



Old structures for contemporary theatrical productions: a warehouse, an arena and a thrust stage ¹

Evelyn Furquim Werneck Lima

Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
evelynfwlima@yahoo.com.br

Introduction

Theatre architecture and theatrical spaces in general have been changing along centuries but since the first decades of the twentieth century these changes have increased. Marvin Carlson (1989; 2012), one of the best known scholars who had studied theatrical spaces, attests the wide range of possibilities of places of performance introduced along the twentieth century and he highlights the outdoor or non specific spaces chosen by many contemporary directors². It is a fact that each director or set designer has a different demand on theatrical space. Peter Brook (1970 [1968]) proposes an empty space to perform his plays; Jerzy Grotowski (2002 [1968]) suggests an intimate space for his shows and Richard Schechner (1973) preaches an environmental theatre and huge open spaces. But all of them want to encourage the use of a theatrical space where the audience participation can be intensified. Drama in the twenty-first century requires new appropriations of space. In the case of Grotowski, for example, limiting the space becomes crucial as his performances depend on what he called "proximity to living organisms." (cf. Lehmann, 2007) Moreover, large spaces may also be required to obtain the desired effects. The appropriation of spaces not originally intended to be theatrical spaces opened other possibilities for staging space and the option of working at different scales.

Changing traditional theatrical spaces can mean using alternative spaces as proposed by José Celso Martinez Correa in *Os Sertões* (2007), it can also mean re-

¹This article is one of the results of my Senior Research Fellowship at the Collège de France (2011) and was orally presented at the International Federation for Theatre Research in Barcelona, 2013.

²Marvin Carlson discusses theatrical spaces in *Places of Performance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989 and, in August 2012, he addressed a lecture on the subject entitled *Changing Theatrical Spaces*, at the Second Conference on Architecture, Theatre and Culture at Unirio, when he added contemporary and innovative "found spaces", presenting the groups that "discovered" them.

adapting more traditional theatre structures in unusual features such as idealized in Miguel Vellinho's *mise-en-scène* of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (2006), but it can as well mean performing a traditional Elizabethan play as a circus show as did Gabriel Villela in London (2000) as the leader of the Brazilian company Galpão. This director created a remarkable production of *Romeo and Juliet* in the reconstructed Shakespeare's playhouse. This paper aims to discuss some problems about readapting old structures as theatre architecture "found" by contemporary Brazilian directors for their plays and will also focus on the contemporary use of an architectural pattern which is four hundred years old.

José Celso's experience: the ritual space in a warehouse

The Oficina Group exists since 1958³. In 1993, director José Celso Martinez Correa re-opened his Oficina Theatre in São Paulo featuring a revolutionary architecture. After the inauguration of the new internal space of the Oficina Theatre, the group staged two classic texts: *Ham-let* (1993), based on Shakespeare's work, and *The bacchae* (1996), by Euripides, inspired by Dionysius.

Since the early twenty-first century, Zé Celso has developed his own approach to scenic drama that combines music, poetry recitation, dance, performance, epic theatre, popular game, party and carnival, which he calls "tragediacomediorgya", revealed in other productions such as *The Sertões*. The Oficina theatre is currently a space designated to the democratization of culture, adopting a social approach and allowing a huge range of artistic and political manifestations to be spread among all people, no matter what social class they belong to. Architect Lina Bo Bardi's design reused the old structure of the 1920s and created a "theatre as a street" – with a longitudinal stage which connects the entrance to the backstage of the theatre, taking advantage of a very long, narrow building, whose interior was completely demolished. Metal parts support the new roofs and mezzanines superimposed on the background of the building (Figs 1 and 2). The metal galleries arranged along this walkway/stage, on both sides, have three levels, allowing actors to act as spectators but also that the audience can circulate among the

³The Oficina Theatre is a place of international experience in arts, where Brecht, Sartre and the Living Theatre have met. It was at this theatre that was launched a major manifesto of Brazilian culture, the *Tropicália*, version in the sixties of the cannibalistic movement led by Oswald de Andrade in the twenties. Musicians, poets and other artists have joined the manifesto.

performers. The dressing rooms, the scenic machinery, the screens, musicians and even the office of the director are absolutely visible to the audience, as designed by the architects.

