Stages across the world

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1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

Theatre has been a part of human culture for a very long time and today it exists all over the world. Even though the idea of acting in front of an audience is similar everywhere, each region has developed its own theatre traditions. Theatre is influenced by history, religion, and daily life.

The reason I will be writing and focusing on this topic is because theatre is one of my biggest passions, I would love to continue theatre in the future. I have several experiences with performing in theatre. I have performed twice at the Grand Théâtre in Luxembourg, additionally I have acted in different school plays since 7ième. Since 6ième I have focused my works on theatre, and for this work I would like to put in some of my own experiences. I have watched many theatre productions around the world, and I became more curious about how theatre can look and feel depending on where you are.

During the summer holidays 2025 I visited Bali in Indonesia, Bali is a very traditional place, and their religion plays a big role in people's lives. As I watched a theatre performance there, I noticed how strongly their belief and tradition can influence their art and the way stories are performed. This made me realize how different Balinese theatre is, compared to the theatre productions I have seen in modern theatre, as an example Broadway in New York, where entertainment is often the focus. For this reason, I decided to explore theatre cultures around the world and compare what they express and what they mean. Additionally, I would like to find out how theatre even started, since it's not spoken about.

1.2. Short overview of the regions I will cover

In this project, I will focus on theatre in Asia, Europe, and America. I chose these regions since I saw a performance there, and they represent very different theatre traditions. I will explain the origin of theatre, which mainly focuses on Europe, but gives general knowledge of the beginning.

2. Importance of Theater to human culture

Theater is an art form, performed in front of an audience, the word theatre is from the Greek "*theatron*", "*a place of seeing*". There are different types of theater: Plays, musicals, opera, operetta, ballet, pantomime and more. Every piece has its own importance. The reason why theater is important is for the audience to understand different history and cultures. Theater is a form of communication, where they use different strategies to tell a story. This could be one person or multiple people telling a story through words, music, or movement to an audience. Since theater is spread across the world, every culture has its own way of performing a story.[1]

There are various reasons why performing art is an important part of human culture:

- A performance should be amusing, but the message behind it plays a big role. They usually tell a story, where they reflect the culture and struggle of different times
- Theatre helps individuals express themselves. Many performing art students suffer from shyness as they start attending classes, and after a time they start being more confident in the way they express themselves. After all, they gain confidence not only in their performance but also outside[2]
- Theatre helps the audience learn about different cultures and history by letting people experience stories from other places and times
- Theatre is a special kind of art performed in front of an audience. The word "theatre" comes from the Greek word theatron, which means "a place of seeing". There are many forms of theatre, such as plays, musicals, operas, ballet, and pantomime, whereby every form expresses differently. Theatre is important because it helps people understand stories, traditions, and history from around the world. It is a way to share ideas and emotions and to see life from another person's point of view or a different perspective. The reason why theatre is so special is that theatre gets performed live with real people in the same room. Every show is a little different, which makes each performance unique. Watching a play can have different effects on people, such as it helps us connect, listen, and feel emotions together. Theatre can also show problems in our society and make people think about how to change them. It encourages honesty, creativity, and new voices[3]

[1] https://www.centertheatregroup.org/news-and-blogs/news/2023/february/what-is-theatre-anyway/#:~:text=Theatre%20is%20an%20art%20form,the%20different%20types%20of%20theatre
[2] https://www.theicmt.com/blog/3-reasons-performing-arts-are-important-for-society
[3] https://www.actingstudiochicago.com/5-reasons-why-theatre-is-still-important-blog/

- In a digital world theatre stays important. Theatre tells stories in a way that screens cannot, because the audience shares the same space with the performers. This makes the experience real and unforgettable[4]
- Theatre can reflect social issues and make audiences think about important ideas and changes in the world[5]

Every country and culture has its own kind of theater. These different styles show how people see the world in their own way. To understand why theater looks so different today, I have to look back at where it all began and start at the origins of theatre.

2.1. The origins of theater

A timeline of theatres evolution and styles clearly shows that theatre began in Ancient Greece and Rome, continuing through the Medieval times, developing into the renaissance and later into modern theatre sharing styles such as Realism and Expressionism.[6]

