resourceful, have already been systematically examined by theorists Tony Goode, Jonothan Neelands and their like, who believe the traditional purposes of ritual 'have included signifying and re-affirming the social order; coronations, investitures; paying homage', as well as 'guiding individuals and groups into the next phase of their life journey; naming ceremonies; confirmations; engagements; weddings'.⁵³ In their views, TIE should be taken more seriously by Britain's education authorities, as it is the very one thing that can help young learners bridge the gap between their school life and their social life by way of bringing 'life necessities' – the true 'basics' – to them. Instead of forcing the students to learn something that could be totally irrelevant to their lives in the future, TIE gives them a chance to 'rehearse' their lives. This is what has been missed out from the Tory's and the Labour's educational agenda over the last two decades – be it John Major's famous 'return to the basics' speech, in which the 'basics' are inevitably interpreted as the glories of traditional British values, or Tony Blair's ambitious 'education, education, education' discourse, in which 'education' sounds much more like an input or an investment.

⁵³ Tony Goode and Jonothan Neelands, Playing in the Margins of Meaning - The Ritual Aesthetic in Community Performance, *Drama*, Vol.3, No.2 (Spring 1995), p.17

1.4 Theatre, Community and Socio-Educational Service: A Case Study on the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT)

All the TIE-related issues raised and discussed so far in this chapter are indubitably best embodied in the history and work of the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT). Although GYPT has never been officially named or defined as a community theatre, it is actually one of the most community-conscious theatre companies in London. The southeast part of London, where the company is based and operating, has long been renowned for being multi-racial and multi-cultural, as a big population of immigrants and refugees have chosen or been sent by the authorities to settle down in this area. Poverty prevails in the borough of Greenwich despite the glossy appearances of the royal park and the newly opened Millennium Dome; racial prejudice and discrimination can easily be found in people's daily life. It is therefore always a top task for the local residents and communities to soothe ethnic conflicts, as well as to enhance mutual understandings.

In 1965, Ewan Hooper, who founded the Greenwich Theatre four years later, set up a Youth Theatre as part of his concept of a community theatre for the South East London area. In 1969, the Bowsprit, a professional TIE company, was formed with a director and two actor-teachers. It operated from the Greenwich Theatre and worked in schools in south-east London and Kent. In 1970, the Youth Theatre and the professional TIE company joined together and moved to St. James Church in

Plumstead, and the collective name Greenwich Young People's Theatre⁵⁴ was adopted - although the term 'Bowsprit' as a separate title for the TIE team was not dropped until 1978. In the earliest stage, issue-based TIE programmes, such as *Empire Made*, a piece devised to examine the problems of child labour in Hong Kong, had brought a liberal social dimension into the Bowsprit's work, and, in so doing, into the local schools. Soon after the company was formally established, GYPT began showing an even stronger interest in social justice and state welfare, and became deeply involved in serving the underprivileged during the late seventies and eighties. Inspired by the pedagogy of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire and the experiences and techniques developed by DIE workers such as Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, they exposed and explored politics- and society-related issues, with a left wing-inclined attitude and through the means of drama, in their work, and encouraged their young audiences to look at the world they all lived in from different angles with an open mind. According to Chris Vine, a former director of GYPT, it was at this period of time that the company came across Augusto Boal's work through the book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, and started integrating his methodology into its existing TIE practice in 1982:

In his struggle to make his work increasingly relevant and effective as a tool for liberation, Boal had come to the conclusion that traditional forms needed reworking and, specifically, that the relationship between the actor and the audience must be changed. He believed that feelings as well as the intellect were crucial to the development of people's perceptions and understandings and saw in the language of theatre the means to help them think with their whole being – not passively but 'in action'.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The term 'Lewisham' that appears in GYPT's current official title 'the Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre' was added to its original name only after the company started to receive funding from the Borough of Lewisham and thus extended its service to cover the schools located in this specific area few years ago.

⁵⁵ Chris Vine, *TIE and Theatre of Oppressed*, collected by Tony Jackson in *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.111

In Vine's own words, GYPT was, up to that point, working within the mainstream of TIE on the belief that 'central to the work, in all its variety of theatre forms and educational strategies, are the twin convictions that human behaviour and institutions are formed through social activity and can therefore be changed, and that audiences, as potential agents of change, should be active participants in their own learning'.⁵⁶ Their encounter with Boal's theatrical ideas and skills therefore produced sparks of recognition and, consequently, made the company the first British TIE group to study and adopt, systematically, the Brazilian director's working methods, in the hope that their mutual concerns for the oppressed and deprived would be materialised within the context of the experiences of young people in south-east London. Since then, GYPT has become very aware of the power structure of human relations and the problems it may cause, be they arguments between parents and children, conflicts between employers and employees, or contradictions between different ethnic groups. Many of their TIE programmes have been developed around the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The participants are very often invited to step into some characters' shoes and try to solve the problems or dilemmas, which usually involve a protagonist oppressed in some way, presented in the dramatised situations. Amongst many examples, *Land Fit for Heroes* (1982), a programme devised for examining the general strike of 1926 through a sophisticated utilisation of role-play, can be immediately singled out as a direct result of this encounter; the programme of which, during its second tour, was greatly reinforced by Boal's forum theatre

⁵⁶ Chris Vine, *ibid*, p.109

model, and the audience was invited to intervene in the theatre and to change action on the stage.

So far, GYPT has integrated Boal's inventions, such as image theatre and forum theatre, with the traditions of creative drama, such as hot-seating and group role-play, and developed an organic set of devising approaches. These can be categorised in the following way:⁵⁷

Drama Games

Games are used for many reasons:

To warm up the participants (audience and actors)

To get to know each other

To introduce a theme or concept

To create a participatory atmosphere

To focus, reflect, relax

For fun

Image Theatre:

This technique has been used for many years by community theatre and TIE practitioners. It has been particularly developed by the Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal. GYPT's image theatre work involves the creation of 'Tableaux Vivants' or 'living sculpture'. Participants use their bodies to make a static representation of a moment from a scene, story, real life or to express the essence of a feeling or situation. It can be used as a way of sharing experiences, of analysis and to get the heart of a matter in an expressive and concentrated way.

⁵⁷ The following are directly quoted from the programme plan written by Vivien Harris, the artistic and educational director of GYPT, for a workshop conducted by the company's TIE team in Taiwan in 1998. This workshop, entitled 'Green Tide', will be fully covered and discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

Forum Theatre:

GYPT's use of forum theatre has been inspired by Boal, who developed this method as part of his Theatre of the Oppressed. The company has developed and adapted this approach in its own work with young people in formal and informal educational settings in two main ways:

Classic Forum - A play, or scene, is shown, which follows the story of a protagonist who wants to, but cannot, change the situation. This story and the problems which face the character should be ones which the audience recognises as something they too would want to change, and which has relevance to their own lives. The play is run for a second time, but now the audience can try to change the outcome by stopping the action and replacing the protagonist.

Dilemma Forum - As above, but the action of the play is stopped at the point where the protagonist faces a very difficult dilemma. The audience is then invited to suggest different options to deal with this dilemma and to take on the protagonist's role to explore them.

Working in Roles:

This term is used to describe any situation where an actor, teacher or actor-teacher adopts a role and interacts with the audience in that role, or where the audience adopts a role (they may or may not interact with the above). There are a range of ways this technique is used:

Hot-seating - this is possibly the simplest form of an actor (or teacher) working in role; a play is shown, a story read or a character introduced and the audience can ask questions of the character(s).

Character with a dilemma - here the actor or teacher has prepared a role with a particular (educational) theme in mind. He or she is prepared to answer any question which the audience asks but will answer in such a way as to keep the audience thinking about the problem the character faces. The audience may also be

given a role (eg. Social workers investigating why a child has run away from home).

Role play - Usually describes an improvisation where actors or teacher and audience are in role together. This form is active, unlike hot-seating (above). *The Longest Road*, produced in 1993 by GYPT, in which the pupils are asked to play a group of refugees (see Figure 1 below), is a good example of this.



Figure 1. The participatory TIE programme devised by GYPT: *The Longest Road*

By freely adapting and combining some of these techniques, GYPT's TIE team has developed various devising patterns, by which community- or society-related issues are acted out and scrutinised in depth. The half-day programme *Collywobbles - Knock, Knock, Who's There*, for example, devised by GYPT in

1993 for secondary school pupils with an AIDS-related theme, was segmented in the following way:

Part I Discussion

Pupils (about 30 - 40) are gathered in a studio. In the centre of the studio there is a chair with a letter on it. An actor-teacher approaches the chair and picks up the letter. He reads the letter to the pupils. It is a letter left by young Karen. She has been very depressed and she thinks she cannot cope anymore. She therefore decides to leave but obviously does not know where to go. The actor-teacher then asks the pupils some questions: 'Why is Karen depressed?'; 'Where do you think Karen is going?'; 'What do you think will happen to her?'... Meanwhile, another actor-teacher writes down all the ideas proposed by the pupils on the blackboard one by one. Finally, they vote to *decide* what Karen's problem is (she may have been terribly ill) and where she has gone to (she is probably taking shelter in her friend's place).

Part II Improvisation

The pupils are divided into three smaller groups to work with the three actor-teachers. They are asked to make 'image theatre' (still images) on the topic 'how will those who are close to Karen, such as Karen's family or friends, react to her problem'. After twenty minutes or so, the three groups take turns to show one another the result of their improvisation. The actor-teachers are there to help them look at the human relations embodied in these images and explore the skills of

characterisation throughout the improvising session.

Part III A Break

The pupils take a ten minutes break. During this short period of time, the actor-teachers put on their costume and make-up openly on the performing area, which gives the pupils a chance to witness how actors physically slip into their roles.

Part IV The Play

The pupils assemble again and sit in rows in front of the performing area. They then watch a one-hour-long play that is specifically written and rehearsed for them. It is a story about friendship and betrayal, love and hatred: A guy is lingering on the street with a gun in his pocket. He looks sad but we do not know why. Feeling tired, he knocks on the front door of a flat, where an old couple live. When the couple hear the knock, each of them has his/her disguised hope of who is going to turn up. However, the appearance of this stranger reminds them of an Italian friend, who was 'sold' to the secret police by the husband during the War out of jealousy... As described by Brendan Murray, the playwright, in the 'teacher's pack'⁵⁸, the play 'is not about AIDS, but about what AIDS is about'.

In this project, the TIE team of GYPT has combined image theatre, discussion and

⁵⁸ Many TIE companies tend to include the editing of a 'teacher's pack' in the devising process when they are working on a new project. A teacher's pack is a resource book, by which a school teacher is equipped to prepare his or her students for the TIE team's visit, as well as to carry out some follow-up work with them. It is usually edited by the team's education officer.

a short piece of straightforward theatre. They are bound up by the motif of finding out what ‘fear’, ‘betrayal’ and ‘friendship’ mean to different individuals under different circumstances: On the one hand, a very pure theatrical experience is provided and the young audience is given a chance to *feel* the power and *observe* the composition of theatre in an intimate space that is specifically set up for them; on the other hand, their own experiences of making image theatre (in Part I and II) can now be applied to explore the sophisticated and multi-layered meanings embodied in the old couple’s and the stranger’s stories after they watch the short piece of theatre. What is even more noteworthy is that while the project was obviously set up with an educational aim of awakening children’s awareness of personal health and sexually transmit-able disease, the GYPT team did not opt to sell the message at a bargain. Instead, they have come up with a four-part programme, which suggests what it is like to live with something threatening and dreadful rather than addressing the audience directly about the horrors of AIDS. This is exactly what Vivien Harris, artistic and educational director of GYPT between 1991 and 2002, means when she says the GYPT team tends to explore the themes of their programmes ‘conceptually’:

Recently GYPT TIE programmes have explored the following themes: bullying (age group 9-12), race and identity (age group 11-18), decision making (age group 3-5) and language and power (age group 9-18). We explore these themes conceptually. That is we aim to help young people uncover connecting threads. For instance let’s say that we wanted ‘nationalism’ to be the subject of our next programme. Our concept learning approach would mean that we would look at the things that nationalism is about – ‘identity’, ‘belonging’, ‘fear’, ‘exclusion’, etc. That is ideas that apply to all sorts of topics. This helps us to know what facts mean and the implication of that meaning. These concepts already apply to our own lives and to those of our audiences and so concept learning allows us to take advantage of what we already know, to extend our understanding

through the theatre process and afterwards to apply those understandings to all sorts of new situations.⁵⁹

It is through this ‘concept learning’ process that the performance efficacy of TIE is formed. By being invited to ‘feel’ and ‘think about’ the depth of the problems embodied in a programme through the association of an drama experience and their own life experiences, the young participants become active learners and get to know their own views of and standpoints on certain life-related issues.

Although TIE has long been located at the heart of GYPT’s work, the company’s service does not stop there. In the last thirty years, GYPT’s policy of providing a comprehensive programme of educational arts activities for children and young people in south-east London has been carried out through four areas of work:

TIE and associated school based workshops

Drama and youth theatre workshops for young people in their free time

Training programmes for young people, in the performing arts

Professional training programmes, including in-service training for teachers

In addition, the company also has a history of innovative work with people with learning difficulties and long standing collaborations with youth and professional groups overseas. Through these activities, GYPT has led their young participants to look, both inwardly and outwardly, at themselves and their surroundings in the belief that people learn best through doing and in ways that do not artificially

⁵⁹ Vivien Harris, How Can Theatre Enable Learning, a speech given to audiences totalling about two hundred in two different seminars on interactive theatre held alongside the ‘Green Tide: Theatre for Interaction Workshop’ (for more information about this workshop see Chapter Three); unpublished

divorce their senses from their intellects. Their work not only helps the school-attending local youth cultivate a strong interest in theatre-related areas, but also gives the unemployed an opportunity of equipping themselves with some living-making skills. In this way, the company has addressed some community problems, and also contributed to the creation of a more integrated atmosphere in southeast London.

1.5 Problems and Hopes

Although TIE companies like GYPT have been trying very hard to bridge the gap between social and scholastic realities by means of theatre, it seems that the way they have been treated by the British education authorities and the arts bodies since the eighties does not do much justice to their efforts - here, ironically, a perfect illustration of the fact that in reality things do not always turn out right for everyone, as they are usually more complicated than one may think, and therefore need to be incessantly negotiated and improved. While some TIE companies have fought their way out and managed to make ends meet by, for instance, binding themselves to some particular agencies involved with young people or community work,⁶⁰ a lot of them are still doomed to suffer from being incapable of maintaining their basic subsistence due to a general shortage of governmental subsidies:

The eighties posed difficult questions for all alternative theatre. TIE is a branch of community theatre that cannot survive without substantial subsidy, and we must face the fact that it is threatened with virtual extinction. The Arts Council no longer acknowledges any responsibility for sustaining it, while local authorities are often ill-informed of the TIE method and are in any case far more liable to reactionary pressure to cut out

⁶⁰ Tony Jackson, *Learning Through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.30

‘frills’ (sic). It is clear that a greater clarity of vision of the role of all art is going to be necessary for any form of popular art to survive. Creating ‘agents of the future’ is one of TIE’s goals but it is increasingly clear that it is a goal to be shared by all of the alternative theatre.⁶¹

According to Bryan Newton, director of administration and finance of GYPT, in 1991 and 1992 his company was faced with losing almost fifty percent of all their funding, and then losing almost fifty percent of their staffing along with the cut; meanwhile, they were told by their two main funders, the Local Authority of Greenwich and the Local Authority of Lewisham, that the only way of keeping the remaining funding was to continue to do the work the two funders required them to do in their schools. GYPT was therefore driven to abandon their long-observed policy of free service, and started charging schools for their performances:

For instance, in 1991 and 1992, we were faced not only with losing almost fifty percent of all our funding, and then losing almost fifty percent of our staffing along with it, at the same time being told that the only way you can keep the remaining funding is to continue to do the work that the two main funders require us to do in their schools. Also, at the same time, those two main funders, the Local Authority of Greenwich and the Local Authority of Lewisham, are saying to us: ‘But of course we know we are not giving you all the money we used to give you; we can’t do that any more,’ - and that’s not just to us that they were saying that, they said it to everybody. It was not a comment on the work; it was simply to do with a comment on the finances, and changing regulations with regard to management of schools. It also meant that, for the first time, we’re no longer a free service; we had to charge schools. So we moved into a new culture, in that we were having to become more commercially minded; and with our ‘customers’, if you like, the schools, also having to learn the same lesson and try to be more commercially minded themselves, with their budgets being cut back and having less and less money to spend on everything.⁶²

Many reasons have contributed to the decline of the British government’s support

⁶¹ Tony Coult, *Agents of the Future*, collected by Sandy Craig in *Dreams and De-constructions*, London: Amber Lane Press (1980), p.85

⁶² For more information see Appendix I: *An Interview with Bryan Newton*

towards TIE. They can be, rather artificially, classified into three levels of ideological disputes as follows:

First, *moral* level: arguments in relation to people's *belief* in TIE – 'why?' questions such as 'why should drama or theatre be included in the educational system?', 'why should TIE be one of the top choices?', and 'why should the Government financially support an activity like TIE?'

If there is general knowledge of the power and the place of drama in our culture, there is little agreement about drama's purpose in education, where a fierce debate has raged amongst the theorists. On one side stand those who give priority to drama's role in child development, on the other those who see drama as an art form indivisible from theatre. The former blame the latter for introducing alien theatrical approaches to activities which they feel should be unsullied by notions of performance and audience... The latter blame the former's inability to align drama with the other arts for its exclusion as a discrete subject from the National Curriculum.⁶³

Second, *technical* level: arguments in relation to people's *perception* of TIE – 'how?' questions such as 'how can drama or theatre be included in the educational system?', 'how can TIE be defined?', and 'how can TIE be evaluated?'

The activities of TIE companies have become very diversified. Teams work not only in schools but in community centres, clubs and institutions, theatres and so on... TIE companies vary enormously in composition, in their views of what they are doing and why, in where they work and in terms of employment. The structure of programmes vary according to their objectives, content and the intended audiences. Performance is often only part of a TIE programme which may include any combination of workshops, discussions and simulations.⁶⁴

⁶³ John Somers, *Drama in the Curriculum*, London: Cassell Education Ltd. (1994), p.8~9

⁶⁴ Ken Robinson, *Evaluating TIE*, collected in *Learning through Theatre*, London: Routledge (1993), p.251

Third, *executive* level: arguments in relation to people's *responsibilities* for TIE – 'who?' questions such as 'who is responsible for funding TIE?', 'who should be given the chance to participate in TIE?', and 'who is qualified to devise or evaluate TIE?'

Historically, the funding of TIE companies has drawn typically on a combination of two or three separate sources in varying proportions. These have commonly been arts grants, local or regional education authority subsidy, and the charging of individual schools. The ideal generally sought would be an amalgam of the first two, as such representing a desirable interpretation of TIE... In the past this has enabled many companies to offer a free service to schools with the firm and approving backing of the education authority, which was in a position to incorporate the TIE company as part of its overall programme of providing centralised educational resources. With the introduction of LMS (local management of schools), the matter of funding has become highly problematic for schools and LEA alike.⁶⁵

These sometimes unanswerable questions have led to an unpredictable future of TIE. As Bryan Newton rightly points out, the British government's decision to cut off their financial support for TIE has forced 'classic' TIE companies such as GYPT and the local schools taking advantage of their services to re-tune their keys. With the money issue rising high above everything else, TIE companies and local schools can no longer sing together harmoniously. In other words, the idealistic nature of TIE was greatly damaged by an increasingly powerful political agenda that education is very much an act of investment. Under such circumstances, the work ethics developed by TIE practitioners over the last three decades can no longer sustain within the framework of a new subsidising policy. Inevitably, GYPT

⁶⁵ Nicolas Whybrow, *Young People's Theatre and the New Ideology of State Education*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol.X, No.39, August 1994, p.271

is now going through the most drastic reforms ever taken place in the company's 30-year history, and it is expected that the new GYPT will operate with an entirely different set of strategy^{ies} – for instance, the permanent TIE team has already been removed from the company.⁶⁶

Even so, the revolutionary spirit has still been diverted to meet the needs of other societies or countries out of the British Isles. Indeed, over the last two decades, theatre practitioners from all continents – this does not suggest that there are always a great amount of people in each continent – have come to recognise TIE as one of the most dynamic and radical forces of the twentieth century. In English-speaking countries such as Canada, the United States and Australia practitioners have largely modelled their TIE works upon the examples set up by their British predecessors. In African countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria TIE has been adopted by people who work in community and education sectors and utilised to generate new ways of thinking, as well as to reinforce what they call 'theatre for development'. In Asia Pacific, the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) has even come as far as to define TIE in their own way on the basis of their work:

Theatre-in-Education in the Philippines may mean: The use of theatre methods and disciplines as tools for putting across ideas and content in various academic areas in the school. In PETA we call this CREATIVE PEDAGOGY while St. Scholastica's College of Manila call it Drama-in-Education The use of theatre productions to highlight or deepen learning in school. The use of an educational and cultural package which includes a 45 minute play performed by adult actors tackling various themes and issues coupled with a 3-4 hour follow-up

⁶⁶ According to a letter (dated 16 January 2004) circulated among the friends of GYPT by Melanie Sharpe, chair of the Board of GYPT, members of the current board 'are not convinced that a permanent team of actor/teachers is a prerequisite to achieve the aim of producing highest quality TIE'.

theatre workshop for teachers and students to deepen the theme of the play performed, plus an hour session to discuss practical application of the theme in the school and community to make the theme alive in their day to day lives.⁶⁷

In other words, theatre workers – particularly those who work within the field of community and educational theatre – in the Philippines, as in many other Asian countries, have been trying to integrate the working methodologies developed by British TIE practitioners with the work they do in their home countries, hoping that the British experiences in combining theatre and education can be transplanted and utilised to ease down certain problems they have faced in their education systems or cultural environment. Together they have worked to bring a new dimension to the seemingly declining TIE by trying to preserve the idealistic nature of this theatrical device, despite the fact that subsidising systems in these countries could be even more profit-conscious and disorganised. Now, consequent upon the efforts made by many Taiwanese theatre and education scholars and practitioners, Taiwan has also joined the league and started integrating the ideas and skills of TIE with the island country's own cultural and social traditions. All these facts show that in a world where people are becoming increasingly eager to make contact with and get to know their fellow human beings better, TIE will not disappear easily. It may be adapted or transformed into something else, but its true value of enhancing young people's understandings of their society lives on. It thus echoes with what Brian Roberts has said with a touch of warning in his preface to the book *Echoes of the Surging Tide*:

It would be bitterly ironic if Britain, the original home of TIE, allowed any

⁶⁷ Ernie Cloma and Beng Santos-Cabangon, Theatre-in-Education as Defined by the Philippine Experience, *SCYPT Journal*, No.28, August 1994, p.57-58

further decline in the fortunes of this vital form, while internationally its dynamic potential as an active educational force was increasingly recognised. ... That reaching out and finding new ways of understanding is, after all, what TIE is fundamentally concerned with.⁶⁸

The relationship between the true value of TIE and the transplantation of TIE from Britain to Taiwan can also, on this basis, be further demonstrated and explored in the following chapters.

⁶⁸ Tsai, C.C. and Hsu, R.F. (ed.) 2001, *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, Taipei: Yang Chi Books Co., Ltd., p.16-17

Chapter 2

Theatre-in-Education in Taiwanese Context

Introduction

In Taiwan, although drama specialists and educational psychologists such as Wu Jing-ji (吳靜吉)⁶⁹ and Yang Wan-yun (楊萬運) came to recognise the importance of applying drama/theatre to help young people learn and cultivate themselves at quite an early stage, the correlation between theatre and education did not improve much until about seventeen years ago, when the abolition of martial law in 1987 started to give rise to a series of educational reforms and the development of alternative theatre. Following the social changes brought about by the practice of democracy, education-related theatre has been gradually introduced to the Taiwanese by independent-minded theatre practitioners and educationalists, who look Westward for new ideas and working methodologies. In the process, many ‘orthodox’ thoughts about theatre and education have been challenged and certain governmental policies debated, such as the role of the Education Ministry and the abolition of the long observed national entrance examination system. Meanwhile, arguments and conflicts with regard to how the traditional *tian ya* (填鴨), or ‘stuff the duck’, method of education⁷⁰ can be transformed into a more balanced and

⁶⁹ Wu Jing-ji, who trained with La Mama when he studied theatre in the States in his youth, is deemed by many to be the ‘father of Taiwanese experimental theatre’. He was the one who organised Lan Ling Ensemble, one of Taiwan’s pioneering and most renowned experimental theatre groups, in 1979, and has been involved in the promotion of drama-related activities ever since.

⁷⁰ In Taiwan, this is an act to ‘stuff’ students with whatever they need to know to pass an entrance examination for higher education.

diversified schooling system have led to misunderstandings and chaos among those who are in power and people who would like to gain control. Under such circumstances, the introduction of a new approach such as TIE to the gradually opening-up Taiwanese society remains a difficult task, particularly at a time when the value of TIE is not as highly appreciated as it used to be in its country of origin. Nevertheless, none of those who consider TIE a valuable resource seems ready to give up their belief in its special value. Even today, this ‘quiet revolution’ is going on in the island of Taiwan at a snail’s pace. More gentle efforts have been made by educationalists and theatre workers alike to boost the profile of this British-born pedagogical method. The development of TIE has therefore become a relatively significant movement in theatrical and educational circles. It is therefore worthwhile to look at the evolutionary course of TIE in Taiwan with a special focus on why it is needed and what it has achieved in a totally different cultural context, and then proceed to examine the many different sides, positive and negative, of this transplantation. The contemporary perspective will focus on a case study on Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, a Tainan-based community-related theatre group eager to find alternative ways to engage its local audiences.

2.1 Education and Theatre in Modern Taiwan

In Taiwan, an island with a mainstream culture of Chinese origin and some residual effects of the Japanese colonisation (1895-1945), theatre does not always seem to be a compatible companion for education. Several reasons have contributed to this conspicuous division. First of all, as in most modern Chinese societies, education in Taiwan tends to operate above and not alongside the arts. While Taiwanese

parents and politicians are notoriously keen to give education - or, more precisely, schooling - a high profile,⁷¹ their attitude towards making arts integral to the young person's school life is not as enthusiastic. This is not difficult to understand, for a race that has, over the last century, undergone a series of intense wars, not only with its foes but also within itself. Education is inevitably regarded by the government-in-power as a means of securing the legitimacy of the regime.

Although claimed by the Communist Chinese government as a rebellious province of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan had actually been ruled by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, better known as KMT), who took over the island after Japan lost the Second World War and were in power for more than fifty years until the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)⁷² won the presidential election in March 2000. During the 1950s and 60s, KMT chairman Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who fled to the island with his KMT forces from mainland China in 1949 and called his authority in Taiwan The Republic of China (ROC)⁷³, made Taiwan a military base for 'recovering the mainland'. Under his rule, the islanders were manipulated to wipe away their consciousness of being Taiwanese or Japanese.

⁷¹ An immediate example is that whenever there is a general election in Taiwan, education always resides at the top of most candidates' agenda to win the support of the middle-aged, middle-class voters.

⁷² DPP, or Democratic Progressive Party, was established on 28 September 1986. Its founding marked the culmination of four decades of democratic struggle against the KMT's one-party rule and Martial Law in Taiwan.

⁷³ The Republic of China (ROC) was founded in 1912 after the Chinese Qing Dynasty was demolished by Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT). The Nationalists ruled most parts of the country under this name shortly before they were forced out of power by the Communists during the Chinese Civil War. In 1949, while the People's Republic of China (PRC) was being established in the mainland by the Communists, the then Nationalist Party leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan with his defeated army and re-built ROC on the island. ROC has since remained as Taiwan's official name till now, even after Chen Shui-bian, who is from DPP (Democratic Progressive Party, KMT's political rival, see the note above), was elected as Taiwan's president, and therefore the first president in Taiwan of a non-KMT background, in March 2000. The Constitution of ROC was adopted by the National Assembly on December 25, 1946 and promulgated by the National (Nationalist) Government on January 1, 1947. It was put into effect on December 25, 1947, though since 1949 has only been observed and practiced in Taiwan.

Children were taught to be dignified Chinese in order to save the poor fellow-countrymen in the mainland from Mao's terrible communist gangsters. Mandarin became the official language - instead of Japanese - and the Taiwanese dialects⁷⁴ were unreservedly suppressed by the military government. As a result, the cultural features of Taiwan were substantially affected by the harsh political atmosphere during that era. Beijing Opera was, and still is, regarded as the 'national opera' by the official circles, while the indigenous forms of theatre such as Taiwanese Opera and puppetry - usually performed in a local dialect - were purposefully neglected. Different kinds of censorship were forced on literature, drama, and art. Intellectuals and dissidents who acted against Chiang's 'return to the Motherland' policy or stood for the Independence of Taiwan were inevitably arrested and persecuted. Under such circumstances, the educated have long been encouraged by the educators to conform to certain social morals in order to 'stabilise' the status quo⁷⁵. Individuality and creativity are therefore often undervalued or passed unnoticed in the domain of education, as they are by nature against what a domineering or dictatorial government really needs: collectivism and productivity.

⁷⁴ Min-nan-yu, or Fukien, is the most popular dialect in Taiwan, and is therefore nicknamed as Tai-yu, or Taiwanese. It is now used by almost three quarters of the whole population. These people are generally referred to as 'native Taiwanese' (*ben sheng jen*, 本省人); most of their ancestors came to Taiwan from China's Fujian Province 350 years ago. The second most popular dialect in Taiwan is Hakka. It is spoken by about 12% of the whole population. In addition to the above-mentioned languages spoken by Chinese Han immigrants, there are also some other dialects spoken by Taiwan's aboriginal peoples. However, since Mandarin is now Taiwan's official language, people of different ethnic groups and the young generations tend to communicate in Mandarin - although the language itself is often seen as a symbol of the oppressors, i.e. those who fled to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek's KMT army, or the so-called mainlanders (外省人).

⁷⁵ Refusing to become a local government of the PRC (People's Republic of China), Taiwan has rejected China's 'one country, two system' formula for unification. Opinion polls have shown that the majority of people in Taiwan prefer maintaining the status quo -- tantamount to de facto independence. See Taipei Times, 'Follow Our Lead, Says HK Envoy', 2 July 2000.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of China (ROC), on which the current education system in Taiwan is based, education of the ROC should be governed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, namely Nationalism, Democracy and the People's Livelihood. The goal of education is 'to improve national living, support a decent existence in society, pursue economic development and prolong the life of the nation so as to achieve independence of the nation, the implementation of democracy, and the advancement of national livelihood.'⁷⁶ Education and culture shall 'aim at the development of the sense of nationalism, sense of autonomy, national moralities, healthy physique, science knowledge, and the ability of the national citizens to earn a living'; in addition, all public and private educational and cultural institutions in the country shall, in accordance with law, 'be subject to the supervision of the State.'⁷⁷ Considering these articles, it is obvious that the orientation of Taiwan's education is highly political and based on economic principles. With the State machinery successfully controlling and manipulating the purposes and resources of education, school or college curricula are doomed to have a problematic structure and function like a conveyer-belt of a fully charged mechanical device that produces products of the same mode:

Schools and colleges in Taiwan, at all levels, operate within very tight centrally controlled curriculum guidelines. Centrally promulgated 'curriculum standards' specify the curriculum framework for each phase of education, together with time allocations for each subject and, in the case of vocational courses, sub-divisions of subjects. The detail to be followed in each subject is then laid down in textbooks and other teaching materials,

⁷⁶ The Goal of Education of the Republic of China, *Education in the Republic of China*, Taipei: Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Education (1996), p. 3 [published in English]

⁷⁷ Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of China Pertaining to Education and Culture, *Education in the Republic of China*, Taipei: Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Education (1996), p. 3 [published in English]

which are produced by the government or have to be approved by the National Institute of Compilation and Translation, if published privately.⁷⁸

As a result, the space left for arts in any curriculum is visibly small: While music, Chinese calligraphy, fine art and crafts are all officially part of the compulsory education, their importance to a child's mental and emotional development is never fully justified. This is particularly true in the case of junior high school education. With the shadow of the very first national entrance examination haunting teachers and students alike all the way through the three exhausting years, arts-related classes are like tiny windows opened for some fresh air rather than doors with open access to a mind-liberating world. Very often, when the pressure of exams becomes unbearable, which happens frequently in the third year, these classes would be removed from the regular timetables and replaced by 'heavyweight' subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English – the consensus being that a good senior high school will then lead to a good university, and thus a smooth career in technology- or business-related fields where a bright future with financial security is guaranteed. Arts, on the other hand, are not to be taken seriously. They distract one's academic motivation and give the young reasons to rebel or encourage dreams that cannot be realised. Therefore, for the good of the young generation, as well as the whole society, arts should be stripped of their social potential and kept as light entertainment. The official approach is that they can be fun; they can be cool; but they certainly cannot turn into bread and feed one's stomach.