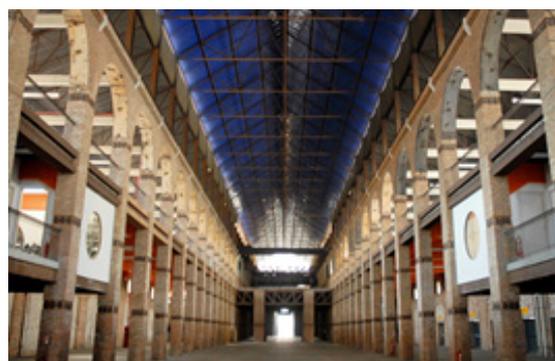


Figures 1 and 2 – The Oficina Uzina Ozona Theatre - Internal views of the theatre. Funds of the Laboratory for Theatrical Spaces and Urban Memory Studies- LEG T5, Photo: Cassia Monteiro, 2012

But this solution for a linear stage, allowing the audience to participate in the play from the scaffolding galleries or from the walkway sides has become so peculiar to the Oficina Group that recently, Zé Celso has put together spaces similar to his Oficina Theatre in São Paulo in the different cities where he performed his five plays based upon Euclides da Cunha's most famous novel "Os Sertões" (The Hinterlands)⁴. At that occasion, Zé Celso stated *"We want to install a structure as close as possible to the original, so that people feel that they are at the Oficina Theatre environment. So we are concerned to suspend the floor to create an underground corridor and keep the galleries, for aerial scenes"*(Corrêa, 2012).

⁴José Celso Martinez Corrêa dramatized "Os Sertões" (The hinterlands) of Euclides da Cunha. The book is divided into three parts: "The Earth", "The Man" and "The Fight", which, in the Oficina Theatre, were unfolded in five: Earth (The Shell Award 2005), The Man I; Man II, I Fight: The Struggle I and II.

To perform this masterpiece in Rio de Janeiro, Zé Celso chose the oldest storage building of the docks area in Rio de Janeiro, built on 1871 by André Rebouças⁵. Its unique dimension and architecture features consist on approximately 14.000 m² distributed in two very high floors and the internal space features 168 meters of extension and 36 meters wide⁶. The ritualistic, dithyrambic features of this production have been perfectly adapted to the basilica shape of the building, which, such as a Paleo-Christian church, presents a very large and high central nave and two shorter lateral aisles, divided on two floors (Figs 3 and 4).



Figures.3 and 4 – Old storage building of the Dom Pedro II Docks in Rio de Janeiro where Zé Celso performed *Os Sertões*. Courtesy of the Ação da Cidadania, 2012.

From the 2nd to 14th June 2007, Zé Celso put together, in this huge storehouse in Rio's Docklands, similar galleries – as those built by architect Lina Bo Bardi and Edson Elito at his own Oficina Theatre, in São Paulo. He even raised the stage/walkway and built an underground corridor which was used to serve as trenches along the stage were some hatches could be opened to show many surprises during the performance. In *Os Sertões* there are elements of melodrama, clown, pyrotechnics, opera, fake blood, Hollywood music, nudity, samba, allegories, political agitation and pantomime⁷. The existing structure in São Paulo enables the perfect *theatre-happening* desired by the Oficina Group, so the director has decid-

⁵ The warehouse was included in the Brazilian Heritage List in November 2016.

⁶ The restoration project of the old warehouse began in 2002 by architect Hélio Pellegrino in order to get the space ready to locate a centre of culture and social inclusion.

⁷ For more information about the play *Os Sertões* performed at the Oficina Theatre, in São Paulo, see José da Costa Filho. *Os sertões em cena: crítica, vocalização e cruzamento de sentidos. Sala Preta*, v. 10, 2010, p. 77-92.

ed to reproduce this model in warehouses and other spaces and cities where he staged *Os Sertões*⁸.

The choice of the warehouse to reproduce the set of the Oficina's walkway stage was an amazing solution which proves that theatre architecture may change the impact of a play. In José Celso's proposal, the linear and processional stage with galleries on both sides provoked the impact of a ritual, exactly as he desired. The old structure with its old red brick interior was a perfect shrine for Euclides da Cunha's novel.

The use of this particular old non-theatrical space to exhibit a play that has been performed during 26 hours in five days attests how architecture can interfere in its meaning. Images of actors and audience were edited in real time and projected on a large screen and also interacted with a live band. No boundaries have been established between audience and stage. Sometimes the actors came up to the stands and spectators descended and came into the scenic area, fraternizing with the actors (Maggio, 2007). Such "found space" corresponds exactly to the concept of an architecture which is not limited to its dimensions and aesthetics, but absorbs the dimensions of the bodies of the people who use it, as suggested by Andrew Filmer⁹ (2006, 24).

