

The Affective Dimension of Direction and Its Effects on the Conformation of Groups in Contemporary Argentinean Theatre

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Abstract

This work studies the affective dimension on group processes of artistic creation and analyses, particularly, the case of Argentine independent theatre groups in the city of Córdoba. The study –whose methodology included ethnographic interviews and discourse analysis– is based on the question regarding the way in which groupalities are formed and the role played by theatre direction in them. The objective of this paper is to understand how affects contribute to the formation of groups with artistic creation purposes. For that, I first recall my conceptualization, which is based on groupality. Secondly, I review theoretical contributions from Sara Ahmed and others in order to analyse the relationships between groups and affects. Lastly, I systematise four affective dimensions experienced by theatre direction, which intervene in the conformation of theatrical groups. The conclusion of this paper values the emotional dimension as a power for the artistic work itself.

Keywords: performing arts, contemporary theatre, artistic practices, theatre directors, affects, theatre groups, artistic creation, feminism.

Introduction

This paper examines the relevance of affective dynamics for the processes of group formation and interactions within Independent Theatre in the city of Córdoba, Argentina. Independent Theatre in Argentina is a tributary of the European theatres of the late 1800s and early 1900s: independent theatre/ *Théâtre-Libre*, art theatre and popular theatre. Today, it gathers a series of practices linked to the performing arts that are historically produced and reproduced by an artistic community whose identity is constructed on the basis of differentiating itself from the interests and desires related to neoliberal subjectivity. These practices include the creation of convivial artistic works, non-formal, informal but also official formative instances, parties, recreational gatherings and other instances crossed by affective

logics.¹ The places where independent theatre takes place are the *Red de Salas de Teatro Independiente* (Independent Theatre Network), state or mixed management cultural centres, official training institutions and also the street, with demonstrations and performances located there. This theatre is also differentiated from other theatres by the normative definition contained in the National Theatre Law (Congreso de la Nación Argentina), which supports and promotes theatrical activities that take place in theatres with less than 300 seats and are produced by groups that are confined to these spaces, whose purpose is not (solely) economic, which is manifested, for example, in the limited number of tickets sold.

In this article I will look at this unique set of artistic practices that can (at least partially) dissociate themselves from neoliberal identities and that, I believe, are governed by affective logics. Assuming that Western rationality values affects as arbitrary, I observe the preponderant emotionality in the selection processes of artists for theatre groups. Such affectivity is judged negatively because it would supposedly cover choices with a layer of whim to the detriment of the valuation of artists in terms of their technical abilities. In my analysis, I will consider the diversity of affects involved in the forms of functioning of a rationality founded on the affective that, for the formation of groupalities, largely enhance the depth and artistic commitment of the scenic processes.

Throughout this paper I first present the methodological perspective of my doctoral thesis on theatre directing and the central problem from which this work emerges. I also present the conceptualisation developed in my study about the role: embedded in group dynamics, directing is understood from its links with an artistic collective; for this reason I consider it is important to analyse the affective logics affecting the scenic processes. In the second section, I review the theoretical contributions that allow us to establish the relations between groups and affects more complex. This theoretical journey aims, firstly, to problematise the invalidation of affective logics and, secondly, to de-romanticise the implications of affect in group cohesion. Finally, it is proposed a series of affects that influence the conformation of theatrical groups that will produce work. In this work, I address how affections constitute human groups and are at the same time what fosters the artistic work itself.

Theatre Direction

This paper is part of a larger research project that studied the contemporary role of directors in the Argentinean Independent Theatre in order to understand the conceptions that guide artists to act. My aim was to construct a definition of the role that could account for its

¹ For further information on this subject, I recommend the articles “El rol de la dirección en la intersección entre metodologías de trabajo creativo y condiciones materiales en el teatro independiente argentino”, “El rol de la dirección en el teatro independiente argentino y su potencia para abrir brechas de igualdad”, and the article by María Fukelman “Influencias del teatro europeo en el primer teatro independiente de Buenos Aires”.

