

## "Leonídia: Is She Crazy?" — Shared Production of Knowledge and Polyphonic Performance Creation<sup>1</sup>

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This text is dedicated to Maria Helena Pabst de Sá Earp (1925-2014) and the writer Myriam Fraga (1937-2016), in memoriam

### Introduction

This paper explores the creation of "Leonídia: Is She Crazy?," a show by "Trupe Diversos," a theater-and-dance company that originated in the Projeto Paratodos (For All Project) of UFRJ (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). The initial phase of this process was presented on Skype at the "Differentiated Bodies in Contemporary Art International Seminar" at UFRN (Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte) in December 2014, with the participation of teachers André Meyer and Marta Peres and troupe actors Sebastian Jair, José Marcelino, and Maria José Miranda.<sup>2</sup> This text addresses that event and the main developments in the troupe's work since then.

The dramatized 2014 performance/reading led to the mounting of the show in 2015,<sup>3</sup> and was followed by six presentations, with others scheduled. Leonídia is the result of the extension course "Polyphonic Performance Creation"<sup>4</sup> (CCP), the

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<sup>1</sup>Paper presented at the 2nd Differentiated Bodies in Contemporary Art Seminar, in December 2014, presented on Skype under the title of "Leonídia, the Muse of the Poet — Polyphonic Performance and Diversity Creation."

<sup>2</sup>Seminar organized by Nara Salles (UFRN) and Rosana Baptistella (Unicamp), December 12-18, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>Presentations at I FestFic (InterUniversity Culture Festival) at the Paço Imperial, UFF and Fórum de Ciência e Cultura (July and August, 2015), at the Salão Helenita Sá Earp (EEFD, Isla do Fundão, UFRJ, September 2015), at the Centro Coreográfico do Rio de Janeiro (October 2015), and the Casa da Ciência/UFRJ (December 2015).

central idea of which was to apply the ideas of Shared Production of Knowledge (SPK) (Bairon and Lazaneo, 2012) and of polyphony (Bakhtin, 2010)<sup>5</sup> in the performance. Combined with contact with manifestations of traditional cultures in Brazil, the concepts resulted in artistic realization<sup>6</sup> and other works such as academic events, audiovisual material and this article. The creation, scripting and mounting of a show by a group characterized by diversity bets on an increasing permeability between the university and society.

### **For All Project**

During six years of classes, study groups and ongoing promotion, Paratodos (founded in 2010) had become a diverse group, comprised of professor Marta Peres and collaborators, fellow teachers, professional partners from neighboring centers that referred their patients, students enrolled in related disciplines and extension participants (which we refer to as UFRJ students without a registration number).

Although physical activity is a frequent medical prescription, options for practices guided by qualified professionals are still scarce for people with movement limitations, sensory and physical deficiencies, and mental suffering.<sup>7</sup> The guidelines of the Paratodos project (a teaching and research extension of the Department of Body Art at the UFRJ School of Physical Education and Sports) are based on health

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<sup>4</sup>This course continued a previous one, "Human Body/Brazilian Dances (Jongo)", reported in an eponymous article (Peres and Justino, 2014), in the Paratodos project, and was open to students from UFRJ, other institutions and external participants. The proposal may be revisited in other contexts, so that this paper can foster future developments of the experience.

<sup>5</sup>The course was one of the items of the post-doctoral research project conducted by Marta Simões Peres at the Diversitas/Universidade de São Paulo project (USP, 2013/2015) entitled "A Polyphonic Perspective on Griot Education — Dialogues Between Bodies and Networks" by Marta Simões Peres, under the supervision of Professor Sergio Bairon.

<sup>6</sup>The results are presented in theatrical, performative, hypermediatic and digital forms, as the registration of the creative processes, rehearsals and performances of "Leonídia" turned into audiovisual and hypermedia material to be made available.

