

The Body Preparation of the Scenic Artist as Potential Evocation for the Process of Creation

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In search of authenticity, one cannot expect to find security and safety inside inherited forms, plays, songs or movements. What's necessary is to rekindle the fire inside of repetition and be prepared for a personal exposure to its effects. Be prepared to be embarrassed (Bogart, 2011, p. 117).

The preparation of artists who intend to create a movement score or to give a stronger presence to the character in scene is a process based on risks, in which the possibilities appear in order to construct their own ways. Anne Bogart argues that embarrassment is a part of the process to find paths to be traveled, at the moment of conception (or creation) of the scene or at the moment of its presentation. Thinking of these unusual paths which lead us to expressive, poetic and human processes is challenging and therefore instigating. As artists, professors, researchers, directors and actresses, we have pursued many issues that cross our professional lives and, in the rehearsal room, dancers and actors yearn for finding answers for the questions that weave the network of scenic preparation. According to Bogart (2011), one must be prepared to feel uncomfortable on the scene. This discomfort is an integral part of the sense of exposure, uncertainty, and consideration of the greatness of the character. It is necessary the actors be prepared for the uncertainties which may come up at the moment of the scene, serving as a springboard for the intuition to unveil.

The body training encompasses this opening to the intuition developed by the awareness of this new being who experiences himself. There is no pretension to

find the perfect movement; the actor must articulate all his knowledge in order to make intuitive leaps within the structure of actions and words (Bogart, 2011).

"The other", a character essentially constructed from the subject itself, is determined by the exchange in different dimensions: emotional, mental, physical and psychological. Thus, the bodies of the dancers and the actors are stimulated so that they awaken and instigate the artists to seek their availability and their motivation to produce human potency in their state of maximum consciousness; a state related to micro and macro spatial-temporal perceptions. A sensitivity state occurs by the perception and mastery of bodily elements.

The idea of potency is opened to different conceptions. It is important to have clarity about the understanding of each concept in the respective process, especially with regard to body preparation. We propose the understanding of potency as a possibility; what does not demand so much academic knowledge because it gives credit to itself: faith in the artist of the scene in a becoming process. The investigation concerning potencies involving the scenic artists, as well as the whole process, is in response to the creative gesture, in its expressive force, without presupposing the correctness. Deleuze (1992) says that the disappointment is a pleasure. Stimulating the potencies of "the other" has confidence in the possibilities of a creative process in which the meanings of gestures and words are not given, but discovered in partnership during scenic creation. The artists who are involved need to detach from the hierarchical logic of the scenic work. They need to construct in togetherness, in partnership and collaboration, a work based on different perspectives of the roles played in that process: actor and / or dancer, body coach and director.

We intend to promote a discussion in this article, deepening thoughts concerning the scenic body preparation from our experiences in dance and in theater. We have been developing a partnership project between two bachelor degree courses lately: bachelor degree in Dance and bachelor degree in Theater Direction, at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). At UFRJ, there are three undergraduate dance courses¹; therefore, the bachelor degree in Dance can correspond to a graduation in theory, licentiate or dance technique and its history. It is necessary to emphasize that the students from these three undergraduate dance courses participate

¹ The undergraduate degree courses in Dance at UFRJ are Bachelor of Dance, Licentiate degree in Dance and Bachelor of Dance Theory.

in project. In this project, we advise and supervise the students of Dance degree to act as body preparers in the plays of Theater Direction students. We expose our own experiences in dialogue with authors who have understood the scene as a sacred space of the human being, as a space of instability, discovery, and intuition; a dramatic action, either in dance or theater, is a true act of faith.

We believe that the specificities of dance and theater are integrated in the scenic composition; the exploration of the body is the basic necessary condition to discover it. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the predisposition of the body to experience. Experiencing is to know again, to seek new relationships, to feel in a new way through the experience itself. The trajectory performed by a part of the body in space or the creation of a form can be an element of discovery and expression of innumerable sensations: cross space, cutting the air, pushing, abandoning "self", floating, balancing, pointing, groping and many others which occur at the present time and in the imagined place.