specificity. The methodology used was to gather, through interviews from an ethnographic perspective, relevant aspects of directorial training, work and practices. The directors that I interviewed were chosen according to criteria of consecration and age, resulting in a sample composed of David Piccotto, Marcelo Arbach, Daniela Martín, Martín Gaetán, Rodrigo Cuesta, Luciano Delprato, Eugenia Hadandoniou, María Belén Pistone, María Palacios, Gonzalo Marull, Jazmín Sequeira and Maximiliano Gallo. The criteria I took into account seek to ensure the directors were recognised references in the field of independent theatre in the city of Córdoba. The general topics that the design of the interview proposed dealt with the observation of the role itself, the work methodology, the groups, the aspects of the staging, such as the device, the dramaturgy, the performance and the relationship with the audience. Through this treatment of the documents, it was possible to observe a series of meanings that were reiterated in the discourses of the interviewees, which could be synthesised in what I call theatrical conceptions. Sara Ahmed points out that by interviewing people about their emotions—something that invariably occurred when addressing the topics of the interview—a form of speech is produced that will be transcribed into a written text and in this way the researcher “then becomes the reader of the text and writer of another text about the text” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 19). The subsequent treatment of these documents was performed using elements of discourse analysis, in such a way that it was possible to take a *reading* of the theatrical conceptions of the directors interviewed. Understanding discourse as a verbal-textual materiality, the discursive view aims to understand processes, relations and effects of meaning (Glozman 10).

My research conceptualised direction as the formulation of a proposal for a particular distribution of the sensitive for a creative process for different artists, who will assume and transform this initial invitation and from which they will be established as a group. At that point, the direction ceases to be outside the collective, as a proposer, in order to integrate it as a creator. The twist introduced is that the direction is not limited to the organisation of the distribution of the sensitive aspect of a particular work or of the materials and people involved; on the contrary, in this scheme, the distribution of the sensitive aspect is rooted in the group (Boenisch 21-22).² This means a way of being together as creators, a way of creating collectively and a way of relating to spectators in what will become the play.

This concept of direction is grounded in the group as a result of interviews’ analysis; in others words, as a result of my reading of the textuality produced in that framework. Sara Ahmed focuses her work on the reading of texts with a particular emphasis on metonymy and metaphor that account for the emotionality of the text (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 19). I observe in

² Boenisch uses Jacques Ranciere's concept of the sharing of the sensitive to consider such a conceptualisation of the role of direction. The author defines directing as a role of “medium” between the audience, the stage text and the present moment. Boenisch adheres to the Rancierian idea of aesthetics as a sharing of the sensible.

the interviews the relevance of affects in group conformations, in the development of the dynamics of work and creation, and in the political action of the groups, that is to say, in their capacity to affect reality.

As far as the specific tasks of the role are concerned, I conclude that decision works almost as a synonym for direction. For the group, making a decision implies blocking the course of the creative becoming, mainly collective. Consequently, the decision lies at the opposite pole, in solitude. However, the real task of the director is not to decide alone, but to sustain the tension between deciding—and advancing the process—and becoming with the group—and pausing or disintegrating the process. Referring to the decision making as a task is to simplify it, given that, it actually implies sustaining the tension between deciding and not deciding. The task of the director is to maintain the tension and balance it, in order to manage progress and pause over time. For the directors interviewed, respecting the process and having a committed work ethic means balancing both extremes. This way of conceiving the role places trust in the creative powers and hinders the exercise of power against others — which happens if the direction is done without listening to the process and only taking into account only the decision-making impulses of the director. There is a strict set of decisions remaining only in the director's hands, which are situated in particular coordinates: during actor's performance and from the director's observation space. During that time and from that space, the direction has the exclusive right to affect the scene and make decisions.

Nevertheless, beyond the specific task of the role, the groups assume the proposal that the direction formulates in order to create their own expectations about the stage process. The project includes establishing a possible result, which may be a theatrical piece presented to the public, the approach to some materials, the experience of a process with certain people or a form of group work. Strictly speaking, the objectives are linked to the directorial poetics, as they are the origin of the proposal. In itself, the director's objective is not relevant enough to sustain the project until it is achieved. I believe that the trust forged by groups around the process, the direction and the potential of the group itself are crucial to understand its maintenance and commitment over time. Conviction about the capabilities of peers and mutual affection are crucial to the formation and sustainability of groups and projects.