A Theatre in the Round for a Peculiar Puppet Show on Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*

Since the Greeks, theatre architecture has been structured in the circular pattern. Vitruvius, who in time of Augustus, after investigating the Greek theatre architecture, codified the art of building theatres, set a number rules for the Roman theatre and amphitheatre which have been used until today (Vitruvius, c. 20 BC). One of the possibilities for theatre architecture is the "theatre-in-the-round", originated from the Roman amphitheatres, allowing an integrated and intense participation of the audience. The SESC Copacabana Theatre, designed by Oscar Niemeyer in the seventies is an example of this theatre architecture (Fig.4). It was in that intimate

⁸ José Celso presented the same play at the Volksbühne Theatre in Berlin, and in alternative spaces in Brazilian capitals and in the very city of Canudos, in the Northeast of Brazil, where the war actually took place in the late nineteenth century.

⁹ "Architectural discourse has often distanced bodies and buildings from each other, ignoring the 'deep reciprocity' that human bodies share with the world around them, and the mutually constitutive relationship between body and built place. In so doing, architectural discourse continues to privilege visual and aesthetic, rather than embodied and social, forms of knowledge" (Filmer, 2006, p. 24).

theatrical space with only 274 seats, that Miguel Vellino, leader of the PeQuod Company Puppet Theatre, directed Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (2006) amongst other plays, all of them with a perfect set design adapted to the stage and creating an ideal interaction between the actors, the puppets and the audience.



Figure 5 - **The Sesc Copacabana Theatre**. A real Roman arena designed By Oscar Niemeyer. Courtesy of the Theatre, 2010.

The choice of a “theatre-in-the-round” forced the group to abandon the proposed set designs which has been established earlier in the process of conceiving the play, including the abandonment of counters with casters who had served as support for the puppets used in other plays. This particular theatre architecture – the round stage – enabled the director to create a stage in reverse, setting that the actors / handlers would also perform as stagehands, a very recurrent procedure in the work of the PeQuod Company (Fig. 6).

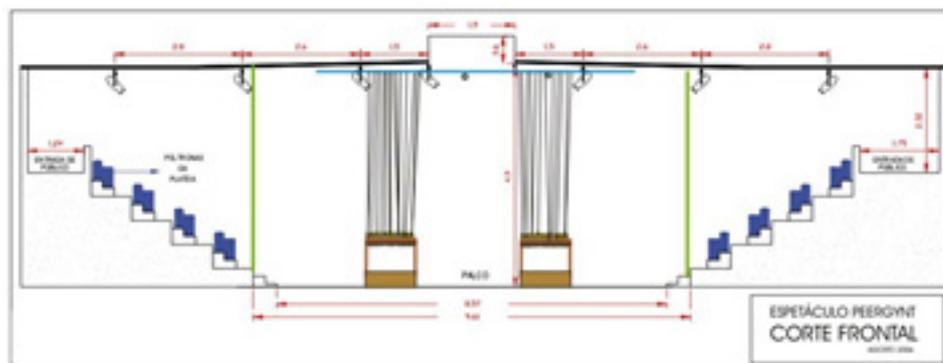
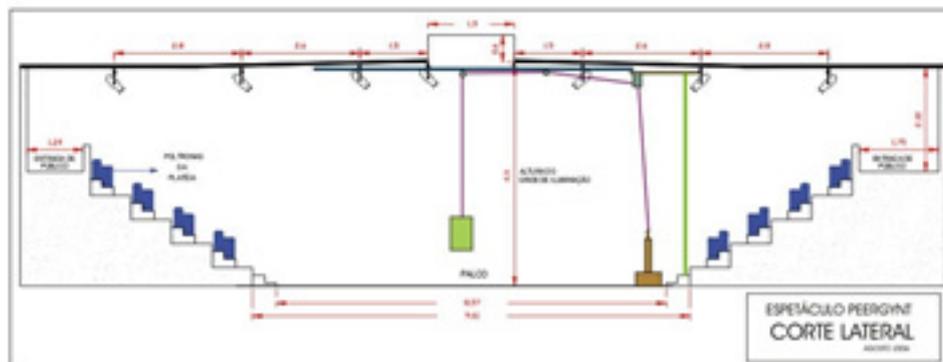
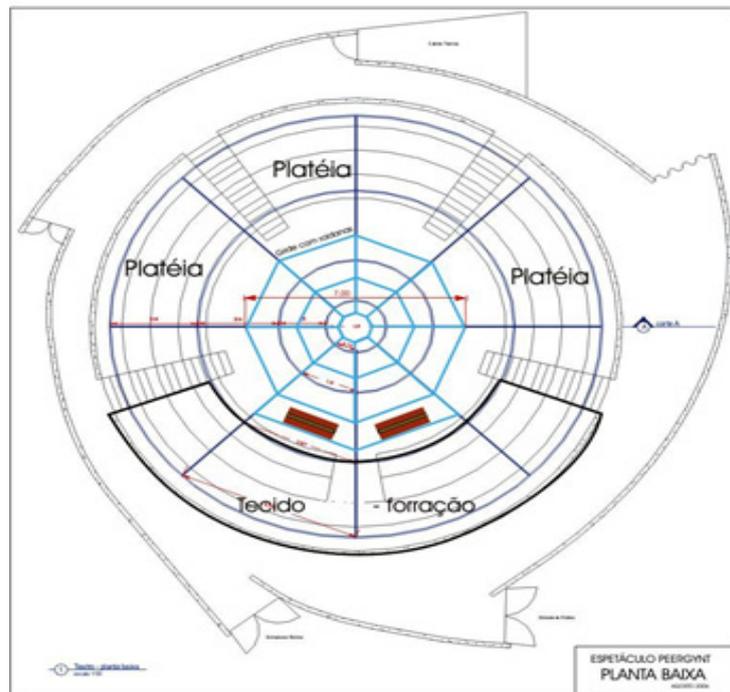


