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Staging the Social Drama of Work:
Ethnography of a Theater Company as a Means of Analyzing Theater
Activity

Abstract

This paper shows how conducting the ethnographic study of a theater hall and company can help define theater activity. Once the aesthetic of the social organization is set apart from the proper division of labor, theater appears as a collective activity which requires the cooperation of eight groups playing different social roles. The cooperation modes rest on a meshing of direct or indirect services for the actors who carry out the core task of performing. This specific organization of work around a central group is what makes the activity artistic. Simultaneously, the service relation offers the possibility for some categories to bring their relationship with actors closer to a state of symmetry and sometimes reverse asymmetry. As a status enhancing opportunity, service relationship for actors also directly or indirectly provide the grounds for participant commitment and thus guarantee long-lasting operation for the theatrical organization.

Keywords

Theater ethnography; Collective activity; Division of labor; Tasks; Social roles; Service relationship; Commitment

Actress Jane Christian plays *Matilda*, a young South-African married woman of the 60's who, when alone, vividly recalls the days when she was a singer. Wearing a yellow-daffodil flowered cotton dressing-gown, she stands in the middle of the stage and starts singing on Myriam Makeba's famous tune *Forbidden Games* as though she were back in her cabaret days. The audience silently sits in half-light. Sitting near one of the entry doors, Victor, an ushererⁱ, is watching it over. In the wings, Isabelle Nardi, the dresser, is helping actor Soumaoro Kante adjust his detachable collar. On the upper circle and peering over the stage and the orchestra section, Pascal Laville operates the blue and red spotlights that bathe the actress on stage in a cabaret-like atmosphere while Simon Chénabi, the sound engineer, is playing the sound track of Makeba's song. At the desk in the entrance, two usherers are preparing the books to be sold after the show. Jacques and Izabela, the ticket sellers, have gone back to the ticket office to keep the accounts. All of them are active members of the Circle Theatre (referred to here as the Circle or CT)ⁱⁱ; a theater company founded more than thirty years ago by Alex Meadow a stage director and since then, artistic director. All

of them contribute to the artistic activity called theater. But what exactly is this activity? How can it be socially defined? Most sociological studies on theater have been concerned with studying its most visible participants. Actors training, tasks and careers have been thoroughly described and analyzed (Menger 1997; Paradeise 1998 and Katz 2006) and the new artistic figure of stage directors detailed (Proust 2001). Laure de Verdalle (2003) has accurately accounted for the changes that affected East-German playwrights and stage directors during the reunification process. In France, sociological analysis sets strong emphasis on the specificity of actors and stage crew job statuses and the *intermittent* system.ⁱⁱⁱ Because of the importance of public funding, French theater audience members have been the focus of in-depth examination with a view to sketching out theatergoing as a cultural practice^{iv}. The impact of government intervention as well as pressure for artistic innovation have been seen as increasing the division of labor and a rationalization process to which the collective organization model of the theatrical community praised by many drama companies stands as a means of resistance^v (Proust 2003). However, except for Eleanor Lyon's study of the social organization of theatrical production in a US context (1974), theater has not given rise to analyses that detail the various categories of people who participate according to their respective tasks, their cooperation modes, the type of perspectives they develop on their participation and what makes them maintain such participation.

This paper aims to show that the symbolic interactionist perspective developed by Becker for artistic activities (1982) and adopted for the study of a theater hall and company improves our understanding of theater activity. Indeed, theaters like the Circle offer a stage on which most of the different activities necessary to the production and distribution of a piece of drama are presented. This enables the researcher to better see the participants' social roles and thus set back into question the conventional three-category typology resting on the artistic, technical and administrative personnel. It brings to light the type of relationships needed for participants to be able to cooperate and the motives they develop to commit themselves to the production and distribution processes the social activity of theater involves. It thus reveals the social drama of work (Hughes 1993) in theater but points to the transferability of some concepts to other worlds of art (Becker 1982). The monography of a theater thus appears as a means of understanding an organization's *working drama*, that is the stage on which participants to a theatrical organization adapt the role they play to the roles played by the other persons and by doing so over time enable the organization to last^{vi}.

Prior to presenting some of the results of my empirical research at the Circle Theater, I will sketch out fieldwork conditions and research methodology. As with the conventional analysis of plays, this paper is then built around three main parts. The first part deals with defining the setting. It points out the possibility that strong focus on task description offers of separating the aesthetic (Becker 1982)^{vii} of an artistic organization from its proper division of labor. The second part focuses on the characters and their parts: who they are, what they do and how they do it.^{viii} It shows how task description and allotment, confronted to the different participants' perspectives help bring out social roles thus enabling the construction of a new typology of participants. The last part reveals the plot that is to say what keeps all these participants together. It thus accounts for the cooperation modes in theater activity as well as the motives that draw participants into maintaining cooperation so that the theatrical organization continues to operate therefore contributing to its durability.

Methods and Fieldwork conditions

This paper stems from the fieldwork research carried out for a PhD dissertation in the field of sociology (Bense Ferreira Alves 2005). It is based on direct observation of parts of the work performed by the members of the Circle Theater (CT) as they were completing some of the numerous tasks that the production and distribution of a theater play directed by Alex Meadow implied except for rehearsals^{ix}.

During the five years (1999 – 2004) of fieldwork, I spent many days and nights as a volunteer worker with no set position at the theater. I thus started as assistant to the dresser and moved to that of cashier, then usherer while simultaneously remaining just a versatile helpful hand when required and a non-obtrusive observer when I felt it most appropriate. This observation at different stages of the theater season and daily life produced field notes of different natures (observation notes, situated talk) mainly focused on defining the clusters of tasks (Strauss 1985) or “bundles of tasks” as Hughes would say. Along with observing activities and interactions, I conducted counts (specially among the audience) as well as formal extensive interviews of a biographical nature so as to be able to trace access to the occupation and to the organization but also collect individual participant perspectives on their roles within the organization and the way the latter had evolved. Lastly, I explored different types of archives about the Circle Theater so as to rebuild the rather long history of the place. Life histories as well as the participants’ perspectives on the division of labor and organizational changes were then confronted to this historical material. This brought life to both the elements that made up the life-long aesthetics of this theater hall and those that enabled its adaptation to a changing environment^x.