⁷⁸ *Vocational Education in Taiwan - A Report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*, London: Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 1996), p.7

Given that there is a tendency for the arts to be unfairly treated by Taiwan's education authorities, the long-term prejudice Chinese people⁷⁹ have held against *xi zi* (戲子)⁸⁰, performers or actors, and the island's heritage of musical and symbolic drama do not help in any way to improve the compatibility between theatre and education. In most Western countries, drama, as Chris Johnson puts it, has considerable advantages over art forms such as music or the visual arts by criteria of accessibility:

There is an immediacy to its practice. There are no scales to be learned or arpeggios to be practised; we can begin creating material straight away. Drama's language is simply the language of social experience – what it 'feels like' to be alive – borrowed and fashioned for other purposes. So it's easily accessible to those who lack professional arts training. We can claim, reasonably enough, that *everyone* has a basic proficiency in its grammar. Everyone 'improvises' from the moment they get out of bed. We all feel pain, experience joy, and learn to 'act a part'.⁸¹

While Johnson is certainly right in pointing out that Western drama's language is the language of social experience, traditional drama in the Chinese-speaking world does not share the same accessibility. In Beijing Opera, one of the most popular forms of traditional theatre in both China and Taiwan, the artistic means of expression, such as singing, dialogue, acting, combat and acrobatic performance,

⁷⁹ Here 'Chinese people' does not mean 'people of Chinese nationality', but 'people who are ethnically Chinese', including those who live in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore.

⁸⁰ Although actors are now better accepted as performing artists, they used to be, according to Shu-fen Chen, bracketed with slaves and prostitutes as the lowest of the low in China, and edicts of 1313, 1369, 1652 and 1770 forbade them or their families to sit for civil service examinations, making it very difficult for them to rise in society. See *Shakespeare in Taiwan: Struggle for Cultural Independence from Mainland China and Euro-America*, a thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts in 1999, unpublished, p.22

⁸¹ Chris Johnston, *House of Games: Making Theatre from Everyday Life*, London: Nick Hern Books (1998), p.3

all 'follow conventionalised patterns taken from real life and refined by generations of operatic artists, which become symbols of human intent and sentiment.'⁸² This symbolic performance should not become life as it is, but life as extracted, concentrated and typified:

(On the Chinese stage) a horse whip, or an oar, is merely a piece of property if it is seen on its own. But when it is seen through the performers' acting combined with the story, it not only represents the form of 'a horse' or 'a boat' on the stage, but also transforms the flat stage into a three-dimensional mountain, battlefield or river. In addition, the character's action, feelings and desires are therefore underscored. If a real horse or a boat is used on the stage, the object itself is true, but the character and its circumstances will become false.⁸³

In other words, Mu Gong suggests when explaining why 'false but true, empty but full and few but many' are regarded as the guiding principles that make Chinese theatre different from its Western counterparts that there is hardly any realism in conventional Chinese theatre. The stage is almost empty - in many cases with only a table and two chairs present; the costume, make-up and props are both specific and full of special meaning; the acting is therefore highly artificial and symbolic, as depicted in the most famous guiding principle of Beijing Opera: 'each voice has to be like singing, each movement has to be like dancing' (無聲不歌，無動不舞):

The simplicity of the (Beijing Opera) stage was balanced by the complexity and symbolism of the actor's art. Manners of walking, differing from character to character, hand gestures and the use of fingers are all highly

⁸² Xia-feng Pan, *The Stagecraft of Peking Opera: From Its Origins to the Present Day*, Beijing: New World Press (1995), p.20

⁸³ Stated by Mu Gong, a theatre historian from China's Jiangxi province, at an international symposium held in Beijing in 1986. See Ruru Li, False but True, Empty but Full, Few but Many – The Dialectic Concepts in Traditional Chinese Performance Art and Painting, *Theatre Research International*, Vol.24 No.2 (Summer 1999), p.179

stylised and told the audience the nature and the behaviour of the character.⁸⁴

To achieve this level of skill, Beijing Opera actors have to be trained rigorously from their early youth, and then work extremely hard to master the highly demanding vocal and physical skills in order to secure the audience's interest in what they do. For this reason, Beijing Opera has been seen by many drama scholars as an actor-based theatre. Famous actors such as Mei Lang-fang (梅蘭芳), Cheng Yan-chiu (程硯秋) and Yang Xiao-lo (楊小樓) had all made great contribution to the popularisation and refinement of Beijing Opera with their original creativity and personal charisma. However, the same reasons have also led to an unfavourable side of the profession. Since the performance art of the actors is the major cause that makes opera fans willingly buy tickets to fill the seats, they are naturally deemed responsible for the success of the box office, and thus the management and maintenance of their opera groups. Many of them are therefore forced to 'honour' their patrons, mostly rich and politically powerful, by 'entertaining' them both on and off stage, so as to obtain financial security of some sort. Moreover, given that the majority of their repertoire is concerned with courtship or love affairs between young scholars and beautiful ladies, their personal identity is often confused with the roles they play and the way they interpret these characters. Their true-life personality is, accordingly, widely regarded as being frivolous and untrustworthy, as described in the common saying:

⁸⁴ See 'China' in *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, edited by Martin Banham, Cambridge University Press (1992), p.187

'prostitutes do not know what feelings are; actors care nothing about righteous principles' (婊子無情 , 戲子無義). Consequently, the social status of opera actors has been relatively low in the Chinese society.⁸⁵ Parents would only send their children to actor training schools - which, in many people's eyes, are like circus troupes - when the family suffers from poverty. On this basis, it is very clear that, traditionally, drama or theatre is not something that the mundane and pragmatic Chinese would care to take seriously. Its position as a unique art form is, as a result, never fully respected by the audience and its potential as an alternative educational implement hardly explored.

It must be noted, however, that this attitude has gradually been changed in accordance with the development of the so-called modern theatre - which, literally, refers to Western-style spoken drama (hua ju, 話劇). According to *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre and New Drama Movement in Taiwan under Japanese Rule (1923-1936)*, a defining book written by Taiwanese drama researcher and cultural critic Yang Du (楊度), Taiwan's earliest performance activity of hua ju can be traced to 1911 (the year in which The Republic of China was established in the mainland), when a Japanese director staged several productions with local actors. Over the next twenty years, numerous local drama troupes were organised on an amateur basis and they staged works by well-known mainland Chinese playwrights as well as by local authors dealing with Taiwanese themes.⁸⁶ During

⁸⁵ Due to the rise of Chinese nationalism and cultural identity, opera actors are now better accepted as folk artists both in Taiwan and China. They are, however, still underpaid and their performance art not really appreciated by modern Chinese people, particularly the young ones.

⁸⁶ James R. Brandon (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*, Cambridge University Press (1993), p.231

this period of time, drama-making was deemed by many local intellectuals as a way to rebel against Japanese rule, even though the Japanese government had done their best to censor politically oriented meetings or performances. Dramatists such as Zhang Wei-hsian (張維賢)⁸⁷, a local director, acting teacher and the mastermind behind the historically important Starlight Performance Research Association (星光演劇研究會), and Zhang Hsen-chieh (張深切), who helped to set up Yan Feng Youth Association and Drama Group (炎峰青年會劇團) in 1925, had established theatre groups with an anti-colonialist attitude and of an anarchist nature. The so-called New Drama Movement (新劇運動), in essence a counterattack on traditional theatre, was thus formed and converged at the level of nationalism – or, more precisely, localism, as Taiwan’s political entity has always been in a state of ambiguity.

Although most theatre practitioners involved in the creation of the new drama were forced to run their hua ju groups in appalling conditions, their endeavours did make a major contribution to the rising status of actors and drama-related activities. As Yang Du recorded, the plays presented by Zhang Wei-hsian’s Starlight

⁸⁷ Zhang Wei-hsian, born in Taipei on May 17th in 1905, was seen by himself, as well as by many others, as ‘the number one man of Taiwanese New Drama’. He dedicated himself to the movement of New Drama at the early stage of his life, and contrived to establish performance research associations such as Starlight and People’s Beacon (Min Feng, 民烽) with the aim of raising the artistic standard of Taiwanese theatre. The performances presented by his drama groups inspired the audiences greatly, and made him one of the most respected dramatists in Taiwan. However, due to many objective reasons, including the hardship of running theatre groups under the colonialist government, the prevalence of Japanese Fascism and the failure of his own investment, Zhang was forced to quit his interest in drama. In 1958, he turned to the business of film-making, but did not succeed at the box office. He became more and more withdrawn thereafter and lived in solitude in his remaining years. Zhang Wei-hsian died in 1977 at the age of 72.

Performance Research Association, such as *You Die First* and *Lotus in the Fire*, in 1925 at the Novel Stage Theatre (新舞台戲院) in Taipei had a strong and immediate impact on people's perception of theatrical performances:

The performances given by Starlight... drastically changed the public's impression of drama as something that 'jeopardises good customs and offends public morals'. They made people realise that drama could also be good for the society aside from being an entertainment... The content of these performances and the actors' talent helped to raise the social status of performers and gain the audience's approval on their work. This certainly is how drama should be treated; because actors are not just ordinary people, but are also artists who bring life and personality to the characters they play.⁸⁸

In retrospect, it is clear that these performances were by nature socio-educational at several different levels, and therefore had helped to give hua ju a high profile: First of all, these plays were produced and presented by Taiwanese theatre practitioners for Taiwanese people. Given that Taiwan was still a Japanese colony at that time, it was only normal for the islanders to be treated by the ruling government as second-class citizens. Spoken drama, like education, was deliberately made inaccessible to the general public, as the Japanese were very aware of its social influence. However, the fact that these interesting pieces were created by enthusiastic local drama lovers with the aim of serving local people had enlightened the audiences. They felt that they were witnessing the emergence of, as well as taking part in, something new and worth looking forward to. The implication of brotherhood and comradeship - between the actors and the onlookers - embodied in these performances was strong and the seeds of people's

⁸⁸ Yang Du, *New Drama Movement in Taiwan under Japanese Rule (1923-1936)*, Taipei: China Times Book Co. Ltd. (1994), p.69 [the author's translation]

group identity as Taiwanese were, accordingly, sown. Secondly, the members of Starlight were mostly well-educated intellectuals, who belonged to the upper-middle class. As depicted above, performers of traditional music theatre, such as Beijing Opera and Taiwanese Opera, were often looked down on by society on account of their poor family background and low self-esteem. But this group of hua ju actors appeared to be very different. They were young, fresh, idealistic, and generally considered to be models of talent and brilliance. They brought back what they had learned and seen abroad, particularly in the two ‘motherlands’ – Japan and China, and made efforts to create theatrical pieces that were based on features of local life. The image they projected as both caring artists and social revolutionaries had thus made the audience look at the actor’s profession in a different perspective. Thirdly, as many of the Starlight members were either deeply concerned with or directly involved in the anti-Japanese movement, the realistic plays they created to expose and explore Taiwan’s social realities were inevitably filled with localism and, in some cases, anarchist ideologies. Through these performances, the audiences were encouraged to face up to certain issues and problems that confronted them in their daily life. The uplifting spirit and the socio-educational power of drama further distinguished Starlight’s works from ordinary entertainment and, according to Zhang, ‘drew in those who did not enjoy going to the theatre as well as those who had never been to the theatre’.⁸⁹ Consequently, spoken drama became a new fashion. Many theatre groups of a similar nature were established in Taipei within the next few years, including the Fraternity Association and Taipei Mechanics’ Club.

⁸⁹ See Yang Du, *New Drama Movement in Taiwan under Japanese Rule (1923-1936)*, Taipei: China Times Book Co. Ltd. (1994), p.69 [the author’s translation]

Unfortunately, the development of New Drama was soon interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War, in which Japan and China were both involved as arch-rivals. In 1945, Taiwan was returned to Chiang Kai-shek's regime in China after Japan admitted defeat. Taiwan was once again made a province of China. Four years later, Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist army, defeated in the Chinese civil war by the Communists, fled to Taiwan and made the island a base for the recovery of his power with the political and financial assistance of the United States, whose government was Chiang's 'comrade in arms' during the War. Political and economic control became the KMT government's top priority. Taiwanese people were forced to identify with their Chinese roots, while at the same time still being treated like second-class citizens because Chiang and his followers – many of whom were actually refugees who did not want to stay in the Communist-ruled mainland - regarded themselves as saviours who liberated the colonised Taiwanese from the control of Japanese imperialists. Meanwhile, martial law was put into practice in the name of national security. Intellectuals, political dissidents and art lovers who dared to speak out and promote the importance of free thinking in public or criticise Chiang's government would either be arrested, jailed and executed, or simply disappear without any trace⁹⁰. Moreover, the Western-style education system set up by the Japanese had been revised, in accordance with the education articles of the ROC, to meet the needs of economic development. The national curriculum of compulsory education – primary and secondary schooling (6 and 3 years respectively) – was largely technology- and

⁹⁰ Those who were arrested by the KMT government in the name of treason would be executed at dawn, when the colour of the sky began to turn white; that is why the whole act of dictatorial persecution is now called the 'white horror'.

numeracy-based. English was included in the secondary education so that the efficiency of American management could be introduced to the students of higher levels. Chinese Language and Literature was discreetly designed as a vehicle of traditional values and orthodox thoughts, such as patriotic loyalty and filial piety. Politics and arts remained as forbidden zones. Subjects in relation to the awareness of local and personal identity, such as dialect (mother-tongue) education and Taiwanese culture, were completely excluded.⁹¹ In other words, until martial law was eventually lifted in 1987, there was basically no integrity in education and no freedom of expression in Taiwan no matter whether it was ruled by the Japanese or the Chinese. People who were willing to take the risk to engage themselves in ‘anti-government activity’, such as seeking the Independence of Taiwan or simply making an ironic play to mock the government’s policy, had to put themselves in exile or go underground.

In this context, it was almost impossible for the movement of hua ju to move forward with distinctive progress. On the other hand, Beijing Opera – instead of Taiwanese Opera, which is performed in Taiwanese dialect and is indubitably the most popular form of traditional musical drama in Taiwan - was made the national opera by Chiang to reflect Chinese nationalism. The government showed a high degree of generosity in subsidising the three famous Beijing Opera troupes operating under the wings of the army, the navy and the air force. The only hua ju performances that could be seen were those of a propagandist or anti-Communist nature. These plays tended to emphasise Chiang’s good deeds and praise his

⁹¹ The textbook of Secondary Chinese Geography is a clear example: There used to be only about two or three lessons dedicated to the island’s geographic features in a total amount of four volumes. All the others were dedicated to introduce the other provinces located in mainland China.

government's 'unprecedented success' in turning Taiwan into a modern and advanced society. Sometimes drama performances would be given for the celebration of his birthday. The artistic value of these pieces was therefore extremely limited in comparison with their 'socio-educational' value - that is to brainwash Taiwanese people with the government's agenda. However, among the people in the pre-1980 Taiwan modern drama scene the female playwright Li Man-kuei (李曼瑰)⁹² deserves special mention:

Li was responsible for the brief Little Theatre Movement in Taiwan in the early 1960s. In 1962 she organised the Committee on Spoken Drama Appreciation, which was for years the major producing agency of modern dramas in Taiwan. Over 120 productions were presented between 1961 and 1969 under the auspices of Li's Committee. The Committee also started a World Drama Festival in 1967, presenting foreign plays in the original languages by language students in local universities. In 1968 the Committee created a Youth Drama Festival presenting plays by local playwrights and performed by university students in the Chinese language. These two festivals are still in existence today and are instrumental in the development of school drama in colleges and universities on the island.⁹³

To be more specific, Li's achievement was to make spoken drama and school education co-exist harmoniously and creatively for the very first time. Following her footsteps, education authorities in Taiwan started to set up grants and awards to encourage playwriting and drama performances. The result was very fruitful. Although most productions presented by student drama groups or clubs were neither radical nor highly artistic, the opportunities provided by

⁹² Li Man-kuei was born in Guangdong Province of China in 1906. Her family arrived in Taiwan with the KMT government when she was three years old. A devoted educationalist and dramatist, Li set up the famous Chinese Dramatic Art Centre (中國戲劇藝術中心) in Taipei and spent most of her life promoting the importance of drama education, which led to the formation of 'Little Theatre Movement'. She was therefore regarded as 'the spiritual guide of modern Chinese drama'. Li Man-kuei died in Taipei in October 1975 at the age of 70.

⁹³ Martin Banham (ed.), 'Taiwan', *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, Cambridge University Press (1993), p. 942

government-sponsored educational organisations for them to create something together did throw a different light on the theatrical and educational scenes.

2.2 Modern Theatre in a Socio-Educational Perspective

At the very beginning of his book, *The Playful Revolution*, Eugene van Erven argues that cultural awakening is a crucial stage in the development of a people. He writes: 'There is little point in introducing high technology to improve the efficiency of developing economies if one does not also stimulate the minds of the people to take creative control of their own destinies'.⁹⁴ Although this statement, as van Erven suggests, should not be deemed 'another progressive idea developed by Western intellectuals and subsequently imposed on the developing world', it is virtually a moral standard shaped in the post-World War Two Western societies and, soon afterwards, embraced by the intellectuals of many developing countries.

Towards the end of the seventies, the foundation of Taiwan's 'economic magic', as it became known worldwide, had been laid by the islanders under the wings of Chiang and his son's authoritarian regime. Meanwhile, a consensus that claimed that the native culture of Taiwan should be respected and treasured by the pro-reunification KMT government as much as the dominant Chinese values was also reached in accordance with people's desire for democracy. It is under these circumstances that a politically flexible and economically prosperous eighties has been 'made in Taiwan', where the first opposition party, Democratic Progressive

⁹⁴ Eugene van Erven, *The Playful Revolution: Theatre and Liberation in Asia*, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.1

Party (DPP), was established in 1986 (but only formally recognised by the KMT government several months later) and martial law was eventually lifted in 1987. Thus, in a society that has been swiftly diversified, the possibility for theatre to grow is further opened up along with other forms of artistic expression, most notably the new Taiwanese cinema, on the island.

The radical change of theatrical features in Taiwan marked a watershed in the cultural development of the island in a way similar to what had happened in the West during the 1950s and 60s. Ever since the early 1980s, theatre has indeed been given a different role to play in the drastically changing Taiwanese society. In the light of Western theatrical movements such as 'off-off-Broadway' in New York and the popularisation of fringe theatre in Britain, the new generation of Taiwanese theatre practitioners have teamed up with some idealistic revolutionary idealists and university/college students to create an alternative atmosphere for theatre. Through transplanting the theatrical concepts and skills set up by their Western precursors into their work, these people seek to resist a dictatorial government and to repress the greedy expansion of capitalist consortia with the help of a theatre which is, in essence, more society-related, an approach very different from the repertoire-based traditional musical theatre. In this way, theatre began to be liberated from its previous function as entertainment or propaganda, and increasingly utilised as a 'weapon of offence' to challenge the governmental policies and social taboos, or a 'weapon of defence' to protect the intrinsic qualities of local Taiwanese culture and the land that nourishes it from being damaged or overly exploited. As a result, in addition to the continuously growing 'mainstream

theatre'⁹⁵, all sorts of 'action drama', 'political forum', 'satirical theatre' and other aesthetics-orientated performances can widely be seen in and out of those properly-built theatrical venues throughout the island in the last two decades, although much more centralised in the capital Taipei after 1985.

In his book *The Politics of Performance*, Baz Kershaw suggests that the practices of alternative theatre can 'best be considered as a form of cultural intervention'⁹⁶ on the grounds that it has the potential to mount an effective opposition to the dominant culture, as well as to modify its values no matter how slightly that might be. Unsurprisingly, the rising trend of this theatrical thought has soon made up a liberal stage for the long de-voiced Taiwanese young people, whose courage to challenge and eagerness for change are often deemed by the rigid State (education authorities) as 'aggressive' and 'rebellious', to play an active role in shaping up new cultural values. According to a survey done by Lan Ling Ensemble, whose modern play *Ho Chu's New Match* is generally considered as the initiator of Taiwanese experimental theatre, nearly eighty percent of their audiences are in the 20-30 age range and seventy-two percent of them have gone through university or college education (no matter that they are still studying or already employed)⁹⁷. Although the figures cited here may seem the result of a rough estimate, they

⁹⁵ As in many other countries, it has always been difficult to define what 'mainstream theatre' means in regards to Taiwan's cultural context. Commercially, theatrical works produced by certain touring *hua ju tuan*, or western-style theatre companies such as the well-known Performance Workshop or Ping Feng Ensemble have mostly enjoyed a successful box office. However, it is traditional theatre like Beijing Opera that has been officially encouraged and subsidised on a regular basis - even though they do not meet the needs of younger Taiwanese any more. Both of them, in my perspective, should be regarded as 'mainstream' in the sense that they are strategically managed and financially more stable.

⁹⁶ Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*, London:Routledge, 1992, p.6

⁹⁷ Jung Ming-der, *Youth Culture and Avant-Garde Theatre in Taipei*, Contemporary Monthly, Issue 41, Taipei: September 1989, p.65

certainly signify that the new wave of experimental theatre has struck a responsive chord with the island's young intellectuals, who are mostly from the newly emerged middle-class families. So far, the flourishing growth of experimental theatre⁹⁸ has undoubtedly provided an outlet for these well-educated Taiwanese young people to air their grievances against the widespread social problems, such as the increasingly worsened air/environmental pollution caused by continuing industrialisation; the high cost of real estate that makes a lot of people 'homeless'; the spectacularly celebrated materialism; the habitual practices of bureaucracy and autocracy in the official or academic circles; and, of course, the national identity of the island with which they are deeply concerned. Viewed from this perspective, it should be appropriate to take their experimental theatre as an extension of higher education in Taiwan, since it allows the young to carry out what they have observed and learned. Moreover, as the intellectual youth will soon become the backbone of the society, their partnership with the theatrical circles has surely made this 'cultural awakening' a meaningful self-learning process.

Although these young people are passionate and courageous enough to exert their revolutionary spirit upon the society through the practice of theatre, their influence, on the whole, remains limited and dispersed. Their participation in experimental theatre is often categorised as a 'minority public culture'⁹⁹, or a cultural/theatrical coterie, by cultural analysts in Taiwan. This is not simply because their somehow elitist-centred and sometimes sensationalist-mannered performances do not conform to the accepted practices of society, and therefore fail to appeal to the

⁹⁸ According to the same article written by Jung Ming-der, approximately 25 theatre groups of this kind were organised in Taipei alone before 1990. Ibid, p.69

⁹⁹ This is the literal translation of the Chinese term *xiao zhong wen hua*, which is often used to describe a cultural affair or activity that is shared or favoured only by a small group of people.

majority of social members. Deep in the core, there is a crucial issue for people who are involved in this theatrical movement to consider: while most theatre groups of this category are keen on playing a 'cultural interventionist' role in society, they seem unmindful of the need to provide their audiences with more useful and valuable insights into the socio-cultural context of the island in the first place. Over the last few years, these practitioners have incessantly kept their theatrical works in a dialectical conversation with the Western traditions - among recent developments are the exploration of physicality and the liberation of individuality in accordance with the codes of 'poor theatre' and 'theatre of cruelty' - rather than the social/theatrical resources shared and enlivened by their fellow people. What matters here is that the self-expressive theatre they produce to reflect Taiwan's status quo is thereby short of a cultural soul that can help to bridge the ideological gap between the general public and themselves. Paradoxically, the unusual performance of these 'minority public' in the theatrical circles has in itself become another social puzzle of the island, as the local Taiwanese may find it difficult to relate to their ambiguous intentions.

It is therefore no accident that both the government and the theatrical circles have lately come to recognise the so-called community theatre as a supplementary force to help people decode the 'theatrical myth' promoted by these young groups' fulfilment of artistic creativity and political idealism. In the most favourable sense, the task of their mutual concern is to make theatre accessible to the man in the street *again* so that it can be a powerful impetus to the pursuit of a grassroots cultural identity. In 1991, with the assistance from some 'local' theatre

practitioners¹⁰⁰, the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taipei launched a well-meaning, but less well-conducted three-year project to encourage the development of what they called *she chu ju tuan*, or ‘theatre for local community’, including Cornfield (Yu Mi Tian) Experimental Theatre in Shinju, Hua Deng Theatre Troupe (the name was later changed to Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe) in Tainan, and Spring Wind (Nan Feng) Art Theatre in Kaohsiung.¹⁰¹ As Su Guei-chih, once an inspector of the Council, points out, the project was meant to ‘enhance local people’s comprehension of the unique cultural features of their surroundings or communities and, with this premise, call for their participation in theatre by means of the dramatisation of the stories/issues they feel familiar with or related to.’¹⁰² Intriguingly, although this proposition obviously bears a resemblance to the ideas of ‘community theatre’, ‘resident theatre’, or ‘civic theatre’ that was prevalent in the West during the 1970s¹⁰³ in its ‘user-friendly’ motive, the application of theatre to a properly defined community is in fact nothing new to the Chinese-speaking islanders. According to Chiou Kun-liang, the Head of Taipei’s National Institute of Arts and one of the most established Taiwanese theatre scholars, theatre (or performance arts in general) has long been a crucial factor in the making of Taiwanese people’s social life:

Before 1960s, performing groups of this type (community-based groups, that is) could be extensively seen all over the island. Each community (or residential unit), no matter where it was located, would have at least one

¹⁰⁰ Here, ‘local theatre practitioners’ refers to those theatre practitioners who have been working in a specific city or county apart from Taipei.

¹⁰¹ For more information please see the case study on Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe

¹⁰² Su Guei-chih, Mending the Sky and the Development of Theatre for Local Community, *Performance Arts Journal*, Issue 18, Taipei: April 1994. p.73 (*Mending the Sky* is a piece of community-based theatre presented by Peter Schumann’s Bread and Puppet Theatre in 1994 when they were invited to Taiwan by the Council for Cultural Affairs.)

¹⁰³ See, for example, Sandy Craig, *Dreams and De-constructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain*, London: Amber Lane Press, 1980, p.60-68

amateur theatrical troupe organised by its residents in its own right. Crowned with a distinctive appellation such as ‘shiu’an’, ‘jai’, ‘yuan’, ‘tang’, or ‘she’ (軒、齋、院、堂、社, all of them are Chinese characters used to describe a certain place of meeting), the troupe was set up to perform traditional musical theatre (eg. Beijing Opera, Taiwanese Opera, Lion Dancing and other religious/ritualistic performances) and, more recent, musical pieces from abroad for the community on a regular basis. By virtue of these collective activities, the relationship between the local residents was inevitably tightened and solidified. Meanwhile, the traditions of local performance arts could also be passed over to the next generation through this kind of social interaction.¹⁰⁴

In this case, it seems quite a creditable attempt that certain groups of Taiwanese theatre practitioners are now contriving to bridge the thirty years’ gap by blending their work with a flavour of locality. As Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, sums up the situation in the preface to her nostalgic play *The Phoenix-Trees Are in Blossom*, it is a top priority for a community-based theatre troupe like Hua Deng (Tainan Jen) to accumulate social and theatrical resources as much as possible through its interaction with local audiences, so that it can help to fill the ‘blank’ resulting from the island’s fragmented cultural history and intensified social change.

Because Hsu’s theatre happens to be founded in the oldest city of the island, most of the troupe’s major productions are based on Taiwan’s traditional customs (*Ordinary Life*, 1991), historical events (*Illia Formosa*, 1995), or modern issues faced and shared by the citizens of Tainan (*Journey of the Wind Birds*, 1996). In addition, these productions are mainly performed in Min-nan-yu, the most popularly used dialect in Taiwan, with an aim to reach the majority of Tainanese for whom Mandarin is not *the* mother tongue. In Hsu’s mind, it is not an

¹⁰⁴ Chiou Kun-liang, What Sort of Community Theatre Do We Need in Taiwan?, *Performing Arts Review*, No.36, Taipei: October, 1995, p.95

enthusiastic audience that matters, but an *approachable* one. Inevitably, Hsu and her colleagues' theatrical pieces have again brought people who are concerned with the future of Taiwanese theatre, as well as the island itself, 'back to the basics', urging them to re-consider fundamental questions such as *what is theatre for?*, *who is the audience?*, *what do we say in theatre?*, *how can we best say it?*, and so on. In terms of a theatrical context that is desperately in need of cultural spontaneity and popular roots, Chiou's statement certainly deserves to be taken as the basis for the practice of socio-educational theatre in Taiwan.

2.3 The Development of Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan

Although the movement of alternative theatre began to prosper and reached its peak in the eighties, it is widely accepted that TIE was first officially introduced to Taiwanese theatre workers and education practitioners in 1992 through a three-week (12-31 December) series of workshops. Organised by Taiwan's Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association with the sponsorship of the Council for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the National Theatre, the workshops were designed and led by Lowell and Nancy Swartzell¹⁰⁵, a husband-and-wife team based in New York University, with the aim of demonstrating how young people can be encouraged to take active and creative control of their own learning experiences through the function of Theatre-in-Education. The initiative taken by Taiwanese drama scholars such as professors Yang Wan-yun (楊萬運), Wang

¹⁰⁵ Both Lowell and Nancy Swartzell are NYU professors specialised in educational theatre and theatre for young audiences. They have long been lecturing and practising TIE at New York University (NYU), where CAT (Creative Arts Team), the professional educational theatre company in residence at NYU's Gallatin School, provides immediate and useful resources.

Shi-yi (王士儀), Jung Ming-der (鍾明德) and Huang Mei-shu (黃美序) in making this international event happen has since led to a growing interest in the socio-educational efficacy of theatre among the educational and theatrical practitioners in Taiwan. Many of those who took part in the workshops are now diligent advocates of TIE and creative drama. Its position in the evolutionary history of TIE in Taiwan is therefore crucial and decisive.

According to the working diary written by professor Huang Mei-shu, the workshops were built up around two key skills of TIE, hot-seating and forum theatre, and a pre-chosen theme, young people and drugs. The course consisted of ten different lessons, each of which was about three hours long. Through the drama games arranged and introduced by the Swortzells in the first three lessons, the participants got to know each other better and learned to work together as a team as well as in small groups. They then proceeded to create still images, practice hot-seating and develop forum theatre over the next few days, through which drug-related issues were raised and discussed. Towards the end of the workshop, the participants were divided into several groups; each group was asked to improvise, devise, rehearse and, eventually, come up with a short piece of work. Their work was then presented to the public on the 29th and 30th of December so as to wrap up the workshops. As most of the participants involved in the workshops and the presentations were young college students and drama-related people, their creation and interaction was naturally full of energy and fun. The presentation, in particular, drew the attention of the press to the alternative pedagogy that was available to be applied to improve the quality of the existing education system. Its socio-educational power acted in coordination with a social atmosphere that was

inclined to change.

In addition to the workshops and the presentations, the Swortzells also gave five open lectures in Taipei. The topics of these lectures were, respectively, 'A General Introduction to Educational Drama and Theatre', 'An Introduction to Class Drama and Theatre-in-Education', 'Script and TIE', 'The Procedure of Developing a Workshop' and 'The Producing Methodology of TIE'. In these discourses, the two NYU professors not only managed to dissect the myth of how interactive theatre works, but also contrived to theorise and contextualise the many different aspects of TIE. TIE-related concepts such as educational aims, target audience, follow-up work, evaluation and feedback were all included in their lectures and conveyed to the audiences step by step. The richness of the international event thus led Huang Mei-shu, the faithful observer and note-taker of the workshop, to conclude that 'we (in Taiwan) should work hard to catch up with the advanced development of TIE (in the West) and would therefore need to cultivate the sort of people who know how to do it'. 'One of the best ways (of catching up)', he wrote, 'is to include the ideas and skills of TIE in the national teacher training system - better-known in Taiwan as the normal school system - as obligatory courses and have them practised on an experimental basis, and then try to make TIE efficiently popularised'.¹⁰⁶ Huang's remarks certainly did not stand alone. Professor Yang Wan-yun, the key organiser of the international event, had also seized the rare opportunity to promote the facilitating capacity of DIE and TIE. In an article entitled *Two Ways of Drama and Theatre Education*, he states that DIE is based

¹⁰⁶ Huang Mei-shu, *Theatre-in-Education: Theory and Practice*, *Performing Arts Review*, No.5. Taipei: March 1993, p.98

upon dramatic therapy, and is therefore in many ways connected with psychoanalysis.¹⁰⁷ TIE, on the other hand, is centred upon the belief that human behaviour and social systems are both artificially shaped, and therefore can be changed for better causes.¹⁰⁸ In other words, both Yang and Huang have come to recognise the potential of TIE, as well as DIE, and agree that it should be used to mount a powerful attack on Taiwan's cliché-ridden educational mechanism. By giving young students opportunities for examining their inner world and their relationships with the outside world through drama-oriented activities, these scholars hope that the students' individuality and creativity can be liberated from their monotonous school life. The efforts made by the members of the Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association are thus commonly regarded as the first steps taken to localise TIE in Taiwan.

Unfortunately, only very limited writings have been published to honour the memory of this groundbreaking workshop. The lessons and lectures given by the Swortzells were not fully recorded, nor further publicised after the workshop came to an end. The lack of organised, translated (from English into Chinese) materials made it hard for those who were intrigued by the interactive nature of TIE to explore and develop what they had learned from the Swortzells in Taiwan on their own, as TIE was often confused with DIE or other forms of educational theatre.¹⁰⁹

Their intention of popularising TIE in the island was inevitably interrupted by the

¹⁰⁷ Professor Yang Wan-yun visited England in 1987 to study and practice DIE at a secondary school, where he led his students to create drama games and classroom performances over some newspaper reports on gang fights.