<sup>7</sup>Although most users of health services at the PVUFRJ campus area are poor, regardless of users' economic status there is a supply shortage outside of therapeutic contexts for the disabled, wheelchair users and users of other mobility aids, such as crutches and walkers. Unfortunately, on the Praia Vermelha campus, as well as at almost all other UFRJ campuses, accessibility for wheelchair users and people with mobility difficulties is still extremely precarious.

prevention and promotion, and an expansion of knowledge about the body and arts education, taking us to a diverse audience and aiming at motor, emotional and sociability improvements.

Seeking to expand the profile of dance and expand its access to a public beyond dancers and professional artists, and to consolidate dance as an activity of health prevention and promotion, the project offers free dance classes at the UFRJ Praia Vermelha campus sports complex.<sup>8</sup> The public at the classes includes the elderly, people with psychological distress, and those who are blind or have poor eyesight, wheelchair users, and all those interested in attending the activity (Peres, 2013).<sup>9</sup> Recently, during 2015 and 2016, we have started to receive children, including those diagnosed with autism, referred by professionals from the UFRJ Instituto de Neurologia Deolindo Couto.<sup>10</sup>

UFRJ and professor Marta Peres conduct the classes.<sup>11</sup> They are strategically located on the UFRJ Praia Vermelha campus, together with major health centers (Pinel, IPUB and Rocha Maia), and in the vicinity of the Instituto Benjamin Constant<sup>12</sup> as well as five public schools and Copacabana, with its great concentration of older people and a municipal health center offering integrative practices<sup>13</sup>. However, de-

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<sup>8</sup>Other objectives include: to establish teaching methodologies in dance and theater; improve the approach methods; prepare care protocols and assessment tools; open doors in the job market; strengthen the internship stage in dance and health; develop research, and theoretical and artistic production.

<sup>9</sup>The internship center in dance and health was introduced in the 1990s at HESFA (Hospital Escola São Francisco de Assis), with the DanDiHipe project (Dance for Diabetics and Hypertensives), by teachers Katya Gualter (CAD-EEFD) and Vera Halfoun (medical school faculty). I founded Paratodos in 2010, when this internship center was moved to the UFRJ Praia Vermelha campus.

<sup>10</sup>We call this group "Paratodos Mirim."

<sup>11</sup>Among the specific objectives of the enumerated classes are: to improve fitness and muscle tone; to present the basics of anatomy, kinesiology, human physiology, and injury prevention;

<sup>12</sup> Lilia Wolf refers to the location of these centers in the Praia Vermelha area in "The Infamous of History: The Poor, Slaves and Handicapped in Brazil" (2009), addressing the idea that the "infamous subjects" are historically invisible. Starting with colonial Brazil, the author mentions psychiatric institutions (Hospício Dom Pedro II) and rehabilitation (Benjamin Constant) of Praia Vermelha. Since it was established at this campus, Paratodos received users of a now closed swimming pool, neighbors, the elderly, Pinel and IPUB patients, and those rehabilitating at the Instituto Benjamin Constant. When they came, their presence increased the group's motivation. We believe in the idea that all human beings, unique and singular, have qualities to be shared.

to enhance the relationship with body image; and to stimulate sociability, expression and creativity.

spite the affinity with therapeutic approaches, we stress that we offer classes and not care, in that participants are extension students and not our patients. These classes are based on dance, theater, music, arts in general, and pedagogy, fields to which undergraduates are connected. Having an emphasis on its extension-type nature, the project has to meet a social demand for careful and enjoyable physical activity. The labor market in dance is reduced, and health is a little explored field, in which new fronts can be opened. We must carry out the dual function of providing an important service to the community and, for dance students and other graduate courses, the application of health knowledge, with a more diverse public than the people with whom they usually live. Therefore, issues of diversity, disability, and mental health are part of our practices and theoretical reflections. The search for the elimination of barriers to diversity (mainly attitudinal) comprises the daily activity of Paratodos.