The Setting or the Circle’s Aesthetic

A Theatrical Place in Paris

The Circle Theater is worldwide famous for its thrust and orchestra-leveled stage, red-and-brown-pigment dilapidated walls and corroded iron-wrought dome that makes it resemble the remains of a temple in which a cult would still be secretly celebrated. A 19th-century theater hall built on the borders of newly annexed Parisian suburbs, the Circle Theater had been abandoned for 25 years before it was occupied and reused as a place for theatrical rehearsals and performances in the mid 1970s. At that time, the government was engaged in promoting theatrical production by means of a wide variety of subsidies^{xi}. Many already well-known stage directors started looking for premises that would not only host their shows but would also offer space for rehearsals therefore giving them the opportunity of becoming the directors of new theater halls and of being able to control part of the distribution process. All types of spaces were then occupied from closed down plants or railway stations to a disused cartridge depot. Finding the abandoned shell of the Circle Theater enabled Alex Meadow and his partner Yvonne Segla to apply for a government subsidy specially meant for theater companies with a place to rehearse and perform which provided them with a competitive advantage over other theater companies.^{xii} The amount of money received could cover the refurbishing works required to match safety standards and then the yearly creation of theater shows that claimed that the text and actors were central by not resorting to setting, costly costumes and large stage personnel, but making wide use of the Elizabethan scene and acting

techniques such as pantomime. All of these elements enabling the CT to put forth a distinctive theater product on the Parisian market. The artistic and administrative directors^{xiii} also claimed that the type of drama offered at CT was available to all types of audience members and fostered wider audience participation thanks to the association of several elements: reduced staff and craft organization with little specialization, the theater hall specific localization and architecture that enabled sale of low-cost seats, simple and clear stage situations, absence of etiquette in interactions, as well as side-show activities. If we replace these claims in the evolution undergone by dramatic art since the end of the 19th century, they appear in direct descent of the work conducted by Pottecher, Gémier, Appia, Meyerhold and Craig, Artaud, Brecht and Grotowski that championed new interaction patterns between company members and their audiences during performances by simultaneously revisiting theater architecture, text and actors' performances.

During fieldwork, audience interaction patterns with other participants to the Circle were of the following kind. At one point on stage, Jane Christian, thanks Soumaoro, who plays a reverend, for having warmly welcome her to the women's club he supports. She also shows gratitude to Lionel, another of her acting partners, who embodies a women member of this same club. Jane Christian then comes close to a woman seated in the first row at the orchestra. She addresses the latter as if she too were a member of the club and thanks her for her help. The audience member is first surprised and then smiles. When the actress continues with another patron, the latter smiles and nods as if grateful for the acknowledgement. Despite the absence of heightened stage and of sophisticated décor, the like-life scenes and absence of conventional protocol in the theater hall, audience members do to move onto the plastic mat that delimits the stage or provide an improvised cue to the actress, thus fully becoming part of the play's cast. Actors and audience members then play different parts in the production and distribution process of the play. Géraldine Bayle is a member of the audience. She has come with a group of students to whom she teaches theater in high school. Prior to attending the show, she had to convince the students to come and accompany her to the Circle and had to get in touch with the chief cashier so as to get special prices when booking the seats. Géraldine Bayle thus plays the part of an intermediary between potential audiences and theater professionals. Audience members that can gather groups of people to buy several tickets at a time - like teachers with their students or members of worker's councils with their colleagues - can thus play an active part in increasing attendance volumes. By doing so, they contribute to securing the theater's receipts. Resorting to audience members acting on behalf of institutions or groups is a very widespread practice in the theater world^{xiv}. At the Circle student audience members can also play another part. About a fortnight before the opening night, a performance of the newly created show directed by Alex Meadow is sometimes organized at one of the high schools of the students who regularly fill in the house. After the actors have performed the play with only a few props, the students are asked to provide answers to the director's questions about what they understood of the play. Thus, they play the part the director conventionally plays during rehearsals when acting as a surrogate audience for the actors and act as work-in-progress evaluators within the limits set by the director. However, we can see that, as in most theaters and despite the specific elements put forth as audience participation incentives, theater patrons at the Circle Theater have mainly two conventional bundles of tasks. On the one hand, by coming to the theater, attending a show, expressing their feelings and convincing other people they allow the theatrical event to take place and to last. On the other hand, observing audience behavior during a performance also shows that the more active

part theatergoers take in the performance of actors is the collective support they can bring by laughing at a scene or their collective refusal of support by remaining silent or showing disapproval. Task description therefore enables the researcher to measure the adequacy between audience participation as claimed for - that is to say its role in the theater aesthetic - and the role played by this same audience in the division of labor that exists in the production and distribution process of a play. When systematically conducted for all groups of participants, task description underlines that there is sometimes a huge gap between an aesthetic and the actual division of labor.

A theater hall is then, in Howard Becker's terms (2004: 2), a place that has been socially defined - some people share a view on how it has to be used, by whom and it therefore receives financial means so as to operate. However, even a physical place is constantly being redefined socially through the actions and judgments of the types of participants that cooperate so as to keep it going which implies that these participants, their tasks, their cooperation modes and the perspectives developed on them must be thoroughly examined.

The Characters

If the sociology of work and occupations has long been looking for the social roles^{xv} (Hughes 1996 [1951]: 314) beyond the positions held in social organizations^{xvi} (Blumer 1998 [1969]), fieldwork in the sociology of the arts, and the sociology of theater in particular is still constrained by the three local categories above-mentioned. Although trying to define artistic work, as well as technical or administrative work for their specificities is necessary, relying on these categories hinders the description of the division of labor as well as the definition of the social roles within a theater by comforting the view on artistic work as esoteric. As a drama production and distribution unit, a theater gives access to almost all the sequences of tasks required in a row or simultaneously along the course of theatrical project and divided up according to various criteria among all participants - that is to say an *arc of work*^{xvii} (Strauss et al. 1985).

Participants and their Social Roles

When standing in the middle of the stage, singing *Forbidden Games* in red light, Jane Christian is indeed playing a situation with words and gestures in front of an audience. As such, she belongs to the category of "actors", that is to say the group of participants whose occupation is to embody dramatic characters on stage. In the theater world, the sole presence of actors gives a theatrical nature to the production and distribution process of a theater piece. The product of their action is a theater show whose consumption is immediate and which is thus also a service for those who consume it. The term used underlines that, just as the "artists" defined by Howard Becker (2004: 24), the "actors" carry out what they define and what other participants to that world underline as being the "core activity" in the production of a work of art.