¹⁰⁸ Yang Wan-yun, *Two Ways of Drama and Theatre Education*, *Performing Arts Review*, No.5, Taipei: March 1993, p.99

¹⁰⁹ The misunderstandings about TIE, DIE and the other forms of educational drama or theatre caused by the language barriers in the process of translating will be further discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

insufficiency of professional support and general resources. However, some of the participants of the workshop did start to take action despite all the difficulties. Among them, professors Huang Mei-shu and Situ Zhi-ping (司徒芝萍) managed to introduce the skills they had obtained in the workshop to the students of Zhang-hua Teachers College between 1993 and 1996. Zheng Dai-qiong (鄭黛瓊), with an MA in Educational Theatre from NYU and a lecturer at the Keelung-based Deh Yu College of Nursing and Management, has also made a great contribution to the growth of TIE. Ever since Zheng was invited by the Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association to act as an interpreter in the above-mentioned workshops in 1992, she has been an ardent supporter and an active practitioner of TIE. In addition to her personal endeavours to make TIE heard through the lessons or the lectures she gives, Zheng has co-ordinated with children's theatre groups and normal school students to produce TIE programmes. In May 1994, Zheng presented a pilot programme entitled *All-Action Dolly* with a group of students from the Taipei Municipal Teachers College (now the National Taipei Teachers College) at the Little Shiny Shoes House, a performing space provided by the Shiny Shoes Children's Theatre (鞋子兒童劇團). The story was based upon an adaptation of *Polly, the All-Action Dolly*, a piece of TIE work created by Bowsprit Company, the forerunner of GYPT. It was devised for preschool children with the aim of making them identify with their own behaviour through the naughty acts of a magic doll who is keen to imitate what she sees in human boys and girls. The excitement displayed by the audiences of children led Zheng and her students to develop three more projects in the following years. These were, in chronological order, *The Kingdom of Circles and the Kingdom of Squares* (圓圓國與方方國, June 1995).

The Night When There Was a Power Cut (停電的晚上, June 1996) and *The General Mobilisation of Garbage* (垃圾總動員, June 1997). These programmes were all targeted at kindergarten children but dealt with different themes. By way of drama games and group role-play, the young participants were invited to look at life-related issues such as cultural differences, as in *The Kingdom of Circles and the Kingdom of Squares*, and environmental problems, as in *The General Mobilisation of Garbage* – though in a relatively light-hearted manner. These performances became an embodiment of what the Chinese called ‘yu jiao yu leh’ (寓教於樂), to accommodate education within entertainment, and poured new thoughts into preschool education as well as the conservative normal school system.

Although there were quite a lot of practitioners working both in theatrical and educational circles to give TIE a higher profile, TIE-related activities, on the whole, remained rare and dispersed in Taiwan between 1993 and 1997. However, the emergence of another international workshop has further improved the situation. This workshop, entitled ‘Green Tide: 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop’ and sponsored by the Council for Cultural Affairs and the British Council, Taipei, led to an upsurge of the second TIE wave. It also gave rise to a very interesting phenomenon that has taken place in the relatively short history of the development of TIE in Taiwan: the association of community theatre and TIE skills. This, of course, is nothing new in view of the context of the British TIE movement, as the first TIE project was conceived at a regional theatre and many TIE teams have since been set up with the support of regional theatres to provide local

students/residents with community theatre services. Nevertheless, it is inspirational in terms of how the seeds of TIE can be implanted in the soil of a foreign land.

2.4 Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe: Community Theatre and TIE

The transmission of one's culture is a fragile thing, and even more so when it has no independent storage, for example on paper. In a pre- or proto-literate society, education (or the transmission of one's culture) did not involve the teaching of abstract 'facts' which were to be absorbed without immediately practical aim. It lay rather in the passing on of experience whether by example and/or practical training (as in social behaviour - where we are more used to such an approach - or hunting, or farming or fighting) or by word of mouth. ... Another vital factor in binding a community together was its shared rituals. These normally had a religious setting, that of honouring or propitiating a divinity, but it has often been observed, particularly among so-called more primitive societies, that the ritual itself is just as important as the object of that ritual: the process of ritual involves shared knowledge of an important routine at important times of the year or critical times of life, and meeting as a community under these terms can develop a sense of group identity and pride.¹¹⁰

Nan Fang Shuo (南方朔), a Taiwan-based culture critic, once argued in his article *Community or Tribe?* that the reason why the concept of 'community' has become so popular over the world in the last few decades is mainly because people are dissatisfied with a 'society' that is technology-orientated, heartlessly exploitative and vulgarly consumerist under the notions of capitalism.¹¹¹ In response to a social reality where human relations and interactions are largely reduced to their remunerative level, the idea of community is widely accepted by the public as a saviour to their unknown future. Whereas society tends to operate in a 'top down' pattern, community usually functions in a 'bottom up' way. It helps people gain

¹¹⁰ J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society*, London: Routledge (1994), p. 5-6

¹¹¹ Nan Fang Shuo, *Community or Tribe?*, *Performing Arts Review*, November 1994. p.91

control of their lives, and gives them dreams and hopes that are reachable. Through the pattern of searching for the future by learning from the past, people can easily see in the structure of community the beauty of early-day human warmth and generosity, be it the sense of belonging to a specific place or group, the feeling of taking part in a festival or ceremony, or the sensation of being taken care of and supported by like-minded people. As far as the humanitarian spirit is concerned, these are all integral to the picture of ultimate harmony contained within the concept of community. The self-dependent and self-empowering nature of community has therefore become a stimulus for certain groups or types of people to seek or build up their own Utopia, despite of the fact that the word 'community' can sometimes be closely associated with more problematic concepts such as tribalism, localism or xenophobia.

Community theatre, as its name suggests, is nominally a side product of this community-making and identity-seeking trend. In terms of its formation, community theatre is the way theatre workers and drama lovers carry out their personal beliefs in the collective strength of people and the uplifting power of art; in terms of its format, it is a counterattack to the compositional structure of theatre audiences within the mainstream commercial culture. According to *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, community theatre can be categorised as:

(1) the companies whose primary role is *performance*, usually of original plays written with the locality in mind which are toured to non-theatre venues *within a distinct geographical area* - to community centres, schools, play-schemes, trade union clubs, etc. Often such companies combine this work with theatre-in-education or children's theatre; (2) the *community arts* companies who see the theatre as just one part of a larger operation in which 'animating' the community, getting people to become involved in a whole range of activities, from drama to silk-screen printing or

video-making, is just as important as the group's own performances; (3) companies who gear themselves less to geographical areas than to serving specific 'communities of interest' – women's groups, racial minorities, gays, etc. - and who will often tour nationally. Meanwhile, despite their manifold differences of purpose and strategy, all of these companies (of which there are now over 50) tend to operate within communities that are theatre-less and in other ways under-privileged. Almost without exception, too, their work is underpinned by a concern for social improvement and a belief in the power of theatre to help effect change: the work is often openly socialist. Their repertoires can be as much celebratory as critical and the best companies have succeeded in creating theatre that is at once entertaining, directly relevant to the concerns of its audiences, challenging, un-patronising and, in its standards of performance, easily comparable to (if it does not surpass) most mainstream theatre.¹¹²

Although the way community theatre is categorised by the *Cambridge Guide* seems to be thoughtful and detailed, this is certainly not a definitive set of rules that can be applied to cover all the different cases of community work conducted by theatre practitioners around Britain, let alone around the world. While it is a top priority for academic theorists to define or classify what they observe with well-measured objectivity, the operation or management of community theatre demands a very different approach and attitude. At a time when people's life styles have been drastically changed within an economy-oriented society, the social reality faced by community theatre workers is an elusive one: they do not always know where their audience is; they have to set up projects and look for funds; and they need to be flexible enough to adjust their administrative strategies. All in all, it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to secure permanent financial resources and they cannot expect their work always to be appreciated by their target audiences. Therefore, from a pragmatic perspective, it is not necessary to fit all the community theatre groups into the right categories, as sometimes they do have to cross lines

¹¹² Martin Banham (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, Cambridge University Press (1992), p. 819

and accomplish some tasks which are by nature not part of the reasons why their groups were established in the first place.

Even so, several significant characteristics that distinguish community theatre from the other types of theatre can still be found within the categorisation provided by *Cambridge Guide* in terms of its 'motif' and 'content': First and foremost, community theatre is a sort of non-commercial, although usually professional, service offered by theatre practitioners with a high degree of self awareness and willingness to a specifically targeted audience. Secondly, community theatre is essentially socio-educational; therefore it is often associated with political or educational theatre, such as TIE. Thirdly, community theatre invites people to express themselves through collective creativity, so that links between different individuals and their surroundings can be formed. Fourthly, community theatre confronts the issues that concern a specific group of people. Finally, community theatre is based on the belief that theatre is humanitarian; it gives people who do not usually take part in the theatre some opportunities to benefit from this particular art form. In other words, as long as the way a theatre company functions in accordance with any of these disciplines, it should be taken as a community theatre in a broad sense.

Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GYPT) is one such example. Although the word 'community' is not included in the company's official title, it is undoubtedly one of London's most renowned community-oriented theatre companies. While the main body of GYPT's work has long been TIE, the service they provide is much richer than that. Over the past thirty years, GYPT has

organised numerous drama-related events for young people and local residents of Greenwich and Lewisham, such as theatre workshops and training courses. These activities not only help the students of the schools they visit to observe and understand their relationship with their surroundings through the intellectual and emotional efficacy of theatre, but also give those who are unemployed or deprived in the communities they serve certain opportunities to ‘participate’ in what might be their only experience of learning something useful and applicable. By so doing, GYPT’s target audiences are encouraged to develop a proper interest in theatre art, as well as to attain working skills or life attitudes of some sort, which may benefit them in their future career or job-hunting process. Many social problems are thus addressed and explored; the harmony between certain groups of people is, hopefully, improved.

On these grounds, GYPT has managed to build up a healthy interactive network with most schools located in the boroughs of Greenwich and Lewisham, and attracts the attention of some charities and welfare organisations (for example, the Committee of Racial Equality), who seek inspiration and co-operation from those who know how to enhance the mutual understandings between different communities or people of different interests. Financially, this gives the company, whose existence relies heavily on the subsidies of the London Boroughs of Greenwich and Lewisham, the London Boroughs Grants Committee and the London Arts Board, an advantage over theatre groups who do not work on a community-related basis. In 1998, GYPT was listed as one of the most outstanding theatre groups to be subsidised by the National Lottery; its professionalism and hard work on social education have once again been officially recognised. Viewed

from this perspective, it is clear that GYPT has contrived to stand firm on the ‘grey area’ between two seemingly different genres of theatre, community theatre and educational theatre, by engaging itself in the field of community construction from an educational point of view. In this way, the company’s strategic flexibility not only contributes tremendously to the development of local culture, but also helps to create extra working opportunities for the company itself, and therefore holds out a bright prospect for its own future.

In comparison with GYPT, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, the most representative of Taiwan’s ‘community theatre’, has walked a very different path. While the ‘community’ nature of GYPT is widely regarded as something that the company was ‘born with’, as the company was formed with the aim of providing the residents of Greenwich borough with proper theatre services, Tainan Jen’s reputation as a community-related theatre group should be deemed a ‘given status’, due to its gradual association with the government’s community subsidising policies. Although the concept of community theatre was never new to the Taiwanese¹¹³, it was only after a group of Western-educated scholars returned to Taiwan and the Council for Cultural Affairs was established in the eighties that the term *she chu ju chang* (社區劇團), theatre of a specific region or community, was

¹¹³ According to Chiou Kun-liang, Head of Taiwan’s National Institute of Arts, ‘community theatre’ in Taiwan can be, in a broad sense, traced back to what the Taiwanese called *tzu di xi* (子弟戲), or ‘youngsters’ play’, a tradition brought to Taiwan and closely observed by Chinese Han immigrants when they crossed Taiwan Strait and settled down in the island at the end of the 17th century. *Tzu di xi*, as the name suggests, refers to those amateur acting and performing groups organised voluntarily by the young people, mainly male, of a particular tribe or community, who would perform, free of charge, at local venues for local temple rituals, festivals or special events. For more information see Chiu Kun-liang, *Taiwanese Theatre and Cultural Transitions*, Taipei: Taiyuan Publication Ltd. (1997), p.387-392

formally adopted and introduced to the public. When Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe was founded in the southern city of Tainan in 1987 under the name 'Hua Deng Theatre Troupe', as a sub-organisation of Father Don Glover's Hua Deng Arts Centre, it had no obvious aims or purposes of its own:

When the troupe was first set up, none of us was confident enough to think about the troupe's future, as most troupe members were non-professionals and the general environment for drama and theatre in Tainan was horrendously hollow. We did it out of curiosity, but did not expect to become so deeply involved in the theatre...¹¹⁴

As stated above by Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Tainan Jen, the troupe was, at the earliest stage, like a drama club, both amateurish and disorganised. With the church-supported arts centre providing, free of charge, a barely equipped basement for their rehearsals, the troupe members, mostly young and passionate, started exploring the power of spoken drama in Tainan, Taiwan's old capital, where the culture of modern theatre was then virtually non-existent. During that period of time, the troupe endeavoured to play with all kinds of ideas and skills under the leadership of Tsai Ming-yi (蔡明毅), who trained with Dr. Wu Jing-ji's Lan Ling Ensemble in Taipei for several months and was the only person familiar with drama techniques among the troupe members. The pieces they created were therefore often loose and green, and had no immediate appeal for local residents - except the families and friends of the troupe members, as well as a small group of local students who frequented the arts centre.¹¹⁵ However, the 'dark period' as such did not last long. As a result of the democratisation of the Taiwanese society, the

¹¹⁴ Hsu Rey-fang, *Writer's Foreword*, *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom*, Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs (1995), p.1 [the author's translation]

¹¹⁵ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in Chapter Three.

harsh political atmosphere began to ease off in the eighties. Theatrical performances of non-traditional and experimental styles were intensely produced and presented with critical perspectives and could be easily seen in Taipei. In the meantime, the ideological trend of localism, as opposed to the Great China-ism that had long been taken as granted since the fifties, started to prevail all over the island. The 're-born' KMT government, led by the Japanese-educated and Taiwanese-speaking president Lee Deng-hui,¹¹⁶ took action to encourage the development of and the research into local culture, and set up grants and awards to boost their number one cultural policy: the Integral Construction of Community. A 'post-economic magic era' that emphasises the importance of the grassroots had thus 'officially' arrived.

In 1990, in accordance with the unprecedented social shifts, Hua Deng Theatre Troupe made a crucial move that was to determine the troupe's future. Tsai Ming-yi, then leader of the troupe, carried out field research on Tainan's wedding customs and collected a lot of interesting marriage-related stories from the troupe members and his own relatives. He then began working on the materials he had and came up with a five-act play. The result was an extremely popular theatrical piece called *Taiwanese Comic Dialogues: Ordinary Life*. Due to its farcical nature and strong local touch, the play became an immediate hit when it was presented at the annual Experimental Theatre Festival of the National Theatre. The amusing tone of

¹¹⁶ During his 12-year presidency (until May 2000), Lee Deng-hui, a charismatic and much admired political leader who openly claimed that Taiwan and China are two different states and called his own ruling party (KMT) a 'foreign political authority', often visited the National Theatre to see big-scale Taiwanese Operas produced and acted by famous Taiwanese Opera stars such as Yang Li-hua (楊麗花) and Sun Tsuei-feng (孫翠鳳), but seldom paid attention to the performances given by Chinese Opera (such as Beijing Opera and Kun Opera) groups. This is just one of the many examples that can be used to explain why localism has become the mainstream of Taiwan's cultural development.

the Taiwanese dialect and the deliberately exaggerated comic quality of traditional marital practices, such as match making and ghost marriages, made the audiences laugh heartily.



Figure 2. Tainan Jen's hit: *Taiwanese Comic Dialogues – Ordinary Life*

The huge success of *Ordinary Life* overwhelmed the troupe members. It made them understand how precious and resourceful their local culture was:

The fact that the play (*Taiwanese Comic Dialogues*) was so wholeheartedly received by the audiences has not only had our hard work of rehearsing, prop-making and continuous revising paid off, but also made us realise what the future direction of the troupe should be. One should not work in the theatre only for the sake of his or her own interest, but should also take up the responsibility to raise cultural standards and give feedback to the society. Hua Deng Theatre Troupe, in particular, is a drama group based in Tainan; it should, more than anyone else, try its best to present to its audiences the cultural characteristics of the Tainan area. The future prospect of Hua Deng is therefore to explore and discover more of Tainan's local culture essence. Through various kinds of traditional or creative forms

of performance, we would like to tell all our audiences that, although Tainan is a small city and is conservative in terms of its popular customs, we are proud of the cultural heritage we own.¹¹⁷

Tsai's statement above makes it clear that the members of Hua Deng became very aware, after performing *Ordinary Life* in Taipei, of the social responsibilities they should take to preserve and promote the local culture of Tainan. It also predicts a different style of management that Hua deng was just about to adopt for distancing itself from the so-called commercial or experimental theatre.

Even so, Hua Deng Theatre Troupe did not set off to re-define itself as a community theatre group or reach out to serve people of the Tainan region with self awareness and new strategy. The reason why this company has become the role model of community theatre in Taiwan since the nineties is to do with the adjustment of the government's cultural policies. According to Su Guei-zhi, the Council for Cultural Affairs had, in 1990, invited experts and delegates from different areas and professional fields to meet and discuss how the increasing imbalance between economic prosperity and cultural development could be improved. Various forums and conferences of such purpose were organised and hosted by the Council all over the island and triggered interesting debates. Eventually, at the concluding National Cultural Conference, the Council synthesised the advice and suggestions it had received and made the decision that it should dedicate itself to 'shorten the cultural distance between cities and rural areas' and act to 'support and guide the development of regional performing

¹¹⁷ Tsai Ming-yi, Writer's Foreword, *Taiwanese Comic Dialogues: Ordinary Life*, Taipei: Zho Kai Theatre Foundation (1993), p.16 [the author's translation]

groups in order to make them grow healthily'.¹¹⁸ In 1991, the Guiding Plan for the Development of Community Theatre was announced by the Council and put into practice. Hua Deng Theatre Troupe, along with Taidong Drama Theatre, Cornfield Theatre and Spring Wind Art Theatre, was chosen as one of the regional drama groups to be subsidised. In accordance with the Plan, each of these groups would receive 2 million New Taiwanese Dollars (about 40 thousand pounds) per year from the Council. They then had to produce a big-scale production on the basis of local history or folklore and give at least ten performances in the region where their theatre was located as well as in its neighbouring areas, so that the objectives set up by the Council – such as ‘encouraging drama creators to take the collection of local customs and folklore seriously’, ‘pressing forward the audience’s participation in drama-related activities’ and ‘enhancing people’s understandings of performance art and community culture’¹¹⁹ – could be fulfilled.

Strictly speaking, the purpose of this guiding plan was appropriate for the cultivation of native culture; and the direction taken by the Council was the natural outcome of the time and the circumstances. However, the authority in charge of the Plan failed to consider carefully the true meaning of the term ‘community theatre’, or *she chu ju tuan*, as they put it. What they actually selected to subsidise were not theatre groups of a community service nature, but those who were based in cities outside Taipei, where the traditional life style was better preserved. These groups were more like the so-called regional theatres than community theatre in terms of the way they operated. In spite of receiving annual sponsorship from the

¹¹⁸ Su Guei-zhi, Mending the Sky and the Development of Community Theatre, *Performing Arts Review*, Taipei: April 1994, p.73

¹¹⁹ Su Guei-zhi, Mending the Sky and the Development of Community Theatre, *Performing Arts Review*, Taipei: April 1994, p.73

government, they worked on an amateur basis and did not have a fixed strategy to engage a targeted audience in their performances. Given that they were not particularly experienced in carrying out field studies or producing professional theatre, the fact that they were obliged to tour their productions to cover the needs of thousands of people who lived maybe seventy or eighty kilometres away from their theatre base had further burdened these groups. Many of their members were forced to leave the company because of physical exhaustion, as most of them had to work for their day-time jobs during the weekdays and go on tour with the company over the weekends. Moreover, there were certain technical flaws in the Plan, among them the skills of budgeting and evaluation, as the staff of the Council tended to look at the ideology and terminology of community theatre from a political point of view. The project executives from both the Council and the chosen theatre groups therefore did not feel that they had shared the same interests. Their differences in approaches and aims made it difficult to continue the guiding plan. As a result, the Plan was abandoned in 1993. The Council was then urged to review its policy and change its attitude.

Nonetheless, viewed from another angle, the co-operative relationship built up through the Plan between the Council and the Hua Deng Theatre Troupe did help to stabilise the latter's existence and management. With the financial security provided by the Council, Hua Deng was able to experiment with and try out different types of dramatic work, such as children's theatre, puppetry and theatre workshop, as well as to move toward the goal of setting up a 'professional' theatre group that could represent the cultural characteristics of Tainan. Despite the fact that this whole set of working methodologies was not particularly appreciated by

the Council,¹²⁰ due to its slow pace in making a contribution to the development of community culture, Hua Deng had actually found its way to approach the local audiences:

As a theatre company based in Tainan, Hua Deng hopes to drive more people to go to the theatre, and make them realise that theatre is not something as far and remote as a castle in the air. Therefore, over these years, the major productions presented by the troupe are mostly based on the issues that concern ordinary people and performed in Taiwanese, so that they would strike a responsive chord with the Taiwanese-speaking society of southern Taiwan.¹²¹

In retrospect, it is fair to say that Hua Deng was committed to the structuring of its ideal 'theatrical localism' on a long-term basis. The company's fulfillment of social obligations could therefore be seen as a lengthy, continuous process. So far, nearly thirty plays have been created by Hua Deng (Tainan Jen) Theatre Troupe and many of them have been produced. In 1991 and 1992, the troupe was invited by the National Theatre to present, respectively, *Ordinary Life - Taiwanese Comic Dialogue (tai yu xiang sheng)* and *Take Me to See the Fish* in the annual Festival for Experimental Theatre in Taipei. To many people's surprise, they were both sold out and well received by the audience. Between 1991 and 1994, when the troupe was operating under the Guiding Plan for the Development of Community Theatre, Hua Deng produced, in chronological order, *Fong Jian Chian Chiou*, a story about the life of a puppet master, *The Baseball Dream of Youth*, a play set in the golden era of the popular baseball game, and *The Phoenix Trees are in Blossom*, a piece of

¹²⁰ According to Su Guei-zhi, the Council was worried by the professionalisation of these subsidised theatre troupes, as it would restrict and discourage the participation of local residents in the theatre. This is one of the main reasons why the Guiding Plan for the Development of Community Theatre was abandoned after three years. See Lin Wei-yu, *Contemporary Taiwanese Community Theatre*, Taipei: Yang Chih Books Co., Ltd (2000), p.64

¹²¹ Hsu Rey-fang, *Writer's Foreword*, *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom*, Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs (1995), p.3-4 [the author's translation]

family drama closely related to the modern history of Taiwan, which were all inspired by the memories shared by its local audiences. Meanwhile, it also became deeply involved in the development of modern theatre at a local level. Since 1994, Hua Deng (Tainan Jen) Theatre Troupe has been taking an active part in the annual Tainan Municipal Art Festival; *Jian Yi Duan Li Shi De Giao Zong* (剪一段歷史的腳蹤) and *Illio Formosa - The Beautiful Island*, two assorted pieces of historic drama, were rather representative among its repertoire back to 1994 and 1995. In 1996, the troupe presented *Journey of the Wind Birds* (風鳥之旅), an environmental piece adapted from Liu Ke-hsiang (劉克襄)'s novel and backed up by the exploration of the fusion of different tribes/communities, in the Art Festival at a time when the Chinese government decided to intimidate Taiwan's first presidential election by firing three missiles at the coast of the island. It inevitably struck a responsive chord with the audience and won over their hearts, as they were reminded to look at their own cultural and political identities through this play. In 1997 and 1998, the troupe presented, sequentially, *Listening to a Song*, *Variations of the River* and *Farewell to the Winter*. All of these plays were devised to reflect how people's standard of value and view of life are affected and changed by the transition of their environment in modern times.

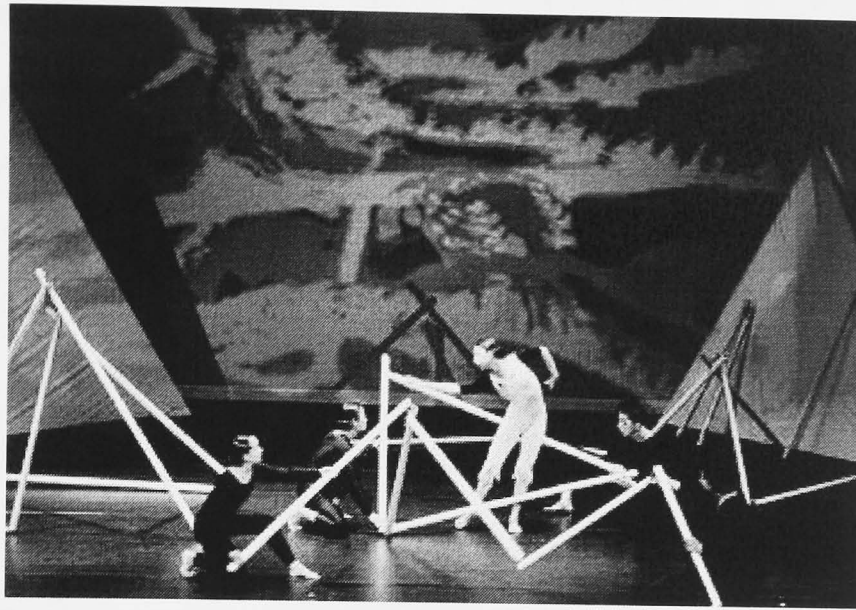


Figure 3. Tainan Jen's *Journey of the Wind Birds*



Figure 4. Tainan Jen's *Journey of the Wind Birds*

In addition, over the last ten years, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe has held many workshops and festivals to bring about the stable growth of drama and theatre in Tainan. On account of its credibility, the troupe was assigned by the Council for Cultural Affairs to carry out a special project, 'The Guidelines for the Education of Local Drama Talents and the Development of Theatre', in 1997, and has been approved by the Council to be one of Taiwan's 'subsidised performance groups of great excellence' since 1998. However, the most important task for the troupe to accomplish in the foreseeable future is, if the finances are in good shape, to hire

more professional staff and transform itself, gradually, into a professional theatre company. This will enable the troupe to tour its productions to different schools during the academic terms, and to visit as many local communities as possible on national holidays. For instance, in the summer of 1998, the 'core team' of the troupe produced and presented *The Marriage Proposal*, a free adaptation of Chekhov's play of the same title, and has since toured it all over the island giving more than 38 performances. This is not just a milestone in the troupe's 17-year-old history, but also an operative pattern that deserves further development, as it is obviously a good way to popularise theatre in Tainan and her neighbouring cities or counties through the participation of people from different walks of life.

In order to explore the ideas of community-related theatre further, Tainan Jen invited the southeast London-based Greenwich and Lewisham Young Peoples Theatre (GYPT) to conduct an international project entitled 'Green Tide – Theatre for Interaction Workshop' in Tainan in 1998. By holding this workshop, the troupe hoped to learn the skills of interactive theatre, and henceforth contrive to make theatre an integral part to its local communities and the educational system with its target audience's active participation in the performing process. The very next year, Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, visited London at GYPT's invitation and participated as an actor-teacher in the devising process of 'Time and Tide Line', a TIE programme aimed at exploring London's racial issues. The TIE team then took the programme on tour and performed it 34 times at 16 different primary schools in the southeast London area. Being deeply touched by this unforgettable experience and the powerful potential of TIE, Hsu recruited her own TIE team to work on Tainan Jen's first TIE project, *The Completion of the*

Mansion (大厝落定), after she went back to Tainan from London. It was premiered in December 1999 at the Kaohsiung-based Wen Zao Junior College, and has since been toured to different high schools and colleges located in the south of Taiwan. The programme, about one hundred minutes long so as to fit into the duration of two successive classes when on tour, was devised by Hsu and a team of three actor-teachers, Hsen Ling-ling (沈玲玲), Gao Si-zhao (高祀昭) and Chiu Hsu-feng (邱書峰), with an aim of examining Taiwan's racial issues. Although on the surface the Taiwanese society seems to be single-raced, deep down there are many identity-generated conflicts and discriminations. This, of course, results from the island's turbulent history and the political oppression that most Taiwanese people used to suffer, as stated at the beginning of this chapter. In view of the theme and the structure of *The Completion of the Mansion*, the company has obviously integrated the working methodologies of GYPT with its own operative pattern. Although Tainan Jen has no intention of turning itself into a professional TIE company, the troupe plans to present at least one TIE programme every year, and to try to organise regular drama and theatre workshops for school teachers, in order to enhance the development of education-related theatre in Taiwan. The interaction and exchange of the two companies through the Green Tide workshop are therefore worthy of being recorded and explored within an intercultural context in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Transplantation of Theatre-in-Education

Introduction

In 1998, a GYPT team of five¹²² was invited by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, a ‘community theatre’ group keen to find new ways to engage its local audiences in drama-related activities, to conduct an international project entitled ‘Green Tide: 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop’ in Tainan between 29 April and 2 May with the financial support of Taiwan’s Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) and the British Council, Taipei. More than fifty Taiwanese theatre workers and school teachers attended the four-day course to learn the ideas and skills of interactive theatre, such as drama games, image theatre, forum theatre and role play, as well as to witness how TIE was practised in the United Kingdom. The result was very fruitful: some of the workshop attendants have since applied what they learned from the GYPT team to their own work, most memorably Song Song Song Children’s Theatre’s 1999 TIE production, *Ah Liang’s Magic Cube*. In December 1999, Tainan Jen, the host company of Green Tide, presented its very first ‘official’ GYPT-modelled TIE programme, *The Completion of the Mansion*, and has so far toured it to more than ten high schools and junior colleges. It is therefore fair to say that the seeds of TIE have been spread in Taiwan, and the interest from this pilot project has continued to increase.

¹²² The five people were Vivien Harris, the artistic and educational director of GYPT, Jonathan Abell, the production manager, Adam Annand, Steve Day and Jan Sharkey-Dodds, the actor-teachers.

The GYPT team, on the other hand, has also been greatly inspired and encouraged by the success of this international project. Although the TIE company has forged links and made collaborations with many theatre and educational organisations outside Britain, particularly in the east of Europe and Scandinavia since its establishment in 1969, this was the very first time for GYPT to extend its work to meet the needs of a Chinese-speaking country. The experience was in many ways as inspiring and encouraging for the GYPT team as it was for the Taiwanese workshop participants. For the British TIE practitioners, the real wonder of this international exchange did not come from the cultural differences such as language, food and people's hospitality, but from the participants' eagerness to embrace the potentiality of this novel theatrical pedagogy. It thus led Vivien Harris, the artistic and educational director of GYPT and the leader of the Team, to conclude in an evaluation report on the organisation, the content and the feedback of Green Tide that 'the Taiwanese people they (the GYPT team) met had a passion for Theatre and the Arts and that they ought to be shared within communities at every opportunity; not only to be used for their own sake, but to assist people in their own development and growth.'¹²³

For this reason, GYPT decided to strengthen its co-operative relationship with Tainan Jen. In 1999, Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Tainan Jen and the project host of Green Tide, was invited to visit GYPT in London and work as a guest actor-teacher for a few months. She was therefore able to take part in the devising and touring process of *Time and Tide Line*, through which an all-round observation of GYPT's management and working methodologies was carried out.

¹²³ Vivien Harris, *Green Tide Report – GYPT in Taiwan 1998*, p. 12, unpublished

Hsu then recruited and organised her own TIE team and presented *The Completion of the Mansion* after she returned to Taiwan. In 2000, GYPT sent out another invitation to ask for Tainan Jen's participation in the company's millennium celebration, *Spirit – International Youth Theatre Festival*, along with five other youth theatre groups.¹²⁴ The first youth theatre group of Tainan Jen was therefore established and the team members, mostly young college or university students, met on a weekly basis to receive basic theatre training. Under the direction of Hsu and through the field work conducted by the team to investigate their personal family stories, the youth theatre came up with a fifty-minute theatrical piece entitled *Our Spirit: Waves over Generations – Taiwan on the Move*. Because of the language barrier, Hsu Rey-fang and her stage designer Yin Peet (謝茵) decided to emphasise the physical and visual dimensions of the production. The history of Taiwan, such as the big-scale Chinese immigration in the seventeenth century and the Japanese colonisation, and the transformation of the island country from an agricultural state to a technology-based society, were told in chronological order with some intelligently created images. The show, being the only performance given by an Asian group in the festival, was received with great enthusiasm by the audiences in London. On the one hand, it was a cleverly devised piece of theatre that managed to convey the collective spirit of an immigrant society; on the other

¹²⁴ The six youth theatre groups invited to take part in the Spirit Festival are Tainan Jen Youth Theatre Troupe from Taiwan, CAT Youth Theatre from the USA, Mala Scena from the Czech Republic, The Wild Bunch from Germany and GYPT's own Greenwich and Lewisham Youth Theatres. Each of these six groups were asked, separately, to devise a piece of theatre on the theme of 'Our Ghosts of the Past Thousand Years' to be performed in their home city, in London schools and in Greenwich Theatre. Following the individual performances, the performers and artistic leaders of these groups stayed together to create a collective work. The work was then presented at the Deptford Albany over two evenings to close the festival.

hand, its sympathy-striking ending¹²⁵ and oriental style had also inspired the European and American onlookers. The continuous exchange between the British TIE company and the Taiwanese theatre group since the organisation of Green Tide has therefore been both two-way and interactive, and is certainly worth being recorded and explored from an intercultural point of view.