The dance classes are based on the pedagogy of Angel Vianna (Teixeira, 1998), in Laban Movement Analysis (Fernandes, 2002) and of Emeritus Professor Maria Helena Pabst de Sá Earp in Dance Fundamentals Theory (DFT) (Lima, 2004). Known as "Helenita," the latter was the founder of dance at UFRJ and introducer of dance to Brazilian universities (Lima, 2004). The diversity and attention to human movement, regardless of standards and virtuosity, are Helenita's foundations of thought, with which Paratodos has a close harmony. DFT emphasizes principles that support the opening of multiple availabilities in body differences and their applications in dance, by means of unlimited research into movement manifestation possibilities. This research involves the development of intuition and of cognitive, affective and motor aspects of corporeality. The innumerable possibilities for connections allow the creation of diverse teaching methodologies for different bodies, with or without disabilities. As there is no standard to be followed and motion research is infinite, a person can dance with any body part. Since Helenita's proposal is not closed, the students', participants' and interpreters' suggestions, behavior, emotional attitudes and movements can be transformed into jointly constructed exploratory situations of the creative process.

Thus, in addition to strictly organic goals of physical fitness, a relaxed and sponta-

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<sup>13</sup>Professor Daniel Rugani conducts tai chi classes at the Copacabana health center and a group called "We Are Aware," and both projects communicate through mutual promotion and exchange of experiences.

neous environment is one of our tonics, favoring the expression and the development of performance works.<sup>14</sup> We focus on the creative production of gestures, dynamics and movements, through the selection and recording of the most interesting elements, and explore repetition, sequences, alternations, phrase arrangements, and motion canons, thus generating compositions. On this basis, during the course "Polyphonic Performance Creation," dance turned into performance, dramatized reading and a theatrical show. This became possible after the arrival of the plot that was its origin, in the book of our "playwright" José Marcelino, a process that will be described after a discussion about dance at the university and the presentation of the concepts of polyphony and SPK.

### **Dance and the University: In Search of Its Own Language**

Defending the cause of accessible dance lessons for all brings us to "disability studies"<sup>15</sup> and the field of mental health, as seen from the perspective of psychiatric reform and anti-asylum struggle (Peres, 2013). The quest for empowerment and criticism of entrenched paternalistic and clientelistic models, present in the political activism of these fields, are summarized in the following excerpt:

"Still, we think it is necessary to 'give things' to those who do not have them. Personally, or socially we still act as if people who suffer and are marginalized need to suffer less and to be 'inserted' into society, which 'gives' them a different status. The technocratic solution has exactly this basic assumption: someone who has 'know-how' will 'study' and propose what the marginal populations should do, and how they should do it, to solve their problems...There are, however, alternatives to this way of thinking; a way to combat this marginalizing vision is to believe that these people are able to get what they need, recognize their right to participate in society, and ensure opportunities that will influence the procedures, decisions and conditions that affect their lives" (Ferreira and Botomé, 1984, p. 23).

This approach lends itself both to the political engagement of "stigmatized" people,

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<sup>14</sup>We perform periodic activities such as drawings, collages, and modeling, which we discuss in relation to perceptions, memories, and body image. Participants report feelings, difficulties, possibilities, limits, and changes brought about by the experience and moments that drew attention. One of them once referred to the class as "Basic Joy," a title that we later adopted.

<sup>15</sup>An area of study of, and activism for, diversity rights in the contemporary world (Martins et al, 2012).

considered socially 'disadvantaged' due to disability or mental suffering, and to the struggle of traditional communities, which have oral history as the predominant means of cultural transmission and which are historically left behind by "formal" academic knowledge. At the same time, the condition of art at the university brings us into solidarity with the movements of disabled people and the anti-asylum struggle and with traditional Brazilian communities.<sup>16</sup>

In the words of Ferreira and Botomé, believing "that these people are able to get what they need, recognizing their right to participate in society, and ensuring opportunities to influence the procedures, decisions and conditions that affect their lives" is an attitude that is present in the perspective of Shared Production of Knowledge (Bairon and Lazaneo, 2012), described below.