When later, Naomi Todd - who has replaced Jane Christian on stage^{xviii} - appears in front of the audience, she is wearing the gown that Isabelle Nardi had previously sewed for her out of a piece of poplin she had bought in a nearby store. All three actors wear suits that Isabelle had found in a second-hand shop. Katia Plovec, who then replaced her as the dresser, had the suits dry-cleaned and then

held them up for the actors to put them on while they slipped their feet in shoes that Isabelle had made easier to put on by replacing the laces with elastic. While operating his light desk, Pascal Laville expresses satisfaction at the cabaret scene. After many years of work at the Circle, he had been able to make proposals of colored lights that the stage director, Alex Meadow, had agreed to during rehearsals. Things being set up, the dresser and light engineer are now making sure that everything goes smoothly the way they were “blocked”^{xix} so as to support the actors tasks on stage. They all follow a written or digital “cue sheet”.^{xx} Just as the stage manager, costume, set and, music designers, as well as property people and stagehands that usually make stage crews, Isabelle, Katia and Pascal see themselves and are seen as “serving the actors”. They form the category of the “support personnel” a group made up of all the people who, behind the scenes, bring direct assistance to actors during rehearsals and on-stage performances so that a play performed by actors may be created and presented in front of an audience^{xxi}. This category was inspired from Eleanor Lyon’s typology of theatrical production divided into “acting” and “non-acting personnel” or “support personnel” (Lyon 1975: 68)^{xxii}.

Prior to playing their parts, Naomi and one of her three male acting partners, Lionel, had both gone through a casting process. Alex Meadow had previously chosen a play to be put up at the Circle. He had then decided to hire four actors and three members of the support personnel on top of Pascal. He had talked long-time participants Soumaoro and Aboubacar into playing in it before having his assistant get in touch with potential actors and actresses for the other parts. He had then watched them play a scene with Soumaoro and Aboubacar in front of him and his assistant and, then decided whether or not the outside candidates fitted the roles. The stage director had set out the overall amount of time necessary for the play to be rehearsed and defined when it would be presented to the general public. He had also defined the rehearsal schedule, delimiting the scenes that would be worked on, with whom and with what type of props. Although actors and technicians were asked to make different performing, lighting, costumes, and sound propositions all along the rehearsal process, Meadow expressed the final decision when it came to choosing. Even if he considers that his task is to help actors find the best way to perform a scene, and defines himself as a guide providing actors with a path to follow, Meadow devised this path on his own accord and does not consider this as an answer to actors’ demands for services. As such, and contrary to most of the other members of Lyon’s “support personnel”, Alex Meadow does not see himself as “serving the actors”.

The situation observed at the Circle Theater as well as previous fieldwork experience with a professional theater company, therefore, pointed at different social roles for some of the participants listed by Lyon. Indeed, if the artistic and administrative directors do bring material aid (a place and money to put up the play) and the stage directors do provide intellectual and coordination support to the actors, they are also their direct or indirect employers, exercise control over all other participants and directly act on the organization of work by affecting a position to people who are then going to act on the organization from this very position. Such a redefinition of the social roles of these participants accounted for the need to create the new category of “management” composed of those people who, by prescribing what other participants to a theater company and hall should do and defining interaction modes, set the rules of the game on which the production and distribution of a theater play is organized. They are the stage directors, administrative and artistic directors, as well as theater managers. The fact that many stage directors

concurrently hold the position of managing director strengthens their roles as rule setters, task distributors and controllers^{xxiii}.

After some negotiation with Christophe Hörer, the then administrative director, 6.4 ft-tall Soumaoro signed a new contract for the tour of the show he was playing at the Circle. Taking into account the terms agreed on, Weronika Maresz, one of his secretaries, wrote out the contract and had Soumaoro sign it. In charge of preparing the tour and as agreed with the director, Beatriz Heinz, the tour assistant, had previously informed the actor that although she had done her best to accommodate him comfortably for the whole length of the worldwide tour, he would have to suffer some discomfort and accept to sleep in a normal bed for one night. Indeed, one of the mid-sized towns of the tour did not provide hotels with king size beds. Acting on behalf of the administrative director she had previously made sure that the selling price for the show, the billing and *per diem* lists^{xxiv} were approved by the welcoming theater by writing out a contract that read the terms of the sale set out by the director and sending it to the other party. Later on, she had made sure the playbill matched the Circle's communication requirements. Just as a tour guide, she had then booked flight tickets, checked out on hotel availability and standards, made sure setting, costumes and props were shipped on time to the right place and provided the actors with a detailed travel warrant. She regularly accounted for her tasks to the administrative director. During the tour, Beatriz then frequently paid visits to the actors so as to make sure everything was running smoothly. Although sometimes attending actors, Beatriz and Weronika's bundles of tasks are specially designed to directly help the "management" in its own administrative tasks (preparing administrative work and carrying out follow up tasks). Their activities customarily lie behind the lines of offensive operations that is to say the stage. These personnel is made of secretaries, accountants and tour assistants for instance, who often define themselves as strongly dependent on members of the management in a kind of patrimonial relationship - they see themselves as serving a "boss" and working in his shadow. These personnel are therefore called "back-line personnel".

Although recruiting participants and allocating work among them, Christophe Hörer's main task at the Circle is to find money for the shows to be put on and in particular those directed by Alex Meadow. He tries to find people that are ready to put money in a show either as a financial investment on future receipts or as a tax-reduction technique. For Alex Meadow's last show, Hörer convinced a few corporations he was used to working with to act as sponsors but mainly signed co-producing partnerships with some of the theaters that would then welcome the show during its tour. Although the show required large amounts of money since it comprised a long period of experiment in different countries before rehearsals, many theater halls and festivals were ready to financially contribute since they were sure the show would attract large audiences. These people then make the group of "sponsors" without which artistic works such as theater shows would not be produced and distributed^{xxv}. State authorities, local authorities, banks, art patrons and independent producers are to be found in that category. In spite of considering themselves as helping artists and as people having a strong influence on the organization, the fact that these individuals define themselves as providers of financial assistance to institutions and not directly to actors makes them belong to a specific category independent from that of the "support personnel".

The show has started and late audience members are not allowed in during the first twenty minutes so as not to disturb actors on stage. Still, the outside doors of the theater are open. At 9:25, a young woman comes in. She says she wants to book a seat. Victor, the usherer that has welcomed her answers he cannot make the

decision. He goes and calls for Izabela the cashier. He comes back and says she can book a seat at the reduced price of 14€. Izabela comes in. The young woman says she only has 10€ in cash or a check. Izabela chooses the check although the woman had started taking her wallet out of her purse. Cashiers, usherers, bartenders and waiters of theater halls contribute to the distribution of the show by acting directly in contact with audience members, managing the flows so these people may have access to the theatrical product and service. In the theater, some of them like the ticket office cashiers make critical decisions as to letting people enter or not and advising them on how to increase their chances of entering or on abandoning attempts. Drawing from Deutscher's analysis of a bureaucratic organization such as a public housing office their role is somehow similar to that of "gatekeepers" (1968) or to Lipsky's "street-level bureaucrats" (1980). However, not all of them are in a position to select people and forbid access to the institution but conduct tasks that do contribute to the clients' assessment of the theatrical product as a whole. Thus and because all of them define themselves as people serving on the front line, being the first people to deal with the institution's clients and acting as buffers who absorb the hostilities of the organization's clients, another category emerges to encompass these participants: the "front-line personnel".