It is necessary to believe in what is invisible to make it visible, to feel what is not concrete to make it real, to enable the journey into itself to explore the senses and express the heat of the produced images. The need for believing in the sensations of the body and events of the scene is due to the necessity of transforming the body of the actor. Similarly, the actor, in the attempt to be another, not ceasing to be himself, experiments his body, its structures and forms in order to construct the dramaturgy evoked by the sense of the text and by the poetic context promoted by the space-time in the scene. Time and space are filled with forms and movements which require energies, dynamics, and colors emitted by the artist's voice and body in the scene.

By thinking of body preparation for dance, we find some peculiarities in relation to the mastery of the body.

The danced gesture, unless it was conceived (codified) to present a certain precise meaning, does not express a meaning that the articulated language could translate in a faithful and exhaustive way. The gesture is free; it carries and keeps for itself the mystery of its meaning and its enjoyment (Gil, 2004, p. 85)

We agree with José Gil about the idea of a dancer who has the movement as a

fundamental element of his language and this movement cannot necessarily be translated and expressed in words. We notice in this question a first element that constitutes a difference in relation to the body preparation of the actor and the dancer. The body of the dancer has to express itself through movement, and in the solitude of the gesture, it establishes the integration and attitude of a body that is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is through his gestures, only from its movements that it can communicate to the audience.

The preparation of the body must permeate this awareness: the human being can communicate itself fully through the apprehension of forms, gestures, actions, movements. Without words, or regardless of them, the dancer must become aware of the necessity to know, to exercise and to dominate possibilities of his body movements, experiencing them, relating them with spatial, dynamic and temporal elements, transforming the movements into codes of an abstract language but an expressive one. It is important to search for new ways of moving, in order to understand the joints, the muscles and the forces of the deepest human feelings.

Dance is done not only by dancing, but also by thinking and feeling it: to dance is to be entirely. I cannot ignore my emotions in a classroom and repress all these things I have inside me. But, unfortunately, it happens: students are anesthetized by entering a classroom (Vianna, 2005, p. 32).

Klauss Vianna was one of the first dancers to compose a scenic work group with the aim of preparing actors for theatrical performances. In 1974, he was invited by the undergraduate students of Bailados School to be the "paraninfo" [guest of honor] of the class. Klauss did not deliver a formal speech, he just told the following story:

The yellow emperor traveled north, beyond Red Lake, and on the mountain of the winter country he looked south. On returning from the trip he lost his magic pearl. Then the emperor sent Clear-vision to find the pearl. But she did not find. He sent Strong-thinking, but she did not find so either. Finally, he sent No-intention and this one found. Searching for the pearl with no intention is the key to solve the mystery (Vianna, 2005, p. 48).

Although Vianna had a long career in academic ballet, he understood the improve-

ment of the interpretation of a dancer as a constant process of researching which does not have closure or any other sense of conclusion. In a "no intention" state, it is possible to find details that refine the artistic technique; Eugenio Barba (2010) named it the subjective state of a constant improvisation. At this specific moment, there are new forms or actions which are created / improvised, but the sub-scores integrate each gesture of the scene and give it life.

We need to introduce a theme that impels us to a work often distressed and trampling: time. The real time for a dance piece production is often insufficient to develop our propositions and ideas deeply. Moreover, professionals come together to work on a production rather than developing processes and improving what is at the heart of the interpretation.

In many theatrical productions, the body work has a minimum time to be developed and the function of the body preparer is to mark positions and to create forms as a scenic support for the dramatic text. In dance, the body work is developed as reinforcement to technical precisions in order to prepare skillful and available bodies for different movements, but not often very sensitive. In this way, scenic works cannot acquire the necessary quality to a so ephemeral art that craves for the involvement and the enchantment of the audience.

This article aims at reflecting on the essential space of body preparation and demarcates it so that the scene can be read as a place of potencies evocation, considering all the creative process. We propose a reflection on the stages of process of creation, as well as suggestion of contents that can support the investigation in a rehearsal room and the sharing of experiences lived since the beginning of the body preparation project.

The Meeting

We do not contemplate a play!

We take full responsibility when entering the theater.

We cannot leave.

We are expected to see things that we cannot escape

(Kantor, 2008, p. 4).