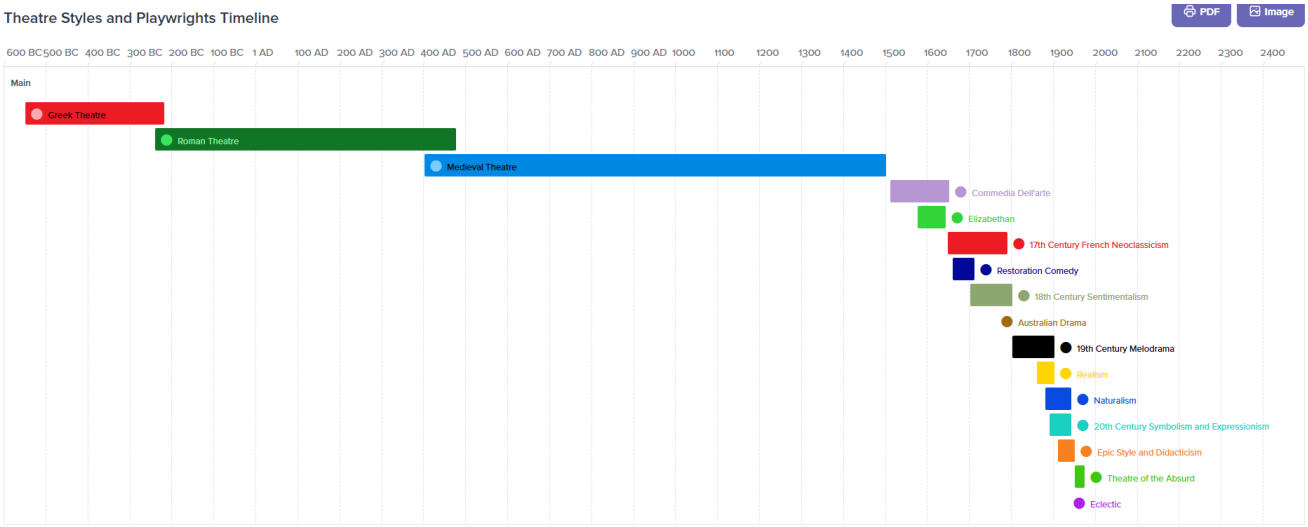

Figure 1 - Timeline showing the main periods of theatre history, from ancient rituals to modern theatre styles[7]

[4] https://www.oxfordhomeschooling.co.uk/the-enduring-importance-of-theatre/
[5] https://theatreinpalm.eu/posts/the-importance-of-theatre-for-social-change/index.html
[6] https://www.preceden.com/timelines/63130-theatre-styles-and-playwrights-timeline
[7] https://www.preceden.com/timelines/63130-theatre-styles-and-playwrights-timeline

In my work I will focus on the most important stages, that show how theatre started and changed over time, starting from early rituals to Ancient Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and modern theatre.

Theatre is one of the oldest ways people have used to tell stories and share ideas. A long time ago, before real stages or written plays existed, people told stories by singing, dancing, wearing masks and doing rituals to honor their gods. These performances were a part of their daily life and their religion. As time went on, the theatre became more organized and structured. In ancient Greece and Rome, people started building theatres and acting in front of a big crowd. They used to play and perform to tell stories, celebrate their traditions, and bring people together. The theatre kept changing. During the Middle Ages, people played stories from the Bible in churches. Later in the Renaissance, famous writers such as Shakespeare created new kinds of plays. In the 19th century, theatre became bigger and more exciting, and today we have many modern styles of theatre.

If you compare theatre today, with theatre in Asia compared to theatre in America, we can see a big difference. Broadway tells stories for entertainment, whereby Asia tells stories using their culture.

2.2. Primitive Drama

The time before written plays and real stages existed, is called the time of Primitive drama or ritual drama. People used simple performances to tell stories and share important ideas with the audience. In this time, people used songs, dances, music and special actions during religious ceremonies and celebrations. The focus during this time was on movement and performing together, dressing in masks and acting stories about gods, nature, life and death. Back then theatre didn't compare to how we know theatre today; they had many similar elements like telling stories with sound and group participation.[8]

In African and Indigenous traditions, there have been performances where people chanted and danced.[9]

Over a certain time, these ritual performances developed slowly, starting to get organized better. People began to write scripts, build stages, and act for larger audiences. This was the reason how the first real theatres began. In ancient Greece and Rome, the theatre became an important part of culture and celebration.

[8] https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/drama-and-theater-arts/primitive-drama
[9] https://www.cultureowl.com/cultural-news/theater/from-sacred-rituals-to-global-stages-a-living-history-of-theater

2.3. Ancient Greece and Rome

Theatre began in the 6th century BCE in Athens. They created purpose-built theatres called amphitheaters.[10]

These open-air theatres were built on natural hillsides with tiered stone seating in a half-circular shape, so large crowds could watch the actors perform.[11]

Figure 2 - Seating of the Theatre of Epidaurus[12]

Greek theatre started through religious festivals honoring the god of wine, fertility and theatre, Dionysus. Many of the plays performed in ancient Greece, were based on myths and legends. Furthermore, the Greek plays were performed in competitive festivals. Back then, only male actors were allowed to perform, and they had strict rules of how the play was structured.

Comedy plays were written and performed a bit later. The plays had a specific structure, that was structured into three parts. The most famous comedy playwrights were Aristophanes

[10] https://alg.manifoldapp.org/read/history-of-theatre-ancient-greece-and-rome/section/7d98577f-981a-4e4e-8d90-668c52feb589
[11] https://www.worldhistory.org/article/895/greek-theatre-architecture
[12] https://www.worldhistory.org/image/482/seating-of-the-theatre-of-epidaurus/

and Menander. The works of the Greek theatre of famous Greek playwrights, such as Sophocles, Aristophanes and Euripides, are still performed today.