As we have already seen in the earlier part about the Circle's aesthetic, the body of clients served by the institution can sometimes play the part of make-believe partners for actors and authorized critics. However, their main activity is to attend the performance, witness the artistic event, formulate judgment, which as Gilmore (1990) says "shows artistic knowledge" and, by doing so, make it exist both financially and in experience (Dewey 2005 [1934]). In art worlds such as the theater world this group of participants is called an audience. So as to better render the idea that these people consume and receive both a product and a service but can also play other parts I chose the term "public".

Lastly, "critics" express their judgment on the works of art and resort to systems built by aestheticians to explain what make their worth (Becker 1982) thus participating in its distribution and to the development of its aesthetics. Although the category is made of both media critics and aestheticians, the term "critics" is chosen here so as to fit worlds in which the production of a good or a service is being assessed by other people than audience members and that have made an expertise in assessing other people's work^{xxvi}.

The few examples provided here have helped us define the division of labor at work in theater activity by pointing to a typology of eight different social roles. However, a lot of drama companies are either forced - for lack of money - or seek - for ideological purposes - to limit the number of participants who do not carry out the core tasks thus emphasizing the central part of actors. In such organizations, the production and distribution process of a show may require that actors also be stage directors, general managers, stage crew and usherers thus matching the conventional definition of "craft organizations" that is to say one in which the work is divided among only a few number of versatile participants. Fieldwork experience at the Circle and at another professional drama company showed that although the categories of participants may vary in their content from one organization to another the different social roles must be fulfilled even if it meant being fulfilled by the same person.

This account has also helped us glimpse at the type of cooperative links that these categories keep up in the production and distribution process of a play. Indeed, by underlining the type of relationship in which carrying out a bundle of tasks places each group of participant, the new typology pointed up the interdependence links

between each category and the direct subordination links of some categories to others - actors and back-line personnel in relation to the management, support personnel in relation to the actors, front-line personnel in relation to the public, for instance and called for further enquiry into the nature of these relationships.

The Plot: Cooperating and Maintaining Cooperation

Service Relationships as Cooperative modes

Katia, aged 36, has been working as a dresser in the theater world for many years but can also boast experience as a dresser in many other worlds like the opera and dance worlds, as well as the movie and fashion industries. After nearly a year of working for the Circle Theater on the worldwide tour of a show, she and the rest of the cast —three actors and an actress, plus the light and sound managers— are back in the theater hall for a two-month performance period. Having spent much time together since tours imply not only participating in the show performances but also traveling and eating with fellow co-workers as well as being accommodated in the same hotels, actors and dresser know each other pretty well, kiss one another and show signs of intimacy and absence of power distance.

Here is the account of some of the tasks conducted during one of the performances: Katia helps 60 year-old Soumaoro put on his camel beige vest and later helps him take it off. When he takes off his hat and places it on her head she smiles. He then starts unbuttoning the detachable collar used to embody the reverend. Later, she kindly reminds him of tying up his fake shoelaces as he enters his dressing room and starts tuning his guitar. While accomplishing these tasks, Katia keeps up conversation with Soumaoro on menial subjects and more personal matters such as the water damage at her flat and father and daughter relationships. In the meantime, Katia also helps Lionel, who at the age of 22 is playing small parts in the play, and Antoine, the male leading role, aged 27, dress and undress. She also provides assistance to Naomi, aged 31, the female leading role, with some of her costume changes. She thus gives a hand to Naomi holding her dressing gown up when the latter puts it on, helps Lionel take off his polo shirt and hands him a towel so that he can wipe off the sweat that runs along his chest and wipes out Antoine's face and chest as he crosses the rapid-change hall and proceeds to an armchair. Meanwhile, Lionel gets into a pair of pants and shirt and puts his socks and shoes on. When Naomi comes back from the stage, she takes off her slippers and lets them in front of the props table. Katia helps her with her gown. As Naomi goes to her dressing room, Katia pushes the slippers away under the table and says to me:

They're in the way. Anyone can stumble on her slippers. I keep pushing them under the table but she always puts them back were she had left them. I never say anything but, I think that as an actor, not being able to understand that is so selfish, it makes me crazy! You see when she transforms her dressing gown into a dress I have to roll her sleeves up. Well, at the beginning she wouldn't stick her arms straight. I had to show her, by mimicking her behavior, how hard for me it was to work quickly that way so that she would at last straighten her arms!

Later on, as she is sorting out clothes to be washed, Katia recounts how she changed the actors behavior towards their costumes. As they were used to leaving all their garments on the floor of their dressing rooms she told them that the

costumes would wear out more quickly and that new ones would have to be found. She knew that actors don't like to change costumes once they have got used to wearing them and that this would bother them. Actors therefore started putting their costumes on chairs.

When bringing all these elements together and matching them with other pieces of information gathered through informal talk or interviews we don't only see that Katia does not behave the same way with each actor but we understand why she does it. Comparing these interactions and the perspectives expressed on them by their agents (Katia and other dressers) with analytical categories drawn out from similar service relationships we can categorize Katia's behavior. In the theater world, the dressers' tasks consist in helping actors dress and undress, but also in taking care of the costumes – cleaning them up, ironing, mending and putting them away. Although their direct assistance to actors and to costume care has an impact on the pace and the aesthetics of the show, dressers are not considered as major participants to the production and distribution process of a theater play. Indeed, their tasks being very close to domestic ones, mainly carried out by women and, part of them—the cleaning tasks— usually carried out in the basement of theater halls. Thus, dressers are seen and see themselves as lower grade participants to this artistic activity. This low status is made official through the position they are given in the hierarchy of theater jobs. Although they are considered as technicians for the training and expertise that their job requires, they are usually poorly paid since the pay index for their job is the lowest one in the technicians pay grid. For all these reasons, dressers, on the one hand, tend to think that actors and actresses either ignore them—considering the dressers' tasks have meaningless impact on the show's production process—or despise them—overtly mistreating dressers. On the other hand, dressers see actors and actresses as irresponsible participants that they constantly have to protect against their own mistakes.