An artistic process which aims at the construction of a scenic work presupposes the encounter between the creative team for the development of the work and the scenic event. The artistic director develops the structure of this meeting. He provides the support for the development of the work: defines the team and the questions to be explored in rehearsals, as well as the general concepts concerning the work; he also prepares the rehearsal structure and sketches an intended path for the meetings.

The creative team finds a sketchy process and it is the meeting that allows this sketch to become consistent. When beginning the work process, the body preparer takes cognizance of several bodies: the individuals acting in the process, the collective body formed by the meeting and the embodiment of process idealized and sketched by the director. It is important to notice that the artistic process is not the same as it was planned before. As Kantor (2008) says, the work, when created, comes to life and has its own needs and "becomings".

What elements can be worked out and developed from the bodies found in the artistic process?

Schematically, the body preparer faces certain challenges: the specific needs of each actor, the needs of the collective body, the establishment of a common body poetics and, finally, the unveiling of scenic body in development: the work of art.

In each process, we find a new imaginary and fantastic world. In this new world, the process of work usually goes through three stages: *active listening, meeting and friction*.

The first action of the body preparer must be the active listening: how to perceive the individuals, the social body formed and the first drafts of the work. He needs to auscultate the project and to perceive the relation between the director's aspirations and the materialization of the work itself.

The second action, almost immediately, but present as a second layer, is the meeting – the artists within the scene, the director, the body preparer and all the artists that integrate another function outside the scene. From this moment onwards, the singularities present themselves and the bonds of empathy begin to develop. Individually, each one begins to present its singularity, abilities and fragilities; during the meetings, they begin to establish a common learning.

⁸The book was consulted in Brazilian translation. A *Análise dos espetáculos*, São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2003).

The *active listening* and the *meeting* are almost simultaneous actions, but perceiving their differences is strongly important for the body preparer, because it helps in the tessitura of a complex understanding about the creative process which is being experienced. At the meetings, the preparer not only does present his proposal, but also begins to perceive the demands of individuals and the process as a whole.

The third stage is *friction*; it is a moment when a mixture occurs involving the preparer's and director's proposals. The goal is to reach this moment having the empathy and comprehension always present. However, it is necessary to be careful in order not to confuse friction with confrontation. Friction is a result of two rubbing bodies; it presupposes the attrition idea. By contrast, confrontation is about a hostile intent or an impetuous encounter, different from manifestation, opposition, resistance. There is a tenuous dividing line between these ideas. This "intersection" is one of the challenges of the body preparation work.

In sum, what is proposed and concerns our reflection tracks the schematic path:

***My body *my body and the body of the other *the meeting *the poetic body ***

After understanding the "fundamental ingredients", the body preparer begins his work. From his research repertoire, he organizes content, he prepares experimentation plans for the creative process and determines the themes (categories, parameters and work techniques). He also begins to define how these bodies (individual, collective, poetic) will be developed from the pillars he understands as pertinent.

It is a singular moment marked by infinite possibilities. There is a plethora of knowledge about the body. The most important thing is for the body preparer to be able to observe his own training, as well as his repertoire of experiences and, based on his background knowledge, to generate propositions, to create ways of experimentation and improvement of technical aspects necessary to the project, respecting all of its demands. We do not believe in a finished and preconceived method of body preparation, for it occurs during the process itself, not to mention the ability to auscultate and propose questions about movement as the result of *friction* stage.

We have elaborated a questionnaire with the purpose of assisting the body preparers in their work days in creative processes. It can aid in the organization of ideas

and in the elaboration of exercises, games, laboratories, etc. This questionnaire was inspired by the questions presented in *L'analyse des spectacles*², by Patrice Pavis, in which the author presents questionnaires prepared by himself and by other authors with the purpose of assisting the structuring of a critical analysis of a spectacle.

These questions should help students structure the guidelines for work in a rehearsal room. These are general questions and do not need to be fully answered. Each preparer can choose the themes and the questions considered pertinent to the process and they can even create a personal questionnaire from this one.

As a methodology of application of the questionnaire proposed, we suggest actions in four stages. At first, the body preparer should study the main bases of the artistic project in development and identify the relevant body issues on it; secondly, he should review the questions listed, expanding his content for body work. As a matter of fact, the questions presented are generic; certainly some of them will be more relevant to one process than another. Finally, we suggest that the preparers begin to create their work plans by relating the contents to their personal experiences. The last stage is to enter the rehearsal room and live this experience.