Since the eighteenth century, there has been a break between the fields of production of art and knowledge in universities,<sup>17</sup> so that all that belonged to the senses and aesthetic experience was left outside of university walls, as something belonging to "artists", while academic space was constituted as a hierarchy in which the hard sciences occupied the top and colonized all other subjects, as if they needed to speak their language, the scientific method, to be properly recognized. The so-called "humanities" have been on the lower rungs of the ladder, and the arts are still arduously seeking recognition and dialogue with other areas of knowledge.

In fact, art's dilemmas in academia are great, both inside and out. It is as if, in addition to teaching itself and to artistic and academic production, we, artists and teachers, need to always "pinch ourselves" to confirm our existence and to find the words to justify the relevance of our being there. Inside, the confrontation of prejudices coming from other fields of knowledge, from colleagues who often see us as people who "lead a very fun life," is a holdover from the eighteenth-century worldview in which only the scientific method deserves "credit."

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<sup>16</sup>Our involvement with the theme is present in the presentation of oral communication in the event "Handilat. Colloque Franco-latinoaméricain de recherche sur le handicap/Colloquium Franco-Latin American of investigación sobre la discapacidad" INSHEA, Paris, 2014, entitled "Pour Tous : Danse, diversité et Santé "(Paratodos: Dance, diversity and health), recorded and made available on YouTube at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxN6AAvlyw>

<sup>17</sup>This issue is addressed in the course "Hypermedia, Digital Language and Shared Production of Knowledge" given by Professor Sergio Bairon, at the ECA/USP graduate school at, with which we had the opportunity to collaborate in 2014 and 2015.

Outside, there is the view of "professional" artists, often derogatory in regards to the teaching environment, that repeat the old adage "those who cannot do, teach", or "the teacher is the one who doesn't know how to do."<sup>18</sup> Dance students, in turn, when they meet colleagues from other courses in the common areas of the university - public transportation, parties, academic events and the university restaurant - are often considered "less intelligent" and asked if their curriculum only has courses such as "Forró 1, 2, 3..."

We do not argue that the university is the only "breadbasket" of artists. Nor that it is limited to teaching technique, as there are schools and courses outside it that already fulfill this role. In seeking higher education, both beginners and artists with consolidated careers seek this place as a space for critical reflection. They deal with areas in dispute, and their achievements consolidate the field, by the construction of methodologies that, although they can dialogue with the scientific method, have their own benchmarks and concerns.

Dance is considered, in a sense, the "poor cousin" of the arts, which merits a discussion that would not fit in this text.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, dance simultaneously has the creator, instrument and work of art in the body and is situated at a point of intersection that is highly strategic in relation to other areas: health, mathematics, nature, technology, the social sciences, philosophy and certainly all the arts. It is essential that those involved establish their own methodologies, problematizations and questions, and build their field in an autonomous way, "uncolonized" by other areas of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

As discussed earlier, the Paratodos Project had already been nourishing itself with references to studies of disability and the anti-asylum struggle. During the collab-

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<sup>18</sup>Do not rule out the possibility of such criticism being accompanied by greedy hints for a stable job, considering it is not easy to depend on reviews or the theater box office to pay the bills...

<sup>19</sup>There is a tradition among musicians not to play without charging, unless it is a get together, cameo appearance, or a festive event. In the visual arts, the work of art is an object and so its market exchange value is obvious. In dance, however, many of the artists survive solely on teaching activities. Invitations to participate in work "in exchange for the experience" are very frequent and give visibility without a fee (!). When dealing with collaborative experiences, a collective investment is acceptable; the problem is when some earn and others

<sup>20</sup>This text deals specifically with the methodology adopted in an extension course, but this need is present in virtually all courses in our curriculum, required and optional, a theme that can be developed in future work. don't; this is exploitation! It is up to the artist to pay attention and know when to accept or not accept jobs for which they are invited.



oration with the Diversitas/USP Center, in Marta Peres' post-doctorate work, contact with the activism of traditional communities (Pacheco) was added, bringing new perspectives, ideas, tools and theoretical and practical resources to nurture artistic creation. We found a strong affinity between their expressions - rituals, music, dance, rodas (music-and-dance circles), - and the demands of education in the performing arts,<sup>21</sup> so that the masters' and griots' political, educational and experiential action instigated inquiries regarding our methodologies.