This chapter, written from the premise that I was an active contributory member of Green Tide and has been deeply involved in the on-going cultural exchange between the British and the Taiwanese sides, depicts how the working methodologies of GYPT, and therefore of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, were transplanted and installed in Tainan Jen's devising machinery. It also explains how certain challenges and difficulties that have confronted the project planners over the last couple of years were dealt with and why this particular international event is a milestone in Taiwan's relatively short history of the development of TIE.

3.1 The Organisation of Green Tide: 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop

In 1995, I visited Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe (then still named Hua Deng Theatre Troupe) for the first time after seeing an outdoor performance of *Illio Formosa!*, an historical piece devised and directed by Hsu Rey-fang, the troupe's artistic director, for the annual Tainan Municipal Festival of Culture and Arts and presented in a temple square. Touched by the director's sense of history and the young actors'

¹²⁵ The ending of the play is centred upon the tragic earthquake which took place in central Taiwan on September 21, 1999 killing more than 2000 people. By likening the earthquake to a punishment from God for the islanders' money-first attitude, which caused environmental problems and social disorder, the young creators of the show wanted to challenge their fellow countrymen's human conscience and to ask the question: 'Are You Still Alive?'

amateurish but enthusiastic stage presence, I was eager to build up some kind of dialogue with Hsu and her troupe members, so that a better understanding of the troupe's work and development could be reached and then taken as a basis to extend the scope of my personal research.

Hua Deng Theatre Troupe at that time was still based at Hua Deng Arts Centre, a converted church located at the back of Tainan's Confucian Temple with a moderately equipped performance space. While I was studying at the Tainan First Senior High School in the early eighties, Father Don Glover's Hua Deng Arts Centre had already gained a well-deserved reputation in Tainan, the oldest city and one-time capital of Taiwan with a population of 700,000, as the headquarters of modern arts, where young art and cinema lovers could meet and share their interests. In a city full of past glories and characterised by people's loyalty to traditions, it was certainly not easy to promote the popularity and raise the status of Western cinema and other art forms, not to mention that Taiwan was still under the control of martial law and censorship was practised in people's lives as well as in people's mind. However, with a strong will and the financial support of the Catholic Church, Father Glover and his young staff managed to organise many mind-challenging and thought-provoking events, including special projections of documentaries or experimental short films, theme-based exhibitions and film or literature-related talks, which were mostly free of charge. During those early years, Hua Deng kept its door wide open to young students, many of whom were from the neighbouring institutes such as Tainan First Senior High School and Cheng Kong University, as well as to local people, who were mainly jobholders in their twenties or thirties.

Looking back at the way the arts centre operated, it can be said that Hua Deng Arts Centre was providing a community service of some sort without knowing it. Although Father Glover was willing and ready to reach out as extensively as possible, the arts centre did not succeed in appealing to a wider audience. However, it did manage to accommodate people of the same interest (art lovers) under its roof. At a time when financial and human resources for the arts were not at all abundant in the Tainan region, the efforts made by Father Glover and his staff obviously had a significant impact on the development of a new - as opposed to traditional - local culture. In 1987, with the aim of encouraging more people to 'create' rather than just to 'appreciate', Hua Deng Theatre Troupe was set up by a group of drama enthusiasts at the arts centre under the guidance and with the assistance of Father Glover. Although Father Glover was not a drama expert and was far from being ambitious for theatre fame, his original intention of driving more people to take an active part in shaping up their life and personal interest through the lively charm of drama/theatre did not stop there. By the time I met Hsu Rey-fang and exchanged our ideas about how to make theatre more accessible to local communities in 1995, the troupe had already established itself firmly as a regional, if not community, theatre group.¹²⁶ Thanks to the 'integral construction of community' (ICC) policy promulgated by the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) and the subsidy given by the Council to stabilise the management of a few chosen theatres, Hua Deng Theatre Troupe was able to transform itself from a club-like drama group into a small-scale regional repertoire theatre company. Despite the fact that the

¹²⁶ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in this chapter for more information about the troupe's history.

performances given by the troupe over those years were generally viewed as amateurish and did not gain wide coverage in the press, theatrical pieces such as *Ordinary Life – Taiwanese Comic Dialogues*, *Take Me to See the Fish* and *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* were all well-received and helped to lay the foundation for the troupe's creative style.

Despite these successes, the direction of the troupe's future development was still an important and unavoidable issue that had to be dealt with not only by the troupe members but also by people who cared about the government's subsidising policies. Being a company subsidised by the CCA under the policy of ICC, Hua Deng Theatre Troupe had to face up to people's growing concerns over its status as a local drama group and the services it provided for the Tainanese. While the troupe was making progress both in terms of its artistic achievement and its administrative capability, more and more questions had been thrown out by cultural critics and other theatre practitioners, who were mostly based in Taipei and had a very different picture of the so-called community theatre, to demand a clear explanation of the CCA's subsidising policy. If, as often asked by these policy challengers, the regional theatre groups (as opposed to those Taipei-based companies) chosen by the Council to carry out community-related services did not focus on working for or succeed in connecting with their local audiences, why should the Council keep giving them the money? In other words, if these chosen groups did not have a clear community function but could still receive annual subsidy from the Council to run their companies simply for not being located in Taipei, why should the Taipei-based non-commercial theatre companies be excluded from the Council's distribution of the nation's cultural and financial resources?

Such arguments have obviously been going on for quite a time in Western European countries such as Britain and Germany. Even today, European subsidising bodies for culture, education and the arts are still looking for new ways within the existing political framework to settle the differences in the cultural development of big cities, smaller cities and rural areas:

Since the Second World War, Western European countries have tended to decentralise their national theatre systems by placing increased emphasis on the activities of regional, local and touring theatres, and in some cases by allowing the decision-making powers for governmental subsidy to such companies to devolve from centralised governmental bodies to the regional and local authorities. Likewise, during the same period, regional and local cultural identity has gained greater credibility, as have the concepts of cultural democracy, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. The process of decentralisation has been occurring at different rates, to different degrees in different ways and for different reasons within the various countries of Western Europe.¹²⁷

However, in the early nineties, the decentralisation of governmental subsidy was a relatively new idea in Taiwan. The islanders had just come to realise that they could have a say in the utilisation of their tax money in a democratic society. Intense debates over the definition of community theatre and how the central government should help local or regional authorities build up their own cultural identity could therefore be widely seen in theme-based meetings as well as in the press, though many of these debates seemed to be based on the concept of 'quantity' rather than the concept of 'quality'. Under such circumstances, the distribution of the nation's financial resources became a tug of war that was to be contested by individuals and organisations of different standpoints. Encouraging

¹²⁷ H. van Maanen and S.E. Wilmer (ed.), *Theatre Worlds in Motion: Structures, Politics and Developments in the Countries of Western Europe*, Amsterdam: Atlanta, GA (1998), p.18

more people to go to the theatre and making theatre more accessible to the grassroots thus became the top priority of the CCA and its subsidised drama groups, so that the impact of the criticism of or the verbal attack against the Council's subsidising strategies would be lessened.

The confusion caused by these debates and discussions did make Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Hua Deng Theatre Troupe, feel anxious about her troupe's wrongly defined identity, as most 'scholarly experts' appeared to care much more about what the troupe *was* than what the troupe had *achieved*. In an interview conducted between Hsu and myself in 1999, she explained how the troupe was once discouraged by the ambiguous definition of 'community theatre' in the early nineties: 'I think I did feel a bit worried at first about this given title ('community theatre'). Tainan Jen has created more than thirty plays so far but only a few of them are seriously discussed or reviewed. People seem more interested in what we *are* than what we *do*.'¹²⁸ Even though Hsu and the troupe members later became more relaxed about how their work was judged by the critics, they were very aware of the importance of turning Hua Deng into a theatre company that would be closely associated with its local audience. Given that there was no immediate possibility for the troupe to survive on its box-office income, it was decided that its function of providing the Tainanese with artistic and educational services should be taken as a basis to win over the government's as well as local people's support.

¹²⁸ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in this chapter for more information.

Hua Deng Theatre Troupe was therefore in need of a new strategy to make its services better known and received by the local residents.

The organisation of Green Tide: 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop was a direct result of a whole series of conversations between Hsu Rey-fang and myself. While I was eager to share what I had learned from GYPT in 1994 when placed at the company as an observer with Hsu, Hsu was open-minded enough to welcome and embrace the performance efficacy that TIE could have brought in to change her troupe's relationship with its audience. Among the many different usages of interactive theatre, Hsu's attention was particularly taken by the central concept of TIE: group learning through thinking and doing together. In her eyes, this not only seemed to be a good way of fulfilling her troupe's socio-educational obligations at a regional/community level, but also appeared to be an interesting method that could be applied to professionalise the troupe and re-define its status. Moreover, Hsu felt that her troupe could connect with young students through Theatre-in-Education and, in so doing, spread the seeds of drama and theatre over a hardly cultivated theatre land. Given that her troupe was already very experienced in touring its productions to different community centres and school halls, which had resulted from working for the CCA's ICC plan, the new relationship built up between the troupe and the targeted student audience would certainly help to give drama/theatre a high profile in a society that was going through political changes and educational reforms. Thus, in 1997, Hsu Rey-fang asked me to act as the negotiator and to discuss the possibility of inviting GYPT to lead a TIE workshop in Taiwan with Vivien Harris, the artistic and educational director of GYPT.

Meanwhile, she would stay in Taiwan to find more partnership and sponsorship for the international project¹²⁹.

In London, following my discussions with Hsu Rey-fang through our correspondence, I approached GYPT to discuss the possibility of a visit to introduce the company's work to Taiwanese theatre workers and teachers. The invitation was met with great enthusiasm. Although GYPT did not have any previous contact with Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe or Hsu Rey-fang, Vivien Harris, the artistic and educational director of GYPT, did know a few things about the development of community and alternative theatre in Taiwan through an essay I had written and the conversations we had had in the past. Even so, Taiwan still seemed to her a remote Pacific island where the people and the culture did not bear a lot of similarities with their British counterparts. Despite the fact that GYPT is very experienced in forging links with foreign theatre and educational organisations, the intercultural exchanges they have carried out outside Britain mainly take place within Europe, with English being the dominant language used by the people involved. However, the visit to Taiwan was going to be very different: it is a long journey; English is not spoken by many Taiwanese; TIE is hardly known and practised in the island; and, most importantly, Chinese culture is not famous for encouraging people – young people in particular - to utter their opinions or to challenge the authorities in public. The task of sharing the working

¹²⁹ The Council for Cultural Affairs became the main sponsor of this international event, as Tainan Jen was commissioned by the Council to conduct a special project entitled Guidelines for the Cultivation of Drama Talents and the Popularisation of Theatre. Tainan Jen was therefore able to carry on with the organisation of the workshop with the subsidy given by the Council, and went on to win over the financial and spiritual support of the British Trade and Cultural Office (the British Council in Taipei) and the National Institute of Arts.

methodologies and administrative strategies of her company with Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners was therefore in need of special care and prudential organisation. As it turned out, it took Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, GYPT and myself almost an entire year to get the contract signed and the project organised. We decided to call this international event 'Green Tide: 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop'. 'Green' was taken out from 'Greenwich', where GYPT is based and operating. 'Tide' sounds similar to 'Taiwan', and could be used to stand for the island's oceanic character. The title was an improvisation on 'Green Jam', a previous exchange project between GYPT and Jamaica. It emphasises the co-operative relationship between GYPT and Tainan Jen as well as the inter-cultural nature of the project, as further exemplified and explored in the last section of this chapter. Meanwhile, the theme of the workshop would be focusing on the devising skills of interactive theatre, rather than TIE, so that those attending the workshop could freely adopt and adapt these skills and apply them to whatever professional fields they would like to make a contribution to.

Before Vivien Harris set off to design the course for the workshop, it was very important for her to know how many people would be allowed to be present at the workshop. From Tainan Jen's point of view, of course it would be better to have as many people as possible to take advantage of this rare opportunity to learn from GYPT. However, Vivien Harris had a pretty different picture in mind. Her rich experiences in organising TIE-related workshops and seminars both within and outside Britain told her that it was more efficient to have only forty or fifty people take part in the workshop all the way through for a number of reasons: Firstly, the core of interactive theatre lies in the mutual guidance and communication of actors

and spect-actors, so the workshop should also be grounded on the close interaction between the GYPT team and the Taiwanese participants. As there are only five people in the Team, the total amount of the participants should be controlled at under fifty, so that the quality of the workshop would not be damaged by the proportional problem of the Team members being excessively outnumbered by the workshop participants. Secondly, given that GYPT was asked by the host company to demonstrate a fully participatory TIE programme (*A Pocketful of Promises*) in the workshop to provide the participants with a true TIE experience, it was appropriate not to have too many people involved in the demonstration session; otherwise the structure and the power of the programme would be ruined or weakened. Thirdly, the Team was going to work in Taiwan for only two weeks. It was therefore much more practical to pass GYPT's devising skills over to a smaller group of people and make them fully understand what they learn in the workshop than to reach out over-enthusiastically without proper measurement. This group of people could then be trained as seed-teachers and go on spreading the ideas of interactive theatre in Taiwan after the Team leaves.

The care taken to negotiate the number of the workshop participants and the content of the workshop can be seen as a symbolic act of this intercultural event. Neither Tainan Jen nor GYPT could insist on their own views without thinking for and about the other side – which, intriguingly, represents the spirit of interactive theatre: to communicate and to understand. After several meetings between Vivien Harris and myself, Tainan Jen finally agreed with GYPT's proposal to have only forty 'fully subscribed' participants but with two attached conditions - for each day of the workshop duration ten observers should be allowed to be present; in addition

to the workshop itself, GYPT should also give two open seminars to introduce and promote their work: one at the National Institute of Arts in Taipei before the workshop takes place in Tainan, the other at the Labour Centre in Tainan after the workshop comes to an end – which GYPT accordingly accepted.

After the number of the workshop participants was decided, Vivien Harris began to plan for the content of the four-day course. As mentioned in the first chapter, GYPT has absorbed and adopted the theories of Theatre of the Oppressed, proposed by Brazilian director Augusto Boal, since the eighties. Relations and conflicts between the powerful (the oppressor) and the deprived (the oppressed) are often presented in the company's TIE work in order to engage its audiences in a process of decision making and problem solving. Therefore, TIE programmes devised by the company tend to have a dilemma-based theme and operate within the framework of audience participation. In line with this tradition, it was only natural that Vivien Harris decided that 'how to induce an audience to take part in a simulated situation through the skills of problematisation' should be put at the core of the workshop course.

With an aim of giving the workshop participants a fair taste of interactive theatre, a term that covers the essential spirit of TIE, the GYPT team made solid efforts to arrange and organise the content of the workshop. The programme devised by the GYPT team for the Green Tide workshop was therefore both lively and vivid, and could be easily understood by the workshop participants and adopted by them for practical use. According to a survey carried out by Tainan Jen on the workshop participants after the Green Tide project came to an end, the majority of the

participants thought that the content of the course was well judged and sensitively planned; it was profound but not difficult, accessible but not patronising. They shared the feeling that the ideas and skills they had learned from the GYPT team were both practical and useful. Moreover, almost all the participants agreed that the programme was organised in proper order.¹³⁰ They could therefore get to be skilful at the devising methods of participatory theatre step by step without worrying too much about their own training background or personal shortage of TIE-related knowledge. In other words, it was commonly accepted among the participants that the workshop programme had struck a balance between theory and practice. Accordingly, many of these participants have responded to the course with an active attitude and become devoted promoters/practitioners of participatory theatre.

3.2 The Translation of TIE from English into the Chinese Language

Before the Green Tide project took place in 1998, TIE had already been introduced to a group of Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners in 1992. As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, the workshop hosted by Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association was the first attempt made to transplant the concept and technique of Theatre-in-Education to Taiwan in an organised way. Undoubtedly, all the

¹³⁰ Fifty-one questionnaires were sent out by post to the Green Tide workshop participants in May 1998 and thirty-three of them had been completed and returned. All the completed questionnaires are valid for further analysis and evaluation. According to the completed questionnaires, all these thirty-three workshop participants think the courses of the workshop were organised in good order. Twenty-four of them think the depth of the courses was well-judged, which means that it was neither too easy nor too difficult for them to learn. However, as reflected in these questionnaires, these workshop participants did feel a little confused by the different terms and concepts conveyed through the courses, such as 'hot-seating' and 'teacher-in-role', despite the fact that twenty-six of them think they have fully got hold of the skills of interactive theatre taught to them by GYPT.

people involved in organising this international workshop had taken on the serious socio-educational responsibility of translation and tried their best to make the ideas and skills of TIE accessible and understandable to the Chinese-speaking participants. However, due to the shortage of experience and human resource, they did not manage to organise and contextualise the content of the lectures and the performance given in or along with the workshop. The lack of written materials made it difficult to extend or continue the influence of this international project after the workshop came to an end. Very little follow-up work has been done. Many terminology- and ideology- related issues of TIE remained untouched. It was therefore only natural that those who had not gained access to the workshop – myself included – would not know much about this groundbreaking event.

When I was planning for Green Tide with GYPT in 1997, I did not have any idea that the seedlings of TIE had already been transplanted to Taiwan. At the time when the first TIE workshop was taking place in Taipei in December 1992, I had just completed the two-year compulsory military service and started applying for a place to study in England. My knowledge of TIE was, up to that point, self-learned under the guidance of Brian Roberts, my supervisor at Goldsmiths College, and through a three-month placement at GYPT. At first, I was very confused by all the different concepts contained within the umbrella term ‘theatre education’, such as TIE, DIE, educational theatre/drama, youth theatre and children’s theatre. Gradually, I came to realise that TIE is a unique form of theatre which stresses the importance of audience participation and has a clear educational aim. Its operative pattern of professional theatre practitioners working *in* an educational environment makes it stand out from that of other forms. The lively interaction and two-way

communication between actor-teachers and young participants in an intimate space by way of a problematised dramatic situation give this theatrical activity a character that is both sophisticated and unparalleled. However, arguments in relation to the definition of the English term Theatre-in-Education have been going on and causing problems over the last decade, as TIE workers with different training or standpoints keep making all sorts of remarks to justify their own working methodologies.¹³¹ The variations of and confusion about TIE in contemporary Britain make it very difficult to translate the whole set of TIE-related ideas and skills into a different language of a non-British culture. Consequently, I had to come up with an appropriate Chinese term for TIE, so that the transplantation of TIE from the British context to the Taiwanese context could take off from there.

‘Jiao yu ju chang’ (教育劇場) seemed to be an immediate option, as the term ‘jiao yu’, which literally means ‘to teach and to foster’, has long been widely accepted both in Taiwan and China as the Chinese equivalent of the English word ‘education’. Unsurprisingly, this also turned out to be how TIE was translated by the interpreters of the workshop held by Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association in

¹³¹ For example, Zhang Xiao-hua, one of the most enthusiastic promoters of TIE in Taiwan, claimed at an international symposium held in Taipei in July 2001 that what he did with a huge group of primary pupils in Nanto county after the area was severely damaged by a big-scale earthquake in September 1999 was TIE. After watching the video tape he prepared for the presentation, many participants did not agree with his definition of TIE. Some said that no genuine interaction had taken place between the young ‘actors’, mainly Zhang’s students at the National Taiwan Institute of Arts (台灣藝術學院), and the hundreds of school children. Some said that the programme Zhang devised for the children did not have any social or educational aims and was simply a song-and-dance event that did not give the kids of this earthquake-stricken area any psychological support. However, Zhang insisted that the scope of the definition of TIE should be broadened, particularly at a time when the government had made up a budget plan and invited drama theatre scholars and practitioners to participate in the re-construction of the victims’ (of this natural disaster) peace of mind and their homes.

1992. However, on second thoughts, I decided that it would not be wise to walk the easy path. While there was basically no problem to translate ‘theatre’ into ‘ju chang’, a place where a play or a piece of drama is performed, it would be improper to simply put ‘jiao ju’ in front of ‘ju chang’ and make ‘jiao yu ju chang’ the Chinese translation for TIE. In ‘Theatre-in-Education’, ‘theatre’ is a genre, an object to be adorned and modified by ‘in-education’, not just by ‘education’. It implies the revolutionary fusion of two seemingly different areas and has a meaning distinguishable from the so-called educational theatre. However, ‘jiao yu’ in Chinese has a strong orthodox sense of someone older or from an upper position giving lessons to or taking care of someone younger or from a lower position in a purely educational environment. In my mind, it was therefore more reasonable to interpret ‘jiao yu ju chang’ as ‘Educational Theatre’, not TIE, and give it the status of an umbrella term to cover all the educational forms of theatre, including TIE.

After thinking over the confusion that an inappropriate translation might have caused, I decided to come up with a different Chinese term for TIE to replace the convenient option ‘jiao yu ju chang’. Given that I did not know anything about the first TIE workshop organised by Chung Hwa Theatre Arts Association at the time of planning for Green Tide, I took the liberty of translating Theatre-in-Education into ‘jiao xi ju chang’ (教習劇場), theatre of teaching and learning, for three reasons. Firstly, TIE should not share the same translation as Educational Theatre, as the two of them do not mean the same thing. The former is one way of making theatre a media of active learning. Its evolutionary process and working methodologies should be recognised as unique and independent. Secondly, ever since its formation, TIE has been famous for launching challenges to formal or

institutional education. Through its interactive and participatory nature, TIE practitioners hope to bring life-related issues into communities or campuses, so as to drive their target audiences to think more thoroughly and deeply about certain academic themes or social problems. ‘Jiao yu ju chang’ gives a strong impression of traditional, orthodox education. It does not reflect the reformist, slightly rebellious spirit of TIE. On the other hand, although ‘jiao xi ju chang’ does not seem to be an authentic translation at first, it does show more clearly the interaction between ‘the people who teach’ and ‘the people who learn’ within a theatrical environment, as well as emphasising the active role that the student participants could play in this educational form of theatre and the control they could take in their own learning experiences. Thirdly, it is only when the individual identity of TIE is firmly established that the whole set of its related concepts can be translated and introduced to the Chinese-speaking Taiwanese in a systematic way. The term ‘jiao yu’ has long been used and applied to cover a wide range of education-related thoughts and activities in the island, and therefore has been fixed and burdened with some unwanted ideologies. By contrast, ‘jiao xi’ is a comparatively fresh term, which is taken out from the terminology of martial art: the one who teaches must practice certain moves or fighting gestures with the one who learns, so that the two sides can make progress and upgrade their understandings of these moves or gestures together. This, as I could see at the time of translating, certainly bears a closer resemblance with the relationship between actor-teachers and TIE participants.

In addition to the literal translation of the term TIE from English into Chinese, there is another dimension of ‘translation’ that needs to be explored: the translation

of the working spirit of TIE. Over the last five years, questions about culture and identity seem to be the theme that GYPT has been repeatedly dealing with in its TIE programmes. This, of course, is done out of practical needs, as legal and illegal immigration has changed the demographic features of Britain – London in particular - and caused hostility between different races. Among the many pieces that are dedicated to the exploration of race-related issues, *Time and Tide Line I* (1999) and *Time and Tide Line II* (2000) are illustrative of GYPT's devising approaches and educational aims when working with a race-oriented theme. The former, being the pilot of the sequence, deals with the conflict between a white family and a Chinese family, which has just emigrated to live in England. Joy, an African-British community worker who describes herself as being British, friendly, supportive and willing to take part, tries to help the two families reconcile through the organisation of a community festival, by which she hopes to bring together different food and cultures of the multi-racial community. However, certain prejudices are so deeply rooted among people of different ethnic origins that Joy feels like giving up at the end. This programme, directed by Adam Annand and aimed at pupils of the age range 9-11, invites its target audience to witness the arguments and debates between the main characters by way of group role-play (as a group of children who live in the same neighbourhood).

In order to make the characters easily identifiable to the target audience, the TIE team of *Time and Tide Line I* consisted of three actor-teachers: one black, one white and one ethnically Chinese (Tainan Jen's Hsu Rey-fang). Their natural presence gave the programme a sharply realistic touch, through which the young, comparatively unsophisticated and socially less experienced audience could

immediately relate the story with what they saw in their daily life. During the 90 minute session, the participants were asked to take part in a forum – a market scene in which Joy was confronted with some racist remarks, as well as to help Joy organise the community festival. When a row broke out between Dean, son of the white family, and Rebecca, daughter of the Chinese family, because of Dean's insensitive criticism of Rebecca's mother, the young participants were given the opportunity of choosing to speak with one of them and finding a way to comfort or give advice to him or her. Through the interaction and the communication, they got to know how friendship is often affected by cultural differences and why it is important to be more sensitive and considerate in making friends. The information they received from participating in this TIE programme was therefore largely life-related, which would certainly make an impact on the development of their personal identity and the cultivation of their self-esteem.

Through *Time and Tide Line*, Hsu Rey-fang's perception of TIE became more complete and concrete. After she returned to Tainan, she decided to recruit her own TIE team and produce Tainan Jen's first TIE programme on the basis of her working experiences at GYPT. The result was a 100 minutes long programme dealing with Taiwan's ethnic conflicts and cultural identity, *The Completion of the Mansion*, whose intercultural significance will be further demonstrated in the next section. In other words, GYPT's working spirit has inspired Hsu and helped her theatre troupe find a new way to connect with their audience. Although the political system, economic strength, theatrical traditions and educational realities of Taiwan are all very different from their British counterparts, the principles of working in the field of TIE should not be easily compromised. TIE was born an artistic

approach to crack down all sorts of boundaries - boundaries between theatre and education, actor and teacher, actor and audience, as well as between theatrical presentation and social reality. In a world of speedy globalisation, its boundary-crossing spirit is now a universal vocabulary. Human beings share the needs of changing this world for the better, although their respective pictures of what is good and what is bad may differ drastically. By working with GYPT, Hsu Rey-fang got to experience the true spirit of TIE. The endeavours she has made to 'translate' that spirit and make it understood and accepted by her troupe members and their audiences should be deemed the prelude to a well-composed symphony of TIE transplantation.

3.3 The Transplantation of TIE: A Case Study on Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe's *The Completion of the Mansion*

In an essay on the interculturalism of contemporary theatre, semiologist and theatre historian Erika Fischer-Lichte, professor at the University of Mayence, talks about the popular combination of 'own culture' elements and 'the other culture' elements in the theatre. In her view, in accordance with the irresistible trend of globalisation, a new 'world culture' is now being conceived and shaped. Due to the blurring of national and cultural boundaries, many cultural elements have been transferred from their original context to a different environment, and then imitated, reproduced and utilised by another group of people to create new cultural features. In such a process of exchange, fusion and transformation, however, the theatrical elements of 'the other culture' should be implanted into and made integral to the context of 'own culture', so that their unique quality and potential can be cultivated and developed in the new environment and make a contribution to the reformation

of the own culture:

The perspectives arising in the context of the idea of a future world culture should not at the same time cloud the vision of the various concrete functions that the intercultural trend has for the own culture. The use of foreign elements, or the adoption of them in a production, is thus always to be understood as a process of cultural transformation in which the components extracted from the other culture are embedded in the own culture so that their special potential can unfold in the here and now.¹³²

As observed by many drama scholars, the interaction between Eastern and Western theatre practitioners has been going on for a long time. Examples such as the way Brecht was inspired by Mei Lan-fang's performance art and how Chinese modern drama was influenced by Stanislavsky's acting methodology are illustrative of the mutual stimulation of 'own culture' and 'the other culture' elements. Over the last few decades, consequent upon the speedy development of media, transport and internet technology, cultural exchanges of this nature have become even more popular worldwide. According to Clive Barker, with the increasing growth of international drama and theatre festivals, theatre practitioners have rapidly learned and absorbed the artistic concepts and performing methods that derive from a different cultural background.¹³³ By integrating these concepts and methods with their own training or working system, the practitioners seek to regain their creative energy and give their life in the theatre a new direction. Through this kind of mutual influence, the ideological distance between the East and the West, two cultural entities seemingly opposed to each other, is shortened and the communication and cooperation of the two sides have become possible within the

¹³² F. L. Erika, *Interculturalism in Contemporary Theatre*, in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. P. Pavis, London: Routledge (1996), p.38

¹³³ Clive Barker, *The Possibilities and Politics of Intercultural Penetration and Exchange*, collected in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. P. Pavis, London: Routledge (1996), p.249-250

framework of 'I am part of you and you are part of me'. It is on these grounds that the so-called foreign theatrical elements can be transplanted into the body of 'own culture' and be activated and further utilised within a new/different cultural context.

In line with Fischer-Lichte's discourse, the real challenge faced by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe was just about to take its course when the Green Tide project came to an end. Being the host company of this international event, Tainan Jen was obliged to review the motive and purpose of inviting GYPT to lead the workshop in Taiwan, as well as to come up with a new way to make what they had learned from GYPT integral to their existing managerial and operational machinery, so that all the efforts put into the project by the people involved would not soon be forgotten and eventually wasted. After long deliberation, Tainan Jen made two crucial decisions. First, the troupe would present at least one TIE programme every year to activate and promote the ideas and skills taught by the GYPT team, so as to fulfil Tainan Jen's socio-educational responsibilities as a regional/community-related theatre through the interactive nature of TIE. Second, the troupe should gather and organise all the articles written or translated before, in and after the workshop, and then make them into a book, so that the theory and practice of TIE could be popularised and the experiences could be referred to by those who are interested in this international event. So far, the troupe has managed to reach these goals. In February 2001, *Echoes of the Surging Tide: The Theory and Practice of TIE* was published. Meanwhile, the troupe's wish to produce a TIE programme annually has been carried out as planned. In winter 1999/spring 2000, the troupe presented its very first TIE programme, *The Completion of the Mansion*. In March 2001, the

second TIE programme *Dreams in the Wind* premiered at the Kaohsiung-based Wen Zao Junior College. In 2002, the troupe's third TIE programme *Nuclear Family*, was produced and put on tour. The following year, Hsu Rey-fang left her job as the troupe's artistic director for a full-time teaching position, and therefore the plan had to be stopped temporarily. But the annual TIE workshop held by the troupe for Taiwanese school teachers still takes place each summer.

Nonetheless, during such a course of imitation and transplantation, not all the outcomes may be predicted or known immediately. TIE was conceived and created in the U.K. within a particular political and cultural context. It has since been developed and reformed by TIE practitioners in coordination with the special needs of the British society. Therefore, when this work is introduced and transplanted to another country or cultural entity, its internal system would certainly disagree with the new environment and cause some problems. According to Brian Roberts, lecturer at Goldsmiths College, University of London, due to the absence of central funding, the experience of spreading TIE in Australia, also an English-speaking country, has largely been that of 'educational theatre', rather than the pattern of 'traditional' TIE.¹³⁴ The same kind of situation is even more likely to happen when TIE is transplanted from Britain to a country where people do not speak English. Language is the main medium for trans-cultural dissemination of thoughts. Once errors occur in the process of translation or interpretation, there would be misguidance and misunderstanding between the one who 'exports' and the one who 'imports' these thoughts. Moreover, the social and educational system of the

¹³⁴ Brian Roberts, *Preface* to *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.15

Chinese-speaking world is very different from its English-speaking counterpart, as Chinese traditions of politics, finance and culture are significantly based upon Confucianism and family values. Therefore, it is a highly challenging task to spread the seeds of TIE and have them grow healthily in the soil of Taiwan.

In an article entitled *Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan*, Zheng Dai-qiong claims that, ever since TIE was introduced to Taiwan in 1992 under the Chinese name ‘jiao yu ju chang’, the promotion of this British-born theatrical work has been obstructed in the island by the following reasons, despite its popularity among theatrical and educational circles:

1. The commercial value of TIE is low.
2. The TIE team has to be ready to take risks, as no one can be sure what would happen during the interactive session.
3. The general public and the government do not know much about TIE, as the Chinese translation for TIE (jiao yu ju chang) is confusing.
4. It is not easy to find professional TIE workers, actor-teachers in particular, in Taiwan.
5. TIE needs long-term investment of money and time.
6. The concept of drama/theatre education has not been made integral to the current education system.¹³⁵

Although Zheng agrees that the organisation of Green Tide and GYPT’s visit could have been the turning point for the development of TIE in Taiwan, obviously all these obstacles are still in the way – particularly for those who are willing to work for the progress of TIE but are based in the south of Taiwan, where human and financial resources are not as rich as the north. Under such circumstances, Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe has to come up with a new set of working methodologies and

¹³⁵ Zheng Dai-qiong, *Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan*, collected in *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.72-73

avoid being restricted by the artistically deficient environment, so that the troupe's intention of carrying on the torch passed by the GYPT team in southern Taiwan can be realised. It is on this basis that the significance of *The Completion of the Mansion*, Tainan Jen's first TIE programme, can be demonstrated and further explored.