The Value of Affect and Its Implications for the Formation of Collectives

The analysis I developed on groupality took, as its starting point, its centrality in working methodologies. My questions focused on the foundations of meetings of people, distinguishing motives, needs and conditions. I considered that the origin of the formations sets the frame for what the group will do and how it will get organised. In the interviews, I analysed the reasons for forming groups, which mainly concerned affection issues. When observing these motivations, I recorded the reiteration of emotionalities and values linked to friendship, trust

and shared life history. I identified the impulse towards other people, linked to the desire to be together, to create with these others, to continue exploring with particular individuals. Contrary to what might be assumed, it is affectivity and not the artistic capacities of the members of the group what organises the groups. The desire to be together was reiterated by the vast majority of the directors. This prompted me to enquire what effects affect has on groups—since affects can be individual but produce effects on the shaping and action of collectives—in what spheres affects specifically act, and what happens with the tension between affects and *artistic* capacities.

I propose a reading of the *desire to be together*, which emerged in the interviews, in a way that makes more complex tautological statements such as *we work together because we are friends, we are friends because we work together*, through the perspective of the affective turn. Although it is a diverse theoretical field, which is far from being definitive, there are some notions that help us to reflect on what emerged in the interviews and what I know from my immersion in the field. Regarding the affective turn, Cecilia Macón and Mariela Solana understand that it is a conceptual environment capable of problematising dichotomies such as passion and reason, body and mind, affects and interior, passions and exterior, and that it can be thought of as an alternative project to address the affective, passionate or emotional dimension and its implications in the public sphere (Macón and Solana 15).

In this way, the affective, passionate or emotional dimension—which surrounds the bonding wefts of theatre makers—has effects on the public sphere: groups are organisations that affect social life with their actions. These organisations in the public sphere are full of emotions, passions and affections. It is in this sense that I argue that in both their functioning and their constitution, collectives are plotted in an affective logic; in other words, affects are thought as “what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects” (Ahmed, *The Promise* 230). Some authors understand affects as a force, and highlight their performative possibilities insofar as they are capable of “affecting and being affected” and refer to a body dimension: bodies are those who act, connect or commit themselves (Gregg and Seigworth 2). It is this capacity of acting and doing that allows *the desire to be together* to become an act, and groups to cease to be imaginary and to become tangible and concrete: groups of people coming together against any economic logic, and sometimes even against any “disinterested interest” (Bourdieu, *El sentido* 82).

Ana del Sarto recalls the Spinozian difference between affect as force, the force of one body that affects another and affect as capacity, that is, as the imprint of affect on the body on which it impacts, beyond the survival of that mark (del Sarto 47). Thus we could identify affect-force with the impulse to assemble a group, to bring together a group of people. The affection-capacity or affectation can be recognised in the permeability of the makers to the impulses of others to form a group and their adherence to these affection-force. Even allowing ourselves

these observations, we note that affects are social, unstable, dynamic, paradoxical and constitute a logic capable of accounting for the social bond (Macón and Solana 17). At the same time, Sara Ahmed exhorts us to pay attention to the de-romanticisation of affects since no affect is in itself either oppressive or emancipatory (Macón and Solana 20).

Historically, the Cartesian tradition has subordinated the body to reason, in correspondence with gender perspectives that undervalue the feminine—and everything related to these genders—and assign it a subordinate position with respect to the masculine (López González 11). By paying attention to the value of the emotional, the hegemony of the Cartesian tradition that assigns a disvalue to affects and feminises emotions—which in a “patriarchal system” is the same as subtracting all political value—is disturbed (Butler 102; Segato 102). Thus, from the hegemonic perspective, a gathering of artists based on affect would mean that it is a merely emotional group whose artistic value is questionable: they are governed by their feelings and not by their abilities or talent. According to Ahmed, emotion is inferior to thought and reason: “to be emotional is to have one’s judgement affected: it is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than autonomous” (*The Cultural* 3). Those who are guided by their emotions would be “less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgement” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 3). Ahmed argues that emotionality is a characteristic that is associated with some bodies and not others: in this case, I can say that emotionality is associated with certain roles and not others. Actors and actresses are related to affectivity, while other artists must be more rational, such as those in technical and directorial roles.