Roman theatre was influenced by the Greeks. However, the roman theatre focused more on comedy in comparison to the Greeks. On top of that, they used a comedy style which they called New Comedy, it was based on romantic and domestic situations. The main reason for the theatre in Rome was to distract the people from political problems in their time. Roman theatre scripts were used in the later days, for young students to learn Latin. Furthermore, the romans performed in freestanding buildings.

Nerveless, roman theatre didn't last, since Rome was overrun by the barbarian tribes. The second reason being the rise of the Christianity. In the early days, Christianity wasn't allowed in Rome, whereas, as the religion was legalized, it influenced many of the plays. The Christian church banned people from going to plays on holy day, and since holy days were nearly every day, the people just stopped going to theatre.[13]

After the fall of the Roman Empire theatre almost disappeared for a long time. The empire began to break apart, and the theatre stopped working. Barbarian invasions and the collapse of Roman civilization destroyed many theatre and cultural centers.

At the same time, the Christian Church became very powerful and didn't like theatre. Many plays were about old gods or had things that church leaders thought were wrong. Because of this and because Roman culture was falling apart, people stopped acting in theatres for a long time.[14]

[13] https://alg.manifoldapp.org/read/history-of-theatre-ancient-greece-and-rome/section/7d98577f-981a-4e4e-8d90-668c52feb589

[14] https://uofuhistoryoftheatre.wordpress.com/2013/09/19/the-downfall-of-roman-theatre/

2.4. Medieval theatre

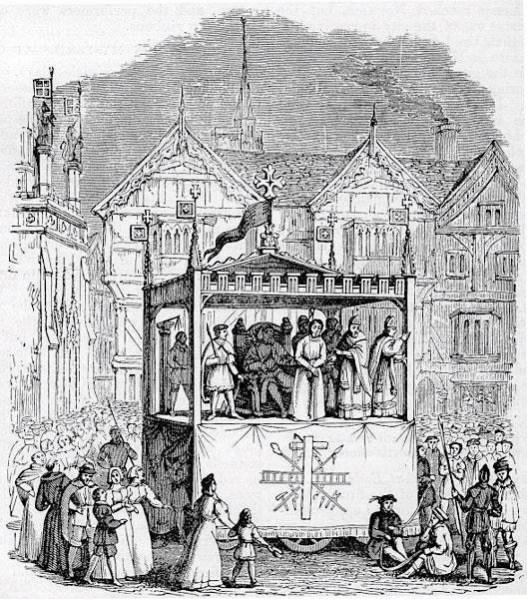

Figure 3 - Medieval pageant wagon
Used for mystery plays in towns like Chester or York. These movable stages were pulled through the streets so audiences could watch biblical scenes performed during festivals.
https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/british-literature-through-history/s02-03-medieval-drama.html#medieval-drama

Slowly over a specific time, theatre started to return inside the church, where priests used small plays to show stories from the Bible.[15]

The medieval theatre played a part in the 5th- 15th century CE, as the popularity of the Christian church grew. They used other forms of dramas, including mystery plays, moral plays, miracle plays, and liturgical theatre. The liturgical play was a type of play performed within or near a church, and telling stories from the bible, it emerged from rituals and ceremonies in the church. As these plays grew in popularity, they started performing in town squares and pageant wagons. As it started expanding in public spaces, they started informing the public of everyday problems, such as economics or political problems, by performing a play. Medieval plays were usually structured in episodes that took key moments from the bible. They used straightforward language, to make it accessible to everyone.[15]

2.5. Renaissance

Renaissance theatre began in the 14th century and lasted till the 17th century. It began in Italy. Eventually theater spread to England, France, Spain and other European countries.

Renaissance playwrights took inspiration from both medieval and classical sources, creating a unique blend of styles. Theater evolved into new theater forms, such as opera and ballet. Playwrights like Shakespear and Marlowe did complex and sophisticated plays.[16] During the period, various theatre forms emerged, such as commedia dell`arte, which was a popular form of theatre and featured professional troupes performing improvised, physical comedies with stock characters like Harlequin and Pantalone.[17]

[15] https://www.preceden.com/timelines/63130-theatre-styles-and-playwrights-timeline
https://thedramateacher.com/greek-theatre-roman-theatre-medieval-theatre/
[16] https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/drama-and-theater-arts/renaissance-drama
[17] https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/commedia-dellarte

2.6. 19th century/ Victorian theatre

The Victorian era was an important era in England, during the reign of Queen Victoria in the 19th century. During the Industrial Revolution, new technologies influenced theatre in several ways. Electric lighting and machinery allowed for more impressive visual and sound effects on stage. Theatre became very popular among the middle classes in the 19th century. People enjoyed different types of performances such as pantomimes, Vaudeville shows, melodramas, and light operas like those by Gilbert and Sullivan. Social plays, often called 'cup and saucer dramas,' became fashionable; these were set in everyday living rooms and focused on realistic situations. Famous playwrights like George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde gained widespread respect for their work.[18] One of the major theatre venues, the Royal Albert Hall, opened in 1871.[19]

