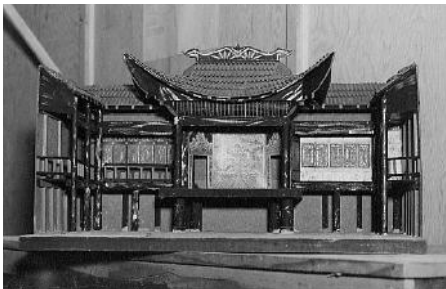


South East Asian shadow theatre seen from backstage

the screen so really the audience should be on the other side. But the nature of performing arts styles in South East Asia means that they don't have a very distinct or strict auditorium orientation. People do move all around the performers, and the people in the picture are actually part of the audience. They went all the way to the backstage to see the performance from the back, and this is not a problem with most traditional forms of theatre.



The Chinese Theatre Temple of Chiang Fec is typical of a Chinese opera performing venue although in practice many are slightly different from what is shown. Chinese opera is traditionally performed on the raised platform in front of an audience that is standing, talking, moving and walking about; it is something like the original performances of Shakespeare. The audience are all around the place and have food and drink and talk loudly.



A model of the Chinese Temple Theatre of Chiang Fec

The Chinese opera music is also very loud. So we see that the performing arts culture in its traditional art forms is actually very different from what happens in modern performing arts venues.

energy from the floor is much stronger. You need a different kind of orientation to appreciate this as it is a very different way from how modern theatres are built.

The need for action

We have been discussing all these issues in Asia and we have finally called upon a few really interested people to come together to form a small group called TTNA, Technical Theatre Network Asia. Its members are all self-motivated people and we met in April 2006 in Singapore to have a three-day workshop to talk about these issues. We want to find a solution because, as practitioners, we often can't do anything about decisions made by government or by the architect or his consultant as to what the theatre is going to look like; we usually have to work with what we are given. We simply don't have the option to dictate what sort of theatres should be provided for us to work in. This is dictated by some other decision-maker, which leaves us almost unable to affect what is being done in terms of future performance spaces.

The importance of the floor

Most of my work in South East Asia is in contemporary venues, and I work with different directors and in different countries. But you can see that traditionally the floor of the performance space is very important and that a lot of effects involve the floor. Despite of set designers, or putting a lot of effort looks like. From the you have to present performing arts on a raised-stage with a y of the audience is much of the floor usually the floor seen auditoria is actually a much of the floor

There was a very interesting debate about cultural identity. I think a lot of South East Asian countries suffer from an identity crisis. Very few countries are not suffering this problem, the exceptions being countries that have not been colonised, like Japan. That is the reason why Japanese culture is very strong, very solid, very intact. If you come to Malaysia and ask me what is my culture I would say, "I am Malaysian," – but what is my culture? This can be quite confusing. Our culture has been changed and is not an original culture because we are not practising traditional Chinese culture and we don't really have a 'Malaysian' culture. One of the unfortunate things is that we now have McDonalds and we get to see Harry Potter films!

Mac Chan has worked as a Lighting Designer

Designer and consultant Mac Chan stresses the importance of performance spaces in south-east Asia reflecting the local culture, while architect Caroline Noteboom describes the development of theatres in Bogotá in Colombia and musician and consultant Tateo Nakajima examines ways to meet the needs of local communities.

as consultant on theatre and media facilities projects, including Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre and Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. He is also undertaking research into Asian theatres and their architecture.

The style of a lot of traditional arts in South East Asia is very geometric, and the layout of the dance or the performance is very important. It is very important that the audience see the geometry of the movements, and so it is not just a frontal view that is required. And what we are finding here is that many ethnic productions presented in modern venues in South East Asia are also paying a lot of attention to the floor. The