Questions to create paths

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A SCENIC BODY PREPARATION PLANNING

1st. THEME: BODY

- How are approached the concepts of Body, Action, Gesture and Movement in staging?
- What are the interference limits in the state of presence of the actor for the poetical aesthetic writing in the space of the scene?
- How can breathing be worked to reach this quality of presence?
- What are the main structuring elements of the posture? How can the study of Body Developmental Patterns contribute?

Examples: cellular respiration, central irradiation, homologous, homolateral, contralateral.

- What are the bone's connections most used by the actors? Which should be stimulated?

Examples: head-tail, ischium-heels, head-shoulder blade, tail-heels, pelvic-femoral rhythm, scapulohumeral rhythm, head-heels, coccyx and ischia, head-scapula-tail, large vertical rhombus, trochanter-trochanter, trochanter-tail-pubic symphysis (Large horizontal rhombus of the pelvic floor), scapula-scapula, scapula-hands, head-hands (eyes-hands) , pelvic girdle-toes.

- In terms of movement research, how is the relationship between posture and gesture? How does the relation between the global movements, executed by the body as a whole which implies a postural change, and the partial movements, executed by parts of the body without demanding a postural change? Does the movement research prioritize any of these options?

- How does the movement progress? How should it be stimulated? Successively (from one joint to the next), simultaneous (several parts of the body at the same time) and / or sequential (one part after the other but not obeying the order of joints)?

- What are the most used bases? Which one should be stimulated?

Example: standing, sitting and / or lying down.

- How does muscle work become necessary for the staging? What kind of work can be developed to meet the demands of the process?

- What body system(s) is (are) most closely related to this process? Can the research on movement of other systems beyond the respiratory, skeletal, and muscular systems cooperate with the process?

Examples of systems: cardiovascular, digestive, nervous, sensory, endocrine, excretory, urinary, reproductive, immunological, lymphatic, integumentary.

- What possibilities of contacts and supports in the actors relationships can be

³The bone's connections described here are presented by Ciane Fernandes on page 51 of book "O Corpo em Movimento: o Sistema Laban/Bartenieff na Formação e Pesquisa em Artes Cênicas". São Paulo: Annablume, 2002.

developed on the scene? What is the quality of the touch? Are there supportive relation of one body in the other? What parts of the body are used to support the weight of the other? How can levers be established to decrease the force used to support the weight of the other?

- Do actors relate to objects / stage props? How can these relations be exploited bodily? Look-touch-action; touch-action-look; intention-hesitation, intention-hesitation-touch-action; etc. How does the touch and contact with the object occur? Is there tension or softness? How do I end the body-object relationship? Is there any body weight support relationship in the object? How does it happen and which parts of the body can be involved in this contact / support? How to make the object a "partner" in scene?

- How can the selected work contents in this THEME be organized into a laboratory experience of constructing body scores, either in actions, gestures and / or movements?

2nd. THEME: SPACE

- How does the relation between internal space and external space?

- How does the actors' Kinesphere present in scene and out of scene? What kind of work about Kinesphere could be relevant to the process?

- How does the topography of the space for creation present itself? How can it be transformed?

- How can the topographical contents of space collaborate with the process?

Example: exploration of dimensions, planes, diagonals and platonic solids.

- Exploring the deformation of this topography could be interesting for movement research?

- How are the paths of body movement? How can they be stimulated?

Example: Central, passing through the center of the body; Peripherals, which do not pass through the center of the body; Transversals, which pass between the center of the body and the peripheral part of the kinesphere.

- Do changes of direction of the body as a whole and its parts occur simultaneously or successively? Do the parties follow the direction of the body or create resistance by the opposition?
- How does the progression in space occur? And the displacement? What progressions have been made on the scene? What are the possible paths within the scenario? How can the created action scores generate different paths and displacement? Are the displacement initiated with imbalance of the body axis or do they establish a dynamic balance in weight transfers?
- How can the selected work contents in this THEME be organized into a laboratory experience of constructing body scores, either in actions, gestures and / or movements?