2.7. Modern theatre

Modern theatre roughly started in the late 19th century and continues today. It is very different from classical theatre like Shakespeare or Greek theatre. Artists began to explore new ways of storytelling and express real life more directly, breaking away from older dramatic conventions.[20]

Modern theatre was influenced by big changes in the world, such as new technology, new political ideas, and new ways of thinking about society and people. As a result, a theatre of challenge and experimentation emerged. Realism became one of the main movements focusing on life truthfully. It faces everyday problems with believable, psychologically complex characters, natural dialogue, and realistic settings. Modern theatre can be entertaining, but it can also make people think about real problems in society.[21]

2.8. Future theatre

New technologies will change and influence theatre in the future. Theatre will use more advanced technology like projection design and even holography. Furthermore, going to the theatre won't feel formal or exclusive, since performances can happen in community spaces or even outdoors. Virtual reality (VR) could let people experience live theatre from

[18] https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-story-of-theatre
[19] https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/building-and-history/our-history/why-was-the-royal-albert-hall-built
[20] https://www.byarcadia.org/post/modern-drama-101-modernism-and-theatre
[21] https://worldoftheatreandart.com/modern-theatre/

anywhere in the world. The audience will also have a more interactive experience breaking the" fourth wall". Breaking the fourth wall means when actors talk directly to the audience, acknowledge them, or involve them in the action. In a traditional play, actors pretend the audience isn't there, as if the stage is a room with three walls, and the audience is looking through the invisible "fourth" wall.[22]

There are trends that future theatre experiences will blend real and digital worlds, becoming more interactive and accessible to diverse audiences.[23]

[22] https://thedramateacher.com/the-future-of-theatre
[23] https://t3triplethreat.com/performing-arts-trends-2025/

3. Theatre cultures around the world

Over time, theatre hasn't only changed through different historical periods in our world, but additionally through different cultures and religions. While the origins of theatre show how it developed from rituals into organized and structured performances, the way theatre grew depended strongly on local traditions, beliefs, and societies. This is the reason why theatre does not look the same everywhere in the world. To have a better understanding of this, I will describe in this chapter how theatre developed differently in various cultures around the world.

In this chapter, my focus and goal are to focus on Europe, Asia, and America. These regions show very different theatre traditions and cultural influences. Furthermore, these examples help to understand global theatre development.

3.1. Asia

Asian theatre, as in many other regions traces back a long time ago, where they used:

- early religious rituals
- ancient movements imitating animals, or so-called animal movements
- martial arts, and
- the art of storytelling and later
- the complex behavior codes of different periods, the most intricate of them being court etiquette, also left their undeniable marks on theatre and dance

Many of these early elements later developed into more structured theatre forms, but they kept their symbolic meaning to tradition. In many early cultures, theatre and dance originally came from religious rituals. For example, in ancient Greece, theatre developed from ceremonies honoring the gods and in ancient China, dance began in shamanistic rituals used to communicate with spirits.[24]

There are many parts of Asia, especially in South and Southeast Asia, where performance continued to be an important religious and cultural practice.[25]

[24] https://disco.teak.fi/asia/the-origins-of-asian-theatrical-traditions/
[25] https://www.britannica.com/art/theater-building/Developments-in-Asia

3.1.1. India

India is seen as the place where some of the oldest theatre traditions in the world began. Because of this long history, India is usually mentioned first when talking about Asian theatre. People in India developed clear ideas about theatre, dance and storytelling. These ideas later influenced other parts of Asia. In India, theatre was closely connected to religion and everyday life. Performances were not only meant to entertain people. They were also used to teach moral and religious ideas.[26]

One of the most important texts about theatre in India is the Natyashastra. It was written more than 2000 years ago. This text explains how plays should be performed. It includes rules for acting, movement, facial expressions, music and stage design. Classical Dances in India have been:

- Bharatanatyam
- Kathakali
- Kathak
- Manipuri
- Kuchipudi
- Odissi[27]

In Indian culture the human body was not seen as something bad. It was seen as a way to show feelings and beliefs. Because of this, dance and movement became very important in theatre. Many performances were connected to Hinduism. They told stories about gods, heroes, and long journeys. Theatre and dance were often shown in temples or during religious festivals. This close connection between theatre, religion and the human body did not stay only in India. Similar ideas can also be found in other parts of Asia. Especially in South and Southeast Asia. Theatre and dance did continue to be important parts of religious and community life.[28]

At the same time, theatre did not develop in the same way everywhere in the world. In some regions, the connection between religion and performance slowly became weaker. For example, in the Western World the strong connection between religion performance began to weaken after the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This change is liked to religious beliefs in monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which often viewed the human body as sinful.