Figure 6 – **The Sesc Copacabana Theatre** - Plan and sections of the arena transformed into a half arena. Courtesy of the PeQuod Company, 2006.

The set design, though worked as an apparent backstage in an intricate structure consisting of wires, counterweights, fabrics and stairs, was lavish in surprises, because all elements of the scene – and even some of the characters – came from the ceiling. The metallic stairs – utilitarian objects indispensable to the stagehands – were used in the presence of the audience throughout the show. Earlier, the stairs were lying and suspended by the same stringing supporting ballast bags. Horizontally and with small adaptations in their steps, they take the position of the old counters, allowing numerous configurations that are unexpected and prepared in the eyes of the audience (Figs. 7, 8, and 9).



Figures 7, 8 and 9 – **The SESC Copacabana Theatre and the construction of a new theatrical space.** Actors and puppets are moving the scenic elements. Courtesy of the PeQuod Company.

The images above show the Company's creativity in the process of re-adaptation of the existing architecture, maintaining the circular area as a stage where all the mechanical devices were completely apparent.

The director explained that:

In our *Peer Gynt*, we used the round stage as a stage in reverse, in which the whole machinery of the theatre itself is revealed. The mooring end of this concept is through the use of counterweights of the ancient theatre, which served to raise and lower the screens. Thus, all elements of our show enter and leave the stage through these counterweights all visible and attached to the ceiling. The small cloth bags stylized from where the puppets, props and large elements showed up. The actors themselves were hoisted in some scenes, due to the special machinery, built especially for this play (Vellino, 2006)

Only an indoor theatre could house the spectacle of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* as conceived by Vellino and Carlos Alberto Nunes in its complex performances simultaneously involving actors and puppets in a dynamic process of machinery arranged from the ceiling. In this case, the new path was the transformation of the round theatre, used in a very atypical way.

An old architecture for a circus street production – different plans of the Elizabethan amphitheatre emphasized through a car on the stage

But these architectures either in warehouses or in traditional theatres are not the only way of "finding the space". This paper also aims to demonstrate how an old architectural theatre structure can also provide a perfectly adapted space to exhibit drama in current times: the reconstructed Globe Theatre not far from the real plot of Shakespeare's Globe. Although the old theatre was built in the end of the sixteenth century, the current reconstructed design (1997) is quite contemporary, as one can experience from a Brazilian production of *Romeo and Juliet* played in 2000. The perfect inner space of the playhouse and its architecture will be discussed through the analysis of the many possibilities explored by director Gabriel Villela, who reinterpreted the peculiar different plans of the Elizabethan amphitheatre surprising the audience with a car on the stage.