Under this arrangement, if a director is primarily emotional, their professional quality would be diminished because they would lose attributes such as responsibility and restraint, being guided exclusively by their “whims”. At the same time, sensitivity is demanded of them, as this would give them artistic capabilities. The right balance between reason and sensitivity seems to be an impossibility; however, for some directorial models, the role of the director must be devoid of emotions and manage the stage resources in the most efficient way possible. This implies control, calculation and organisation over sensitivity and emotionality.

When Ahmed argues that women are “posited as ‘failing’ to ‘live up to’ the standards of truth in their emotionality”, I draw a similarity to what happens with theatrical roles (*The Cultural* 170). In the traditional organisational schemes of theatrical work—a male director at the top of a hierarchical pyramid supported by actors and technical artists—those who perform are deprived of decision-making power over the meaning of the work or other politically relevant aspects of the stage process. The parallelism established suggests that those who take their emotionality into account will, at the same time, be deprived of power. Namely, the performance is subalternated due to its emotional foundation (let’s consider that actors operate centrally with their emotions), and it is the direction that assumes the place of decision because of its supposedly more rational and analytical thinking. The case I am describing corresponds

to traditional production systems, linked to modern European theatre (Naugrette 20). This model organised artists according to a hierarchical structure with a division of specific roles in pursuit of productivity, a system similar to the functioning of a factory, whose manager is who directs. In the contemporary independent theatre I am analysing, this tradition has an influence on the artists, which is why I take it into account.³

A perspective that organises emotions and thoughts hierarchically not only excludes feminised bodies but also serves “to conceal the emotional and embodied aspects of thought and reason” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 170). Ahmed challenges this understanding and argues for the existence of a rational emotional thought or embodied thought. My interest in understanding the affects linked to group formation involves asking about the affects that are capable of bringing people together. This is why I first address the affection for love, which for Ahmed runs the risk of homogenising subjectivities behind an ideal (the loved object).

If I ask about the reasons why “individuals become aligned with collectives”, I recognise love as a decisive one, since it is identification with an ideal what allows bonding (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 124). It must be said that Ahmed is critical of acts in the name of love, because they can end up compelling others to adopt a “particular ideal” as a condition for belonging to a community (*The Cultural* 139). Love also has implications to account for solidarity affection “in the work that is done to create a different world” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 141).

In terms of affective economies, Sara Ahmed argues that love and affection are valid in hegemonic narratives as long as they tend towards sexual reproduction and the reproduction of the family. In other words, they are affects at the service of the productive. Queer affects would be those that can be “readable as the failure to reproduce, and as a threat to the social ordering of life itself” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 145-146). For these affects, the pleasure and enjoyment of relationships that these narratives categorise as “non-(re)productive” can play a politically irruptive role for an affective economy articulated on “the principle that pleasure is only ethical” if it functions as a reward for its (re)productivity.

I make an analogy with respect to art and queer affects: theatrical practices of independent theatre can be understood as unproductive in many cases. For example, the long rehearsal periods do not guarantee the production of a play, nor do the investment of resources and time in shows necessarily produce corresponding economic or symbolic capital. Theatrical works in the commercial circuit are understood as productive for hegemonic narratives due to the amount of money they mobilise and the surplus value they produce. Consequently, it is not comprehensible from the point of view of productivity the fact that a play from the independent circuit that has been rehearsed for a year have, at most, an average of twelve performances

³ The tradition linked to Latin-American collective creation (dates from the sixties) also influences contemporary conceptions. It advocates a redefinition and de-hierarchisation of artistic roles. Since both traditions are juxtaposed in current practices, I cannot ignore the one that proposes an unequal distribution of power that still persists.

with 30 spectators each. I point out these examples, just to mention a few cases of “wasted” energies in terms of neoliberal subjectivity. Neoliberal subjectivity means that the market permeates its rules in all links, in order to establish a competitive and ruthless logic in all other areas of life (Reynares 69; Rossi and Blengino 43). The inability of independent theatre to guarantee a productive criterion and, even more, its willingness to mobilise resources and energies under the criterion of pleasure is what allows drawing parallels with queer affects, since they value affections and emotions resulting in unproductive effects.