Basically, both in dance classes as in those "rodas," there is an undeniable centrality of the body and of experience for which traditional education usually doesn't make room (Freire, 1970), neither in the attitude of separation between subject and object, nor in supposed impartiality and exclusion of the senses, of subjectivity, required by the scientific method since the eighteenth century.

### **Shared Production of Knowledge (SPK) and Polyphony**

SPK (Bairon and Lazaneo, 2012) proposes another ethnography, where communities do not take a passive role as the object of research, but are instead producing knowledge and media. By participating, exchanging and creating a partnership with the group - that is not "studied" but also jointly "studies" and "produces" - the researcher ceases to be an "intruder." Be it an Indian tribe or a group of descendants of quilombos (Brazilian communities of formerly enslaved peoples), the community produces actions, art, and knowledge, and disseminates them through media and Internet resources.

SPK was added to the research we have been conducting within the area of performance creation, starting with developments in Bakhtin's polyphony concept. Ellen Saur, now a professor at NTNU, and the company "NonStop Theatre", took the con-

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<sup>21</sup>In October 2012, with the launch of the Laboratory of Cultural Policies/Universidade Griô at UFRJ and its connecting with the Diversitas/USP Center, corridors and classrooms were occupied by a world view contrasting with established convention in the academic environment; this led us to find a strong affinity. It emphasizes the importance of parties in the transmission of knowledge in traditional cultures. During this period, we had contact with Griot Pedagogy (Pacheco, 2014/2015).



cept formulated by Bakhtin in the field of literary theory to the theater.<sup>22, 23</sup>. Bakhtin's "theory of polyphony" is part of the analysis of the literary work of Dostoevsky, whose characters are presented in his speeches as masters of their own destinies, in a multiplicity of independent voices, immiscible and equipollent, which are not subordinated, but are heard side by side with the writer's words. While the monophonic novel's characters are merely mouthpieces of the author's thoughts, in Dostoevsky each has his or her own independent vision of the world. His plots are populated by contradictory, unfinished beings with limitations and full of nuances and disorders; they are extremely human, like all of us (Bakhtin, 2010).

Bakhtin said that in Dostoevsky the author-artist does not invent the character nor generate it from himself, but the encounter is already a given, regardless of his creative act. As Belmiro, of "Cyro dos Anjos," would say, "In the novel, as in life, it is the characters who impose themselves on us," or as André Gide would say, "They are born and grow by themselves, and seek the author so as to insinuate themselves into the spirit" (Bezerra, in Bakhtin, IX). The representation of his characters is born from the interaction of consciousnesses with which they interact, producing the "great dialogue of the novel." The author, conscious of the consciousnesses, like the conductor of a chorus of voices, participates and is the organizer of this dialogue. Thus, he does not create mute beings, enslaved and submissive to 'Zeus'; rather, he creates free people, even able to rebel against their creator.

Reflection on this fascinating topic led us, like Ellen Saur, to extend the idea to the area of teaching performance creation. We asked ourselves about the conditions that favor a balance in a group's power relations - with participants of

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<sup>22</sup>Ellen Saur, with Oddbjørn Johansen, directed the company "NonStop Theatre," composed of actors and actresses with learning disabilities and graduate students in Social Work at the Nord-Trøndelag University in Namsos, Norway. Ellen brought the concept formulated by Bakhtin in the field of literary theory to the theater. Her stagings addressed the issue of power inversion.

<sup>23</sup>In 2011, I gave a one-week course to the NonStop Theatre cast in Namsos, Norway, grounded in bases similar to the course reported here, finishing with a presentation of the performance "Why Not Play with a Head?," an experience presented at ABA, São Paulo in 2012.