From the outset, *The Completion of the Mansion* was destined to be different from the other TIE programmes that had been produced in Taiwan. Before Green Tide took place in 1998, almost all the TIE works that had appeared in the island were devised and presented by Taiwanese drama/theatre education scholars and specialists with the assistance of professional children's theatre groups or normal school (teachers' college) students. Their target audiences were therefore mainly kindergarten or primary school pupils. With the aim of popularising TIE as their top priority, the creators of these programmes did not act to specify the number of the participants for each performance¹³⁶, and the atmosphere of the audience's participation was, generally speaking, made to be lively, animated and cheerful in order to grasp little children's attention. However, the key notion embodied in the execution of *The Completion of the Mansion* was the mutual beneficial relationship between community-related theatre and TIE, as well as the formation of a more intellectualised learning experience generated by the utilisation of forum skills. Although TIE works of this nature can be easily found in Britain, the place of

¹³⁶ As recorded by Zheng Dai-qiong in the same article, when *The Kingdom of Circles and the Kingdom of Squares*, a TIE programme co-devised by Zheng and some students of the Taipei Teachers College, was presented on 17 June 1995 at the Taipei-based Sheng En Kindergarten, there were about one hundred and twenty pupils taking part in the programme. For more information see Zheng Dai-qiong, *Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan*, collected in *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and -edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.67

origin of TIE, they were virtually non-existent in Taiwan until *The Completion of the Mansion* was produced. In fact, long before the ‘theatre for interaction’ workshop was conducted by the GYPT team in Tainan, Hsu Rey-fang, the artistic director of Tainan Jen, had already been attracted by the socio-educational power of TIE and made an effort to understand the operational strategy of GYPT. Hsu commented that, ‘the way GYPT reaches into schools and communities through the interactive nature of TIE has great appeal to Tainan Jen, who is looking for a feasible approach to activate the practice of community drama. We truly hope that a more effective working pattern of community theatre could be cultivated and developed from GYPT’s experiences’.¹³⁷ Accordingly, the main objective of Tainan Jen’s decision to ‘import’ TIE from a foreign land is to shorten the ‘psychological distance’ between the troupe’s work and its local audiences, particularly the young ones, by encouraging them to understand and appreciate the various usages of theatre, so as to help popularise community-related drama activities through the established education system.

As pointed out in the second chapter of this thesis, ever since the success of *Ordinary Life: Taiwanese Comic Dialogues*, Tainan Jen has taken its role as a local/regional theatre company very seriously, even though the styles of its work and administration are constantly changing. Being a drama group that has been operating in the Tainan area for fourteen years, Tainan Jen never stops searching for new working methods to continue its artistic life, and has inevitably come across a lot of alternative ideas and skills that can be used to connect the troupe and

¹³⁷ Hsu Rey-fang, *Echoes of the Surging Tide: the Planning and Organisation of ‘Green Tide – 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop’*, collected in *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.76

its target audience in a more intimate, concentrated and interactive manner, such as taking part in municipal art festivals and the adoption of interactive theatre. With the sponsorship and encouragement of CCA under the policy of ICC, the troupe has built up a network with certain schools and communities by way of touring over the last decade. As a result, it is not at all difficult for Tainan Jen to comply with the practice of TIE, which means that a TIE team is often obliged to visit different schools with the programme they devise – only that in this case the members of the audience are selected in advance and the number of the participants for each performance has to be controlled. According to Hsu Rey-fang, *The Completion of the Mansion* was aimed at the students of the age range 16 to 21. The TIE team, made up of three actor-teachers and one technician, has toured around several junior colleges and high schools based in Tainan or its neighbouring cities/counties to give ten performances. In addition, in order to welcome the participation of local residents, the team gave five extra performances at two fixed venues, Hua Deng Arts Centre and the Eslite Theatre, in Tainan. But those who were interested in seeing *The Completion of the Mansion* were asked to register with the troupe, so that the total number of the audience present at each performance would not exceed 50 and the quality of the interaction between actor-teachers and participants could be guaranteed.

Viewed from an economic perspective, Tainan Jen's approach of course could not be valued as a wise choice of investment, particularly when the general environment is not healthy enough for the flourishing of theatre in Taiwan. Nevertheless, such a 'small but beautiful' way of running a TIE programme has long been accepted as the 'orthodox' operation of TIE in Britain - although

nowadays this is not always the case:

TIE, because of its nature and more than any other theatre form, is dependent on external funding. It is intensive work requiring skilled practitioners and because of the centrality of interactivity is at its most effective when practiced with a small group of audience/participants.¹³⁸

Through GYPT's demonstration, Tainan Jen has come to appreciate the delicate, solid quality of TIE. The troupe thus decided to serve its target audience free of charge after being subsidised by the National Culture and Arts Foundation and the Ministry of Education for the production of *The Completion of the Mansion*, so that the ideal of following the prototype set up by the GYPT team – a group of forty or fifty people learning by doing and thinking together in a dramatised and problematised situation – could be put into practice. Moreover, with the aim of strengthening the performance efficacy of *The Completion of the Mansion*, Tainan Jen once again followed GYPT's footsteps and compiled a 'teacher's pack' for the theatrically inexperienced school teachers. The pack included drama games and topic-related materials that could be used to help the teachers and the students involved prepare for the team's visit or further discuss the theme of the programme after working with the team. Its function of raising interest and deepening after-thought is crucial in the making of a more complete and authentic TIE experience.

On the whole, *The Completion of the Mansion* is GYPT-modelled in terms of its

¹³⁸ Brian Roberts, Preface to *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*. co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.13

planning, devising and operational patterns. Inspired by GYPT's willingness to work hard for young people and the community they dwell in, Tainan Jen was eager to represent the interactive-ness, the liveliness and the mobility of TIE to its Taiwanese audiences. Even so, the content of the programme was totally original and self-made in relation to the social reality of Taiwan. Under the guidance of Hsu Rey-fang, director and playwright of *The Completion of the Mansion*, the three actor-teachers, Gao Si-zhao, Shen Ling-ling and Chiu Shu-feng engaged themselves in the devising process through group improvisation. In the story, Tai-sheng, of mainland Chinese parentage (*wai sheng jen*, whose parents came to Taiwan from mainland China in the late forties with Chiang Kai-shek's defeated Nationalist army), Yueh-lan, of Paiwan (one of Taiwan's nine aboriginal tribes) parentage, Jian-jung and Mei-mei, both of the so-called native Taiwanese parentage (*ben sheng jen*, whose ancestors crossed the Taiwan Strait and settled down on the island in the seventeenth century), are good friends from their university days in the early eighties. Tai-sheng and Yueh-lan get married after they graduate from school – the wedding is in a modern Western style, which is totally against Yueh-lan's wish to have a traditional Paiwan wedding - and move to live in Kaohsiung, a big city located in the south of Taiwan where the great majority of the residents are 'native Taiwanese'. Tai-sheng works for Taiwan Telecom; Yueh-lan teaches at a primary school. They have a son called Xiao Bao. Meanwhile, Jian-jung and Mei-mei go on pursuing their career in, respectively, politics and business. As time goes by, many things have changed. The Taiwanese society is now a much more diversified and democratic one. Those *wai sheng jen* who were forced to cut off their relations with the families and relatives they left behind in

mainland China are allowed to travel back to visit them via Hong Kong. The ideas of localism and tribalism are first tolerated and then popularised by a 'localised' KMT government led by the very first native Taiwanese president, Lee Teng-hui. Under such circumstances, Yueh-lan's self-awareness of being an aboriginal starts to grow. She becomes more and more involved in the publication of a politically radical magazine and the advocacy of aboriginal rights. Tai-sheng is worried. He thinks that people of different ethnic groups should all try to keep their voice down and get on with their life. The tension between the couple finally breaks out when Mei-mei, now a successful business woman, pays a visit to them: Tai-sheng is teased by a *ben sheng jen* taxi driver for not being able to speak Taiwanese after his car breaks down on the way to pick up Mei-mei from the airport; Mei-mei mentions in their conversation that Jian-jung has been working for a native Taiwanese politician, who in Tai-sheng's eyes is a 'separatist' and 'Hitler-like'; Yueh-lan then tells Tai-sheng that she is planning to change her Chinese name back to her aboriginal name after Mei-mei leaves. It seems that the relationship between these four old friends, and particularly between the couple, is crumbling:

T: It is my father's death anniversary tomorrow.

Y: I know. I can take one hour off tomorrow morning and go to the temple with you to worship and pay our respects.

T: My uncle wants us to bring back Father's ashes to his hometown in the mainland as soon as possible.

Y: It's up to you. What about Mother's ashes?

T: Should be brought back together with Dad's this time.

Y: So you'll be travelling to China to worship every year?

T: We'll see. We've still got ancestral tablets at home anyway.

Y: Oh! I went to the domicile administration office to change my name today. They gave me a real hard time.

T: What?!

Y: I said I went to apply to the domicile administration office for changing back my aboriginal name.

T: You want to change your name?

Y: Yes. GaraBajuju – the name passed over to me from my grandmother.

T: What?!

Y: GaraBajuju. I've told you all about it. *(Pause)* The staff of the office told me that the whole family would be affected by this.

T: This is serious. Stop messing about!

Y: I didn't know it would have been so difficult! Maybe they were deliberately making things difficult for me. *(Pause)* Can you ask Little Chang for some help? He's working at the city government and I think he can smooth away obstacles for me.

T: Why are you making such a fuss of it? Do you want everybody to know about this? You've been using your Chinese name for more than forty years, and we are all so used to it by now. Why has it to be changed?

Y: This is a gesture to identify with my own people.

T: Identify this and identify that! Should I keep all our relatives and friends informed of your new name? Or maybe I should hold a party to celebrate?

Y: Why are you being so mean?

T: I really don't understand. You keep accusing people of not treating the aboriginals as proper Taiwanese, but now you are trying to show forth your differences. I just don't get it!

Y: Of course you don't. Our adoption of Chinese names has led to many tragic cases of inter-marriage among close relatives. It's only by bringing back our original names that we can find out where our roots are. *(Pause)* Suppose you also don't want to have your name changed easily by any others, right? Shouldn't each ethnic group have its own foothold?

T: All right, all right. Why are you still so dissatisfied with the reality when you already have the right to say all the things you want to say? You fight for this and fight for that all day; it makes our life such an intolerable mess!

Y: If we don't fight, we might still be called 'mountain people'¹³⁹ today; Wu Feng¹⁴⁰ would probably still be regarded as a majestic hero! All these things will remain exactly the same if we don't fight. (*Pause*) If people like you can change your attitude and show us more respects, the whole situation would be very different. We wouldn't need to fight so hard then...

T: OK, so it's me again! Yueh-lan, can you stop thinking about the aboriginals' melancholy for a while? In Taiwan everybody has his own problems, like me, and my parents...

Y: Exactly! We all suffer from melancholic feelings from time to time. But that shouldn't become the burden of our son's generation. Isn't it great that Xiao Bao knows how to say 'yeh yeh, nai nai' as well as 'vuvu, vuvu'¹⁴¹?

T: You mind your own business and keep our son out of this!

Y: What's that supposed to mean?

T: You dare to change his name!

Y: Did I ever say I want to change his name? Why do you always act like that whenever I raise important issues about the aboriginals?

T: You are the one who's causing trouble. I've never been in your way before. Now you are changing your name, and Xiao Bao and I are forced to change with you. What if people look at my ID card, see this strange name of yours, Bar...., whatever, and think I've married a foreign woman?!

Y: It only takes a few seconds to explain. Is that so difficult?

T: No, it is not difficult. But how unnecessary that is! Why must you mess up everything? (*Pause*) I don't care how you want yourself to be called, but leave all our IDs and important documents alone – simply too much trouble!

Y: What are you saying?

T: Yueh-lan, please respect what I think and how I feel if you really care about our family. What's the next step you're going to take after you change your name? I

¹³⁹ Most aboriginal people were scattered and forced to live in the mountains when the first wave of Chinese Han immigrants arrived in Taiwan and occupied the plain areas with better organisation and more advanced technology in the seventeenth century. They have since been discriminatingly called the 'mountain people' (*shan di jen*). However, after a decade-long campaign and advocacy, the term 'mountain people' is now dropped and replaced by '*yuan zhu min*', which means 'original residents'.

¹⁴⁰ Wu Feng, a legendary Chinese Han figure who is said to have sacrificed his own life to stop the aboriginals (then deemed barbaric by most Chinese Han immigrants) hunting human heads. His story was once included in the Chinese textbook of primary level. It has now been removed for the cause of ethnic harmony.

¹⁴¹ 'Yeh yeh, nai nai', 'vuvu, vuvu': 'grandfather, grandmother' in, respectively, Mandarin and Paiwanese.

don't think I can keep pace with you any more. But please think things over before you make any move, for our home's sake. Why can't we live peacefully like before? (*Still Image*)¹⁴²

At this point, the 'facilitator' of the programme would come to the performing area and invite the participants to replace the actor who plays Yueh-lan and try to persuade Tai-sheng to let her change her name. The forum session thus begins.



Figure 5. Forum session in *The Completion of the Mansion*

Like the way racial issues are dealt with by GYPT today, Hsu Rey-fang and her TIE team approached this project with a relatively matter-of-fact attitude. The four protagonists, though good friends from their university days, belong to three different ethnic groups. Given that people of all the different ethnic groups in Taiwan cannot be easily distinguished from each other by their looks – except

¹⁴² The last act of *The Completion of the Mansion*. The script is collected in *Echoes of the Surging Tide*, p.235-238 [author's translation]

some aboriginal people, who have slightly darker skin and more outlined faces, their differences are largely neglected under political oppression but become blown up when democracy is practiced in the island. Suddenly *ben sheng jen*, who were once punished for speaking their mother language by Chiang and his son's *wai sheng jen* government, are in power and they want to fight back. It is within this political framework that certain ethnic conflicts are investigated through the dialogues between the four protagonists. By mixing up the loving feelings of the husband and wife with their heated argument, the team 'problematized' the sensitive issue that concerns almost every citizen in Taiwan, particularly those who live in the south, where people's sense of Taiwanese identity is stronger than that of the cosmopolitan north. On the strength of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the play leads its audience to examine the relationship between Tai-sheng and Yueh-lan, in many ways the oppressor and the oppressed, and make them identify, both intellectually and emotionally, with the problematized situation through Yueh-lan's dilemma (of changing her name). At this stage, some of the participants would be aroused to take action against what happens before their eyes, and the most crucial part of the whole programme, the forum, would develop from there.

In order to present to the audience a realistic picture of cultural differences and an authentic experience of aboriginal oppression, Tainan Jen's TIE team interviewed a group of aboriginal theology students, who studied at the local seminary, and invited them to attend rehearsals. On the one hand, the opinions and advice given by these aboriginal young people helped the team process their materials with a carefully judged objectivity. On the other hand, the cooperation of the TIE team and the aboriginal students proved that Tainan Jen was indeed trying to reach out

and open up new possibilities of working with/for local people. With the efforts made by all the people involved, *The Completion of the Mansion* became a popular piece of work. Many participants were surprised and inspired by the ingenious device of actor-teachers: the change of roles, the interwoven usage of narration and performance, and the multiple capability of giving instructions, leading discussions and acting out characters. Through their guidance, the participants got to witness the multi-layered function of drama. More importantly, through the concluding forum session, the audience were encouraged to step into Yueh-lan's shoes and try to seek a solution to her problem. It gave the students a rare opportunity of breaking away from their 'stuff the duck'-style school life and re-connecting themselves with the world outside of the campus. The whole experience could therefore be valued as a 'curriculum for life'.

In other words, *The Completion of the Mansion* was an embodiment of Erika Fischer-Lichte's intercultural discourse on theatre: owing to the full communication and understanding between the British and the Taiwanese theatre companies, the 'foreign' theatrical elements conceived in Britain – the ideas and skills of TIE – were given the chance to move and operate within the context of 'own' culture – the Taiwanese society. Once the unfamiliarity and the strangeness are removed from local people's perception of and feelings about this British-born form of interactive theatre, the space for TIE to breathe and grow will become bigger and its potential of making contributions to Taiwan's social and educational reforms greater. According to an audience survey conducted by Tainan Jen after the tour of *The Completion of the Mansion* was completed, the great majority of the participants were impressed by the operational pattern of TIE and the content of the

programme. They were also willing to take part in the forum/discussion session and respond actively to the questions raised in the performance. Although a lot of teachers and observers have expressed their concerns over the theme of *The Completion of the Mansion* to Hsu Rey-fang after they saw the programme,¹⁴³ most of the young participants were neutral and unprejudiced in handling the fairly complex relations and interactions between the four main characters. As recorded in the questionnaires, they were capable of relating the story to their experiences in real life and giving constructive suggestions to the team about the utilisation of space and the arrangement of audience participation. The difference between adults and young people in terms of their respective reaction to the same programme is a natural outcome of age and personal comprehension of life, and therefore should not be taken as the sole ground to judge a TIE team's work. Adults, in comparison with the socially less experienced or sophisticated young people, tend to be more cautious and reserved about the theme of a programme, and are generally more analytical and critical of what they see and feel. It is more difficult for them to shake off their own presumptions or fixed standpoints when they are confronted with a social issue or a dilemma. That is why TIE devisors always have to take the age range of their target audience into consideration before a new programme is planned and produced, and then try to reach the audience with well-chosen materials and approaches. In Britain, the evaluation of TIE work is often done with the cooperation of TIE teams and arts authorities/subsidising bodies. That helps TIE practitioners look at their own work from a more objective point of view. In Taiwan, people who are interested in the educational efficacy of

¹⁴³ These adults were worried that ethnic conflict might be too complicated and difficult an issue for young people to deal with.

TIE should not ignore the importance of evaluation, as it is the only way to find out the 'value' of the investment. Therefore, in the process of transplanting TIE, the establishment of a reliable evaluation system has to be taken as seriously as planning or devising.

All the important issues raised so far regarding the development of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe as a community theatre, as well as the transplantation of GYPT's TIE working methodologies to Tainan Jen's devising mechanism, have been touched and explored in an interview conducted between Hsu Rey-fang and myself in 1999. This interview is more than just an ordinary interview. It has a significant place in this research, as many ideas about theatre, education, and local culture shared and exchanged in our conversations have inspired me to investigate the value of TIE from a more objective point of view. It is therefore necessary for the full text of this interview to be inserted below as an integral section of this chapter. Through the eyes of Hsu Rey-fang, one of the most thoughtful and adventurous TIE workers in Taiwan, I get to come a step closer to see the real picture of what has been done over these years by GYPT, Tainan Jen, and myself.

3.4 An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang

Hsu, Rey-fang, BA in Chinese Literature (Tam Kang University, Taipei); MFA in Drama (National Institute of Arts, Taiwan), specialised in dramaturgy. She was the artistic director of Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe until 2002, and is now a full-time lecturer at the Wen Tzao Junior College in Kaohsiung. Hsu was one of the founder members who initiated the Hua Deng Theatre Troupe, the forerunner of the Tainan

Jen Theatre Troupe, in 1987 under the auspices of Father Don Glover's Hua Deng Arts Centre. Since then, many theatre enthusiasts have joined her to work towards the troupe's vigorous growth. Over the last decade, the troupe has proceeded steadily and enjoyed a community-friendly reputation in Taiwan, particularly in Tainan, where it is based. In June 1997, the name of the troupe was changed to Tainan Jen,¹⁴⁴ as a gesture to detach itself from the Catholic Church, as well as to herald a new stage of development.

In her sixteen years in the theatre, Hsu has devoted herself mainly to playwriting, directing, and the promotion of theatre-related activities. Her major pieces as a writer-director include *An Off-Duty Morning* (1989), *I Do Love You* (1990), *Take Me to See the Fish* (1992), *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* (1994), *Illio Formosa - The Beautiful Island* (1995), and *Journey of the Wind Birds* (1996). In 1994, her play *Non-Citizen* was named one of the year's best plays by the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taipei. In 1996, she took the lead in creating an improvisational piece *You Don't Always Get What You Want* with some troupe members. Hsu also wrote the play *Listening to a Song* for the annual Art Festival of Tainan City in 1997. In 1998, she led the troupe's 'core team', an approach introduced by Hsu herself to bring more professionalism into Tainan Jen, whose members consist mainly of amateur theatre lovers, to present Chekhov's short play, *The Marriage Proposal*. The team has since toured the island giving more than 38 performances of the production. As an actor, Hsu has appeared in many of the troupe's productions, but is best known to the audience as the character 'Xia Ong Lai' in the 1991 hit, *Ordinary Life - Taiwanese Comic Dialogue*.

¹⁴⁴ In Chinese, the character 'jen' refers to 'a person', 'people', or 'human beings' in general sense.

Ever since the establishment of the troupe, Hsu has been engaged in organising local theatre-related activities such as the Hua Deng Theatre Festival (1995), the South Taiwan Theatre Fair and Late Season Assortment of Drama and Theatre (1997), with the aim of popularising modern theatre (Western-style spoken drama rather than traditional Chinese musical theatre) in the south of Taiwan. In 1995, Hsu went to New York to study theatre for six months on a scholarship offered by the Foundation for Cultural Construction and the Asian Cultural Council (ACC). In 1997, she invited two installation artists, Yin Peet and Bart Uchida, from the United States to undertake design work for *Journey of the Wind Birds*. The production was therefore both unique and fresh in terms of its visual style. In April 1998, another international project was planned and carried out by Hsu and her colleagues: the Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe invited GYPT to conduct a 'theatre for interaction' workshop entitled 'Green Tide' in Tainan. By holding this workshop, Hsu intended to have the ideas and skills of interactive theatre introduced to Taiwanese theatre practitioners and educationalists methodically and, in so doing, to find a new way to engage local audiences and young students in the theatre. In March 1999, with a subsidy given by Taiwan's National Arts and Cultures Foundation and the Tainan Municipal Cultural Foundation, Hsu visited London at GYPT's invitation. She participated in the devising and touring process of *Time and Tide Line*, a TIE programme aimed at exploring racial issues, as an actor-teacher. Nine months later, back in Taiwan, she presented Tainan Jen's very first 'official' TIE programme, *The Completion of the Mansion*, in December 1999.

Hsu's Publications

<Plays>

1. *Take Me to See the Fish*, 1993, published by Zho Kai Theatre Foundation
2. *Non-Citizen*, 1994, published by Council for Cultural Affairs
3. *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom*, 1995, published by Council for Cultural Affairs
4. *Journey of the Wind Birds*, 1999, collected in *Conference for Modern Theatre in Taiwan – Anthology of Dissertations and Plays*, published by Council for Cultural Affairs

<Others>

Echoes of the Surging Tide – the Theory and Practice of Theatre-in-Education, February 2001, co-edited with Tsai Chi-chang, published by Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd.

The Interview (1999)

Tsai (T): Let's start from the very beginning, shall we? Did you have any personal experiences in drama or theatre before starting at Hua Deng? Why were you involved in setting up the now 12-year-old Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe in 1987 and what was your goal at first?

Hsu (H): It was not all that clear back then. Like many college students of my time, I occasionally got to see some performances of the so-called reformed Chinese

opera and the propagandist-mannered spoken drama (hua ju) while studying Chinese Literature at Tam Kang University, as there was not a great deal of theatre to be seen in the early eighties. I was not all that impressed by what I saw though, as most of it seemed very affected and outdated in terms of the stories told and the language used. Even though I acknowledge that the groundbreaking production of *Ho Ju's New Match*, by Lan Ling Ensemble, was in many ways an inspiration to me as an audience, I only became half engaged in the play-writing side of theatre, and set out to write a couple of short plays for the course I took - mainly as an exercise to sharpen my writing skills. I never once thought that I would take theatre as my life-long career. However, I began working at Hua Deng Arts Centre with Father Don Glover in 1985 after teaching at a primary school for two years. I therefore came across many American and European films, and became quite experienced in organising drama- or cinema-related talks. One day Father Glover approached me and said 'We should set up a drama group in Hua Deng to encourage the local youth to participate in the arts', and that was the starting point of everything, really. We literally started from zero: we did not know much about drama or theatre;¹⁴⁵ we did not have any specific expectations or fixed directions; and there were hardly any resources to be obtained or used. What we did have was a group of enthusiastic people. They came from all walks of life and would visit the arts centre to take part in the drama group when they were free. As none of us was capable enough to come up with an organised training plan at that early stage, I asked Tsai Ming-yi, a good friend of mine (from the Tam Kang University Choir) who used to attend Lan Ling's drama workshop, to lead us to do some basic training. Liu Hsao-lu, a

¹⁴⁵ Although an MFA in Drama, Hsu did not go to study theatre at the National Institute of Arts until 1991, four years after establishing and running the Hua Deng Theatre Troupe with Father Glover and other theatre lovers such as Lee Wei-mu and Gao Si-zhao.

Catholic and a dancer teaching in Tainan at that time, also came to help us explore our physicality every week without charge. We all enjoyed what we did with them as a drama club-like group, but did not actually know what we would like to achieve at the end of the day. We seemed aimless, but were flexible and up for anything. After being trained for a period of time, members of the Hua Deng Theatre Troupe started to take turns to produce or direct plays under the supervision of Liu Ke-hua, the first resident artistic director, and then present them to our families, friends and some local students who frequented the arts centre. Together we learned the many different aspects of theatre by working as a team. It was great fun.

T: So there was basically no intention at all to make this drama group, then called the ‘Hua Deng Theatre Troupe’, a community-related one?

H: No, nothing of that sort. The term ‘community theatre’ was not even in our vocabulary in those days. It was a time when martial law had just been lifted by the ruling KMT (the Nationalist Party) and the democratic movement started to gain its power. A lot of young artists and students were doing what they called ‘experimental theatre’ or ‘little theatre’ in Taipei. Although we were not keen to follow their footsteps, we also wanted to experiment, or play with different ideas and forms of drama in our own ways. However, basing ourselves in a city as old and strongly rooted in traditions as Tainan, we did not have a single clue about where our audience was, let alone how we were going to serve them. The reason why we are so much talked about - or sometimes even shrugged off - as a community theatre group nowadays is predominantly political: Hua Deng was

included in a three-year project entitled The Guiding Plan for the Development of Community Theatre, set up and conducted by Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA, wen jian huei) between 1991 and 1994, when the Taiwanese government took action to nurture people's sense of identity and preserve our own culture, and has since been officially defined and widely regarded as a community theatre. It was therefore a given status rather than a self-grown awareness, but a great leap for the troupe all the same.

T: As the artistic director of the troupe, can you sum up your relationship with the CCA and evaluate how the management and operation of the troupe have been affected by this 'given status'?

H: Financially of course it was a privilege to be associated with the Council. Although the objectives of the 1991 Guiding Plan were never that clear - with 'integral construction of community' conspicuously at the top of the CCA's agenda, the subsidy arrived at a crucial moment and helped us run our office with stability and efficiency. I was therefore able to take two years off to study drama at the National Institute of Arts in Taipei. Meanwhile, by mutual agreement, Hua Deng was obliged to tour its productions to different communities and schools during those three years, in order to 'bring arts to the people', as the government put it. We took it as a good training and tried to learn more in the process. The result was fruitful: we found out how resourceful our local culture was and how meaningful it was to work for the grassroots. But of course there was a down side attached to this governmental scheme: our troupe members were all exhausted; they had to do their full-time jobs on weekdays and went on tour on Saturdays and

Sundays. It took away the 'fun' bit of theatre-making from them. Consequently, some of them were forced to back off and leave the troupe. In retrospect, I think the CCA was definitely trying to do something to cultivate the development of community culture. But they did not lay out things properly in advance: What is community theatre? How should it operate in accordance with Taiwan's historical background and cultural context? How should it be subsidised? The Hua Deng Theatre Troupe was certainly not a community theatre by nature. At best it could probably be categorised as a 'regional theatre' (di fang ju tuan), as opposed to theatre groups based and operating in Taipei, the capital city. However, I am glad to say that we have made very good use of the financial aids provided by the CCA. The troupe matured a great deal, both artistically and technically, in those three years, and has been trusted and assigned by the Council to carry out more theatrical events at a local level ever since. Recently some of CCA's responsibilities have been distributed to the newly established National Cultures and Arts Foundation. Hopefully there will be more opportunities for performance groups like us to get funding from these subsidising bodies.

T: So are you now taking this given title more seriously? Do you intend to accomplish what people expect your troupe to achieve as a 'community theatre' after all these years?

H: I think I did feel a bit worried at first about this given title. Tainan Jen has created more than thirty plays so far but only a few of them have been seriously discussed or reviewed. People seem more interested in what we are than what we do. And sometimes it hurts to see our hard work ignored or dismissed by the critics

simply because we are ‘defined’ as a community theatre - they think most of us are amateurs and therefore do not expect our productions to meet the artistic standard they set up for professional theatre groups. Meanwhile, they keep raising their eyebrows at us for being a subsidised theatre company. Some of them have come to argue that what we do in Tainan does not fit into the category of community theatre - and for this reason should not be funded by the government on a regular basis - without even bothering to point out what ‘community theatre’ in Taiwan should be. I have to admit that I was once quite frustrated and confused by all these criticisms, particularly when I was anxious to find Tainan Jen an ‘identity’ myself a couple of years ago. However, I am less concerned about this now. I have no intention of manipulating public opinions on Tainan Jen. The simple fact is that we are based in Tainan. We live here, work here, and feel certain responsibility to make theatre more accessible to the Tainanese. But we can’t pretend to be what we are not.

T: It is commonly agreed that the 1990 production of *Ordinary Life - Taiwanese Comic Dialogue*¹⁴⁶ was a milestone in the troupe’s history of development. Some even suggested that Tainan Jen should take Taiwanese comic dialogue (tai yu xiang sheng) seriously and transform itself into a professional Taiwanese comic dialogue group. Indeed the company has since established itself as a leading Min-nan-yu¹⁴⁷ modern theatre company in

¹⁴⁶ ‘Comic dialogue’, or ‘xiang sheng’, is a very popular form of performance art in Taiwan. It engages two, or sometimes more, stand-up comedians, with folded fans in their hands to effectualise their gestures, in several episodes of gossip or funny conversation. The topic varies; it can be about politics, history, legendary stories, social customs or daily life. It is usually delivered in Mandarin. But Hua Deng’s *Ordinary Life* was scripted and performed in Min-nan-yu (see next note).

¹⁴⁷ Min-nan-yu is the most widely used dialect - as opposed to Mandarin, the official language, and other dialects such as Hakha - in Taiwan, particularly in the south, and is therefore nicknamed ‘tai yu’, the language of Taiwan.

Taiwan, although Taiwanese comic dialogue has so far never been produced again by your troupe. As one of the key creators of this successful piece, can you talk about how it was shaped and what impact it has had on you as a director and a playwright?

H: Actually I should not gain credit for the piece at all. *Taiwanese Comic Dialogue* was in every sense a brainchild of Tsai Ming-yi, then leader of the troupe. Although many troupe members did offer to tell him funny stories about conflicts between in-laws or bizarre personal experiences of match-making, it was Ming-yi who ventured to organise all these interesting materials and turn them into a five-act play. Personally I only took part in the acting - and I was not even a skilled actor at that time! But the piece was a huge success. It premiered in Tainan in 1990, and then, the very next year, we were invited by the National Theatre to perform it at the Festival for Experimental Theatre in Taipei. The audience loved it! And the critics were no less enthusiastic. As a writer-director, I am greatly indebted to my experience of participating in the devising process of this five-act play. The script of *Ordinary Life* was very well written. Ming-yi was smart enough to milk so much out of Tainan's strikingly sophisticated and sometimes circuitous wedding customs, and then turn these materials into a highly entertaining show. The theme of the play, in my view, will never cease to appeal to the general public, as so many of us are still going through exactly the same 'rites of passage', such as the torment of being arranged to meet a complete stranger who might turn out to be your future husband or wife, and the excitement of throwing a wedding banquet to entertain your friends and honour your family. We laugh at the jokes because we can easily understand and identify with what the two xiang sheng actors talk about on the

stage. That makes me ponder a lot upon my role as a writer-director. I want to write about things that my audience can personally relate to or connect with. I have no intention of making my plays or productions anything less than ‘navel-gazing’. It is therefore a matter of course for me to tell my stories in Min-nan-yu. Technically this is the language of our daily life; local audiences may feel less intimidated by the language barrier when they come to see our shows. Artistically it helps to make our theatrical pieces look more natural, authentic and original, as most members of Tainan Jen speak better Min-nan-yu than Mandarin - believe it or not, even the young ones! Again, I did not choose with a strong self-awareness to make Min-nan-yu the main language used by the company. It came about because the language best serves my plays and our audiences. It is not a political gesture or cultural paranoia, as some might suggest. We are simply fortunate enough to be gifted with such a resourceful language.

T: However, many of your major productions, such as *Take Me to See the Fish, The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* and *Journey of the Wind Birds*, have thus been branded as ‘mild and conservative’ or even ‘nostalgic and backward’ by some critics, as Min-nan-yu is often associated with an old-fashioned or tradition-abiding society and family drama is obviously not among the mainstream fashions. Being the mastermind behind all these productions, how would you like to respond to that kind of criticism?