Now, how is it possible to think about the conformation of collectives from emancipatory affects? Ahmed argues that the emotion of hope and its capacity to produce openings would be the opportunity to bring together “different bodies” in the struggle against “what is”. The possibility of empathising with others requires setting aside time for this opening, in order to inaugurate links founded on hope: “one does not hope alone, but for others, whose pain one does not feel, but whose pain becomes a thread in the weave of the present, touched as it is by all that could be” (Ahmed, *The Cultural* 188).

There are some studies on social movements and affect that can allow us to understand the place of emotions in collective actions (Scribano and Artese 85). For Adrián Scribano and Matías Artese, emotions play a role in the sustainability of collectives over time and explain the connections between politics, intimacy and emotions (97). Emotions are relevant for producing affective loyalties among those who participate in social movements. In the same vein, reciprocal emotions—such as friendship bonds, affection, commitment and trust—serve to consolidate transformative collectives (Scribano and Artese 98). Scribano and Artese point out that in the collision of social movements with the policies of cultural, emotional and subjective control by the system, collective non-conformist emotions also emerge (103).

As for the theatre groups, I can understand them as groupings that configure collectives that transform the discouragement of hegemonic narratives and neoliberal subjectivity into hope. Far from exclusively assuming the role of precarious workers in culture or education, they reverse the place socially assigned to them with the production of artistic work that escapes the logics of the market. In what follows, I address some of the affective-forces that shape the groups' conceptions of foundation, combining affective logics that enhance the artistic creation from a dynamic that does not consider productivity as an unavoidable value.

Affects and Group Formation in The Case Study

DESIRE TO BE TOGETHER AND TO DELVE INTO CREATIVE ISSUES

One of the first affections I recognised in the interviews was the *desire to be together*. Namely, the choice of people who to produce with would be based on the shared trajectory and the pleasure generated by working together. Continuity in the meeting of people also offers

the possibility of delving into creative issues. At the same time, some take a risk towards the unknown including a new person who will join a group that has been consolidated for several decades. They recognise that the collective is activated from pleasure, from the desire to share artistic work with the known people and a willingness to delve into compositional challenges with them. Jazmín Sequeira, in a personal interview, said:

Generally, there are links and people who I've been working with for a long time, and I keep choosing them because we love working together, but we always try to open up in each project and work with someone we don't know. This has been happening and it's good, because working with people you already have a history with allows you to go deeper; but also working with people you don't know allows you to move to new places. So this combination is good. (Sequeira)⁴

The affective logic would have several levels of affectation: the former is the conformation of the group, linked to the desire to be together; the latter is the set of individual creative passions that are put together to produce collectively. I note that individual creative affections could be combined in different ways: towards proposals that standardise the group on the basis of a single criterion, or towards processes that encourage heterogeneity and the explicitness of the technical or compositional singularities of the group's members. Regarding the conceptions of the interviewees, there were those who assumed the production problems contributed by each member constitute a starting point for creation and that the director's role is to assemble the singularities through the instructions and work dynamics of the rehearsals:

A project emerges from previously diving at the meeting place, from the most personal desires or interests of the team participants. [It also emerges] from the question: today, what is troubling you, what makes you question yourself, what excites you, what moves you, what worries you, what concerns you, what do you want to know more about and calls you? ... The question, actually, aims at getting each member of the group to share something with the group, something concrete and tangible that truly worries them and moves them. (Sequeira)

It should be clarified that group formations may be due to affective motivations, in the first place, which trigger a project, or else, the motivation to undertake a project (thought individually) may lead people to come together because of their compositional or technical skills and affective affinities. Although each group is formed differently, desire plays a relevant role in both scenarios. Beyond the recognition of the knowledge and abilities of these people, the affective value organises the formation of the group as a priority. Daniela Martín said about the play *Recetaria. Estados en ebullición*: "First, I met Maura [Sajeva], we thought about who we wanted to work with. On the spot, we both said 'Mauro [Alegret]'. Then, the three of us met Mauro and we said 'let's add someone else', and we were thinking until we got to Fabricio [Cipolla.]" (Martín).