As Roth's hospital emergency staff members (Roth 1971), dressers like Katia first carry out a moral evaluation of their clients and establish categories of clients and demands. Katia assesses actors according to moral values either shared by members of the general society like age, or that are specific to her world like the importance of the actor/actress in the play and his/her fame. While Soumaoro—an old actor and a longstanding member as well as a “pillar” of the Circle Theater as he has been playing regularly on Alex Meadow's shows for nearly twenty years—“deserves” her services, the others, less famous and younger actors are “undeserving”. She also establishes categories of demands to be met or not. Helping actors and actresses with tasks they cannot do on their own or that can be accelerated thanks to her aid and so act on the shows pace is “legitimate”. Picking up clothes from the floor, which is a task associated to a servant's position, is “illegitimate” in a work organization that publicly advocates equality between participants. At the Circle Theater, this “dirty work” can therefore be delegated by skilful dressers who can boast previous work experience in the organization and use their position of insiders to teach some newly recruited actors what kind of assistance they can claim for and what they can't. They can't do so with the oldest actors of the Circle. Thus, and although their relationships show many signs of mutual respect and closeness, these actors are not considered as “good clients” by the dressers like Katia. Indeed, although they are used to carrying many tasks on their own, by leaving their costumes on the floor they also show they are capable of some disrespect. In terms of dressing, therefore, a “good client” is someone who gives little work to the dresser and shows some consideration for her/his tasks. At the other end, a “bad client” is someone who gives her/him much work and doesn't pay enough attention to

her/his activity. As Ray Gold's janitors with their "bad tenants", dressers can put limits to their demands of service by refusing to bring help on tasks that are peripheral as regards the core activities of their bundles of tasks as conventionally defined within the Circle Theater. Thus, during rehearsals, Katia once refused to help Naomi try and manage the difficult handling of a prop that happened to be a suit. Indeed, prior to that situation, the actress had not looked for Katia's advice thus denying both her skills in handling a piece of costume and her part in the show's production process. Naomi was then forced to beg Katia for help who then offered that they took some time for a special training session on the handling of the suit. Just as Katia's, the dressers' behaviors towards the actors therefore constantly affect their work and their way of behaving. Of course, not all situations enable dressers to resort to "client training" so as to readjust their position in the service relationship. Some places like, the *Comédie Française*, impose a routinization^{xxvii} of the work on their employees that reinforces their lower position. Still, as Robin Leidner showed, no doubt that even in the most routinized organizations, "interactive service workers" such as the dressers can use any routine that they see as fostering readjustment so as to get closer to symmetric service interactions (Leidner 1993).

The dressers' tasks not only affect the rhythm of the show, they can also change the aesthetic elements that are usually considered as resulting from the actors' activity or from actors-director relationships. After two months of daily performances of a show adapted from a Shakespeare play, Isabelle was confronted to a cleaning problem as regards a piece of the protagonist's costume, a black all-linen and silk tunic. Dylan Trent, the actor that embodied the character, being used to resorting to the foam produced by white toothpaste to mime an epileptic fit, the tunic was becoming irremediably stained. After having tried many cleaning techniques and convinced the actor to try and use other products so that it might not leave marks on the costume, Isabelle resolved to talk to the director about the risk of damaging a piece of expensive British tailored-made costume that this element of the actor's game represented for the show. Without mentioning the cleaning issue, the director managed to have the actor slightly change his game to avoid the use of staining products. Dylan Trent therefore abandoned the foam prop and resorted to miming fits with body movements.

The service relationship has been analyzed as a power relationship in which each partner is granted a certain room for maneuver (Crozier 1977; Jeantet 2003). However, what we see here is that this type of relationship does not so much rely on a power issue than on a question of asymmetry between provider and beneficiary. As Gold (1952) and Bigus (1972) showed, the provider constantly utilizes tactics to bring his relationship with the beneficiary closer to a state of symmetry. During this readjustment work, participants start from their own status and use the maneuver room they have at their disposal within the organization. Because they see actors as irresponsible participants and themselves as having a lower status, dressers try to readjust the asymmetric relationship in which they are placed as providers of a service to actors.

In taking advantage of the possibility given to them to readjust their position in the service relationships, dressers do not fit the conventional view on their occupation that presents them as subordinates who willingly submit to actors' whims and desires. Nor do the major part of the participants who use the maneuver room they are granted in an activity that implies that all cooperative links be service relationships to readjust their position and thus play a wider part in the production and distribution of a play. Sometimes they can even reverse the dissymmetric relationship they are placed in as service providers and thus, change their statuses

and social roles. This is what happened to the stage directors in France who, as a group, are no longer seen as mere coordinators but have acquired the status of artists without carrying out the core tasks of acting^{xxviii}. The status of artist therefore also appears as relying on the adaptive process of interactive groups willingly or unwillingly delegating or preserving the peripheral tasks around their core activity. It needs some participants to agree to part with a task, other participants to agree to take it on and to be able to use their coordinating activity to convince the rest of the participants to agree with the new allotment for this status to appear.

Beyond the Series of Participants, Division of Labor as a Series of Tasks

Three quarters of an hour before the show starts, the usherers open the main double-door on the square thus giving access to the theater hall to the audience members that have been crowding the square in front of the theater for many hours. Amin the maintenance manager goes out on the square and starts sorting out the people who already have their tickets from those who don't so that the first ones can proceed smoothly to the entrance. These audience members are then being taken care of by Sylvie, an usherer "doing the door" which means that she stands at the double-door located in the hall of the theater and leading to the corridor that circles the theater hall. After checking the tickets for side and floor, she advises audience members as to the path they will have to follow to get to their seats. Pascal, the stage manager stands nearby so as to prevent audience members from forcing access by making sure the other side of the double-door stays closed and, thus helping the usherer at the door carry out her task. On each floor of the theater hall, other usherers show audience members their seats, sometimes just pointing at them sometimes taking some audience members all the way to their appropriate seats while simultaneously trying to contain the flow of newcomers. On opening nights and full performances, the administrative director comes to meet special guests and personally sees them to their accommodation. Some actors also come to "the door" to look for acquaintances or relatives, thus carrying out reception tasks. Meanwhile, the audience members that are waiting for tickets to buy, progressively move to the desk and are attended by the cashiers who either sell them remaining seats or try to organize waiting lists for seats left over by no-show audience members.

The previous example shows how, as focusing attention on the usherers' tasks the observer can take advantage of watching members of other groups take part in the reception activity that traditionally falls onto the front-line personnel. Focusing on the different clusters of tasks and the people who carry them out can lead to defining groups of participants according to their social roles. However, such an entry tends to reduce the time dimension of the production and distribution process of an artistic work since it scarcely provides the possibility of describing parallel or stringed tasks. As a field condensing different activities, the theater hall just, as the hospital, offers the researcher the possibility to observe different groups while accomplishing similar or different tasks in the conduct of an arc of work. This enables the researcher to both strengthen the definition of social roles and depart from set perspectives on some of the bundles of tasks required for a theater play to be put up and presented in front of an audience.