[26] https://www.britannica.com/art/theater-building/Developments-in-Asia#ref39384
[27] https://www.britannica.com/art/Sanskrit-literature
[28] https://disco.teak.fi/asia/the-origins-of-asian-theatrical-traditions/

On the other hand, South and Southeast Asia, the connection between religion and performance has remained strong until todays. Religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism do not see the body as sinful or impure. Instead, the body is considered sacred and closely connected to the spirit. Because of this belief, using the body through dance, movement, and performance is seen as meaningful spiritual practice, not just entertainment. These performances are a way to worship, meditate, and connect with gods, spirits, or higher truths.[29]

Performances were still used in rituals, festivals and ceremonies. A clear example of this can be found in Bali.

3.1.2. Bali

Balinese arts have continued to stay in modern times, because they are an important part of religious life. Many ritually require performances such as song, Wayang Kult, Topeng mask dance, gamelan music, and dance as offerings to the 3 gods. Furthermore, the main setting for performance in Bali is the odalan, or temple festival, which takes place every 210 days in each of the many temples across the island. Although, if a village has its own performers, they will "ngayah", meaning they perform voluntarily as an act of devotion. If not, and if the temple can afford it, outside performers are hired to take part in the festival. Other important rituals in Bali, such as weddings, cremations, and life-cycle ceremonies, almost always include gamelan music and often dance and theatre. Trance plays a central role in both ritual and performance and is considered a natural part of many ceremonies. Certain dance dramas, such as Calonarang, which tells the story of an 11th-century witch opposed by the village protector Barong, are specifically meant to invite both performers and spectators to enter a trance state.

3.1.2.1. Topeng mask dance drama

Topeng means "pressed against the face" it` s a form that usually tells stories of kings of the past. Its traditionally performed by five men, where each one is a specialist in a particular genre of mask performance.

[29] https://disco.teak.fi/asia/the-origins-of-asian-theatrical-traditions/

Figure 4 - Topeng Dance https://triangvillas.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/topeng-dance.jpg

Many of the stories come from the Balinese BABAD or treatises telling storys of Balinese kings. There are a few other types of stories, but a typical one is: Good, righteous, but greedy kings want to take over neighboring land, and for that he gathers up his army, goes over to the enemy lands and wins. As mentioned, Topeng shows are done by five men: It is called Topeng Panca. They come together before a performance, and they decide on the story and who will do which parts. Most dancer-actors know dozens of stories, so it is easy to perform and improvise. In their play, there are usually 11 types of masks used.

3.1.2.2. Wayang Kulit

Figure 5 - Wayang Kulit: A Dance of Light and Shadows https://www.theluxurysignature.com/2022/04/28/wayang-kulit-a-dance-of-light-and-shadow/

Another traditional performance in Bali is the Wayang Kulit, it's a traditional Balinese and Javanese shadow-puppet theatre. Flat leather puppets are held behind a white screen, and a light casts their shadow for the audience. A dalang (puppet master) controls the puppets, speaks the characters, and leads the gamelan music. Stories usually come from Hindu epics or local myths, and performances are booth entertainment and religious offerings, teaching moral lessons and connecting people with spiritual ideas.

3.1.2.3. Kecak

Lastly the Kecak performance is well-known in Bali, it's syncopated mouth music. Using the syllable `cak` in interlocking rhythms, mainly of 3,5 and 7, interwoven with the melody of a typical gamelan riff, over 100 men chant while seated cross legged in concentric circles surrounding a fire lamp. Originally, CAK, as it was known, was used in a small group to help induce a trance state in the Sanghyang trance dance tradition. In the 1930s the German artist Walter Spies and I Wayan Lempad of Bedulu village created a tourist version, which is nearly the same as what one sees today. Known as Kecak this now uses the Ramayana story. No trance is involved. Kecak would never be done in a ritual setting in Bali, but that does not belittle its amazing musicality and “ensemble-ness”. The plot behind the dance is:

King Dasharatha of Ayodhya had four sons: Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana, and Shatrughna, from three wives. Rama, the eldest, was set to become king, but his stepmother Kaikeyi wanted her son Bharata on the throne. Through palace intrigue, Rama was banished to the forest for fourteen years, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. Bharata, refusing to take the throne for himself, placed Rama's sandals on it as a symbol of Rama's rule.

In the forest, a golden deer lured Rama away, and Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana after stepping outside a protective circle drawn by Lakshmana. A great bird, Garuda, tried to rescue her but was injured and told Rama and Lakshmana about her capture.

Rama then assembles an army of monkeys led by Hanuman to rescue Sita. Hanuman crosses to Lanka, shows Sita Rama's ring as proof, and brings back a token from her. Together, Rama, his allies, and Hanuman's army fight Ravana and his forces to rescue Sita.[30]

3.1.3. Other Asia

Theatre in Asia has various different theatre traditions. Countries such as Japan, Chine, and Indonesia have their own form of theatre. In this chapter it won't be possible to describe every Asian region in detail. India and Bali were chosen as examples, since they show two important aspects of Asian theatre. India represents the early origins and basic ideas of theatre in Asia. Bali shows how these ideas are still alive in rituals and performances today. Other Asian theatre traditions such as Japanese theatre also developed in different ways. I won't be going into detail; however, they are part of the wide theatre culture of Asia.