⁴ The translator of this and the others interviews is my own.

The need to incorporate a new member lies in including the difference rather than reiterating the coincidences of a group that has been together for more than fifteen years, as in the case of *Convención Teatro*. In contrast, for other projects, the formation of the group is left in the hands of the director. In some interviews, this activity is perceived as part of the integral exercise of the role. Several directors consider that this responsibility is part of the convention of what activity has been stipulated for directors. In words of Eugenia Handandoniou:

The formation of the group, at least when it's a project promoted by me, because that's what we're talking about, right? We're not talking about the project in which I was called by the members of the group to direct them. In the two projects where I'm now —they called me—, I didn't push them directly, even though I propose things to them. But most of the projects I direct, like *Inside Me*, for example, are shaped by the desire of the people you want to work with, that you've come across, or by an image or dream that has come up. And there's something about that that calls you. Or someone with whom you worked on one thing and you would like to try something else. Mutually, we have told each other that we want to work together. (Handandoniou)

In Eugenia Handandoniou's case, approaching certain people to incorporate them into projects is linked to desire, to the almost mystical occurrence of images of possible co-workers or to the impulse to experiment scenically with an artist. Alternatively, in the cases in which the person who directs is called, the direction is limited to “proposing things”: which seems not to be the same as directing. So, for some directorial conceptions, the integrality of the role occurs when the project is promoted by the director and the conformation of the group is under their orbit.

The desire to work together and to delve into creative issues is what makes the direction exert the affection-force that influences the others and ends up constituting the group. In other interviews, the value of the encounter with others is the origin of the project: this is how Martín Gaetán, María Palacios, Gonzalo Marull and Marcelo Arbach put it—beyond coupling other interests to it.

HUMAN QUALITY AS ARTISTIC POWER

When I talk about affects, I am not only referring to their influence on the shaping of groups, but also to the possibility of recognising how they act on the power of artistic production. The director, Marcelo Arbach, mentions human quality as a condition for creation. Its value lies in the fact that it allows openness to the contributions of all members, whose specific contributions will result in a powerful process. Openness, in the sense proposed by Ahmed for the linking of affections in a collective. It is clear to many directors that selfish or closed views truncate creative processes. A convention of the theatre community is to value processes, assuming that quality works will emerge from rich processes or, as if the work would not match up to the process; the experience can be capitalised on by the members of the group. Therefore, human quality as a requirement makes creative processes worth the time invested in them. Marcelo Arbach pointed out:

The faculty is an important place because you meet people. You form groups. In the workshops I have offered, where people were trained, [groups were also formed]. And finding people with human quality. It seems to me that people who have human quality are much more likely to understand what artistic creation or creation in theatre is like than other people who are more selfish or more closed. I focus more and more on talking about human quality, which is what happened in *Piel de lobo*, where a collective of people who are good people is formed, and beyond that, then you do achieve a good product, but because there was a good process. (Arbach)

I may question the association between goodness and “creation”, considering that it is not goodness that will produce creation and that people with selfish attitudes may carry out projects well. However, I interpret from Arbach's words that human quality is conducive to certain kinds of processes, especially those that allow themselves to regulate progress and pause without the pressure of effectiveness and maximisation of resources. He also draws attention in the testimony to the fact that “finding people” means finding people who have this human quality: finding them, recognising their sensitive qualities and forging links that survive in a theatrical process. This meeting involves moments of observation as well as attraction, and includes affect as a force and affect in its capacity to affect. The contexts of encounter are closely linked to training spaces, the university and workshops. In these situations, processes of seduction occur because, on the one hand, it is possible to observe the compositional and technical capacities of peers or students (when in a teaching role), and on the other hand, it is only an exercise. Formative spaces are test sites, where it is tried out if the group dynamics hinder or enhance the creative processes, if the personalities are compatible, if the skills promote scenic concreteness, if the seduction dazzles the members and mobilises them to continue together. This probing space will give the guideline to constitute a serious group, outside the training space. The scene-building exercises, the training for the development of skills and the informal meetings emerging from the training spaces are a field for the practice of human bonds. Such links test both the meeting of creative capacities of people and the forces that attract or repel them. It is the affections that consolidate the group creation spaces.