H: To be honest I don’t care so much about what these critics have said or what the mainstream fashions are. In most cases these critics have probably only seen *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* and immediately jumped to the conclusion that all

our productions are of the same nature. Besides, the version most of them have seen is actually the revised one, which we presented in 1997 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the troupe's establishment. The socio-political background of the play has therefore lost its true appeal in the second round. When *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* premiered in 1994, it was meant to explore some sensitive political issues in a gentle way. One of the play's main characters, the second brother of the three siblings, was actually modelled on Zhang Tsan-hong, the current mayor of Tainan City, who used to be in exile as a political dissident and was only allowed to return to Taiwan after martial law was lifted. At the end of the story, the two brothers and their younger sister, now all in their seventies, visit their favourite spot in the city and take a photo together under a big phoenix tree.¹⁴⁸ The younger brother then says, 'I hope someday we will be able to vote for our own president'. I can now jokingly tell you this but when we were rehearsing that part of the play for the first time in the early nineties, the actor who played that role was very scared of being harassed or even arrested by the police for what he had to say on stage. But look at what is happening to Taiwan now. Everything is changing so rapidly and drastically around us. In 1997 we could actually vote, for the first time in the history of any Chinese society, for our own president. As a writer-director, of course I am aware of what is taking place in our society and what is being said in my work. I would probably not do something like *The Phoenix Trees Are in Blossom* again now; but when the play was created it had a specific socio-political meaning attached to it. Unfortunately most critics do not see that. However, I am glad to say that a couple of research students, who have been following our work

¹⁴⁸ Phoenix tree, which blossoms in the summer with flowers as reddish as fire, has long been the municipal tree/flower of Tainan. It can be easily found in the city. For this reason, Tainan is nicknamed 'the city of the phoenix'.

closely over the last five or six years, are doing a better job in giving me their feedback and new ideas. Lin Wei-yu, for example, has provided me with some genuine insights into the troupe's productions. Although based in Taipei, she made a lot of efforts to come all the way down to Tainan to see our new pieces while she was working on her MA dissertation. When she could not make it to certain shows, she would ask to see the video tapes. I think that helped to make her opinions sharp-witted but objective. Her observations on the troupe's strong points and shortcomings are therefore valuable and trustworthy.

T: In an essay proposed by you at the 1999 Conference for Taiwanese Modern Theatre, organised and hosted by the Tainan-based National Cheng Gong University, you talked about your personal expectation towards the future development of Tainan Jen, which is to make this community-friendly theatre group a 'professional' one. You then gave a depiction of how you started organising a 'core team' in 1998 for the production of a free adaptation of Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal* by asking three actors, chosen from your own troupe and Modern Form (Mei Deng Fong) Theatre, a Tainan-based theatre group of the elderly, to commit themselves fully to the tour. Looking back, can you explain what you would like to achieve by organising a 'core team'? How does it fit into your plan of 'professionalising' Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe?

H: I think I might be a bit over-ambitious in terms of my own expectation for the troupe's future. But after working in the troupe for more than ten years, I do believe that this is the time for us to map out our priorities and face up to the next stage of

development. Indeed there has always been a problem of keeping our actor members with the troupe for a longer period of time. They come, they learn, they get married, and then they probably have to leave. Financially we cannot give them a sense of security, so naturally we cannot force any of them to commit him/herself fully to the troupe's projects. To be honest, while working with our actor members, I often feel that I have to make concessions in terms of artistic demands. Most of our actors have their day-time jobs and, as a consequence, are usually quite stressed out when they come to rehearse for our productions. Some of them have even made it clear that they are simply here for 'fun'. While I am perfectly happy to recognise this laid-back attitude as part of the troupe's community function, I do have things that I would like to achieve as the artistic director of the troupe. What I really like about theatre is team work – probably the main reason why so many people have been attracted to work in the theatre. In most cases, theatre practitioners enjoy working with each other and feeling inspired by each other's work. But we need to work together under the same level of expectation. It is one way for the troupe to assimilate its resources and present new pieces on a regular basis, given that play-creating has long been the troupe's 'life blood'. That is why I have decided to introduce the idea of 'core team' to Tainan Jen. By discipline, one has to opt to go through the audition and then, if chosen, join the core team of a specific production. He or she therefore has to adjust him/herself to meet the needs of a fully motivated production group. By so doing, I hope we can manage to take care of different people's needs: for those who think this is just a place where local people meet and share an interest, we should set up certain projects to invite their participation; however, for those who are more ambitious in or committed to the theatre, we should also create a working environment and atmosphere that is both

friendly and encouraging for them.

T: So is working with ‘serious actors’ your main concern in terms of your vision of turning Tainan Jen into a professional theatre company?

H: Indeed. As long as we can work with actors on a professional basis, the administrative staff of the troupe are experienced enough and quite ready to take bookings, organise tours and deal with the press. However, I must point out that I do not ask our core team actors to do as well as those ‘professional actors’ who can actually make a living solely out of their acting talents or star qualities. What I ask of them is a ‘professional attitude’. For those actor members who choose to take part in a particular project, I hope they are fully prepared to be directed and challenged: they have to do their homework; they must pay attention to the director’s requests; and they should always try to take their involvement in this project as a serious learning process. Meanwhile, actors of any other drama or theatre groups are also welcome to join our core team, as long as they are willing to make the same commitment and come to work with us in Tainan on a contractual basis

T: But then do you think that, by dividing the troupe into a ‘core team’, whose members are paid, and a largely unpaid amateur group, some of the troupe members would probably feel excluded or even hurt in some way? Isn’t that against the key principle of setting up this troupe?

H: Frankly I do worry about how our troupe members might have felt about my

decision to introduce a different approach of management to the already established operative system. Maybe some of them might feel excluded and decide to leave. But the plain fact is that, while many of them have a day-time job and a married life, it is very difficult to engage everybody in all the things we do. Sometimes, even when offered a job or invited to join a team, they end up having to turn it down due to some personal reasons. So I think we should give this two-way system a go. I don't know how far it is going to affect the nature and the operation of Tainan Jen yet. We will certainly evaluate it after a certain period of time.

T: So after all these years, through different stages of transition, do you think Tainan Jen has managed to nurture a new group of theatre-goers?

H: Yes, I believe so. However, the whole situation is not very stable – you know the environment out there is not really suitable for the healthy growth of theatre.

T: In that case, have you come up with any strategy to draw more people's attention to what you do in Tainan?

H: I think our recent effort to bring our theatrical pieces into local schools is a good way to boost the profile of theatre. Regardless of whether the students who have seen our productions at their schools will develop an interest in theatre or go on becoming regular theatre-goers after they graduate, at least they do get to see some quality performances when they are young. That will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

T: In 1998, with the sponsorship of the CCA and the BTCO (British Trade and Cultural Office), Tainan Jen invited GYPT to conduct an international project, entitled Green Tide: Theatre for Interaction Workshop, in Tainan. Why did you initiate this project? How do you value the working methodologies of TIE?

H: I think TIE will become one of Tainan Jen's annual tasks. Ever since you visited our troupe in 1995 and shared what you had learned in England with us, I have been fascinated by the educational efficacy of this particular form of theatre. It was a time when Tainan Jen was taking productions to schools and looking for a new way to connect with our audiences. The interactive and participatory nature of TIE immediately made an impression on me. That is why I asked you to help me organise this international project and invite GYPT to share their ideas and skills with our local educationalists and theatre practitioners in Taiwan. Through my own experiences in Green Tide, I have learned that, with TIE, there is no need to preach or reprimand, but certain issues - particularly those deemed as taboos - can still be raised and explored by way of open discussion. For example, if a teacher talks about politics with his or her students in class, it often happens that he or she will be criticised for politicising the students' mind. Traditionally, people in Taiwan think that schools should always be politics-free. They don't want their children to be affected by social realities.

T: Somehow I feel that has also got something to do with the fact that nowadays Chinese parents and teachers tend to be very intimidated by the concept of politics themselves. They don't want their children or students to

be involved in anything political because they think it might be corrupt or dangerous. Recently a friend of mine, who teaches at a secondary school in a small town near the east coast, has complained to me about a mock election held in his school. He thinks the campaigns led by the student candidates could be as ugly as those led by true-life politicians for real elections. How do you, a theatre practitioner and a teacher, respond to that? Do you think it is appropriate to give the young the opportunities of engaging themselves in the exploration of important social issues at an early stage? Should society- or politics-related activities be further included in young people's learning process? Is it possible that these activities will 'displace' them and 'disturb' their studies?

H: It all depends on what kind of citizens we would like to have for our society in the future, really. Your friend's attitude actually says a lot about how socio-political education has been dealt with in schools by teachers: they either worry too much about how their students are going to be 'polluted', or simply shrug off these precious opportunities where lessons of democracy can be learned. Take this mock election for example. A responsible teacher should seize the chance to make his or her students understand how important it is to choose a right person to do the job: Why is this candidate better than that one? Is the electoral campaign well organised and carried out with dignity and integrity? Meanwhile, the young voters should also be guided to realise that their responsibilities as citizens do not end at the moment when a vote is cast into the ballot box; they must go on supervising the person-elect all the way through his or her tenure and make sure he or she is doing a good job. Unfortunately, most teachers and students do not take an

event like this seriously. At best they treat it as a game. But more often the whole thing seems to them a complete waste of time. That explains why although in theory we, as legitimate voters, are entitled the right of recalling by the Constitution, none of our lawmakers or local governors, no matter how dissatisfying they are, has ever been dismissed from his or her post by popular vote. We have never learned, and therefore simply do not know how something like that can be done with a proper procedure. On the whole, I think one of the biggest problems of our education system is that we keep asking young people to study and read, read and study. It is no secret that most parents in Taiwan ask only one thing of their children: to pass all sorts of entrance examinations in order to make it to the top, and then settle down with a well-paid job. Meanwhile, these parents will work hard to protect their children from any 'distractions' and, in so doing, make their life as pure as a piece of white paper. That is why I think TIE should be made an integral part of the education system in Taiwan and used to tackle social issues in schools.

T: Now that you are preparing to present the very first official TIE programme,¹⁴⁹ *The Completion of the Mansion*, to your target audience, do

¹⁴⁹ Soon after the Green Tide workshop came to an end, Lin Ming-xia, the financial manager and one of the residential directors of Tainan Jen, had applied the skills of interactive theatre to *Cry in the Dark*, a small-scale production (and one-off presentation) she directed. It was based on a then nationally famous case of office rape and contained a hot-seating session where the audience was invited to talk directly to the boyfriend of the raped girl after they witnessed the dramatised version of the story. The presentation was held at Tainan Jen's studio in July 1998. It was open to the local residents but one had to be 18 or above to get in. Although the project was planned up with the intention of highlighting the audience's participation, the production was actually much more of a try-out than of a so-called TIE programme.

you feel confident in transplanting the practice of TIE from England to Taiwan, as there are some obvious obstructions such as the unfamiliarity of many school teachers to the operation of TIE and an orthodox education system that is not very theatre-friendly? Can you talk a little more about the theme of the programme and how you are working with the first-time actor-teachers?

H: This TIE project is meant to explore the conflicts between different ethnic groups in Taiwan. We have invited two young students of aboriginal parentage from the Tainan Theological Seminary to join us in the devising process. They give us a lot of ideas about what kind of problems they and their tribe members have faced in a society that consists mainly of Han Chinese. That has indeed been very helpful in terms of the setting-up of the programme's framework. Although I have learned a lot from my own experiences working with GYPT, particularly when I was involved in the devising and touring process of *Time and Tide Line* (GYPT, spring 1999) as an actor-teacher, this is the very first time for me to organise a TIE team and try to come up with a TIE programme. As you can see, these two students have no experiences in the theatre whatsoever. And the two actors involved so far, though very good at stage performance, know very little about how to be an actor-teacher. So the whole thing is quite a challenge for all of us. Moreover, as you have rightly pointed out, there are indeed some problems in dealing with schools. When I was making the tour plan for *The Completion of the Mansion*, Lin Mei-chun, one of the Green Tide participants and a teacher at the National Tainan Teachers College, told me that she would like to have her class take part in this TIE

programme. As a matter of procedure, we sent the head of her department all the information about this project, in which the theme of the programme – conflicts between different ethnic groups, an issue that is often intensely debated whenever there is a general election in Taiwan – was clearly stated. However, the head was very suspicious of what we are going to do with the students. He thought the theme was too politically orientated, and therefore wanted us to guarantee that we would not ‘politicise’ his students. At that time, I could not possibly make him any promise of that sort. Politics involves everybody of our society; education, tax, traffic... everything is political. His assumption of students being non-social members was simply ridiculous and unacceptable. In the end we decided not to visit Tainan Teachers College, but have instead invited Lin’s students to come to participate in our show at the Hua Deng Arts Centre, where we will give a couple of open presentations. What I mean to say with this case is how conservative and reserved some teachers in Taiwan still are. Many of them, compelled by our education system, seem to be completely stuck with the ‘extent of progress’ (jin du) in their teaching. For their own good, they have to speed all the way to meet the standards and schedules set up by the education authorities. This makes them reluctant of sparing some quality time to deal with any extra-curricular demands, particularly those of a political nature. Personally I think these teachers’ collective attitude towards politics and education does have a strong impact on our younger generation. They make political issues seem irrelevant and insignificant to their students, which is why so many Taiwanese youth are totally apathetic about and ignorant of what happens around them. So, generally speaking, I do have my worries. But it is worth a try.

T: I know that you have seen a TIE programme produced by Song Song Song Children's Theatre Company called *Ah Liang's Magic Cube*. How do you value that programme? Is *The Completion of the Mansion* going to be very different?

H: Yes, I did participate in that TIE programme in Taipei. I think the children were obviously very excited about having the chance to speak to the characters/actors face to face right on the spot. That was not something that happens to them every day. However, I think that should not be taken as the sole basis to judge the achievement of the programme. To me, *Ah Liang's Magic Cube* seems a little disorganised in operation and rather simplistic in devising approaches. As the presentation I took part in was an open session, there were about two hundred children sitting uneasily in the fully packed auditorium. Meanwhile, although the writer-director was trying to tread the fine line between children's theatre and social drama by introducing the imaginary world of Ah Liang, a little boy depressed by his divorced mother's decision to re-marry, to the young audience, the story-line was never clear and the characters often seemed out of focus. Furthermore, the actor-teachers were not very good at interacting with the children. This, of course, was not only because they were chosen and assigned the job right after attending a TIE-related workshop hosted by Song Song Song, but also because the framework of the programme had not been properly set up and the interaction between the actors and the audience not thoughtfully rehearsed. At one point all the young spectators were invited to decide which one of the three main characters – Ah Liang, his mother, and her new husband-to-be – they would like to speak to, and then queue up in front of the one they choose in order to 'interact'.

Surely that was all very exciting, but unfortunately also very chaotic. Personally I admire Song Song Song's determination to involve their young audiences in something new and inspiring, but I believe that there is quite a big space for them, as well as for us, to learn and sharpen the skills of TIE devising. Children and young people are all adults-to-be. As theatre practitioners, we should try not to be patronising or dogmatic when we create for them or with them.

T: Does that mean that you would like to adopt GYPT's working methodologies and work with a classful of students each time when you tour *The Completion of the Mansion* to a school?

H: Very much so. *The Completion of the Mansion* is sponsored by the National Arts and Cultures Foundation and the Ministry of Education, so we can tour it to schools as a free service. I think that is a good start. Although we have contacted several schools and set up a tour plan, the TIE team is still going to give six open presentations at Hua Deng Arts Centre and the Eslite Theatre, so that the programme would remain available to those who are interested but not included in the plan. However, as we intend to put a tighter control on the quality of these presentations, and have therefore decided that there should not be more than 50 participants present in each presentation, people out there will have to ring Tainan Jen and book their seats in advance. In addition, they are also going to be asked to send us 300 New Taiwanese Dollars (about 6 pounds) as a deposit. The money will then be returned to them when they show up to take part in the programme.

T: So what stand do the National Arts and Cultures Foundation and the

Ministry of Education take when faced with a project as groundbreaking as *The Completion of the Mansion*? Are they helpful and supportive all the way through?

H: The National Arts and Cultures Foundation has obviously been very supportive. Actually it was the Foundation who granted me the money I needed for my trip to London in 1999, where I got to work with GYPT in their spring production *Time and Tide Line* as an actor-teacher. So the Foundation would certainly expect me to make something out of what I have learned in England. I think when *The Completion of the Mansion* is on tour, the Foundation will definitely send someone to observe and evaluate it. As for the Ministry of Education, I am happy to know they have finally decided to step in and offer us some financial support – although it is not really a big sum of money. What I hope is that, in the future, they will take this kind of project seriously, and ask their subordinate units – local education authorities – to help subsidise TIE-related activities.

3.5 Problems Faced by Theatre and Education Practitioners in Taiwan

In view of the operational experiences of *The Completion of the Mansion* explained and discussed above in my interview with Hsu Rey-fang, the prospects for the future development of British-style TIE in Taiwan are encouraging, if not promising. After going through a series of social transformations, the Taiwanese are now open and liberal enough to appreciate something as innovative and communicative as TIE. Following the planning and practicing of a 'nine-year

integrated curriculum',¹⁵⁰ the integration of the humanities such as literature, music, fine art and drama can be expected to take place in the compulsory education system shortly; meanwhile, it has become a consensus among education practitioners that young students should be encouraged to cultivate their creativity, aesthetic sense and capability of cultural thinking by means of art-related activities.¹⁵¹ At this stage of transition from the old to the new, TIE can certainly play a role in providing school teachers with useful creative resources and reinforcing the effect of education reforms. However, before TIE actually exerts its influence and helps achieve the effective integration of society, culture, arts and education in Taiwan, Taiwanese TIE advocates have to face up to and try to accomplish the following three tasks:

First, the training mechanism for the increase of professional TIE workers has to be set up. TIE demands a whole set of devising and working skills that characterise its interactive nature and socio-educational function, as well as differentiating it from conventional theatre performances. Professional TIE practitioners/devisors therefore not only need to acquaint themselves with the knowledge of creative drama and audience participation, but also have to be sensitive about the issues that

¹⁵⁰ Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum is at the core of a whole series of education reforms that have been taking place in Taiwan over the last decade. Its main purpose is to bind together the existing primary and secondary education – 6 and 3 years respectively – so that young students would be allowed to take control over their own learning motivations and experiences in a more flexible environment. Unlike the current curriculum that is largely based on academic knowledge, the humanities are included in the nine-year integrated curriculum as an integral part. After going through three stages of planning and experimenting, the new curriculum is scheduled to be introduced to the first-year students from September 2001.

¹⁵¹ For more information see Appendix II, An Interview with Professor Lin Mei-chun.

concern young people both inside and outside of school. Through their sensitivity and specialty, the cooperative relationship between actor-teachers and young participants can then be applied to serve the integration of theatre, education and society. In Taiwan, owing to the slow pace of transplantation and the short history of development, the operation of TIE is often interrupted by lack of well-informed or experienced professionals. In *The Completion of the Mansion*, for example, the actor-teacher who played Tai-sheng, the oppressive husband, did not have any forum experience before he was invited to join the team. Despite being a skilled actor, he had to learn and master all the forum techniques within a very short period of time under the guidance of Hsu Rey-fang. It made him feel pressured and the interaction between himself and the ‘spect-actors’ showed that – though he did try his best to generate audience participation and discussions in the forum sessions. On this account, it is necessary for TIE specialists and educationists, particularly those of a ‘normal college’ background, to work together and set up training schemes to help foster those who are talented or interested in devising/working for TIE.

Second, the cooperative relationship between TIE groups and schools has to be improved. When Tainan Jen was planning for the tour of *The Completion of the Mansion*, they were asked by one of the school teachers they contacted – the head of a department in a teachers college – not to ‘include anything political in the performance’.¹⁵² After long negotiation and deliberation, the troupe decided to turn down the teacher’s request and switched over to inviting the target class to take part

¹⁵² Hsu Rey-fang, *Echoes of the Surging Tide: the Planning and Organisation of ‘Green Tide – 1998 Theatre for Interaction Workshop’*, collected in *Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001), p.97

in the programme at the Hua Deng Arts Centre. Although this unpleasant interlude may be deemed an individual incident caused by insufficient communication, it is significant of the vulnerable mutual trust between theatre workers and education practitioners that needs to be strengthened. Due to the tight control put on Taiwanese people by the authoritarian government in the past, the management of teachers colleges (normal schools) used to be extremely conservative and stiff. Over the last ten years, however, education authorities in Taiwan have gradually adapted themselves to modern (or, more precisely, Western-style) educational thoughts and alternative pedagogy in accordance with the democratisation of the society. But they are still not very experienced in working side by side with arts professionals who do not come from an academic background. The reason why this specific case is worthy of further exploration is mainly because of the teacher's dislocated sense of protectiveness. Indeed, politics was once a taboo both inside and outside of schools in the island. But now Taiwanese people are living in a very different world. Throughout the last decade, call-in programmes of different political standpoints and on various topics have been produced and presented on both television and radio to provide the audience with an open space where personal and critical comments are allowed to be made; public opinion polls and surveys are carried out on a regular basis to ignite debates over political issues or social problems. Under such circumstances, is it possible (or necessary) for teachers to put their students in an 'ivory tower' and protect them from being 'polluted' by politics? If, on the contrary, the students are given the opportunity to learn in a safe, rational theatrical environment the skills and the attitude of communicating with each other, they would undoubtedly be facilitated to taste the

flavour of the complicated and confusing world that they are going to face sooner or later. In Britain, it is widely accepted that the most precious quality of TIE is its potential of linking up young people's school life and the society they live in. If the education authorities and the school teachers in Taiwan cannot appreciate or respect the efforts made by TIE practitioners to sustain this quality and do not want to work closely with TIE professionals for the success of their performances, then the possibility of TIE growing healthily in the island remains slim.

Third, the subsidising policies have to be established and systemised. TIE stretches across two seemingly different fields, theatre and education, and is often in need of governmental subsidy due to its idealistic character of being a socio-educational service and the requirement of skilled practitioners. In Taiwan, unfortunately, neither arts foundations nor education authorities are ready to provide TIE professionals with the financial assistance they need. Even though TIE workers all over the world are used to being rejected by subsidising bodies for the 'ambiguous' work they do, it is generally hoped that subsidising policies in relation to the healthy growth of TIE can be carefully thought out and reasonably institutionalised on the basis of Taiwan's status quo and financial administration. To be honest and fair, no matter how hard the arts, culture and education authorities – such as CCA, NCAF and local cultural/educational bureaus – try, their subsidising policies would never meet the various needs of all the grant applicants, as their financial resources are usually controlled and limited. When it comes to the distribution of funds, people of different views or interests always have different reasons or ideals to justify the work they do. Therefore subsidising bodies should take the initiative in integrating/synthesising different ideas and setting up the funding principles firmly.

so that arts, culture and education practitioners could follow their guidance and feel safeguarded by the authorities in the application process. In other words, it is not the size of the 'cake' that matters, but how the cake is cut and shared. Since it is agreed that education plays a key role in the shaping of individuals and the society as a whole, authorities in charge of culture planning and arts subsidising should stay calm and thoughtful, and try not to be disturbed or interrupted by continuously changing public opinions. As far as the future of TIE is concerned, these authorities should work out their strategies and draw up the regulations in view of the practical needs of TIE professionals. The established subsidising system can then be evaluated and improved according to circumstances, so as to make the development of TIE progress steadily in Taiwan.

In an evaluation report made by the GYPT team on the results of Green Tide after the intercultural event ended, Vivien Harris, leader of the team, concludes:

GYPT has no reservations that the visit to Taiwan, the work executed and the contacts made were a resounding success. ... The impression that (GYPT) Team members had of Educational life and the world of Theatre in Taiwan was that a large number of people were striving to find new and different ways to approach the work they were committed to. There was a huge vibrancy and willingness detected for people to learn, and also evidence of the possession of superlative skills, both artistic and educational. Above all else, Team members at GYPT did feel that the Taiwanese people they met had a passion for Theatre and the Arts and that they ought to be shared within communities at every opportunity; not only to be used for their own sake, but to assist people in their own development and growth. It was felt that if GYPT could continue to enable artists and educators in Taiwan to continue to do that, to address the continual possibilities of 'Change', then it would be an extremely valuable notion to treasure and nurture.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Vivien Harris, *Green Tide Report – GYPT in Taiwan 1998*, p. 12, unpublished

Indeed, in a society where the great majority of people are eager for change, theatre can be applied to agitate for social and cultural reforms. Over the past two decades, Taiwanese people have gone through drastic political and economic shifts and achieved democracy and prosperity. Now they have come to realise how important and urgent it is to readjust their focus to culture and education, which have been neglected and twisted in the process of social development. TIE, as an innovative theatrical work characterised by its interactive nature and educational mission, has ‘helped shape the minds and imaginations of a generation of young people’ in Britain.¹⁵⁴ Its facilitating potential of helping young people face up to social problems at an early stage and enhance their capability of communicating with each other has been recognised and adopted by many theatre and education practitioners who do not live or work within the British Isles.¹⁵⁵ In Taiwan, through the introduction of the two international workshops hosted by Chinese Academy of Drama and Theatre (1992) and Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe (1998), the application of Children Theatre groups such as Song Song Song and Shiny Shoes, as well as the hard work of drama/theatre education specialists such as Yang Wan-yun, Zhang Xiao-hua, Situ Zhi-ping, Huang Mei-shu and Zheng Dai-chueng, TIE has been successfully transplanted from Britain and utilised to benefit the young generations. In this trend of searching, exploring and cultivating, Tainan Jen’s *The*

¹⁵⁴ Brian Roberts, *Preface to Echoes of the Surging Tide: Theory and Practice of TIE*, co-written and –edited by Tsai Chi-chang and Hsu Rey-fang, Taipei: Yang Chih Book Co., Ltd. (2001). p.16

¹⁵⁵ In addition to English-speaking countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States, TIE can also be found in East European countries such as Czech Republic and former East Germany, Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, as well as in several African countries. Although the political systems, social customs and cultural traditions of these countries appear to be very different from their British counterparts, it is commonly understood that TIE is transplanted from Britain to these countries by people who would like to reach out and find new ways of understanding, so that social, cultural and educational reforms can be brought about in their homelands. This, according to Brian Roberts, is what TIE is fundamentally concerned with.

Completion of the Mansion has opened up a new chapter for the association of community/regional theatre and TIE in the island. Meantime, the mutual stimulation of 'foreign' and 'own' cultural elements has resulted in the examination and re-interpretation of Taiwan's social and cultural self. The troupe's future TIE work is therefore well worth being closely followed and observed.

Conclusion

4.1 The True Value of Theatre-in-Education

In view of the development of Theatre-in-Education in both Britain and Taiwan, it is obvious that the true value of TIE lies in its potentiality of ‘forming a community’ by way of audience participation. No matter where a TIE programme is presented, it is always expected to make its target audience feel like being in the same ‘community’ through the issues and themes dealt with in the participatory session. That explains why TIE and community theatre are, to a great extent, interdependent and inseparable. The interactive format of TIE can be applied to serve the audiences of community-oriented theatres in order to engage people of the same residential area or of the same interest in the theatre, while the audience-centred working methodologies of community-related theatre can be utilised to devise TIE works, so that interaction between young students and TIE teams may be multi-layered and informative, and a sense of group identity can be developed among the participants. Without this community-forming quality, TIE would not be so different from the other genres of theatre education, such as children’s theatre and DIE, and, accordingly, would not generate so much interest among theatre and education practitioners within the British Isles as well as in many other places around the world.

It is on this basis that a concluding argument can now be made: When transplanting TIE from Britain to another country or cultural entity, the community-friendly

nature of this unique theatre work should never be removed from its core. This is not only because TIE was created to help re-establish the theatre's roots in the community,¹⁵⁶ but also because the educational power of TIE can only be carried forward when the young participants are invited or incited to take part in an awareness-raising or problem-solving process and interact with their fellow audience. In other words, the true value of TIE needs to be based on the fact that in a world where basic human interaction is gradually being replaced by technology-oriented contact such as telecommunications and the internet, audience participation should always be included in theatre that is to be presented to the young, so that they can be encouraged to communicate, understand and care about each other through the ritualistic closeness of theatre-making.

This particular need of putting young people in closer touch with their 'community' during the process of learning is universally felt nowadays, as we are now living in a so-called global village. A statement made by Dorothy Heathcote, one of the most experienced and respected drama/theatre educationalists in Britain, may best embody the necessity for schools and community to be closely linked up:

There are literally thousands of commissions waiting to be taken up so that schools and community become more and more interactive and interdependent. I have this dream that if that could ever be possible children would not have to spend thirteen years of their lives being denied protected responsibility and without power to influence how they spend their time in school. Neither would they be expected to suddenly emerge at eighteen like

¹⁵⁶ In his Introduction to the book *Learning through Theatre*, Tony Jackson states that TIE stems from a number of distinct but related developments in theatre and in education evident throughout the twentieth century, including 'the movements to re-establish the theatre's roots in the community and in so doing broaden its social basis – manifested since the war in the revival of regional theatre and the rapid growth of community, alternative and children's theatre'. For more information see Tony Jackson, *Learning through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre in Education*, London: Routledge (1993), P.3

Pallas Athena out of Zeus's head, as mature responsible members of their community.¹⁵⁷

Needless to say, Dorothy Heathcote's dream is shared by many theatre and education practitioners, no matter in which part of the world they are based. In the interview conducted between myself and Hsu Rey-fang, Hsu points out that one of the biggest problems of Taiwan's education system is that we (in Taiwan) keep asking young people to study and read, read and study: 'It is no secret that most parents in Taiwan ask only one thing of their children: to pass all sorts of entrance examinations in order to make it to the top, and then settle down with a well-paid job. Meanwhile, these parents will work hard to protect their children from any 'distractions' and, in so doing, make their life as pure as a piece of white paper.'¹⁵⁸ She then proceeds to conclude that TIE should be made an integral part of the education system in Taiwan and used to tackle social issues in schools, so that a new kind of citizens can be nurtured and developed in the island.¹⁵⁹ Clearly Hsu's opinions about the value of TIE have shared with Heathcote's view that the spectrum of school education should be broadened with the implementation of community-related work. Both practitioners are concerned with how a sense of responsibility can be implanted in children's mind before they become mature members of their society or community. As passionate and devoted drama/theatre educationalists who work in, respectively, Britain and Taiwan, Heathcote and Hsu's common interest - despite their differences in race, age, cultural background and drama training - in a young individual's relationship with his or her fellow human beings not only explains why TIE still matters after going through four

¹⁵⁷ Dorothy Heathcote, *Contexts for Active Learning*, *Drama Research*, No.1. April 2000, p.44

¹⁵⁸ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in Chapter Three

decades of changing fortunes, but also justifies the efforts made by a lot of non-British education and theatre practitioners to integrate British TIE with their own theatre traditions and education systems.

4.2 Parallels between British and Taiwanese TIE

Viewed from the two case studies on the work of GYPT (Chapter Two) and Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe (Chapter Three), certain parallels can be drawn between British and Taiwanese TIE to signify the formation of an international TIE movement. First of all, in both Britain and Taiwan, TIE is taken as a kind of artistic service to link up theatres, schools and communities, as well as to improve the communication and mutual understandings between these institutions. Sandy Craig, editor of *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain*, attempts to endorse the movement of political theatre with an opinion that ‘all theatre is political in the sense that theatre is not autonomous and is forced continually to decide *in whose service* it acts’¹⁶⁰. In my view, the statement can still be sustained when the word ‘political’ is replaced by ‘educational’. When TIE was first created in England at the Belgrade Theatre nearly forty years ago, it was meant to operate under the wings of a regional repertoire theatre¹⁶¹ to reinforce the audience-friendly function of this theatre company, so as to break down the boundaries between theatre and education, actor and teacher, actor and audience.

¹⁵⁹ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in Chapter Three.

¹⁶⁰ Sandy Craig (ed.), *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain*, Amber Lane Press (1980), p.30

¹⁶¹ According to Mark Woolgar, the ‘Conventry’ model is that of a permanent group of people (a TIE team) spending their whole time in this kind of work (professional theatre in and for schools), based on the theatre and using its plant and facilities for some of their activities. For more information see Mark Woolgar, *The Professional Theatre in and for Schools*, collected in *Drama and Theatre in Education*, ed. by Nigel Dodd and Winifred Hickson, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. (1973), p.84

as well as between theatrical presentation and social reality. A new kind of collaboration between theatre workers, education practitioners and young communities was thus ignited. In the early seventies, with the financial support given by subsidising bodies such as Coventry civic authorities and London boroughs,¹⁶² TIE groups were expected to provide young people with quality theatrical experiences, in most cases free of charge, so as to raise their awareness of a specific issue or to enhance their capability of problem-solving. As a result, TIE was widely accepted as a socio-educational service, and was essentially different from the popular mainstream commercial theatre. In Taiwan, although TIE has been adopted by different theatre groups to reach different goals, the ideal of making TIE a ‘service’, not a ‘commodity’, remains the same. Hsu Rey-fang, before presenting her first TIE programme in 1999, stated that governmental guidance and sponsorship, especially those from the Council for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education and local cultural bureau or education authorities, should play an active and crucial role in the developments of *jiao xi ju chang* (TIE).¹⁶³ Her concerns over the government’s subsidising policies and the operational pattern of *jiao xi ju chang* are illustrative of how TIE is perceived by some, if not all, Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners; that is, TIE should be carefully nurtured by the Taiwanese government, particularly by the local education authorities, with the assistance of those who are specialised in the working methodologies of this education-oriented theatre, and then offered to the young as a free service to encourage their participation in art-related activities. This open attitude emulates the best of UK practice at the height of TIE as a local, free

¹⁶² In the same piece of writing, Mark Woolgar states that the work of Belgrade Theatre’s TIE Team is ‘largely made possible by the very sizable grant given by the Coventry civic authorities to enable the Team to function’. Ibid.