<sup>24</sup>An initial problem that one faces in proposing the radicalization of democratic relations is the misconception of imagining that one of the participants should take the leading role from someone who would be "giving it up," a theme that deserves further research in future texts.

a course and then the cast of a theater and dance company - in a collective creation, giving vent to singularities.<sup>24</sup> As if everyone were producers of knowledge and art, in a horizontality of relations, we apply SPK and polyphony to the dance and theater teaching context of Paratodos, establishing conditions in the group analogous to those of the communities. This attitude contrasted with the situation of "patients" being treated in some neighboring centers.<sup>25</sup> Instead of their occupying a place as "ethnographic research objects," their empowerment, active voice and role as producers of knowledge and art were stimulated. This experience has shown that in addition to successful actions reported among traditional communities, enriched by 'polyphony', the SPK approach can expand experimentation in the performing arts.

## **Leonídia**

In order to put this methodology into practice, the "Polyphonic Performance Creation" course, which professor Marta Peres taught to the Paratodos group in the UFRJ Praia Vermelha campus sports complex, was the starting point of putting together "Leonídia." We established an analogy with the polyphony of Dostoyevsky (Bakhtin, 2010) and with SPK by encouraging participants to mount the production, assuming their status as autonomous people not subordinate to a director and/or choreographer (the teacher in this case).

Study, discussion and reading groups that address topics such as mental health, psychiatric reform, disability and stigma are part of our activities in addition to practical dance classes. Although initially aimed at graduate students, extension participants began to participate in them as well. We maintain a dialogue with professionals from neighboring centers that make referrals and report the positive effects of the classes. However, due to the criticism of the asylum model, in line with psychiatric reform and the anti-asylum struggle,<sup>26</sup> we settled into UFRJ's physical

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<sup>25</sup>Recalling that, at some point in life, we are all patients.

<sup>26</sup>"Psychiatric reform aims, above all, to transform society's relationships with madness" (Amarante, 2010).

space. In fact, attending UFRJ to study is quite different from "getting treatment" in a health center, which opens up cracks both in the walls that separate us from those institutions and from the streets outside. Thus, these study groups gave rise to the creative process of "Leonídia." Her biography presented itself as a unique way to approach the theme we've been debating, with the lavish aid of Castro Alves, one of the greatest exponents of poetry in the Portuguese language.

Intrigued by reading Michel Foucault's "The History of Madness," José Marcelino brought us "Leonídia: The Unhappy Poet's Muse" (Fraga, 2002). With this book, the dance turned into a theatrical show, as the script and production revealed themselves, coming from the course "Polyphonic Performance Creation" and "Trupe Diversos" was founded. In it, all are producers of art and knowledge, including those present in the seminar communication -- the authors of this text.

For allegedly being "crazed by love" for the poet Castro Alves, Leonídia was admitted to the São João de Deus asylum in Brotas, Salvador.<sup>27</sup> There she lived until the end of her days, a laughing stock known as "the bride" or "the poet's widow." When she died, poems and letters from Castro Alves dedicated to her were found among her belongings, in a trunk and a cloth bundle.

Through reading the biography and selecting its relevant points, we built a script that alternates a greater presence, sometimes of the choir and sometimes the main characters (Leonídia and Castro Alves), interspersed with poems, songs, instrumental music and, of course, dances. The story served to support the criticism of the prejudices against diversity and the asylum model. The dialogue between the contexts of Bahia (where Leonídia lived) and Rio de Janeiro, two states with many cultural affinities, was enriched by references to jongo,<sup>28</sup> a cultural manifestation that originated in the Southeast, and was chosen as a "bridge" between them.

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<sup>27</sup>São João de Deus was the second asylum founded in Brazil, while the first, "Dom Pedro II", founded by the emperor himself, was founded in the building where today some units of UFRJ (formerly, Universidade do Brasil) are located.