Outside the boundaries of the City, on the right bank of the River Thames, in an area near London Bridge, the Globe was built in 1597-1598, with the reuse of the wooden beams of the old Theatre. This is the most investigated of the English playhouses from the sixteenth century, given that for its reconstruction in 1997

numerous studies were undertaken by famous scholars (Hildy, 2012, p. 117-135). In 1613, the first Globe was destroyed by fire, but it was rebuilt (1614) as the structure that appears in the famous Wenceslas Hollar's sketch¹⁰, and demolished in 1642.

The Elizabethan theatre is as a pattern of theatre peculiar to England itself, from the end of the sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century. It associates dramaturgical writing, architecture, and a specific way of staging (Sugers, 2010, p. 119). The almost cylindrical theatrical space presents itself as a symbolic image of the world and by correspondence, between the microcosm and the macrocosm so discussed in Renaissance and Mannerism. For Brook, the Elizabethan stage was a diagram of the universe as seen by the audience of the sixteenth century: the gods, the Court and the people - and the three separate levels of galleries. However, this architectural pattern amalgamated very often the different social classes. Brook (1970: 89) has described the theatre as "a stage that was a real philosophical machine". And it is true that this architecture is in tune with the Shakespearean drama, as well as the structured framework of a building that may perfectly house contemporary plays.

Andrew Gurr's studies (2009) point out that the Elizabethan amphitheatre could accommodate up to four levels in the sense of verticality: the raised main stage and its discovery or backstage, the upper gallery or "heavens" and the trapdoor to the underground. In the Globe, a rectangular stage platform extended itself towards the centre of the courtyard: the apron-stage or thrust stage. Behind this stage, two or more doors allowed the entrances and exits of the actors and accessed the inner stage or "tiring house" separated by curtains. Two columns supported a gable roof, under which various scenes could be simultaneously represented. There was also a large trapdoor (hell), on the pavement of the stage, allowing the characters to disappear or arise suddenly, and the entry and withdrawal of actors

¹⁰ We must remember that Tom Fitzpatrick reviewed Hollar's panorama in the light of computer graphics and found that although the engraving depicting the structure of the theatre was a completely circular drum, for various reasons in his article, he states that even this theatre that seemed to be cylindrical, was actually a "multi-sided polygonal structure", and as such it was rebuilt in 1997 (Fitzpatrick, 2004). In a recent study, Frank Hildy regrets that the theatre has been rebuilt with a larger number of sides and greater diameter than the archaeological excavations proved after the inauguration (Hildy, 2012).

besides all the scenic elements. The third stage – at the top – was a gallery where musicians or actors could stand. Above all those levels, “the hut” was used as a small warehouse and communicated to the tiring house through a staircase. The two external staircases for access to all three levels were sheltered by towers adjoined to the facades, located symmetrically about the central axis of the playhouse that passed through the centre of the stage roof.

Arguing that *Romeo and Juliet* is a play that stands under the sign of the architecture, Muriel Cunin reminds us that the verb *delectare* is widely used in the text of the Renaissance architect Alberti and confronts the erotic drama that exists in the aesthetic pleasure that she describes as “the purpose and crowning [...] of the practice of *building*” This same assumption is reinforced by Filarete for whom *building* is nothing more than ‘a voluptuous pleasure similar to that of a man in love’. *Romeo and Juliet’s* approach to architecture already begins in the prologue, when the narrator announces “Two Households ...” assuming that the story was about two families, but also related to two specific palaces in Verona (Cunin, 2008, p 173).

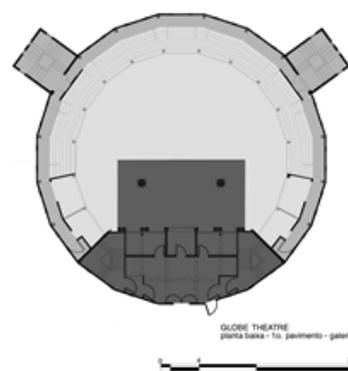
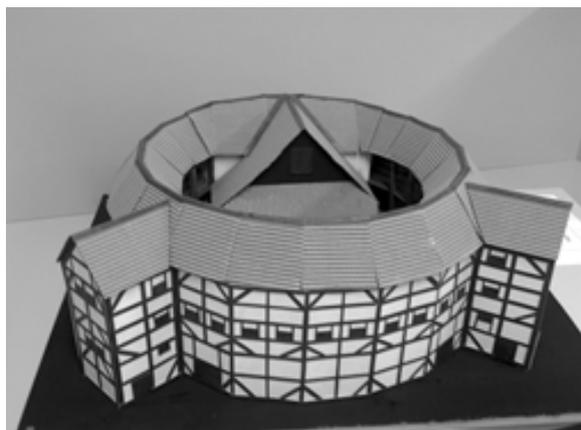
If we consider that in their amphitheatres, Londoners had really improved their earlier platform stages – armed in market places for itinerant troupes¹¹ – and that the three floors of galleries surrounding the courtyard were inspired by the inns and arenas for bear-fights, we can deduce that this space was a magical and symbolic “found space” of England from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (Lima, 2012).