¹⁶³ See *An Interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in Chapter Three for more information.

educational service. It also signifies that the torch of traditional TIE is being passed from British TIE groups to theatre companies overseas through cultural exchanges and international workshops.

Secondly, in both Britain and Taiwan, the performance efficacy of TIE has been taken as a stimulus for social change. This, of course, has a great deal to do with how TIE was formed in Britain and why TIE was 'transplanted' to Taiwan. In Britain, TIE 'emerged from the new thinking and atmosphere of experiment that characterized the British theatre of the mid-1960s, and from the developments in educational drama in schools that were taking place at the same time'.¹⁶⁴ It was thought out and carried out in Britain to bridge the gap between young people's school life and their social life¹⁶⁵ at a time when British society was going through a whole series of political, economic, socio-cultural and educational changes. Its function of encouraging young people to learn together, through participation and interaction, as a group of social beings makes it stand out from all the other theatrical approaches and educational methods. Likewise, the reason why Taiwanese theatre and education practitioners became interested in this unique form of theatre was because they were urged to look for alternative ways to explore the problems caused, as well as the possibilities created, by a society increasingly opening up to wider cultural influences. As stated in the third chapter of this thesis, the people of Taiwan went through the most drastic political, economic, socio-cultural and educational changes within the ten years after martial law was lifted in 1987. The education system, in particular, was crying out for reform, as it

¹⁶⁴ Tony Jackson, *Education or Theatre? TIE in Britain*, collected in *Learning through Theatre*, ed. by Tony Jackson, London: Routledge (1993), p.18

¹⁶⁵ It means that TIE was used to help young people develop the skills of decision-making, problem-solving, confronting, considering and understanding some of the key issues in a changing society, so that they would become more experienced and mature in managing their personal lives.

became clear that the traditional ‘duck-stuffing’ style of education could not meet the needs of a speedily democratised and diversified society. The act of the so-called *jiao gai*, or education reforms, has therefore been deemed necessary for the country’s progress towards political, economic and cultural maturity and integrity. During this process, new policies and alternative pedagogy have been introduced to reinforce young people’s sense of being part of society and to improve their understanding of important social issues. According to Jung Shu-hwa (容淑華), an experienced drama teacher at the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts, a series of education reforms have given arts education a higher profile and drawn people’s attention to the making of proper arts education policies in Taiwan over this period of time:

The more liberal the society becomes, the more vocal is the population. Many voices from educationalists and parents, for example, ask for changes in the education system, and revision of teacher education and in-service training programmes. Therefore, in 1994, the Executive Yuan Education Reform Committee was established. This committee is responsible for the overall education policy and issues general directives to the education system. In 1997, the President of the Republic of China decreed an Arts Education Constitution, which has three aspects concerning the implementation of arts education:

- *professional arts education to educate students for the profession;
- *universal and fundamental arts education for all in mainstream schools that allows students to acquire a broad knowledge in the arts as well as aesthetic values; and
- *social arts education to arrange a variety of activities or workshops for people like those in adult continuing learning, and theatre workshops for the amateur theatre.¹⁶⁶

Under such circumstances, TIE was transplanted from Britain to Taiwan and adapted, in accordance with Taiwan’s political, cultural and educational context, to

¹⁶⁶ Jung Shu-hwa, *A New Place of Drama Education in Taiwan*, *Research in Drama Education*. Vol.5 No.2, September 2000, p.269

serve the young generations who were in need of new perspectives that could help them learn and think more actively. Its role as a thought-provoking powerhouse has since been deeply appreciated in Taiwan by education specialists and community theatre workers alike, and a lot of efforts have been made by a number of TIE practitioners to nurture its growth in the island. On these grounds, it is fair to say that the performance efficacy of TIE has been utilised to generate new ways of thinking in both Britain and Taiwan, despite the fact that TIE was 'born' in the British Isles but 'cloned' in the Pacific island.

Last but not least, in these two countries, TIE practitioners have to adopt a more flexible strategy in devising their work and running their companies, so that the significance of TIE can still be recognised in a continuously changing society. At the end of the first chapter, the problems that confront British TIE workers are artificially categorised into three different levels: moral, technical and executive. These problems not only concern the essence, the status and the importance of TIE, but also make a strong impact on the future development of TIE in its homeland. Being a nation with a long history of democracy and a fading tradition of social welfare, Britain is now, like many other industrial countries, seeking a foothold to stand firm in the international marketplace in order to do well in modern-day global competition. Within the last decade, conflicts between big cities and rural areas have been magnified by people's different concerns over economic prosperity and cultural identity along with the increase of immigrants and the decrease of community or regional services. In the process, arts-related subsidies are often cut, which suffocates TIE. However, voices that demand proper community- or school-based art services are even more frequently heard, which gives new hopes

for TIE.¹⁶⁷ In other words, in a society that never stops moving forward, TIE practitioners in Britain have to keep coming up with new working methodologies and administrative strategies in order to survive in a very changeable political, economic and cultural environment. When asked about how the co-operative relationship between GYPT and its sponsors has changed over these years, Bryan Newton, former director of administration and finance of GYPT, steers clear of any sentimentalism and puts it bluntly that it is necessary for the 30-year-old TIE company to take up a 'soft' negotiating stance to win over the financial support of different trusts and foundations:

So it's meant that we had to sell our work to the people who sponsored us on the basis that what we are doing is very key to an overall strategy in being able to develop youth theatre and theatre techniques, to actually get to people in the community, young people, to address certain issues that are crucial to society in general, as well as to specific societies in which we work. So that is doing programmes to do with race, programmes to do with health matters, programmes to do with drugs, which is related to health matters, and all those sorts of things. Then if we can sell that to the trusts and the foundations who have money, as opposed to business sponsorship, then we have a good chance of being able to maintain the work as we know we can do it at the moment, and I'm pleased to say that we have been successful.¹⁶⁸

In Taiwan, however, since TIE was not native-born, but transplanted from a foreign land, practitioners are forced to be even more flexible when they work. As stated in the last section of Chapter Three, it is still not easy for TIE to exist in its own right in Taiwan. The goal of setting up professional TIE companies that produce fully participatory programmes on a seasonal or regular basis in the island

¹⁶⁷ Edward Bond, for example, has been an enthusiastic advocate of the importance of TIE: 'It is TIE that has returned to the true basics. TIE performs education's most fundamental duty. Today education is being reduced to learning how to make money and fit into the economy. These things are necessary but they will never teach children what a civilised society is – what moral sanity is – what responsibility for others is.' See Edward Bond, The Importance of Belgrade TIE. *SCYPT Journal*, No.27, April 1994

remains difficult to reach due to the shortage of human, financial and cultural resources. That is why Taiwanese TIE workers have to seek professional assistance from established children's theatre companies, such as Shiny Shoes and Song Song Song, or community-related theatre, such as Tainan Jen and Assignment Theatre (差事劇團)¹⁶⁹. Through their cooperation, the participatory and interactive nature of TIE can be sustained; the true value of TIE, which encourages young students or community residents to learn together through theatrical approaches in a problem-solving and decision-making process, can also be preserved.

4.3 Hope and Crisis: Future Prospect of Theatre-in-Education in Taiwan

The parallels drawn above indicate that TIE is indeed an innovative theatre work and is given a special role to reinforce the links between theatre, education, and community worldwide. It is flexible and strategy-based in terms of its creative process and management, where targeting, devising, adjusting, and evaluating are always happening and the audience-centred awareness emphasised by Brecht's epic aesthetics and Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed' discourse is closely observed. More importantly, in accordance with the de-construction and re-construction of social and theatrical hierarchies over the last half century – the continuous shifting of the boundaries between classes, sexes, political ideologies (socially), stage and

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix I: *An Interview with Bryan Newton*

¹⁶⁹ Founded by Jong Chiao in 1990 in the Da An District of Taipei, Assignment Theatre has been working closely with and for the local audience through the methodologies set up by Augusto Boal and some People's Theatre specialists. The company has also built up a long-term association with theatre workers from other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and the Philippines (PETA, for example) through the organisation of international workshops and festivals. In July 2001, Assignment Theatre hosted the very first big-scale international symposium on theatre and drama education, entitled '2001 New Vision: Drama, Theatre, Education' in Taipei, and has since been regarded as a TIE-friendly theatre group.

auditorium, actors and spectators, theatre and reality (theatrically) – TIE practitioners have managed to give young people what they need in the new millennium, such as creative learning and human contact, and have incessantly poured fresh ideas into the theatre world, such as devising approaches and pedagogical thoughts. With these special qualities, it is very unlikely that TIE will cease intriguing young students and theatre practitioners. However, as often questioned by drama scholars and theatre educationalists, if TIE is such a great invention, why does its reputation seem to upstage its popularity, and why does its influence appear to be limited? Since TIE can now be seen in Scandinavia, East Europe, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Australia, why, then, is it unable to win back people's favour and the government's support in its country of origin, Great Britain? Moreover, if its future development in Britain keeps going down, does its gradual decline signify that the enthusiasm so far invested into this theatre device by international TIE advocates will turn out to be rootless and pointless at the end?

These questions are, essentially, the same questions I posed in the Introduction to this thesis. After spending such a long time collecting data, analysing questionnaires, building up contexts, and exploring issues, I feel that these questions simply cannot be answered in any easy or convenient way. Deep in its core, TIE is about quality, not quantity. A personal experience of mine can be depicted to illustrate this 'quality versus quantity' argument, and then taken as a basis to open up further discussions about these questions. While attending a drama/theatre education conference in Taipei in 2001, I was scheduled by the host to present my essay side by side with Dr. Zhang Xiao-hua. The essay I wrote for

that conference was about my working experiences with Tainan Jen in producing *The Completion of the Mansion*. After I finished my presentation, Dr. Zhang began his talk by showing the audience a video tape, in which the TIE programme he devised with his college students was vividly recorded. For a moment the audience, mainly Taiwanese theatre workers and school teachers, seemed to be deeply confused. The TIE ‘mould’ I adopted was completely different from Dr. Zhang’s. In my essay, TIE was interpreted as something small-sized (with the number of the participants not exceeding 40 or 50), issue-based (racial and marital conflicts), professional (well trained actor-teachers), and physically and intellectually interactive (still images, forum). In Zhang’s speech, however, TIE was presented as a big-scale, amateurish song and dance performance in which hundreds of school pupils from an earthquake-struck area were invited to relax and have fun with the actors/singers/dancers (Zhang’s college students). The differences juxtaposed in our presentations immediately incited the conference participants to question our respective definitions of and beliefs in TIE. During the discussion session, I remember, I had to answer a question like this: ‘All right, so what you have done with Tainan Jen is quite interesting, but don’t you think it is strange to invest such a big sum of public money into one single TIE programme, when only such a small group of students get to see it?’ The question, of course, is a good question (except the last part of the question – ‘see’ was obviously not the right word). That is a question I think all the TIE practitioners around the world should keep asking themselves at a time when money used for public purposes has to be distributed by and scrutinised through individual interests. To this question, my answer was ‘you are certainly right in saying so, but I am surely also right in doing so. As for the public money issue, I think TIE practitioners in Taiwan should be

given the financial support they need to do the things they want to do in accordance with their different trainings and working methodologies, as long as they are making benefits for their target audiences, not making profits for themselves.’ My answer did not even quiet myself down, of course. It sounded idealistic and defensive, and did not really respond to the key notion hidden under the rhetoric: how can TIE be evaluated, particularly in a country like Taiwan, where arts-related subsidising system or policy is still under construction? Dr. Zhang’s approach to TIE was obviously much more realistic. With more or less the same amount of money spent, he managed to bring laughter and happiness to a big group of children, who had suffered from the shock and horror of a terrible earthquake, and make them believe that life can still be beautiful. Given that it was fairly difficult to apply for either the CCA’s or the NCAF’s subsidy, wouldn’t it be wiser to make a fuller use of the money we had in hand? However, the little voice in me could not stop asking – and a couple of conference participants did ask it out loud, is this really the kind of TIE we want in Taiwan?

While devising and touring TIE programmes with Tainan Jen in Taiwan between 1999 and 2002, I was often approached by theatre friends and school teachers after performance. For the majority of them, TIE seemed to be very new, original, and exciting, but they also had their doubts. The very question that they kept asking me was: can we bring in more students to take part in this programme (school teachers), or why do you have to put a limit on the total amount of the audience (theatre friends)? Underneath this question, I know there was an anxious feeling shared by these theatre and education practitioners. Their common concern was, since it has been rare for theatre and education to be combined in this way in Taiwan, and the

way they are combined looks good, why do you not try to involve as many people as possible, so that the performance efficacy of TIE can be seen and recognised more widely? It was, of course, very difficult for me to explain my ways of thinking to them clearly, as this kind of on-the-spot conversations tended not to last long.

In the interview conducted between Hsu Rey-fang and me, Hsu gives an example of a TIE programme she attended in Taipei. Although the programme, devised by a children's theatre company, was presented as TIE with an aim of making theatre more interactive and accessible to young children, it was packaged in a way similar to commercial theatre. The audiences (young children accompanied by their parents) bought tickets and chose their seats. They then sat down in the auditorium to watch a play, in which a little boy's traumatic experience with his mother and her new boyfriend was explored. The only difference was that, at some point, the young audiences were invited to queue up and given the opportunity to speak with the actors who played the leading roles, and that was the kind of 'interaction' they could get from this programme.¹⁷⁰ In my mind, this programme could be interpreted as something TIE-related, but did not best embody the true value of TIE, as audience participation – the very core of TIE – in this programme was only developed and utilised at its most basic level. Over the years of following and observing GYPT's work, I have come to realise that, very often, the quality of a TIE programme needs to be built on a strict control over the 'quantity' – the amount of people allowed to 'take part' in a programme, as that is the only way to guarantee a substantial interactive experience in the theatre. However, the way

¹⁷⁰ For more information see *An interview with Hsu Rey-fang* in Chapter Three.

GYPT operates could be very costly. Before the company was re-structured in 2003, artists and specialists of different fields had to be employed to work with the company's permanent, professional TIE team on many occasions, so that the artistic and educational standards the company was proud of could be maintained. Unfortunately, due to a very bleak reality, the company also had to continuously evaluate their own work and find ways to get the worsening financial situations re-adjusted and improved. In a 'scientific era' where the value of quantity prevails, it is very likely that a quality-inclined theatre company like GYPT will eventually go down with the dissolving of humanitarian concepts such as 'community' or 'group support' in modern days, unless it begins to make a great deal of change to get itself reformed and reborn. That explains the reason why the permanent TIE team of GYPT was removed soon after Vivien Harris left her job as the company's artistic and educational director. Only through these drastic reforms would the company be able to survive – although the name 'GYPT' will no longer be a symbol of 'golden' British TIE.

On these grounds, I can now come back to discuss the issues raised above about the limitation Tainan Jen and I put on the amount of audience-in-participation. As demonstrated in the arguments above, I have been aware of the fact that GYPT might have to change the way it operates some day. Therefore, ever since our first meeting, I have never tried to persuade Hsu Rey-fang to turn Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe into a professional TIE company. As far as I could see, there was no need to do so. It would only further damage Tainan Jen's already problematic structure of finance and deepen the conflicts between Hsu and some of the troupe's senior members. The common agreement among Hsu and I was that TIE could help

Tainan Jen develop a better relationship with its local audiences, and therefore should be properly introduced to Taiwanese theatre and education in its most accomplished form. After the ‘theatre for interaction’ workshop ended, Tainan Jen and I have so far worked together to produce three different TIE programmes in sequence between 1999 and 2002. All of them are GYPT-modelled in the sense the quality of audience participation has to be sustained through a tight control over the amount of the participants. Our approach, of course, has been received by theatre and education specialists in different manners. Some think it is a pleasure to see the true value of ‘classic’ TIE re-produced and re-presented in Taiwan. Some, however, think that the things we do are simply over idealistic and do not fit into the wider contexts – or, the reality – of theatre and education in Taiwan. Opinions of both sides are heartily taken, but the stance we take should be further clarified.

To begin with, I think TIE was born with an idealistic nature, no matter whether viewed from an artistic, educational, or financial perspective. As discussed in the previous chapters, traditionally TIE – particularly when it was at its peak in the seventies – was provided to schools by TIE companies as a free service. With subsidy given generously by local education authorities – a symbol of the government’s endorsement – TIE practitioners were able to concentrate on the things they do without worrying too much about practical money issues. However, the entire landscape of public funding has changed drastically over the last two decades. As theatre and education are now both regarded by the British government as ‘cultural merchandise’ within an increasingly capitalised social and cultural environment, TIE, the ‘mix-raced’ child of theatre and education, no longer enjoys the kind of support – both spiritual and financial – it used to get. TIE

practitioners are left to fight for their own survival, and therefore have to re-adjust themselves for bitter competition in order to get the money they need and to make the ends meet. Under such circumstances, the working methodologies and operational patterns of TIE have to be constantly 'evaluated', and then compromised or even sacrificed – to put it in a more PR-oriented way, re-adjusted and improved – on the basis of revenue and balance. As a result, TIE companies, particularly those who work with a strong belief in traditional ('classic') values, find it necessary to 'update' themselves by cutting down the numbers of full-time staff, re-structuring their management, and associating themselves with health or arts education schemes devised for young people, which more and more public money has been put into. All these are done with the intention of taking TIE to a new direction, or more precisely, of giving TIE a new identity, so that it can be 'liberated' from its glorious but suffocating past, and begin to adapt itself to fit into a very different world.

There is a typical 'prince in disguise' kind of story in fairy tales – the only difference is that a real prince, as in fairy tales, does not need to be 'evaluated' all the time. Evaluation, as Ken Robinson argues in *Evaluating TIE*, is a term as ambiguous and elusive as TIE itself. Its approaches and purposes tend to be very difficult for the evaluator and the evaluated to get hold of. According to Robinson, when evaluating TIE, at least four different aspects of a programme have to be closely observed: operation, content, context, and responses.¹⁷¹ However, even Robinson has to admit that very often the evaluator and the evaluated – in the case

¹⁷¹ Robinson, K., *Evaluating TIE*, collected in *Learning Through Theatre*, ed. by Tony Jackson. London: Routledge (1993), p.261-262

of TIE, the funders, the company board, actor-teachers, school teachers, and the students – would not be able to reach an agreement on the points made in an evaluation report, as the work they see or do is, by nature, not only educational, but also artistic. Arguments about the evaluation of art-related works have been going on for a long time. Can it or can it not be done? Should it be done at all? If yes, how can it be done? Take the two different kinds of TIE presented by Dr. Zhang and me in the conference for examples. In my view, of course Zhang's work would not have engaged his target audience in the same kind of emotional depth as *The Completion of the Mansion* would. But then the audiences we respectively targeted were very different: Zhang's TIE work was applied to serve a big group of children, aged between, approximately, 6 and 12, who were in need of spiritual support due to the earthquake. Tainan Jen's TIE programme, however, was devised to engage junior high or high school students in an exploration of social issues. The contexts in which our works were developed and the responses we got from our target audiences were, accordingly, very different. When answering the conference participants' questions, Dr. Zhang made it clear that there was no fixed way to define TIE. He was certainly right in saying so. The problems would then be how a certain set of standards could be established and applied to evaluate the many different kinds of TIE, and how could the evaluator decide which of these the evaluated should be given the public money?

As I pointed out in the first chapter, the act of evaluating TIE is not so much a matter about 'how big the cake is', but is essentially a matter about 'how the cake is cut and shared'. Although TIE is still not a well developed theatre work in Taiwan, it has already been regarded by some theatre and education practitioners as a way

to win over the government's financial support. This is rather an unfortunate development, given that the true value of TIE has not yet been properly introduced to or fully recognised by young students in Taiwan. Therefore, there is indeed a need for people who want to see TIE popularised in the island to pay special attention to the distribution of the financial resources provided by the government and to push forward the formation of a more standardised subsidising policy.

In a country like Taiwan, where the governmental subsidising system is not yet well established, it is almost a taboo for cultural or education authorities to give money to support arts-related projects which involve only 40 or 50 participants each time, as TIE does. Accusations of elitism and personal favours would soon spread out and bury the spirit that underpins these projects. Furthermore, similar to what had happened in Britain, the big 'theatre or education?' question has also caused some problems in Taiwan. Subsidising bodies such as the National Culture and Arts Foundation and local culture and education bureaux have expressed their concerns over how TIE should be categorised and subsidised.¹⁷² In my view, however, prejudice or confusion of this kind makes it even more necessary for TIE to be strategically bound up with community-related theatre and 'sold' to the government as a 'package' in Taiwan. Through stressing the message-carrying and culture-transmitting side of TIE and its community-forming participatory nature, it becomes much easier for this particular genre of education-oriented theatre to survive in the grey area between two seemingly different institutions, theatre and education, in the Chinese-speaking Pacific island, particularly when 'integral

¹⁷² After funding and evaluating Tainan Jen's first TIE programme, *The Completion of the Mansion*, Chen Jin-cheng, then an inspector of the National Culture and Arts Foundation, told Hsu Rey-fang, the director, that, although the programme was a highly valued piece of work, it was not the Foundation's top priority to subsidise such an education-oriented theatrical activity.

construction of community' is still placed at the top of the Council for Culture Affair's agenda. This is how Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe manages to integrate TIE with the company's given status as a community theatre group. This is also how TIE can be better transplanted from Britain to another cultural entity and grow more healthily in a completely different cultural climate.

Today, it is commonly accepted that theatre exists in almost every human culture and shows a strong tendency to represent the ethos of a society in which it is created and developed. In a society that is economically stable and politically tolerant, theatre is usually deemed the most immediate and powerful medium for artistic expression and social education. By contrast, in a society where people are still confined to following authoritarian leadership, theatre, particularly that of a non-mainstream or unofficial nature, is often not given enough air to breathe.¹⁷³ In Taiwan's case, as the country's political atmosphere has largely relaxed over the last decade and people's perceptions of art and education are continually changing, theatre is just about to enjoy a freedom and diversity that is unprecedented. Alternative theatre workers, particularly those who work for TIE, should therefore seize the opportunity to exert their creative power and try to convince their audience that what they do is worthy of support and respect. At a moment when the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum – in which drama is included for the first time – is currently being practiced in the island with an aim of making students become more aware of and prepared for society, TIE can certainly play a crucial role in the establishment of a new educational environment. It is therefore an important task

¹⁷³ Under such conditions, however, a sub-cultural, sometimes underground theatre would often flourish and be able to find ways to be critical of the regime.

for people who work in the fields of theatre and education to give TIE a better defined status in relation to Taiwan's cultural and educational context. so that the strength of this British born theatre work can be used to help 'shape the minds and imaginations of many a generation of young people'¹⁷⁴ in Taiwan.

As Lin Mei-chun, professor of drama at Tainan Teachers College, points out in an interview conducted between her and myself in 2003, TIE, along with DIE, should be included in Taiwan's current education system in order to give the entire act of education reforms a defining spirit:

... I strongly believe that it is good to introduce TIE and DIE to our children and young people. In particular, our children are faced with many different challenges both in and out of their schools. Living in a society where views of value and morality are shifting speedily, they need to be given the chance to learn how to make decisions or solve problems. In the past, teachers tended to preach their students an entire set of morals and ask them to do as they were told. But we are coping with a very different world now. Different people have different ways of thinking and behaving. There are no fixed rules or viewpoints to be followed any more. This is exactly why I think drama can play an important role in our education system; it not only helps an individual to develop his or her own perspectives, but also encourages different individuals to communicate their thoughts.¹⁷⁵

Indeed, after going through a long road of isolation and solitude, the value of drama and theatre has finally been recognised by Taiwan's education authorities and given a place in the new curriculum. This is certainly a positive development in terms of opening up the young students' learning potential. However, as most drama and theatre educationalists would say, the policy-making process of this

¹⁷⁴ In his preface to the book *Echoes of the Surging Tide*, Brian Roberts claims that 'TIE has helped shape the minds and imaginations of a generation of young people in Britain'. (See *Echoes of the Surging Tide*, Taipei: Yang Chi Books Ltd., 2001, p.16) Here I would like to 'borrow' his words and use the expression to show our great hopes of getting TIE localised and popularised in Taiwan.

¹⁷⁵ See Appendix II, *An Interview with Lin Mei-chun*.

inclusion was very chaotic. As discussed by Professor Lin and myself in our interview, one of the most serious problems that has appeared in the practice of the new curriculum is that most school teachers are totally unprepared for the change to come. Before the drama graduate school of Tainan Teachers College was established in 2003,¹⁷⁶ there were no departments of any kind set up within the normal education system to train drama teachers. Students of Taiwan's teachers colleges or normal universities were therefore seldom given the opportunities to familiarise themselves with any drama or theatre skills. Under such circumstances, it would be unrealistic to hand over to these teachers the great responsibilities of making drama/theatre accessible to young people.

In my view, this is where the TIE practitioners – although there are not many of them – can begin exerting their influence. As the Education Ministry in Taiwan has become a little more generous in setting up funding schemes for the organisation of drama and theatre workshops under pressure from school teachers and local education authorities, school teachers have begun to learn different drama approaches within a very short period of time through these workshops. TIE practitioners are therefore urged to seize this opportunity to demonstrate to school teachers, as well as to Taiwan's education authorities, how this innovative theatrical device can help young people develop and deepen their understanding of life and themselves. Meanwhile, as Professor Lin makes clear in her conversations with me, the normal education system in Taiwan has taken the initiatives to build up a more consistent relationship and a more constructive dialogue with TIE

¹⁷⁶ This is the first drama-related institute ever established in Taiwan's normal education system. The project was initiated by Professors Huang Zheng-jieh and Lin Mei-chun. For more information about the hopeful function of the graduate school see Appendix II. *An Interview with Lin Mei-chun*.

workers. Through their cooperation and collaboration, it is hoped that the working methodologies applied by TIE practitioners in their work can be observed and researched by those who study drama skills in these teacher training institutes, and the skills of interactive or participatory theatre can be utilised to help school teachers and their students learn together in a more pleasant way.¹⁷⁷ In addition, problems regarding the lack of human and financial resources can also be dealt with more effectively. This new attitude towards making drama/theatre integral to the state education certainly signifies the beginning of a different stage of transplanting TIE from Britain to Taiwan. Traditional beliefs in education and conservative ways of teaching are now under scrutiny and challenged by alternative pedagogies in Taiwan. In view of the increasing interests in TIE shown by Taiwan's normal education system, whose executive power is capable of making Taiwan's educational environment a better place for TIE to grow, it can be expected – with some caution, of course – that TIE will eventually start to make a difference in Taiwan.

¹⁷⁷ For more information see Appendix II.

Appendix I

An Interview with Bryan Newton, Director of Administration and Finance of GYPT – interviewed by Chi-chang Tsai in 1997; revised in 2001

Tsai (T): After following GYPT's work for nearly five years now, I can feel that the way this TIE company operates has been gradually changing – not only artistically, but also financially, particularly when compared with what you used to do in the seventies and eighties. As we are heading for the next century, can you talk about your prospect of the company's future and what kind of difficulties you are now facing?

Newton (N): You are absolutely right in what you say about the company, about its history and how it's now changing. And all the things you said are, funnily enough, wrapped up in the work and the decision-making that London Arts Board got to do in the course of next two months anyway. A lot of those things about the company's future, structure, financing, and the vision of how it delivers its work from now on through into the next millennium is part of what is already being put together by Viv¹⁷⁸ and the artistic and education policy of the company and myself with regard to the company's development plan and business plan, which we are working on at the moment. So a number of things are answered in that way. Also, this 'Arts for Everyone' funding that we have has a clear policy attached to the two areas of work, of new work that we should be doing with that money, and that is work with refugee communities in this area of London, and work on a more

¹⁷⁸ Vivien Harris was the artistic and educational director of GYPT between 1991 and 2002.

permanent basis with young people with learning disabilities and being able to develop that work further. Hopefully, this work can be built into the way the company is moving. We see all of that as still being linked to a certain amount of co-funding from our existing main funders. But more of what we do, and you are right in the way the company is continuing to change, we have to present a clear picture of how much of that, up to this stage, has been as the result of the artistic and educational policy of the company, and how much of it has been simply to do with the economic policy of the company. And, primarily, it has been to do with economic policy because we've been forced back and back and back financially, and having to adjust in order to do that but at the same time holding certain key standards in our policy as to what we are here to do and are doing it.

For instance, in 1991 and 1992, we were faced not only with losing almost fifty percent of all our funding, and then losing almost fifty percent of our staffing along with it, at the same time being told that the only way you can keep the remaining funding is to continue to do the work that the two main funders require us to do in their schools. Also, at the same time, those two main funders, the Local Authority of Greenwich and the Local Authority of Lewisham, are saying to us: 'But of course we know we are not giving you all the money we used to give you; we can't do that any more,' - and that's not just to us that they were saying that, they said it to everybody. It was not a comment on the work; it was simply to do with a comment on the finances, and changing regulations with regard to management of schools. It also meant that, for the first time, we're no longer a free service; we had to charge schools. So we moving into a new culture, in that we were having to become more commercially minded; and with our 'customers', if you like, the

schools, also having to learn the same lesson and try to be more commercially minded themselves, with their budgets being cut back and having less and less money to spend on everything. So we had to decide how best we could still continue to hold this company's long-standing and impressive record of providing, first and foremost, the two main areas of work it covers, that is the provision of professional Theatre-in-Education work for schools at all age groups and, secondly, providing arts workshop activities for young people to come to in their own time, led by professionals, and keeping those two strands of work, which was what this organisation is all about. We decided that if we could not keep those two strands of work together and be able to present them with the sort of quality and with commitment that we always have done, then there's no point in this organisation continuing, because that is what it was set up to do, first and foremost. That is not to say it should not look for changes. But, nevertheless, on top of that, we've also been successful because of the expertise that has been gained by people on the permanent staff here and the people who're also brought in on short-term contract, but mainly on the permanent staff, in being able to add to those two main strands of work, by being able to provide in-service training for teachers and other professionals; running courses not only in different parts of this country but also in other countries, abroad; being able to start and run in conjunction with the local Greenwich Community College a course for young women who were not employed, but then growing to be a course basically for any unemployed young adult to be able to go through a training in the skills of producing community theatre and covering all aspects of that from the acting side to the technical side to the administration side and to bring all that together in mounting a full-scale production, and that course being properly accredited through the college. But we.

by this time, have got all that together and making up the overall work and that is what we set out to maintain at all costs that we could keep that being delivered one way or another; maybe not quite so much of it, but certainly not fifty percent less. We had to do that by not only re-adjusting, but also by being able to be in a new position of selling our work, and also to be in a position of having to apply for and find ways of attracting new fundings for specific projects, in order to bring all these things together.

T: So does that mean you personally have to do a lot of marketing? It seems that there is a trend in this company that you are now getting more and more associated with some particular organisations and subsidising bodies, such as the Greenwich Health Promotion Service the Committee for Racial Equality, in order to get certain projects done. Do you, as a company, feel the needs to get yourself better connected?

N: Yes, we do. And it's been a learning process, because marketing, as you know, is a very specialised area of work. Whilst we know we can stand on our record, ... let me put it this way, if it is an ordinary straightforward theatre that is presenting one production after another every month or whatever, a new full-scale production, then you know exactly what the product is. Those productions are planned one on top of the other, a year in advance maybe, and your marketing strategies are laid out for you when you go out and sell those, using the best techniques that you can use, with budgets available to either publicise in the press, publicise on posters or however you publicise or bringing together schemes that make it more attractive for theatre-goers. The end result would be to get a maximum number of people in

your theatre every night to see all the plays and thereby the maximum amount of money to put into your fund in order to keep the company running, depending on how big or how small your theatre is, and the standard of the productions also dictates how much you can attract commercial sponsorship or other grant funding from commercial organisations or trusts or foundations if they feel that the thing is being sold properly to attract more money in and they know that their name and their logo is going to be on X-thousands of theatre posters, X-thousands of theatre programmes, and is going to be received by X-thousands of people, either directly or indirectly. So it's not a bad *deal* for them. When you come to look at our particular area of work, it's not the same; it does not carry the same sort of attractions. It is low profile in as much as we are not going out to the general public, because our work is with schools or within schools. The only people who are going to see our work and see the logos to do with funding are the staff of those schools and the people soon to see the programmes, and then you have the other agencies who will deal with it directly. So it becomes much more specialist, and therefore becomes much more difficult. Those commercial sponsors, if you like, who take the attitude of 'yes, I am prepared to give to the arts but by the same token I want something back from that', i.e. in the formal advertising, they would give money to put their name on that and that will be fine. That is something we are looking at, but as far as the work itself is concerned... So it's meant very much that we had to sell our work to the people who sponsored us on the basis that what we are doing is very key to an overall strategy in being able to develop youth theatre and theatre techniques, to actually get to people in the community, young people, to address certain issues that are crucial to society in general, as well as to specific societies in which we work. So that is doing programmes to do with race, programmes to do

with health matters, programmes to do with drugs, which is related to health matters, and all those sorts of things. Then if we can sell that to the trusts and the foundations who have money, as opposed to business sponsorship, then we have a good chance of being able to maintain the work as we know we can do it at the moment, and I'm pleased to say that we have been successful. So, for instance, just looking backwards is the *Skin* production, that we were successful in getting the grant of six and half thousand pounds from the Wates Foundation, which is a foundation built on the back of a very large civil construction company that builds roads and motorways and things in this country. But they have a foundation that is very community-conscious, that they give money to things to aid the community...