<sup>28</sup>Jongo was part of the first steady course of the Diversitas/USP post-doctorate project: "The Human Body and Brazilian Dances", a partnership of myself and graduate student Gessica Justin, with the collaboration of Lis de Paula, an experience related in this article (Peres, Justino, 2014).

A person in a wheelchair, undergraduate students and graduate students were part of the first and of the most recent group of elderly persons, the latter in treatment at the Hospital Municipal Philippe Pinel and IPUB, and the visually impaired who are rehabilitating at the Benjamin Constant Institute.<sup>29</sup> The original soundtrack was composed by Hector Coutinho, a student at the UFRJ School of Music, alternating his own improvisations with known songs from the public domain. Artisan and costume designer Maria Celia Marques took over the making of costumes and props. Initially, we call this creation a "performance" because of its flexible character, open to improvisation and different spatial presentation possibilities (indoor or outdoor). At the time of the Skype communication in the seminar in Natal, the work had already been presented at the Teatro do Instituto Benjamin Constant and recorded on video. Six presentations followed in the year 2015, in different formats, as the show matured.

### **Is She Crazy?**

In addition to the collective, polyphonic, shared direction, the show is characterized by interactivity, especially in the scenes of the "fit", the "little pill" and the "circle of poetry." The piece begins with a passenger from Porto Alegre arriving at Tom Jobim International Airport in Rio de Janeiro. He picks up his luggage in the baggage area and calls his sister on a mobile phone, while a ballerina dances with a toy airplane to the sound of Tom Jobim's "Samba do Avião" (Samba of the Plane). The scene shuffles through past and present times and geographical locations -- the Northeast, the Southeast, southern Brazil -- as if leading the viewer to question fiction and reality. Then successive interior scenes are presented and arranged diagonally - in Curralin-

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<sup>29</sup>The initial cast was formed by Beatriz Reis, Beth Caetano, Celia Marques, Eliane Pereira, Gilson Carneiro, Greice Macedo, José Marcelino, Maria José Miranda, Marta Peres, Ronábio Lima, Jair Sebastian, Vanessa Prallon and Vinicius Araujo. The 2015 Cast (with variations) was made up of André Meyer, Avanir, Celia Marques, Berenice Xavier, Cida Lopes, Gabi Sinésio, Gessica Justin Gilson Carneiro, Ivy Schipper, Jose Marcelino, Lia Meireles, Lili Sinésio, Luli Machado, Maria José Miranda, Marcela Cavallini, Marta Bonimond, Mary Help, Maura, Nathalia Araujo, Raine Machado. Ronábio Lima, Sebastian Jair, Silvia Patricia, Tatiana Damasceno, and other collaborators and actors.

ho, which is today the city of Castro Alves, in the Recôncavo Baiano area and, in big cities – in his brief life, the poet passed through Salvador, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. The scenery consists of a clothesline with colorful skirts, a bench in the countryside, and a bar table in the city. Other props are a bouquet of flowers, a table, a bottle, cups and soap bubbles. To the sound of Luiz Melodia's "Juventude Transviada" (Wayward Youth) on a keyboard, women wash clothes at the edge of the Paraguaçu River (which passes through the Reconcavo) and then twist them and shake them, and hang them on the clothesline. A dancer pulls the "river," a long piece of blue silk, and dances with this lighter-than-air material in an ethereal choreography set to bossa nova.

The childhood and youth of the protagonists pass in the midst of children's games and nursery rhymes, as children join the cast. Before leaving for the big city, the poet puts a veil on Leonídia, symbolizing a kind of engagement. In the social circles of artists from urban centers, he becomes famous but contracts tuberculosis, and returns to Curalinho, where the "unhappy woman" receives him and cares for him in her arms. When he moves again to the big city, he became seriously ill and dies after a scene with much coughing and many falls. Sebastian Jair, who is blind, beautifully portrays Castro Alves. Ronábio Lima, who has a Bahian accent, supplies Alves' voice for the longer lines. He is covered by a cloak and the news of his death reaches Leonídia. She goes crazy, dirties herself, screams, runs, goes crazy, and advances on the audience, touching spectators while yelling, "He died?!"<sup>30</sup> During the fit, one of the actresses, Maria José Miranda, adds the "fragment" which ended up being incorporated into the title of the piece: "Is she crazy?," which the cast repeats innumerable times with fingers pointed at the protagonist.