This short description hints at another factor in the division of labor. The fact that managing the flows of public members cannot be defined as a "dirty work" that is spontaneously relegated by the management to subordinates. Indeed, in some cases it can become a highly praised task provided the audience members to which this service is rendered are selected and defined as "deserving". Thus we can say that

the value of a task also relies on the statuses of both the service recipient and service provider. It also hints at the fact that theater, like other cultural institutions, gives the possibility to participants to be versatile workers in spite of the bureaucratic tasks and work segmentation involved and that this doesn't necessarily affect their social role^{xxix}.

Status Enhancement as a Commitment motive to a Theatre Company

Many of the participants I was studying had been working at the Circle Theater for many years. At the same time, everybody was telling me that nothing was ever settled at the Circle and people would never know in advance if they were going to be part of a project or not. I therefore started wondering what made these people stay and maintain a "consistent line of activity" within an organization over a long period of time by rejecting any alternative in spite of the conventional "project-based form of organizing" (Faulkner and Anderson 1987). This amounted to questioning people's commitment motives as expressed by Becker (1960). In France, and probably because of the specific job status the *intermittent* workers are granted as related to conventional short-term workers, current analysis on commitment to artistic organizations is based on understanding market mechanisms. Those rely on a vision of the employer – employee relationship in terms of a commercial relationship. Participants to theatrical organizations are seen as individuals who, for most of them, offer their workforce because they have balanced out "efficiency salary", skill-assessment based on reputation, insurance mechanisms covering unemployment periods and psychological satisfactions linked to the non-routinized work attached to a project-based production system (Menger 1991, 1997, 2002 and 2005). However, as Florence Weber (2000) would say, if this is a way of seeing interactions, it does not make room for exploring the thickness of the links between interaction partners. What struck me then when doing so was that each individual's participation to the Circle, whatever his or her social role, seemed extremely intertwined with that of the director and greatly dependant on how they considered their status in the organization and the way other people regarded it.

As far as Alex Meadow was concerned, the data collected had led to the following portrait: a very famous director whose continuous success for over 60 years of career had never been denied but who never gave himself over to stardom; a man that had achieved the position of theater master thanks to the continuing success of the shows he had directed but also thanks to his numerous writings that build up part of the theoretical body of texts used in many drama schools; a member of the management personnel of the Circle Theater who simultaneously held many positions (adapter, translator, artistic director and play director) and therefore concentrated decision power in his hands both in the production and distribution process and in the definition of artistic work; and finally, the pivot of all work interactions in rehearsals as teams were made of multicultural actors who could not but rely on him so as to interact with the other members, and of support personnel that only deal with him and his assistant.

Pascal Laville had started at the Circle Theater as a former electrician that had discovered the performing arts by carrying out lighting tasks for holiday village shows. He says that he owes Meadow the fact of having left a worker's condition and having had access to an executive's position. He receives a good salary, bonuses for taking part in the creation process, daily tour allowances and the symbolic benefits of taking part in a famous theater, going on worldwide tours and being personally acquainted to the director who regularly shows he appreciates his work. Such

portraits illustrated Weber's (1993) somewhat abstract concept of "charismatic leadership" for all instances about Meadow matched the "prodigious qualities", "moral authority", "intellectual authority" as well as all the pragmatic elements that enable an individual to establish a leadership mainly linked to the personal interest in the material rewards and social honor he provides. Though all employees seemed to be linked that way to this leader, the notion of personal interest remained vague and could not explain why some participants maintained their participation while others chose other alternatives after one or a few collaborations. Part of the answer was to be found in studying the group of actors that presented a great age gap. While the oldest actors were all ongoing participants to the Circle Theater, the youngest ones had only been one-shot participants to a show directed by Alex Meadow. Scrutinizing their life stories, careers and perspectives, I found out that all of the older actors had, when meeting Alex Meadow in the 1960's or 1980's, rejected a certain way of working in the theater world and were hoping for a reformation of their private lives as well as their professional lives. They found in Alex Meadow a consciousness master and guide, who, by providing an esoteric definition to their work gave them the possibility to change their ways of life. By becoming his "disciples" —in Weber's meaning^{xxx} —, they themselves acquired a moral authority and some "prodigious qualities". Thus, by participating to the Circle, Soumaoro Kante has been able to enhance his social status as a griot^{xxxii} that had long been denied while living in Africa. For the black actors of this group such as Soumaoro, personal relationship with Alex Meadow has also meant being destigmatized. In the theater world, the casting process of actors for a play still relies on role types. Those are still much marked by some criteria such as age, sex, and skin color. Thus the character of Hamlet in the eponymous play conventionally corresponds to a leading role held by a young man, Caucasian, expressing a certain kind of melancholy. Skin color still acting as a "master status-determining trait" (Hughes 1993: 147), a black actor will find it difficult to be given the role of the young Scandinavian prince. He will be mainly offered to play black characters more common in contemporary drama and entertainment shows than in classical drama highly praised as a cultural commodity. The fact of playing the leading role in a play of the classical repertoire directed by Alex Meadow that could also lay claim to worldwide fame helped Soumaoro get out of the role type defined by the color of his skin. Thanks to his long-term commitment to the Circle and to his spiritual and charismatic leader, he was then, sponsored by Alex Meadow along the path of vertical mobility by having access to other positions in the theater such as that of stage director and has become a "Wise" participant to the organization (Anderson 1999).^{xxxii} Meanwhile, Alex Meadow maintained constant innovation in his shows and distance in personal relationships with these actors. The disciples movement to social and professional enhancement which provided them with the possibility of acquiring some autonomy from their own group and the leader's progressive depersonalization of relationships comforts the "routinization"^{xxxiii} process of charismatic domination that allows the organization to last. Dylan Trent, a young black actor who had already experienced success in out-of-type roles offered by other famous directors, was not indebted to Alex Meadow for his destigmatization. He, nevertheless, found in his participation to a show directed by the famous director, a means of achieving status enhancement. Indeed he hoped this participation would help him have access, in the future, to ever more prestigious roles with ever more famous directors. As many other young actors he was a "believer-but-non-belonger" to the Circle. Although old and young actors had developed very different motives to their participation to the Circle Theater, what emerged was that both groups hoped their collaboration for a certain period of time would bring future status enhancement

outside the organization. Indeed, just as many other participants to the Circle, their commitment to this theatrical organization was linked to their simultaneously betting on the achievement of another goal. This hinted at Howard Becker's use of Thomas Schelling analysis of bargaining in which side-bets constitute the motives to commitment (Becker 1960).