3.2. Europe

In Europe, theatre is part of public culture. People go to theatres in cities. Theatre is also connected to Europe's history, because many old theatre buildings still exist today. In Europe, theatre is usually not a religious ritual. It is mainly a public event. People watch plays, musicals, comedy, dance or opera. Theatre culture in Europe is not the same everywhere. There are differences between northern, southern, eastern, and western Europe. However, a common factor is that European countries share the idea that theatre is a form of public art, open to a wide range of audiences.[31]

[30] https://ista.co.uk/resources/uploads/2021/03/Balinese-Theatre-master-class-resource-pack.pdf#:~:text=Balinese%20theatre%20encompasses%20more%20than%20just%20drama%E2%80%94gamelan,and%20is%20famous%20throughout%20the%20theatrical%20world

[31] https://www.erht.eu/page/en/home.php

Theatre entertains people, but it can also make them think or discuss social or political topics. Some plays show problems, ask critical questions or start discussions. This could be controversial; however, it may also be seen as an important part of culture.[32]

One well-known writer was Bertolt Brecht. He believed that theatre should help the audience think critically. His plays often showed social injustice and encouraged people to question what they see on the stage.[33]

Since Europe has many large cities with strong cultural life, theatre culture is often shaped by urban life. It is helpful to look at one example. London is one of the most important and well-known theatre cities in Europe, where theatre is strongly connected to the city, entertainment and cultural life.[34]

3.2.1. London - West end

England was strongly influenced by the art and performances of theatre. They are known worldwide for their amazing theatre performances, which began centuries back. The West-end is a well-known tourist location, offering musicals, such as “The Lion King”, “Wicked”, “Phantom of the Opera” and more.

Figure 6 - Shakespeare's Globe Theatre https://www.marykatenavigates.com/the-blog/2017/10/25/shakespeares-globe-theatre

The Globe Theatre in London today is the third version of the Globe, meaning it has been rebuilt three times. The first Globe opened in 1599 and was built by the Lord Chamberlains Men, Shakespeare's theatre company. It's likely that the first play which was performed there, was written by Shakespeare called Julius Caesar in 1599, then wrote “As You Like it” and later “Hamlet”. Over the next fourteen years, he created many famous plays such as: Twelfth Night, Othello, King Lear, Macbeath, Antony, Cleopatra

Other writers, including Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, and John Fletcher, also wrote plays for the Globe. Later in the year 1613, during a performance of Henry VIII, a prob cannon caused a fire causing the Globe Theatre to burn down completely, luckily no one was killed. Within a year the theatre was rebuilt and the second Globe stayed open until 1642, when it

[32] https://www.europeantheatreforum.eu/page/about
[33] https://www.helles-koepfchen.de/artikel/3127.html

[34] https://officiallondontheatre.com/london-west-end-guide/

got closed from the parliament. From 1609, Shakespeare's company also performed at the indoor Blackfriars Theatre, where Shakespeare wrote his final plays. The modern Globe Theatre reopened in 1997.[35]

3.3. America

American theatre began in the colonial ear, with early playhouse in Virginia in the year 1716 and South Carolina in the year of 1730 showing English plays like Hamlet. In the 18th Century, theatre struggled due to colonial tensions with Britain, moral concerns, and oppositions from religious groups such as Puritans and Quakers, who viewed acting and theatre as sinful.

During the 19th century, theatre gained popularity, though actors were initially not highly respected. Minstrel shows became a dominant form of entertainment, featuring white performers in blackface, but these declined by the mid 20th century as racial attitudes changed.

By the late 19th century and early 20th centuries, vaudeville (a popular American variety show format) became the main popular form, consisting of multiple unrelated acts, helping launch the careers of performers like Judy Garland and Harry Houdini. Traditional theatre also rose in fame, with actors gaining celebrity status and government support through Franklin D. Roosevelts Federal Theatre Project. (1935-1939). As the cinema grew in the years of 1920s-303, live theatre faced competition, leading to the rise of musical theatre with productions like Show Boat and *Anything Goes*. American theatre continued to evolve, blending entertainment, artistry, and social commentary.

After World War II, American theatre gained international fame with productions like *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *The Crible* (1953). Musical theatre also grew, developing more serious productions in the 1950s and 60s. During the Civil Rights Movement, theatre evolved into “agenda” theatre, focusing social justice issues such as racism, drug culture, and cultural divides, with musicals like *Hair* and *West Side Story*.