Obedying the above descriptions, the current building is very similar to the ancient – as it has been object of investigations for two decades –, allowing the occupation of space in height, width and depth and these three dimensions establish the relationship between the audience and the stage. The permanent structure of the Elizabethan theatre can still be found. The playwright may at his discretion use the different places within the scenic area. The suggestive power of words and the actors’ bodies performing on stage are sufficient to convince the audience. The first editions of Shakespeare’s stage directions contained little to elucidate the scene today and some of the scenic indications were added by editors (Cunin, 2008, p. 170). But the

¹¹ In the earlier wooden stages erected in the squares there was probably a tiring-house behind the stage, as mentioned by Andrew Gurr (2009, p. 141).

words themselves are so evocative, that they allow the audience's imagination to reconstruct the space and the atmosphere all along the performance.

This architectural lay-out was rebuilt in the Shakespeare's Globe (1997), and has served as a venue for numerous plays including the contemporary *Romeo and Juliet* staged by the Galpão Group in 2000 and 2012 (Figs 10 and 11). The *mise-en-scène* that we analysed was staged in 2000, and we highlight the well succeeded adaptation of the power of imagery of Shakespearean theatre to the theatrical space which housed a circus show, safeguarding the tragic characteristics of the play.



Figures 10 and 11 – **The Shakespeare's Globe in London** - Model and Plan of the first floor, with a thrust stage where the Galpão Group staged *Romeo and Juliet* in 2000. Photo: Evelyn Lima. Model and sketch Evelyn Lima and Niuxa Drago, Funds of the Laboratory for Theatrical Spaces and Urban Memory Studies- LEG T5, 2011.

If we understand that the reconstruction of the Globe allows contemporary plays to rekindle the success that characterized the theatrical scene in the sixteenth century. Of course we do not agree with another replica – considering that the one built in London is already the emblem of the Elizabethan era –, but we want to point out the interest of returning to its interior lay-out in other contemporary theatre playhouses around the world.

It is known that the Elizabethan stage has been pursued by twentieth century directors such as Jacques Copeau and Peter Brook, probably because it features different spatial levels, the possibility of greater public participation, and especially for offering the spectators a high degree of imagination. The lack of set design in Elizabethan theatre was one of its greatest freedoms and it is known that the very architecture of the amphitheatre collaborated to the dynamism of action. The stage had little characterization, using only some furniture and objects as elements of the

scene. Through the analysis of the *Romeo and Juliet* of the Galpão Group at the Globe in 2000, we aim to highlight the contemporary possibilities of that architecture.

The theatrical space of the Globe seems to reflect perfectly the attitude and gestures of individuals of the seventeenth century, featuring the courtyard for the less fortunate - but by no means ceased to vibrate with the pieces of playwrights - with its galleries superimposed remembering the inns that housed the bourgeoisie, and the boxes on the sides and on the stage, which has revealed the need presented by the aristocracy who longed to be seen by the audience, contenting itself to hear more than from actually seeing the piece. Even if to Heinrich Wölfflin, "*un style architectonique traduit l'attitude des hommes et les gestes de son époque*¹²" (Wölfflin, 1996, p. 82), we sustain that this architecture is still perfect for contemporary staging.

There has been a coincidence in time between the recurrence of the construction of public theatres in Elizabethan England and "*la formidable vigueur de la création théâtrale de cette époque marquée par la splendeur des grandes oeuvres du théâtre elisabéthain*"¹³ (Cunin, 2008, p. 28). At that time, one could already notice the democratic character of the space – as opposed to the Italian theatre, which completely segregated the social classes –, the Elizabethan amphitheatre brings together more than segregates the Londoners eagerness for theatrical performances. And it was really the democratic spirit of the Elizabethan theatre architecture that Villela exploited to stage *the Romeo and Juliet* as a circus, and to use a car on the stage as a scenic element and as a space organizer. The analysis of the play *Romeo and Juliet* by the Galpão Group which has taken place at the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe, allows understanding Cunin's quotation:

Le théâtre public élisabéthain, à l'architecture si singulière, a nécessairement influé sur l'écriture des pièces. Car le rapport de l'homme de théâtre élisabéthain au lieu théâtral est fonctionnel et empirique: c'est l'espace dramatique qui s'adapte à l'espace scénique à la troisième dimension, font de l'espace théâtral un usage dynamique, et leur théâtre fortement architecturé paraît dégager de manière symbolique les fondements mêmes de l'architecture: horizontalité/verticalité, intérieur/extérieur, haut/bas..... (Cunin, 2008, p. 28)¹⁴

¹² "An architectural style reflects the attitude of men and gestures of his time".