T: Is it competitive to get this subsidy?

N: Yes, yes, very. It is with all of them. That is the other thing about it whether you are talking about subsidy or whether you are talking about grants, or whatever. The pots of money are not getting any larger, but more and more people are following around the same pots of money. The other thing, also, is that because we have the National Lottery, and so much connected with the National Lottery is to do with capital expenditure, nothing to do with the day to day running of our organisation, as you know. But, to the outside world, people see that and hear about all this lottery money being handed out, and therefore think 'well, that's all right; so why should I give to these other charities or whatever when that money is available for funding the arts anyway'. They don't realise the distinctions being made between buildings and actually paying actors' or actor-teachers' salaries in order to do the work. So there's a mixture of things going on. Now what I need to do is to put that

also in the context of going back to 1991 and 1992, and moving towards that time before we had any cut at all, before we had our fifty percent cut in funding.

T: So are you saying that, before that specific period of time, the company had actually not encountered any kind of big financial problems? If so, is that kind of financial sufficiency what you are looking for in the future?

N: No, no. It always had different financial problems. But it had sufficient stability and sufficient financial stability to be able to deal with those problems, because they were relatively minor. In 1990, this company had an overall budget of approximately four hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year. Within a space of two years, that had dropped back to just over two hundred thousand pounds. At that point, and for eighteen years leading up to that point, we had managed to organise this company, so it was funded mainly by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), the central education authority of London, the Arts Council of England, as it now is, and a little bit of money, about four thousand pounds, from the London Borough of Greenwich. All that money together meant that with the total grant we received we only had to earn approximately five percent of our entire income, about twenty thousand pounds or thereabout, and that was easily done. We moved from that point to having less and less money guaranteed each year, to a point where we now have to earn, approximately, twenty-eight percent, just over a quarter of all our income. And that comes out of our current budget which represents somewhere in the region of between sixty and seventy thousand pounds a year, when we are least well equipped, through staffing and everything else, to do it. And that is what we have to turn around. And in doing that, we've gone through

what I call this downward spiral, through no fault of our own. When people see money being withdrawn from the organisations, even if they were actually half thinking about putting in some money, they hold back because they say, or have said, not only to this company but generally, when they see money being withdrawn by co-funders, 'it is not our policy to give you money just to replace what has been pulled away; it is our policy to give you money to start something new or add to what is already there, but not to fill a hole created by somebody else.' So the funding continues to go downward. You've got to stop funding cuts; either you get new income generation somehow, or you just go out of business. Fortunately we reached a stage two years ago, where we began to get people interested in the work we were doing, from outside. So within a space of the last two and half years, we have managed to inject in excess of two hundred thousand pounds into this organisation. Primarily, that is being met from a major grant from the Sports and Arts Foundation to stabilise us because we were losing money hand over fist every year, so that had to be stopped. We haven't stopped it totally yet, but are closer to doing so. We were able to attract funding from some major organisations – we had that Sports and Arts Foundation grant, for example. When people saw we could get subsidy from Sports and Arts, they thought 'they must be all right', and will look closer next time when we apply for a subsidy. So the Southeast London Community Foundation put in two thousand pounds in response to our request, that's the maximum grant. There are all organisations that don't have a record of funding the arts. They have a record of funding organisations that have an impact in community and in our particular case it happens to be through the arts, then so be it, as long as they are not in a business of funding the arts as such. So the City of Perochial Foundation came to see our work after making an

application to them. These things take months to do. The Sports and Arts Foundation, the fifty thousand pounds we received from them in order to just wipe off a lot of our debt, that fifty thousand pounds took two and half years to bring a result. The other fact that I was going to say about all that was that, yes, the City of Perochial Foundation, we asked them to look at the work that we were doing with the community theatre course, and we applied to them for thirteen and a half thousand pounds this current year. We were absolutely thrilled when we got a letter back from them, again, after four or five months, saying that they were not only giving us thirteen and a half thousand for this year, but they clearly had so much faith in what we were doing that they had already voted to give us a further six and half thousand pounds next year as well. Now that is something they usually do not do. So what I am saying is, don't misunderstand me, we are not that successful that we are rolling in money, we are not. We are still having to fight for every penny. But what I am saying is that we have reached a point after so long that even with the co-funding to be reduced, nevertheless we've been able to demonstrate that our co-funders have still remained with us at some level, and we still manage to keep the work going at an acceptable level. And now other outside agencies are saying 'actually there must be something in this organisation, we'll take a closer look'. Usually when they have done, they've liked what they've seen and we've been successful. The problem is, that we are always year to year not being able to guarantee on being successful year in and year out - and what happens if you are not successful? Because a lot of that depends on the way that we order this organisation as a company and how we produce the work and this is partly back to what we said earlier and the problems we face. A lot of the high quality and expertise that we are able to bring to the work comes out of the fact that we have a

permanent company, people who are working together all of the time, rather than short-term contracts that just bring people in to do a little bit of work and then let them go again. People who are used to working here have a clear understanding and are able to bring all that to bear. That's part of the strength of the company. If you can't maintain sufficient funding to hold a permanent company like that together, a lot of what we do gets destroyed. There are people who would argue that we are out of date and not cost effective. But so far that is the way that we have operated, that is the way which this organisation stands on record for quality and depth of its work. And those are all part of the issue of funding that has to be looked at as to where we go, as a company, in the future.

APPENDIX II

An Interview with Lin Mei-Chun, Professor of Drama at Tainan Teachers College – Interviewed by Chi-chang Tsai in 2003

Tsai (T): Can you talk about your academic and working experiences? What made you become interested in drama and theatre education in the first place?

Lin (L): I first became interested in the educational power of drama/theatre when I was studying at the English Department of National Kaohsiung Normal University (KNU), where I was trained for professional English teaching. As an English major, I had to study Western drama in the third year. It was a tradition that after taking this course, we have to make a formal production on stage. Without any training in Theatre and with little help from our professor, we struggled to do the show on our own. Frankly speaking, as a director and a coordinator for the play, it was not much fun in the process; however, I did have my first taste of drama's 'social flavour' – interaction and communication between people. Although I was pretty active and thoroughly involved in the production of Williams's play, it left me with an impression that drama was all words and, indeed, very text-based. The experience made me wonder: Could drama be any different? Could it be combined with the teaching skills that I was learning at KNU in any way? Fortunately, in my fourth year, an American visiting professor, Brian Hansen, came to lecture at our department. His approach to drama seemed to me totally new and very inspiring. Under his supervision, an extra-curricular drama club was organised. We called it The Little Dragon Theatre. Professor Hansen was kind enough to offer his flat and his free time to help us develop our interest in drama and theatre. Certain ideas and

skills of creative drama were applied to open up our body and mind. We wrote our own short stories. We devised our own short plays. We even managed to make a puppet dragon and went outdoors to present our own shows. No matter where we went, we would circle up the dragon and make it stand on the ground with bamboo sticks. A performing area was thus shaped. We would then start our performance – in easy English – in the circle and sometimes ask the onlookers to play with us or invite them to learn English from us. The learning spirit and happy atmosphere led me to look at drama from a different perspective. It was until then that I began to realise that drama could be so charming, and could be so useful. This understanding of drama as a medium for education had such a strong impact on me that my passion for creative and educational drama has since stayed with me.

After graduation, I began to teach English at a secondary school, and was assigned by the head master to teach a ‘cowherds’ class’ (放牛班)¹⁷⁹ – mainly because I was a new-comer. As soon as I started teaching, it became clear to me that almost none of my students had any interest in learning English. The only thing I could do was to teach them some basic vocabularies. I felt a little frustrated at first, but then decided to play the role of a ‘scout-master’ and try to make English learning more

¹⁷⁹ Cowherds’ class, or fang niu ban (放牛班), was a widely applied term in the education circles when Taiwanese teachers and parents were still very obsessed with their students’ or children’s performance in the national entrance examination. Only a few years ago, in secondary schools and high schools, those students who studied hard and had the potential of passing the examination would be assigned to study at a ‘scholarly class’ (升學班). On the contrary, those who were not promising in terms of their academic performance would be assigned to study at a ‘cowherds’ class’, which means they would not be able to pursue any higher education after graduation, and therefore could not possibly get a decent job in the future. Although Taiwan’s education minister keeps saying that this kind of ‘segregation’ does not exist in the island any more as a result of the education reforms, it is commonly acknowledged that many schools still divide their students into different classes or academic levels in order to guarantee a good proportion of them entering schools of a higher grade.

interesting to them. During those two years, I managed to devise a couple of word games and come up with different strategies to engage my students in my teaching. They responded quite positively to the way I taught, which was very comforting. Through play and improvisation, these 'no-hopers' did have fun in class and perform much better in their exams. The results of this two-way teaching/learning urged me to think deeper about the educational efficacy of drama. I knew drama could really help my students become better learners. But I did not know how to use it in a systematic or an organised way. I wanted to further explore the ideas and skills of drama education. But I did not have any access to this specific area of knowledge. In between, I was keeping correspondence with Professor Hansen, and he encouraged me to go to the States for the advanced study of theatre education. Through his recommendation, I got the chance to enter the graduate programme of Theatre at Arizona State University (ASU), which had one of the leading drama education programmes in America. Lin Wright, Dr. Hansen's good friend, was then the chair of the Theatre department. She became my advisor soon after I entered ASU. Dr. Wright had a tremendous influence on my academic life in ASU. Her willingness to help and to involve me, an Oriental student searching for something she did not know what, in her teaching (I was her TA) and her research projects (I was also her RA) made me brave and active. After studying at ASU for only one year, I was given my first opportunity to teach a class of Education majors creative drama. Then Professor Wright asked me to be one of the team responsible for carrying out a research on the integration of drama and fundamental education, whose results would be taken as a basis to convince the government that drama is good and necessary for kindergarten and primary school pupils. Through these experiences I came to realise what 'learning through doing' was. What was even

more important to me at that time was, as I did not come with a theatre/drama education background, I had to make up for a lack of drama and theatre education theories by taking a lot of courses at the undergraduate level. These courses drove me to study hard and, in so doing, to read many academic writings on drama and theatre education. Therefore I had come across prominent names, terms, and concepts such as Peter Slade, Gavin Bolton, Brian Way, Cecily O'Neill, Dorothy Heathcote, Winifred Ward, Nelie McCaslin, creative drama, process drama, DIE, TIE, and so on. In addition, since Professor Wright was well connected with almost all the famous drama education organisations in the States, many outstanding theorists and practitioners of this field would be invited to give a speech or lead a workshop at ASU. Feeling more and more intrigued by the educational potentials of drama, I tried to seize every opportunity to participate in these events in order to test and verify what I had learned or done. The solid foundations of my pursuit in drama education were thus laid.

After I received my M.A. degree in Drama (with a special focus on child drama), I still had a lot of questions about drama/theatre education. I wanted to further explore the relationships between children, play, and learning – I think I owed it to my earlier training in professional teaching. By then, there was no Ph.D. programme in the Theatre department at ASU. Professor Wright therefore introduced me to Dr. Moyer, who was the chair of ECE (Early Childhood Education) programme and had worked with her on a drama project in kindergarten. In the ECE programme, I had the chance to study more about the theories and pedagogies of drama education. What is more, I found myself getting closer to the origins of drama – the child's natural dramatic play. Meanwhile, I had

a chance working both as an RA and an assistant teacher in a kindergarten, where a research about the impact of dramatic play on children's literacy development was being conducted. Due to the nature of the research, I was placed in a preschool class where I did lots of observations, practised my drama teaching skills, as well as collected data for the research. It was not rare for me to work three or four days a week at the kindergarten, so that a more efficient and productive research could be carried out. During that period of time, I had many opportunities to teach and talk with different children. Through dramatic play, I felt that it was much easier for them to open up to me and express themselves. Their positive responses drove me to 'rake' into the theories I had read and think about some fundamental questions: 'what is education?', 'what is it for?' 'how can we help children learn?', 'can creative drama play a role in their learning process?', and so on. With Professor Wright's and my Ph.D. instructor's generous assistance, I managed to collect a lot of useful data. These data helped me answer some of the questions I had in mind. Years later, I completed my Ph.D. degree and returned to Taiwan. I felt a new adventure was just about to begin.

T: So after you came back to Taiwan and started your teaching career, did you have any problems merging into an education system that was not yet opened up to new ideas and methods? How did you cope with a teaching environment that was not as resourceful as the one you had in the States?

L: Due to my doctoral background, I was offered a job to lecture at the ECE Department in National Tainan Teachers College (NTTC). Fortunately, I was able to offer courses on creative drama both at basic and advanced levels. In fact, among

the departments in every Teachers College, the faculty members in the ECE departments were the ones that really valued the importance of drama for children and in education. In addition to the pre-service teacher's classes, I also offered drama education-related courses in the summer for in-service teachers. Therefore I was, simultaneously, in close contact with many teachers-to-be (my students) and professional teachers. That was a very good training for myself actually: I was the one who brought back to Taiwan all these theories on drama and theatre education; they were there on the other end to receive what I could offer and share with me what they did and thought in their daily life. Sometimes I would talk about how interesting and effective to let children take active control of their learning experiences in class. Soon afterwards these teacher-students of mine would come back in frustration and confront me with the problems they had encountered, such as class management and a lack of drama skills. These problems, caused by the gap between theory and reality, led me to look at what I taught from a different angle. I therefore decided to conduct an action research at a local kindergarten, so as to see how Taiwanese kids would respond to the approaches of creative drama. It was not long before I realised that there were indeed some very tough challenges awaiting me. First of all, I had to admit that age range was a big issue. Creative drama was hardly applied to teach primary school pupils in Taiwan at that time, not to say kindergarten kids. In an education system that was not at all arts-friendly, kindergarten teachers would be easily panic-stricken whenever they were asked to adopt a more drama-oriented approach of teaching. At school they had never been trained for anything remotely related to drama. So it was very difficult to convince them, given that they were dealing with children of 3 to 5 years old, that they could truly have fun with their pupils by playing or devising a short piece of theatre with

them. Gradually, I became very aware of the fact that it was not useful to preach about the importance of drama education constantly without making those who had to 'go to the front line' feel supported. It was my top priority to make these teachers feel confident that they could utilise creative drama in their teaching, even though they had never done it before. I knew I had to give them guidelines and, better still, some books of a 'creative drama made easy' nature. But then there were almost no books of that kind ever written in Chinese. That is exactly why I immediately sat down in front of my desk and translated a book on creative drama from English into Chinese. Through this 'know how' book, I thought, the teachers would be inspired to take a more active stance in planning drama-related activities for their pupils. After my book was published (by Psychological Publishing Co., Ltd.), these teachers and I could finally begin to explore the power and charm of creative drama on shared grounds. However, that was only the beginning of our journey. Soon it became obvious that the gap between theory and reality was not to be easily bridged. Problems of classroom management and course devising kept coming up and we could not simply close our eyes and pretend that they were not there. Actually this part of my job has been very challenging. I think this is what was missing when I worked on my doctoral programme. Most drama scholars who intended to conduct a research on the educational efficacy of dramatic play or drama programme would go to a primary school or a kindergarten and try out their experimental treatment; however, they could only stay for a limited amount of time that kept them from getting to know their pupils better. This somehow put a limitation to the scope and depth of their research results. Problems that confront school teachers therefore cannot be really solved or made easier. Even today I cannot stop asking myself this question: who should be the 'executors' of creative

drama, school teachers or drama scholars? In my view, school teachers should be the ideal teaching candidates if they can get some help from the drama specialists. To sum up, I think teacher's training is the most important thing to do; meanwhile, drama scholars should do action researches to bridge the gap between theory and reality. We should also involve more teachers to work with us in our researches, so that we can hear the real voice from the teachers and thus know better on how to solve the problems for them. Only when teachers experience the magic power of drama in their own teaching and the success of doing drama with their own classes, they will be willing to accept drama as an art form and an educational tool in the education.

T: Since you have been working in the Normal Education System for such a long time, do you find this system accommodating for someone of your background? Being one of those at the position of leading and channelling educational thoughts, how do you value the education authorities' changing attitude towards drama, theatre, and education?

L: There are always two sides in everything, positive and negative. Speaking of the positive side, I must admit that I was blessed with a little bit of luck when I began teaching at the ECE Department of NTTC. Most of my seniors and colleagues already knew the importance of child play, and therefore were open-minded enough to accept new ideas about and theories of creative drama. They thought that it was good to introduce a 'process over product' way of thinking to our students (teachers-to-be), as it was commonly agreed among us that children should be taught to – but not forced to - cultivate their self-motivations, make their own

decisions, and develop their personal perspectives. Their inner world is no less important than the outer world. They should be encouraged to build up a sense of 'self' before they begin to connect with a bigger society. On these shared grounds, I was given the freedom to teach several challenging but thought-provoking courses at the department in accordance with my training in drama education at ASU.

However, as you rightly pointed out, the Normal Education System has a long history, and therefore certainly has its own values and traditions. Drama, owing to these values and traditions, has never been taken seriously by any normal teachers university or college. Evidence can be seen in the fact that there is no drama department whatsoever established in any of these colleges or universities¹⁸⁰ - but there are already many music departments and fine art departments. In comparison with other artistic forms, drama seems to have been carelessly treated and defined as something 'valueless' in an adult's life. The main reason for the missing of 'drama department' in the teacher college's system is that drama was not taught as an academic subject in primary or secondary schools. Therefore, there was no need to set up a department at a teachers college or university for its teacher training.

This kind of situation began to change – although very slowly - after people like Dr. Zhang Xiao-hua, Chen Jen-fu, and myself returned to Taiwan from abroad in the early 1990s. We wrote books. We gave lectures. We tried hard to make those who were involved in theatre or education understand our thoughts and our goals. It was

¹⁸⁰ With the effort made by Professor Lin and the warden of NTTC, a new drama graduate school has been established in 2003. It is the first drama-related institute ever set up in a normal teachers college or university in Taiwan. It is hoped that soon afterwards a drama department will be founded 'under' the basis of this graduate school.

not easy, of course, given that drama/theatre education has long been regarded as a weird creature. Fortunately, with the development of the nine-year integrated curriculum reform, Arts and Humanities have formally become the main courses both in primary and secondary schools, and therefore drama/theatre education has become a new star both in the public school system and in the teachers college system.

T: Many theatre practitioners in Taiwan have high hopes for the practice of ‘nine-year integrated curriculum reform’, which include drama-related courses for the very first time in Taiwan’s education history. Most of them think that this is a wonderful opportunity to really integrate drama with Taiwan’s orthodox education. Do you agree with what they think? Can we really be optimistic about the future prospect of the development of drama and theatre education?

L: As mentioned earlier, drama was not taken seriously by our Education Ministry and Normal Education System. However, the practice of ‘nine-year integrated curricula’ did bring new hopes for us. With the inclusion of drama in the curriculum of Arts and Humanities, our government was forced to re-adjust its views on drama and education. Personally I think Dr. Zhang Xiao-hua has made great contribution to this wonderful accomplishment. Well connected with people of the education circles, he volunteered to attend a lot of conferences and made his opinions on drama education heard when the Education Ministry began to plan a new set of curricula with an aim of meeting the public’s demands for education reforms. He also seized every chance possible to get himself involved in the

process of policy-making and curriculum planning – although his active attitude has been misinterpreted as profit-motivated and his proposals criticised by some dramatists. The initiative he displayed helped to convince the government that drama has a strong impact on the child's growing and learning process. Drama was therefore placed at the top of the education authorities' agenda in their discussions about Arts and Humanities education. Since then, training drama teachers or holding drama education-related workshops has become an important task, particularly after the nine-year integrated education was put into practice in 2000. The Education Ministry and local educational authorities have made budget plans of different scales to set up various training schemes for those who want to require drama skills. Under such circumstances, teachers colleges/universities, drama associations, and theatre groups are given a lot of money to provide school teachers with drama training courses. Given that most teachers colleges/universities are not very good at drama or theatre training, drama associations and theatre groups certainly have an advantage in being commissioned and getting subsidies. On the one hand, this, of course, is a wonderful opportunity for drama and theatre practitioners to participate in teacher training programmes. On the other hand, however, not all theatre artists have profound training in drama education, so that the quality of teacher's training programmes may not be as good as expected, especially when the national standards only provide a general guideline in which the 4 Arts (music, visual arts, performing arts including drama and dance) are supposed to be integrated with each other. It is hard for the teachers to design the new art curriculum, let alone those drama artists who did not have backgrounds in education and training in curriculum design. I hope that with the growing programmes of drama education in the normal teachers training system, both

teachers and drama artists will have chance to learn more about the basic theory, principle and methodology of drama/theatre education. By then, there will be hope for the real prosperity of drama in education.

These are only the ideal thoughts, of course. In reality, the Normal Education System is totally unprepared to take the challenge. Although the Education Ministry has already put the policies of nine-year integrated education into practice, none of the teachers colleges/universities seems to be open enough to welcome all the changes. A lot of them are still watching. They want to wait and see how far these so-called education reforms can go. Meanwhile, many professional teachers who teach music or fine art at primary schools are forced to take drama training courses in order to make up for a lack of drama teachers, as their specialties are, in most people's eyes, 'arts-oriented'. However, as you can see, a music or fine art teacher would not know much about drama education. How can he or she be asked to attend a few drama classes or workshops and then become a qualified drama teacher? An even bigger issue is that, since 'drama' – very much in the sense of Western spoken drama - has been integrated into the new curricula and given a high profile, many people from other drama-related fields, such as dance and traditional operatic drama, want to make their 'arts' admired and accepted accordingly. Some of them even proposed to re-organise the content of the curricula and have all the dramatic forms combined and integrated within the new schooling system under the name 'Performing Arts Education'. In my view this is all about how the 'cake' should be cut and shared. Only few people show genuine concerns over the true spirit of drama/theatre education: to encourage young pupils to be creative and to take active control of their learning experiences.

T: Is that the reason why you have just accomplished the task of establishing a drama graduate school at Tainan Teachers College? This is probably the first step ever taken by a teachers college or university to acknowledge the value of drama education. However, as discussed earlier, drama teachers are desperately needed for a better development of drama education within primary and secondary schools, and therefore it seems much more reasonable to set up a drama department for the undergraduate students of Tainan Teachers College. Why did your college choose to establish a drama graduate school, not a drama department? What is your expectation for the graduate school? Were you faced with any problems or difficulties during the process of setting it up?

L: Basically most teachers colleges in Taiwan are still pretty conservative. They need to be pushed to look drama in the face and learn to take it seriously. Indeed, the drama graduate school set up in Tainan Teachers College is a first big step taken. But I am not the one who took the initiative in founding this institute. It was the warden of the college, Dr. Huang Zheng-jeh (黃政傑), that we should pay special thanks to. Without flattering, I have to say that he is a visionary. He sensed that a new era was about to come, and therefore decided, out of his passion for the arts, that a drama institute had to be established. He then came to seek my advice and assistance. Of course I agreed to do what I could to help him get things organised. At first we proposed to set up a drama department in the college, and then take it as a basis to organise an M.A. program. Unfortunately the College Committee turned down our proposal, as there were already many other new

departments waiting to be established. Dr. Huang did not give up easily. He switched his track and began pushing forward his new project of founding a drama graduate school, which required less human or financial resources. There were certainly many problems in the way, as most of the College Committee members had their own preferences and priorities. But in the end Huang's determination convinced our colleagues that the timing was right for installing a proper drama institute in the Normal Education System. It could offer a lot of professional help - such as theoretical backups, case studies, and research methodologies - to the teachers out there. Even so, I do agree with you that the pressing matter of the moment is to establish a drama department for our undergraduate students, who will become 'front-line' teachers in primary and secondary schools after graduation. They are the ones who really need the knowledge and skills of drama to teach the new integrated curricula.

As for my personal expectations towards the graduate school, I truly hope that the following three goals can be reached in the near future. First of all, a group of drama teacher trainers should be cultivated and sent out to work by the graduate school within a few years. These trainers must develop a thorough understanding of drama/theatre education and have the capability of demonstrating their ideas and skills. Secondly, teachers' workshops on the working methodologies of drama/theatre education have to be organised and held at the graduate school on a regular basis, so that those who are already teaching can always come to us for the support they need. Meanwhile, case studies and action researches must be carried out by the teachers and students of this school, as it is necessary for them to develop a whole set of 'know how' and '... made easy' mechanism before they set

off to convince school teachers that drama can make them feel empowered and is applicable to their teaching. In addition, I also have this idea that each of these workshops should not be cut down to three or four days and then conducted in a one-off manner. A more ideal way to make these workshops really beneficial to the teachers would be asking them to come on every Saturday over a longer period of time. In the morning lectures on the theories of drama/theatre education would be given to them. In the afternoon they would get to see drama/theatre education practitioners demonstrate their working methods. After they go back to work at their schools on Monday, they can try out these working methods with their students. Problems of any sort in the process of experimenting shall then be brought back to the workshop on the following Saturday to be discussed and solved. I think this will make the workshops function more multi-dimensionally and a real interaction between school teachers and us ('learning through doing', as I said earlier) can thus be generated. Finally, I do hope that drama and theatre practitioners/artists out there will be drawn to us through the things we do here. These people are already good at writing drama or producing theatre. What we need to do is make them understand and recognise the meaning/importance of drama/theatre education, so that they will be urged to obtain the skills of teaching and curriculum designing. If possible, they can also be trained to be residential artists and given a role to play at local schools with the government's support. Of course I know these are not easy tasks to accomplish, especially when there are not enough qualified teachers and trainers in our faculty. But, in hope of making a healthy environment for drama/theatre education to grow, we must give it a go.

T: TIE and DIE have long been the focus of your teaching and research. What is your understanding of the operational patterns of these two educational approaches? Are they really worthy of being introduced to and adopted by Taiwanese educators and theatre practitioners?

L: Although my Master's and Doctoral training of drama education was from the American system, I do hold a very high value on the British way of doing drama in education, i.e. TIE and DIE. I think both are powerful educational tools. When I was studying at ASU, I took great pleasure in observing and participating in some DIE/TIE programmes. Since then, I have always considered DIE/TIE interesting and powerful. To me, TIE and DIE are different in terms of their communicative media; the former counts a little bit more on the theatrical devices and personals, and the latter centres on drama skills and teacher's role in classroom. But the two of them also share many features. According to my understanding, British TIE and DIE are both inclined to be issue-based. Drama, even when applied to 'teach' academic subjects such as English and History, as in some cases of DIE, is always regarded as a catalyst. It helps young people form the habit of thinking and exploring. I remember that once professor John Somers gave an example of DIE in a speech he delivered at an international conference on drama, theatre, and education: A child drowned in a river near his school. A teacher of this school took this tragic event as a basis to discuss the meaning of life and death with his students. They then began to link this event with what had happened around the river in the past. Together they traced back the history of the river, their school, and their hometown through classroom drama activities. A very constructive point of view on the relationships between life and death, now and past, and individuals and

social groups was thus established among the young learners. So you can see that drama, in this case, is used like a needle to sew up a series of interesting issues that concern the child on a daily basis. Therefore, in my view, DIE can be easily associated with life or social studies, as well as with academic studies. TIE is more or less the same, only that most TIE programmes take place within a theatrical context and have professional actors in them. In addition, both TIE and DIE emphasise the importance of children's participation and their interaction with actors or teachers. Slightly different from creative drama, which intends to cultivate the child's capability of oral and physical expression through story telling and drama games, TIE and DIE do not demand a 'complete story' or 'clear picture' from their devisers. A great deal of time and space can be left to the participants for 'completing the story' or 'clarifying the picture' through thinking and working by themselves.

On these grounds, I strongly believe that it is good to introduce TIE and DIE to our children and young people. In particular, our children are faced with many different challenges both in and out of their schools. Living in a society where views of value and morality are shifting speedily, they need to be given the chance to learn how to make decisions or solve problems. In the past, teachers tended to preach their students an entire set of morals and ask them to do as told. But we are coping with a very different world now. Different people have different ways of thinking and behaving. There are no fixed rules or viewpoints to be followed any more. This is exactly why I think drama can play an important role in our education system; it not only helps an individual to develop his or her own perspectives, but also encourages different individuals to communicate their thoughts.

T: In 1998, you participated in the interactive theatre workshop, Green Tide, organised by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe and led by GYPT. How do you value the workshop? Have you been inspired by the ideas and skills introduced by the GYPT team in any way?

L: To start with, I think it was great that we got our very first opportunity to witness how a British TIE programme work in that workshop. Before the GYPT team came, we never had any chance to observe, so closely, and learn the working methodologies of TIE in Taiwan. For me, it was very inspiring to see how the five GYPT members work together as a team and teach the courses they had devised for the Taiwanese participants. From a Taiwanese point of view, it was very considerate of them to combine TIE skills with local materials – such as the famous Chinese folktale *White Snake* – in addition to bringing over the TIE programmes they devised in Britain, *Circles in the Sky* and *A Pocketful of Promises*. Their audience-oriented approach and user-friendly attitude made it much easier for the workshop participants to understand the essence of TIE, so that it was also much easier for them to relate to it. Unlike *Circles in the Sky* or *A Pocketful of Promises*, whose foreign setting kept the participants, more or less, intellectually or emotionally distant, *White Snake* gave us a very good example of how hot-seating could be done within a local context. Through a story that was as well known as *White Snake*, the workshop participants were induced to explore how GYPT's working methodologies could be 'localised' and 'internalised' as early as these methodologies were introduced to them. In view of the fact that quite a few participants of Green Tide have since been applying these methodologies to their

work, I have little doubt that it was a successful workshop. In this workshop, the concepts about TIE and the skills of interactive theatre were presented to us in the most concrete way. The well-structured four-day course made us realise that it was not so difficult to pick up these concepts or skills and use them by ourselves.

T: You have seen every TIE programme produced by Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe, and have asked several groups of your students to participate in them. What is your general impression about these programmes? How do your students respond to Tainan Jen's TIE works?

L: I have to say that most of them were pretty moved by what they saw, particularly *The Completion of the Mansion*, which was certainly their first taste of participatory TIE. Before seeing these programmes, they did not know that theatre could be utilised this way. In my drama education classes, we did have a lot of discussions about TIE. But their understanding of this theatre work inevitably stopped at the theoretical level, as there had never been any chance for them to see what TIE was like with their own eyes. Tainan Jen's programmes helped them develop a clear vision to see into the educational efficacy of TIE. Since then, it has been much easier for them to relate to what I say in class. Their interest in this educational approach has certainly been aroused. Personally I think Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe has done a good job in introducing TIE to its target audiences. The troupe has successfully blended TIE with local issues that concern young people in their daily life, including ethnic differences, career choices, and family problems. Although some parts of the programmes might have appeared to be a little irrelevant to my students' life experiences – marriage life in *The Completion of the*

Mansion, for example - the issues embodied in the dramatised situations really drove them to think. Even so, we can see that there is still a long way for Tainan Jen to go, particularly after Rey-fang, who has been persistent in producing quality TIE work since 1999, stepped down from her position as the troupe's artistic director last year (2002). In my view, the troupe is faced with, at least, three challenging tasks. Firstly, the 'localisation' of TIE has to be carefully thought over and materialised by the troupe. Secondly, the TIE devisers of the troupe have to keep coming up with proper topics and strategies, in accordance with the participants' age range, that can really make their target audiences feel involved in what they do. Finally, Tainan Jen should try to build up a functional network with as many local schools as possible, so that the troupe's TIE work will receive more attention and appreciation.

T: To sum up, how do you evaluate the development of drama and theatre education in Taiwan? Is there anything we can do to make the current situations better?

L: Over the past ten years, drama or theatre education has indeed grown in Taiwan, although the speed was not as fast as we would like to see in the first six or seven years because the government was slow in policy making. Good policies can act as guidelines for educationalists and drama/theatre practitioners to follow. It is only when our government comes to realise and recognise the value of drama/theatre education that this particular pedagogy can be given a proper status and taken seriously by teachers and parents. The practice of nine-year integrated education can be seen as a milestone. But more things need to be done before our dreams of a

better education system come true

Also I think it is very important for those who are interested or involved in drama/theatre education to set up an organisation or association and try to help and support each other through its operation. You know in Chinese we have a saying that goes: Men of letters tend to scorn each other (文人相輕). This is exactly what

I have seen and how I have felt after I returned to Taiwan. In this island, people of the same field or background do not usually have the generosity to share their knowledge or skills. In U.S. or the U.K., there are hundreds of drama clubs, institutes, organisations, and associations. But in Taiwan only very few of them get to be founded. This is a shame, really, particularly at a time when human and financial resources are not rich enough to offer us the support we need. In my mind, the establishment of NTTC's drama graduate school can act as a research centre, as well as a drama/theatre education archive, in order to assemble more resources. People who need information of this field can always come to us and see what can be done to help them. However, I certainly do not expect this graduate school to become the only meeting place for drama/theatre education enthusiasts or to 'eat off' the biggest piece of the 'cake'. I know it is not easy to get things started. But we have to begin from somewhere. After all, drama is about communication and understanding. Dramatists and theatre practitioners therefore should not close their doors and pretend that nothing is happening around them.

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