Theatre faced challenges from radio, television, and taxes, making it difficult for playhouses to make a profit. To adapt, productions began borrowing from cinema and literature, leading to blockbuster shows like *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*.Today, Broadway and American theatre continue to thrive, combining elaborate musicals and socially conscious dramas. Modern hits like *Hamilton* and *Wicked*, alongside plays like

[35] https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/about-us/globe-theatre/#:~:text=The%20Globe%20Theatre%20you%20see,wrote%20for%20and%20part%2Downed

Angels in America, show theatre's ability to adapt to social change, remaining a vibrant form of cultural expression.[36]

3.3.1. Broadway

Broadway refers to a famous group of theaters in New York City; it is well-known for producing professional, large-scale theatrical performances. Surrounded by 41 theatres, Broadway is widely regarded as the main theatre in America. Broadway theatre has been in America since 1735, and Broadway became the most closely associated with the American musical.

Musicals began combining songs and stories from the late 1920s with *Show Boat* (1927). Rodgers and Hammerstein perfected this in the 1940s with *Oklahoma** Carousel, and *South Pacific*. Later hits like *Guys and Dolls,* and *My Fair Lady* made musicals even more classy. *West Side Story* (1957) was invented by using dance to tell the story, and in the 1960s-70s, musicals explored new themes and focused on dance-driven shows like *Chicago* and *Dancin`* .

During the 1970s and 1980s, Broadway experienced a decline, with crime, vagrancy, and closed theatres making the area run-down. In the 1990s, New York City began to revitalize the district as an entertainment hub with lavish musicals and hotels. Disney stage adaptations like *Beauty and the Beast* (1994), New York and *The Lion King* (1997) marked the company's influence and helped develop Broadway as a tourist-friendly and family-oriented destination. Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber were two of the most important figures in musical theatre. Sondheim created thoughtful, sophisticated musicals like *Sweeney Todd* (1979) and *Into the Woods* (1987). Lloyd Webber became famous for hit shows like *Cats* (1981) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1986). Their work influenced other successful musicals, including *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon*.

By the 2000s, Broadway focused on new works, though long-running hits like *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera* stayed profitable. Musicals began changing form, using social themes (*Rent*, *Urinetown*) or unconventional structures (*Contact*, *The Green Bird*), moving beyond the traditional mix of dialogue, music, and dance.

[36] https://yesterdaysamerica.com/how-american-theatre-has-prevailed-through-history/#:~:text=American%20theater%20has%20a%20long%20history%20that,in%20and%20viewing%20plays**%20*%20**Religious%20discouragement**

Broadway musicals have continued to be highly successful in the 21st century. *Wicked* (2003) became a long-running hit, while *The Book of Mormon* (2011) set record ticket sales and won multiple Tony and Grammy Awards. *Something Rotten!* (2015) received critical acclaim, and *Hamilton* (2015) by Lin-Manuel Miranda revolutionized Broadway by combining hip-hop and musical theatre, earning widespread praise and sweeping the 2016 Tony Awards.[37]

3.4. Comparing cultures

This chapter summarizes and compares the theatre cultures described in the previous chapters. The goal is to show the main differences and similarities between theatre traditions in Asia, Europe, and America. This comparison helps to have a better understanding of how theatre developed differently across the world before looking at modern global theatre and its influences.

Theatre has changed a lot over time, not only because of different historical periods, but additionally because of different cultures and religions. Although theatre originally developed from rituals, the way it grew depended strongly on their local traditions, beliefs, and societies. This is the reason why theatres do not look the same around the world.

- In Asia, theatre developed from religious rituals and storytelling. In countries like India and Bali, theatre and dance are closely connected to religion and everyday life. Performances are often a part of festivals and ceremonies, and the human body plays an important role.
- In Europe, theatre is mainly a public cultural activity. People visit theatres in cities to watch plays, musicals, or operas. European theatre focuses strongly on written texts, dialogue, and acting. It can entertain people, however, also make them question and think about social and political topics.
- In America, theatre developed later and was influenced by Europe. Musical theatre became especially important, like on Broadway. American theatre often combines entertainment with music, dance and social themes.

[37] https://www.usahistorytimeline.com/pages/the-influence-of-broadway-on-american-theater-3f9a7ed7.php?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Region	Origin	Examples	Short summary
Asia	Religious rituals, dance, martial arts, storytelling	India, Bali (Topeng, Wayang Kulit, Kecak)	Theatre is closely linked to religion, strong use of body, movement and dance. Symbolic meanings
Europe	From religious beginnings to public theatre and critical thinking.	Shakespeare, West End, modern European theatre	Theatre as public art, focus on text and dialogue, entertainment and critical or political reflection
America	Colonial period with European influence	Broadway, musical theatre	Entertainment focus, music and dance, social and political themes

Theatre cultures developed in different ways, but they did not stay seperate. Today, theatre traditions influence each other around the world. Due to the fact, that the world is connected, modern theatre uses ideas from many cultures. The next chapter explains how globalization has changed theatre and why theatre stays important in our society today.