¹³ "The amazing force of theatrical creation of this era marked by the splendor of the great works of the Elizabethan theater"

¹⁴ "[...] the Elizabethan public amphitheatre, in its peculiar architecture, has necessarily influenced the writing of plays. That happens because of the practical and empirical relation between the Elizabethan playwright and the theatrical place, as it is the dramatic space that adapts itself into the stage area in the third dimension, making a dynamic use of the theatrical space, and the highly architected plays seem symbolically to emanate the very foundations of architecture: horizontal/vertical, indoor/outdoor, high/low.....".

Villela's proposal explores these space issues mainly through the use of the car which he has implanted on the stage "apron" of the current Globe and its doors and windows. Outdoor spaces are also utilized as well as the trapdoor and the upper gallery, which allow characters to emerge from the top or bottom. The juggling in the circus performance are possible thanks to the architecture of the building, emphasized by the use of the car and of many stairs.

Different types of imagery can come from the same play, depending on the performance and their directors, the aesthetics of the different eras and on the audience's reception. In this particular case, the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* by the Brazilian Group in 2000 has actually pleased the London audience. Pavis's definition for *mise-en-scène* "as the synchronic vision of all the significant systems whose interaction produces meaning to the audience" is particularly enlightening as well as his denials, above all with regard to the 'routes' operated between the text and its passages to the scene (Pavis, 1990, p. 20).

According to Pavis (1990, p. 17-18): (i) *Mise-en-scène* is not the staging of a supposed textual "potential"; (ii) *Mise-en-scène* does not have to be faithful to the dramatic text; (iii) *Mise-en-scène* does not annihilate or dissolve the dramatic text; (iv) Different *mises-en-scène* of the same dramatic text, particularly those produced at different times in history do not provide reading the same text; (v) *Mise-en-scène* is not the stage representation of the textual referent; (vi) *Mise-en-scène* is not the fusion of two referents (textual and stage); (vii) *Mise-en-scène* is not the performative realization of the text. Thus, the contemporary *Romeo and Juliet*, which starts from the modification of the context of the tragedy, introduces a poetic and musical repertoire of Brazilian authors, gives the audience a central role to participate, illustrates more concretely as possible the different paths by which a contemporary reading allows you to change the various information contained in the staged dramatic text. The whole *mise-en-scène* feeds a spectacular pattern that is not only Brazilian, but completely contemporary and perfectly suited to the building.

Using the imagination, the *Romeo and Juliet* of Galpão Group is the product of a performance which includes music and symbols of a typically Brazilian culture, although staging a tragedy of the seventeenth century. This version of the play combines circus acts, music, dance and Brazilian folk culture with the traditional story

of the unlucky lovers. The songs and ditties referring to past Carnivals alternate on stage with waltzes danced in the ballroom of the Palace of the Capulets, where, for a few minutes, the gentlemen danced with mannequins without lower limbs, in a possible reference to puppetry theatre, common in Minas Gerais in the eighteenth century (Lima & Lacroix, 2007, p. 25-51). But despite the circus costume of some characters, after her marriage, Juliet dances a traditional *pas-de-deux* with her white and romantic dress, contrasting with Romeo – dressed and painted as a clown – singing most of the time with the accompaniment of his accordion – an instrument quite popular in the interior of Brazil (Act II) (Figs.12 e 13).

The implicit proposal of the director was to provoke a cultural shock resulting from the displacement of space and time. Constantly, the actors challenged balance: Romeo represented on stilts, while Juliet stood on *ballet pointe* shoes. The other performers acted as they moved on a tightrope wire, alluding to the risk of love and to the eminence of a tragic end. Elements onstage such as the serenades, choruses, accessories and props, besides Brazilian vegetation collaborated to create the heated atmosphere which involved the audience, and approached Shakespeare's drama to a show produced four hundred years later in a state of the interior of Brazil.