These are more than enough reasons to understand why castings and auditions—common in the modes of production in other cities, even in independent theatre—are not a common practice and are often discredited or disregarded as a way of starting serious projects. The dynamics of these selections are far removed from affective logics, which are fundamental for group organisation.

EVERYDAY LIFE, ARTISTIC PRODUCTION AND AFFECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Another affection-force is trust, based on long-standing friendships that involve different aspects of life: art, family, management, work. Affection-trust plays a fundamental role in the groups, as it takes into account that shared life history includes instances of artistic production and everyday life. Particularly in the theatre *El Cuenco*, its members share their “lives”, that is,

they talk about their personal matters, as they have long-standing bonds of friendship. This makes the length of the rehearsals and their stages paradigmatic. The rehearsal goes through an extensive emotional warm-up of about an hour or two—I am referring to a conversation about private matters and moods, and conversations inherent to friendship—a time of domestic organisation regarding the logistics and operations of the theatre they manage together, and a time for activities linked to the scene itself. It may take four hours or more. These moments do not necessarily occur consecutively or in isolation, but they get mixed as friendship, work and creation become involved, as Cuesta described in her account of the rehearsals.

If affects are “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects”, in this case, they make it possible for apparently heterogeneous aspects—such as the management of a theatre, family life and the practice of the rhythm of a dramatic text—to coexist in the same space-time, which is the rehearsal (Ahmed, *The Promise* 230). Rodrigo Cuesta said:

I learned with *El Cuenco* about trust and about knowing that we are all on the same boat. We are creating together and playing together. It seems to me that in *El Cuenco*, all of us have been taking things and learning from each other, it's twenty-one years together. It's a lot of time and sometimes we all work together⁵, and other times we don't, other times we split up, we fight a lot, which has to do with this question of the collective and sharing life, practically. (Cuesta)

Cuesta proposes a way of being together that moves away from indifferentiation, since “the collective” implies shared work, but also distances and conflicts, it involves friendship and affection and it is projected onto everyday life and the passing of time. Rodrigo Cuesta is fully aware that the choices are mutual and that this implies affective responsibilities. Affection-respect and affection-listening emerge in this interview, as in those of other directors, who reiterate that this is one of the actions carried out by the direction. If the members of the group are choosing each other, all of them and especially the direction cannot ignore that these bonds deserve to be honoured:

I choose to work with those people, so it seems to me that this is not a matter, for me, of emotional support, but rather that ‘I choose to work with you and you also choose to work with me’. It seems to me that if human things come up along the way, you have to know how to listen to them, because you are working with people. (Cuesta)

Cuesta's statement that they are working with people makes me wonder if there is any way in which theatre is not working with people: unfortunately the answer is not entirely obvious, because enough literature considers that we are working exclusively with materials—objects, performances, texts, sounds, colours. From our perspective, a scenic process is a creative work carried out by a human collective. However, the conceptions that enable us to

⁵ In July 2017.

think that we are not working with people are those that believe that we are working on individual ideas that are imposed on other people. This type of posture would be faithful to their personal impulses, to affections that lead to artistic productions where individual visions would prevail and the possibility of nurturing other singularities would be lost. The role of the director is very easily accommodated in positions that only take into account the creative passions of the person who occupies it. Not all affections are emancipatory (Macón and Solanas 20).

FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION

Admiration is an affection-force: someone marvels at an artist's ability to affect others. In other words, someone is fascinated by the power an artist has to affect the spectator through their technique or compositional skills. The capacities produce a seductive effect on others, especially on the director, because they are the person who observes the skills, projecting on their own dazzle the fascination that other spectators would experience. Admiration combines the dimension of people's particular knowledge and skills with affective logics, which are transcended in the recognition of the colleague's abilities. This knowledge and skills arouse creative passions in the director and activate their interest (and desire) to form a group. The framework remains affection-friendship and trust: not just any excellent actor is called upon, but a friend I admire. It is in the name of this friendship that artists seek to generate reciprocal benefits so that the project is a significant contribution to the artistic trajectory of the other person, assuming that it will also be a significant contribution to their own:

...because I work with friends. It would be different if I were hired and someone else defined the actors. No, I work with people that I admire, that I like, when I know a character will suit them and the play will suit them because of something in particular or I find some connection. By finding a connection, I mean intuitively knowing that this character or the universe of that play is going to make them vibrate. In acting terms, I like the actors to be good, for the audience to say 'what good actors!' That's what interests me most, that the actor can evoke. After that, the text shines. (Gallo)

In any case, there is an awareness of the market logic that would change the current modes of group formation ("It would be different if I were hired"). The market would guarantee that the time spent would be translated into economic goods and, at the same time, would restrict the possible choices of group formation. Affective logics have the imperative of converting time spent into pleasure; so in order to fulfil this mandate, choices are made according to passionate, emotional and affective criteria. Freedom of choice is limited to this bonding framework.

Conclusion

In some of the interviewees' discourses, it was possible to recognise that presenting adequate technical skills for the development of the director's idea was the exclusive reason for the invitation to the project, without considering desires, bonds or the examination of

production problems. However, the conceptions I review here are those that enhance our understanding of theatrical direction in independent theatre, rather than reiterating modalities that respond to market logics, such as those that only seek to optimise resources in order to obtain products and their corresponding revenues. In this respect, Luciano Delprato criticises the adoption of these logics within independent theatre: “without noticing, we say ‘let’s do a play in four months instead of a year’. These are industrial criteria that are trying to minimise costs in order to maximise profits” (Delprato).

I refer to the importance of affective logic over and above market logic: it is not money nor success what brings a group together or drives the director to make the call that initiates a project. Time plays an important role: it is scarce for independent theatre makers, because the vast majority of them are obliged to undertake “small jobs described as being just to pay the bills” that occupies most of their working day (Bourdieu, *The rules* 227). Artistic work must therefore be carefully chosen because it uses up valuable time: recreational time, unproductive time, time for pleasure, time for living life. In this context, a theatre project will be more related to passions, desires and pleasure than to economic success or the success of other kinds of capital.

The conclusion of this study was that group formations are guided by affectivity and, secondarily, by the artistic capacities of the group members. The impulse that mobilises artists towards other artists and gets to unite them over time is linked to the desire to share, to create and to continue investigating. Friendship, trust and life stories are the main reasons for the meetings, although artists’ knowledge and skills also play an important role. In any case, my understanding of capacities is linked to affections, as performing skills captivate.

For directing, admiration is decisive, as it links the affective dimension with someone’s technical or compositional abilities. By admiring, the director is amazed by the possibilities of an artist to affect other people. At the same time, the director achieves to see the compositional or technical power from a double perspective: the former makes they feel and the latter, the colder, allows they to project possible scenes. One perspective corresponds to an emotional rationality and the other one to a Cartesian rationality. There is a recognition of knowledge and capacities that activate the passions of the director, seduce them and, by extrapolation, seduce the audience as well. Affections imply forces to act and capacities to be affected: they allow the desire to be in community to be realised through the formation of groups. It is conventionalised that the first impulse for the creation of a group comes from the role of the director or from some actors and the director. It is perceived that the integral exercise of the role contemplates this task. At the same time, those who are called upon are affected and subscribe to the calls.

Training instances are among the spaces that put affection to the test, and then become fruitful in groups. Whether they are official or unofficial—the university or independent workshops—they activate the possibility of testing not only capacities, but also affective

potentialities. In addition to encouraging concrete stage work, training spaces enable a series of informal and domestic encounters, in which the community of artists has the opportunity for affections towards other artist to appear and develop. Although for some directions the appropriate technical skills are a priority when it comes to inviting members to a project, this is not the predominant tendency.

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