When she stops moving, huddled in a corner of the stage, the group of washerwomen returns to the "river." She says that her family forced her to marry a cousin and she had a daughter, who died while very young. After this tragedy, Leonídia has another fit and is strapped into a straitjacket by a doctor - wearing a lab coat and stethoscope - and a nurse. Then, he comically says, "I am the doctor." He asks the protagonist, "Have you had your little pill today?" He repeats the question, shaking

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<sup>30</sup>This scene was particularly important in the Instituto Benjamin Constant presentation (December 2014), in which most of the audience was made up of blind people. To explore the sense of touch with this public is an artistic translation of accessibility methodologies, analogous to audio description for the blind and the interpretation of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) for the deaf.

a box of blue breath mints (the color of a medicine called Haldol), offering them to the entire cast and to the public. The noise caused by the mints and the cast getting close to the audience was entertaining and surprising, both in the Teatro Benjamin Constant and in the 2015 presentations.

An actress walks slowly like a phantasm along the periphery of the stage, and is also dressed in a straitjacket. She approaches the "young Leonídia" and touches her back to back; they begin a vigorous choreography to the sound of Nirvana's rock. This symbolizes the passage of time and there is an exchange between the characters, one of who takes over the role of old Leonídia. She regards each one of those who are present, slowly releases her arms from the straitjacket's sleeves, and dances an indescribable solo until she dies, to the instrumental sound of Simon and Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence." After her death, one of the actresses removes the straitjacket and opens the bundle and throws pieces of paper with poems in all directions. Some are distributed and recited by the cast and the audience. Women put on the skirts from the clothesline and start a jongo circle, to the song "Navio Negreiro" (Slave Ship)," followed by "Saravá Old Jongueiro" (Blessings to you, old jongo dancer) and "Adeus povo bom adeus" (Farewell people, fare thee well..."

### **Praise to Teachers, to the Oldest, to Women ...**

With references to jongo, we celebrate Brazilian culture and our "oldest," our ancestors that the official culture – academia's hegemonic language - tries to but cannot silence. On the occasion of the Natal seminar in December 2015, the professor Helenita (Maria Helena Pabst de Sá Earp) had passed away a few days earlier and we dedicated our communication to her. We had looked for Myriam Fraga, the author of the book, to tell her how important it was for our creation, with the desire to possibly present the piece to her in Salvador. Unfortunately, we received the news that she died at the beginning of the year.

In any regard, we will continue looking for her relatives even as we seek funding to minimally "solidify" our cast and chase our dream of traveling with the troupe across Brazil. Therefore, we dedicate this text to these two women, one from

dance, the other from books, focusing on the possibilities of dialogue between these different domains and polyphonic creation.

We also honor Dr. Nise da Silveira, portrayed in a recent Roberto Berliner movie by actress Gloria Pires, who swam against the current of a mechanical - and electrical - psychiatry by creating conditions to give expression to the creativity and, above all, humanity, of her clients in a Engenho de Dentro hospital that now bears her name, mentioned in a Luiz Melodia song.

We honor Angel Vianna, my teacher, who has trained hundreds of professionals, present in different areas with the tool of dance. This week she is dancing, at the age of 87, in a show at SESC Copacabana.

And we honor Eleonora Gabriel, director of Cia Folclórica UFRJ, who for decades has maintained access to popular culture in the oldest university in Brazil.

Amid the general confusion that comes with the avalanche of violations of our political rights, Brazilians watched, in astonishment, the news that thirty-three men in Rio de Janeiro raped a 16-year-old girl. What do she and our Leonídias have in common?

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