If those examples put forth the fact that status enhancement was at the core of commitment motives, many other examples pointed to the importance of status defense and acquisition of label, some of which could be achieved thanks to a "game"^{xxxiv} played inside the theatrical organization. Although, proper description of commitment motives will not be carried out here for it would need a whole paper to provide in-depth description and analysis^{xxxv}, it led to the building sub-categories among all groups of participants according to their commitment motives and degree of participation^{xxxvi}. This led to a slight reformulation of commitment in such symbol-production organizations as theaters. Indeed, individuals commit themselves to a theatrical organization over a certain length of time by making side-bets and/or playing a "game" with the management within the "routinization" of charismatic domination that allows them to foster status enhancement within or outside the organization itself.

Conclusion

Contrary to most artistic activities, theater is easily seen as a collective activity in which, in spite of their central parts, actors depend on the contributions of many other people to produce and distribute a piece of art called theater. Despite such perception, we have seen that examining who gets to do what, when and how sets back into question the conventional view on the division of labor between the three local categories of participants. In spite of the craft organization it claims for, task description and individual perspectives at the Circle thus pointed to the production and distribution of a theater show requiring eight different categories of participants each playing different social roles: the "actors", the "support personnel", the "management", the "back-line personnel", the "sponsors", the "front-line personnel", the "public" and the "critics". We also understood that theater is an activity which gives the possibility for these tasks to be carried out by only a few versatile participants in a series of tasks. Whatever the categories of participants used, the eight social roles will always be needed. This points to the fact that a theater company resembles any type of ongoing concern (Hughes *ibidem*) and that the distinction between craft organization and enterprise lies not in the number of social roles but rather in the constant upholding of a particular aesthetic and collaborative work (Strauss 1985) pattern.

Theater activity is marked by the specificity of the cooperative links it requires since, as in all artistic activities, each category provides direct or indirect service to the group who carries out the core activity, here the "actors". The "actors" themselves offering a service to the "public". The theater show then appears as the result of the efforts put in by each one of these categories to readjust a dissymmetrical service relationship. When some categories —such as the stage directors— are in a position to almost reverse the service relationship, thus also changing the symbolic meaning of their tasks they can become "artists" although they do not carry out the central task of performing a part in front of an audience. This hints at the fact that "art" besides being a specific activity can also sometimes be a label (Becker 1963) because it is highly symbol productive. Nowadays and in our society, the art label acts as a

positive characteristic in the definition of an occupation and, thus, in the definition of status. The stakes that acquiring this label represent, such as that of expert for many professions, is at the core of the division of labor in the world of theater.

Lastly, scrutinizing people's points of view on their work and statuses sets back into question the conventional idea that commitment to a theatrical organization relies on labor market pressure and attraction for so-called non-routinized activity. Concentrating information gathering on a few participants to a single organization enables the researcher to provide thick descriptions that approach the complexity of work relationships and motives and their strong bonds to status definition in a symbol-producing world. Therefore, the ethnographic study of a theater points to the fact that art is most of all a work and that, as such, it places its participants in a whole set of moving and permanently redefined interactions. A theater is just a field that gives the opportunity of seeing cooperation in an artistic activity in a more blatant way and glance at some of its meaning because it is concentrated in time and space. Drama, therefore, is much more than a metaphor for the ethnographic study of a physical place such as theater which is also a drama company. It offers a stage on which the production and distribution process of the piece of art work is carried out. It thus provides clues in understanding work in other symbol producing art worlds.

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Endnotes

- i So as to match gender representation the term is here preferred to that of usherette.
- ii To protect their anonymity, all participants and places have been granted pseudonyms.
- iii In the audiovisual and performing arts, artistic and technical personnel are entitled to a specific unemployment insurance system called *intermittence*. It relies on collective agreements that define the conditions for eligibility (appendix 8 and 10 of the November 13, 2003 convention listing the activities and occupations, the number of hours required and the period of time the insurance applies to). Section L. 594 of the French labor regulations (*Code du Travail*) links recruitment on the specific short-term contract called *CDD d'usage*—that departs from common law short-term contracts—to the *intermittent* status granted to eligible artistic and technical personnel.
- iv French national statistics crossing socio-demographic data with artistic genres regularly provide an assessment of French people cultural practices. See for instance Olivier Donnat and Paul Tolila (2003). Study of audience consumption transactions as advocated by Gilmore (1990)—that is to say description of the cognitive organization of artistic consumers and analyses of the social conditions explaining this organization—has not been carried out as regards theater audiences. For a description of the career patterns of the Circle's

- audience members, their initiation to the theater hall, the different categories of audience members and their interactions with front-line personnel and actors, see Bense Ferreira Alves (2005).
- v Four elements base the theatrical community ideal-type that the author has built up to help understand how the company (*troupe*) stands as a normative ideal for theater participants: founding myths, an economy of asceticism around a director whose authority relies on exemplary forms of sacrifice, and the isolation of the community.
 - vi This definition stems from the perspective adopted by Erving Goffman (1971: 9-10) in studying the type of social life that is organized within the physical limits of a building or an establishment and which uses the theatrical performance as a metaphor. I adapted it so as to both account for the social drama of work in a theater and the persistence of such a social organization over the years.
 - vii As defined by Howard Becker, an aesthetic is a means to tie “participants’ activities to the tradition of the art, justifying their demands for resources and advantages ordinarily available to people who produce that kind of art”, as well as a guide that helps participants cooperate and provides them with a justification for their actions (1982: 132-134).
 - viii For the purpose of this paper, I will not, however, go into the details of task allotment, delegation, denegation, and overlapping.
 - ix Not being able to sustain the total availability required for any potential member to be entirely socialized to the CT and be finally granted access to rehearsals, this part of theatrical work remained inaccessible to my observations.
 - x Because of the worldwide fame of the theatrical concern studied and some of its participants and the general scope on theater activity that the Circle as a case study could claim for, only some of the dissertation findings were published in the form of an essay that erased all situational elements permitting identification and did not present data and analyses on the “public” (Bense Ferreira Alves, 2006).
 - xi Theatre in France has been a heavily subsidized artistic activity since the 1940’s. Public funding (by government or local authorities) has helped set up and develop a nationwide network of theatrical production and distribution units (theater halls and companies) but also of training institutions. From 1959 to 1968, theater was the spearhead of governmental cultural policy. Budgets to national theaters increased, permanent companies with daily-operations annual subsidies were set up and a special support fund for private theater was created. At the beginning of the 1970s’, new funds were brought in for theatrical research and experiment. Theater is still one of the most heavily subsidized artistic activity but recent legislation on cultural sponsorship (Loi du 1er août 2003 relative au mécénat, aux associations et aux foundations) has been aiming to foster private enterprise funding thanks to tax incentives as a means of developing non-governmental financial support for the arts.
 - xii The Circle Company was founded by Meadow and his agent Yvonne Segla, a few years before it settled in the summarily refurbished theater hall that became the Circle Theater directed by Meadow and Segla. It is a corporation that has regularly been entitled to government subsidy but mainly lives on the receipts of ticket selling and corporate sponsorship. Each year, the theater puts up a few concerts and drama shows produced by other companies and a yearly Circle Company show directed by Meadow and performed by a group of international actors some of whom are ongoing participants to the company. Although, from time to time, the company puts up a Shakespeare’s play, it has no specific