4. Modern Theater in times of Globalization and the role in society

4.1. Definition Modern Theatre Globalization

Modern Theatre Globalization means that theatre from different countries is connected today. Because people can travel and communicate more easily today, theatre ideas can spread quickly between countries. This means theatre artists can share ideas and work together across many countries.[38]

The world is connected. There are big international theatre events and festivals where artists from many places perform and learn from each other.

4.2. How globalization influences modern theatre

Today, theatre is influenced by many cultures because the world is more connected than before. Theatre artists from different countries can meet, work together, and share ideas more easily than before. International theatre festivals help performances reach audiences from all over the world. Modern theatre productions often mix styles from different cultures. This can include new ways of acting, storytelling, or using technology on stage. Because of globalization, theatre shows influences from many parts of the world. At the same time, globalization can also create challenges. Some artists worry that local theatre traditions might be lost when global styles become more popular.[39]

4.3. Examples

At the Blobe to Globe festival, Shakespeare's plays were shown in 37 different languages to audiences from around the world.[40]

Another example is the Welt-Kindertheater-Fest, bringing children's theatre groups together from many countries to perform for international audiences. This helps young people learn from each other and their cultures.[41]

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[38] https://fiveable.me/history-theatre-iii-modernism-post-modernism/unit-15/challenges-opportunities-theatre-globalized-world/study-guide/7cDE5lHagrQi9h68
[39] https://fiveable.me/history-theatre-iii-modernism-post-modernism/unit-15/challenges-opportunities-theatre-globalized-world/study-guide/7cDE5lHagrQi9h68
[40] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globe_to_Globe_Festival
[41] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welt-Kindertheater-Fest

An additional example is the Gdansk Shakespeare festival in Poland, where theatre companies from around Europe and the world, perform Shakespeares plays in different styles and languages. [42] These are only some examples; however, they show how globalization helps theatre become more international today.

4.4. The Role of Theatre in Society Today

After learning and writing about modern theatre globalization, I would like to explain why theatre still plays an important role today. Theatre is now shared around the world; however, it still has a place in society. In our generation today, many people tend to watch movies, series or videos online, but compared to movies, theatre is a live performance. The actors and the audience are in the same place at the same time. This makes the theatre performance feel more real and more special.

Another important aspect of theatre is how it influences the audience to think about the subject. Some plays show problems in our society, such as unfairness or existing conflicts. These performances showing issues can help the audience talk about important topics and allow them to see different opinions. The internet may work as a source which is fast and easy to use; however, theatre is a real shared experience.[43]

Theatre can also help people understand other people and their actual situation. Performing can show many aspects of a person's life, when you watch characters on stage, you can learn how they feel and why they act in a certain way, since there is always a story and a reasoning behind the character. In conclusion, live performances can show many different stories and experiences.[44]

[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gda%C5%84sk_Shakespeare_Festival
[43] https://www.britannica.com/art/theatre-art
[44] https://performingarts.nd.edu/news-announcements/theater-effect-benefits-live-performances

5. Conclusion

In this project, I explored theatre culture around the world. I researched the origins of theatre, its development through history and how theatre is different in Asia, Europe and America. In addition, I explained how modern theatre is influenced by globalization and why theatre is still important today.

Through my work, I grew a big understanding of theatre, especially the origin of theatre, starting a long time ago, with rituals, music, dance, and storytelling. Over time, theatre started to become more organized, structured, and developed differently in each region. Asian theatre has become connected to religion and tradition. In addition, the human body, the movement and dance played an important factor, especially in the well-known places India and Bali. In Europe, people go to theatres in cities to watch plays that can entertain them but also affect the way they think about society and politics. However, in America, theatre developed later and focused strongly on entertainment, especially musical theatre, like Broadway. These theatre cultures are different in many ways, but they also share a connection. Because of globalization, theatre artists from different countries can share ideas, perform together, and learn from each other. These different theatres are a good way of sharing different stories and understanding their religion. Modern theatre often mixes styles from many cultures. At the same time. It is important to keep local traditions, so they are not lost.

Theatre is still important today. It is live, which makes it special and different from movies or videos. Now, theatre can't be influenced or replaced by AI, compared to movies or videos, which gives hope to young actors who would like to continue acting and performing in their future careers. However, it is uncertain whether AI will take over theatre in the future.

Theatre helps people understand emotions, cultures, and social problems. It brings people together into one space and creates shared experiences. Whether the performance takes place in a religious setting or on Broadway, theatre still has the same meaning

In conclusion, I can compare the differences between theatres around the world. I am glad I could use my own experience to write about my work. This topic is very important to me, since it's my passion, and I would love to continue it in the future. Having written over this topic made me realize how much opinions, culture, or tradition can influence art. It's fascinating how the beliefs of people can be shared with the audience. Through this project, I have a better understanding of the meaning of theatre. I understood why theatre can look so different around the world but still share the same goal, telling stories and connecting people. This makes theatre a unique and powerful experience.