Figures 12 and 13 – Romeo playing the accordion to a romantic Juliet dressed in white and the car on stage. Photo Kika Lopes, London, 2000. Courtesy of The Galpão Group.

Investigating the negotiations by which works of art – especially literary – generate and amplify a powerful social energy, Stephen Greenblatt reminds that Shakespearean theatre depends on a certain community: there is no reduction of light, no attempts to isolate or awaken sensitivities of each individual in the audience, there is no sense to make the crowd disappear. Shakespeare's plays are the product of

extensive loans, mutual exchanges and collective enchantment (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 5-7). And these aspects are in harmony with Elizabethan theatre architecture itself. In Villela's *Romeo and Juliet*, there are also recurring metaphors, dances, emblems moving from a particular cultural area to another, a constant re-appropriation and new symbolic acquisitions.

One of these acquisitions in the *mise-en-scène* occurs through the various horizontal planes operated in the vehicle placed in the centre of the Elizabethan stage. In the traditional balcony scene, Romeo climbs the stairs to reach his beloved. In Villela's spectacle at the Globe, Romeo arrives from the top of the vehicle to visit Juliet who is in her room, represented by the interior of the car and therefore at a lower level. The insertion of the decorated car as the main structure of the scenic area, the many stairs used to simulate the performers' displacements in contrast with the Globe's architecture allows attesting Cunin's analysis (2008) on the horizontality and verticality of Elizabethan architecture.

Characters keep moving around, over, inside and outside the car as if it was a built set design on the Globe's stage, but also referring to the many possible levels of the amphitheatre. Another successful decision was the use of the car's windows, closing or opening, which have stimulated the audience's imagination.

It is worth to remember that one of the goals for the reconstruction of the Globe was to allow actors and directors from around the world to explore new ways of staging, to revise how they could have been in the early days of the Globe, trying not to stage a theatre without life, as one critic said after praising Villela's *Romeo and Juliet*

[...] Although one of the main purposes of rebuilding the Globe was to allow actors and directors to explore the way the plays were first performed, and thus learn new things about them, the Globe company has generally given us almost exactly the same productions they would have done on a proscenium stage, and generally lifeless ones at that (Berkowitz, 2000).

Some considerations

In the introduction of this paper, we have focused on the adaptation of the architecture of an old warehouse to house the production of José Celso's *Os Sertões*, emulating Lina Bo Bardi's project for the Oficina Theatre. We noticed the disruption of the limits of the materiality of the physical space, since the Oficina Group is also an intangible

heritage of Brazilian culture, first because it is a reference for those who deal with theatre and its multiple manifestations, and second, because it is a space of cultural resistance and social aims for the democratization of culture that the director takes around the world, always with an unusual proposal for theatrical spaces.

In the second case, we discussed the transformation operated in a round theatre designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer which has been adapted by director Miguel Vellinho and set designer Carlos Alberto Nunes as a 3/5 arena, but in which scenic resources have changed architecture in an innovative production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* where actors and puppets staged in a spectacle of unusual aesthetics produced by the mechanical artifacts and space treatment.

The last case attests that the Brazilian *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe (2000) has amalgamated two heterogeneous worlds: that of the hegemonic European culture and that of popular culture in the interior of Brazil. The peculiar proposal of the Galpão Group also suggests that the theatre has an amazing power to touch the audience by introducing the spectators no more to the scene in fourteenth century Verona, but to the streets of Minas Gerais, in the hinterlands of Brazil's twenty-first century, confirming all the possibilities of adapting the text to the scene as pointed out by Pavis (1990, p. 17-18).

Thus, director Villela used Elizabethan architecture to show a street theatre aesthetics adapted to the circus-theatre. The Brazilian spectacle redirects Shakespeare to the streets as if it reconvened in the old Globe's environment, the heterogeneous audience composed of artisans, merchants and aristocrats in which the author combined the Elizabethans musicality of words with its dramatic intensity, the violence, the lyricism, the magic and imagination as opposed to reality.

And, in spite of the numerous studies for finding the ideal contemporary theatre architecture, we have concluded through this research that a nineteenth century warehouse in the dockland area adapted as a theatre in Rio de Janeiro; a re-designed famous round theatre by Niemeyer, also in Rio, and the reconstructed Elizabethan "wooden O" in London are different arrangements for theatrical spaces that have recently sheltered successful pieces planned by twenty-first century directors.

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