- repertoire and shows are performed in English or French and sometimes both. These shows are usually performed for a one-to-two-month period at the Circle Theater before going on a worldwide tour and sometimes created abroad before they are presented at the Circle Theater. As a theater hall, the Circle matches Lori Morris description of a theatrical space: “A space is more than a home, it’s a large part of a theatre’s identity. And the space you find limits the work you can do in it. But communities have a limited supply of spaces theatres can use and groups have to compete for them”. (Becker, McCall and Morris, 1989)
- xiii Between 1998 and 2005, the administrative direction of the Circle Theater briefly came in the hands of Christophe Hörer, the then director of a theater hall, an opera house, two opera festivals and an opera academy.
 - xiv College and high School students attendance is usually sought. Indeed, such “captive audience members”— have no choice but to participate—, they guarantee regular receipts.
 - xv For Hughes a social role is the part one thinks he /she is expected to play or allowed to play in the social drama of the organization in which he/she works.
 - xvi To Blumer’s view, a social organization is a “framework inside of which acting units develop their actions”. It “enters into action only to the extent to which it shapes situations in which people act, and to the extent to which it supplies fixed set of symbols which people use in interpreting their situations”.
 - xvii An arc of work is the “totality of tasks arrayed both sequentially and simultaneously along the course” of a project. It differs from a line of work that encompasses different projects. In a theater hall like the Circle, both arcs and lines of work can be observed.
 - xviii Because of her baby, Jane Christian could not go on tour with the show. Naomi Todd took on the role and it kept until the show came back at the Circle for a two-month period of performances.
 - xix Blocking is the process through which the actor’s basic physical movements on stage are established.
 - xx A “cue sheet” is the set of all the indications about effects or changes that each technician has to carry out during the performance and that are associated to a cue (the execution of a lighting or sound effect or of an actor’s cue).
 - xxi When writing a text to be played on stage and giving stage directions playwrights usually provide direct or indirect help to the actors. Laure de Verdalle (*ibidem*), has pointed to the conditions that made East-German playwrights enjoy the high status of direct actors’ support before loosing it in favor of stage directors by being granted less direct tasks to actors after the reunification process.
 - xxii Drawn out from the study of different types of theatrical organizations, Lyon’s category initially comprised the producer, the director, the stage manager, and the stage crew. It has been taken on by Howard Becker who has widened its scope and identifies the existence of “support personnel” in all artistic activities thus reinforcing the category’s opposition to that of the « artist »: all that is not carried out by the artist must be done by someone else (Becker, 1982: 24-25).
 - xxiii As an artistic director, Alex Meadow shared with the two administrative directors of the Circle, Yvonne Segla and Christophe Hörer, the task of hierarchically controlling theater employees. Although work with the actors and stage personnel in rehearsals has always been Meadow’s preserve, he shared recruitment and dismissal decisions on other employees with his co-directors. As administrative directors, both Segla and Hörer were in charge of financially managing the business, of defining the tasks to be carried out and the way they

- were going to be allocated. However, they have always taken part in planning the theater shows program, therefore making artistic choices.
- xxiv The billing list sets the cast members with their separate wages. The *per diem* list sets the amount of money given daily to the cast for their personal expenses.
- xxv This group has neither been directly observed nor interviewed during fieldwork.
- xxvi By looking at the interactions that critics and aestheticians hold with stage and theater directors as well as actors, researchers could then show how the specific aesthetic of a theatrical organization builds up and evolves. However, as for the Circle, I lacked time to carry out proper study of the long-term relationships drama critics of major newspapers and magazines have with Alex Meadow and some of the long-term participants to the Circle.
- xxvii The term is to be understood here in its basic sense.
- xxviii Serge Proust has pointed to the conditions that, in France, fostered such change in definition (2001). By primarily founding the activity of stage direction on the interpretation of dramatic texts, stage directors of the 50s' freed themselves from literature. By simultaneously suppressing stage-directing scripts and enhancing the creative process through rehearsals, they organized the rarity of the product of their activity. Thanks to special commissions made of drama critics and academics, they gained progressive autonomy while developing institutional careers as theater directors in the different categories of government subsidized theaters.
- xxix For more details on the tensions between bureaucratic rationalization and autonomy in cultural institutions such as the theater, the circus and the museum see Bense Ferreira Alves and Poulard (2007).
- xxx That is to say the permanent auxiliaries to a prophet, linked to him by personal relationships and sometimes endowed with charismatic qualification.
- xxxi The griots are West African « masters of speech », historians, genealogists, advisers and mediators but also masters of ceremony, singers and musicians to noble Malinke families. As the eldest son of a griots' lineage, Soumaoro is in charge of transmitting his knowledge.
- xxxii Elijah Anderson resorts to Goffman's typology of stigmas so as to account for the social behavior of Black executives. He distinguishes three categories. The Own, the Normal and the Wise. The Wise are those who, in some ways, are privileged but who, because of education or life experiences have developed some empathy for those they consider are the victims of social injustice.
- xxxiii The term is to be understood here in Weber's meaning.
- xxxiv The term is used here as in the first part of Burawoy's definition. It is the fact for individuals to consent to the organization's interests by developing their own interests and not because of coercion. It does not integrate the second part that says that by doing so, workers obscure and secure surplus labor thus producing consent.
- xxxv Further analysis of participants' commitment motives to the Circle Theater has been provided in Bense Ferreira Alves (2006) and will be summed up in a forthcoming paper.
- xxxvi The "support", "back" and "front-line personnel" counted stabilized and non-stabilized participants. Among the "public", I found "followers" and "missionaries" who, thanks to their participation to a collective history, seemed to perceive so many connections to the Circle that they could be said to really have strong experiences (as in Dewey's sense) when attending a show. I also

found “casual” public members who were very frequent theatergoers who only sporadically went to the Circle.

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