3rd. THEME: SHAPE

- How can Still Shapes Forms assist in posture and movement creation?

Example: Ball, Wall, Screw, Pin and Pyramidal.

- How can basic forms be related to scenic structuring in terms of movement (paths and progressions)?
- About Modes of Shape Change: How can we change the shapes design in the process? How can it be stimulated? (Directional, Spoke-like or Arc-like, and Carving) Are shapes characterized by definition or deformation?
- How are the shapes in contact characterized? Is there a change in the balance of the body in the formation of a group body (doubles, trios, etc.)?
- How can the selected work contents in this THEME be organized into a laboratory experience of constructing body scores, either in actions, gestures and / or movements?

4th. THEME: EFFORT, EFFORT-PHRASING AND DYNAMIC

- What are the qualities desired by the staging?

- How does Effort appear at work? What are the predominant Effort elements? Which one should be encouraged? (Example: Effort elements - Flow, Space, Weight and Time; States - combination of two factors; and, Impulse - combination of three factors). Can an Effort be present in the body as a whole or in parts of it alone? Is it interesting for the creative process to explore these possibilities?
- How do the dynamics vary in the body scores and how can they be stimulated? Examples: Stunning, Balanced, Accentuated / Percussed, Constant / Conducted, Vibrating, Be Launched, Undulating.
- How strong is the force used to perform the body scores? (Softly, in progression from soft to strong intensity, totally strong, starting by strong intensity and decreasing intensity). Does the whole body accompany the movement of intensities or do the parts create opposition of forces?
- Are the intensities of the movement scores related to the vocal intensity? Is it relevant to investigate the possibilities of such combinations? Examples: soft vocal intensity with continuous movement of strong intensity (a movement of body part or the whole body); the increasing vocal intensity and the decreasing intensity of movement of a body part or the whole body.
- Where are the accents of movement in the scores?
- Does it intensity increase?
- About the size of the scores: It is pertinent to vary the sizes and the intensity of the score (from 100% to 10%)?

5th. THEME: TIME AND RHYTHM

- How is the relation between staging and temporality?
- What rhythms are present at work? What is the relation between the rhythms of each performer and the rhythm of the scene? Are they same? Are they different? Are there many rhythmic contrasts in staging?
- Are there variations of velocity within the rhythmic parts of the movement scores? Is it important to vary the development of repetition in the compositions keeping

its rhythm?

- What is the relation between the time of the speech and the time of the movements, actions and gestures? Is there a clear and intentional relationship? Is it important to research these relational possibilities?

- Is a study about the measure of the scores and the scene pertinent to the work?

Example: binary, ternary, quaternary.

- Can the experimenting with scenes and scores of different compasses contribute to the scenic research?

6th. THEME: METAPHORS

- How is the imagery of the staging? How can this universe be affected and affect the proposals of body preparation? How can we generate movement questions and experimentations?

- Is there a possibility of proposing images to the body in different scenes of the play?

Examples: Image of a floating body, in delirium, fragmented, etc.

- What images could be suggestive for the composition of the corporal scores?

EXPERIENCES

An artist enters into a relationship with the materials at hand in order to wake them, untame them. To release the potential in a word or action requires the actor to perform in such a way that does not describe its meaning but rather turns it slightly so that the multiplicity of its potential meanings are evident and awake (Bogart, 2011, p. 60).

First of all, it is necessary to experience the body materials in order to release its sensitive and creative potential. Experiencing is a process that transforms the body of the artist. Not only at classroom, but also at rehearsals room, we always encourage students to experience the body as something new. Furthermore, the

investigation reveals particularities of a new sense in which the artists of the scene find their bodily poetics.

For three semesters, at least, we have been developing the project "Body Preparation for Actors at UFRJ" quite well. The course Dance and Theater C, offered as an optional discipline in the three undergraduate dance courses at UFRJ, has as main objective to credit the participation of the students in the projects of staging of the Theatrical Direction course. It also intends to assure a space for the graduating students' orientation in dance to "face" the task of preparing the actors for the plays presented by the Theatrical Direction students at UFRJ. The expression "to face" was used in order to denote the students' sense of fragility and insecurity in relation to the body knowledge so well experienced, theorized and synthesized by them during their graduation course. They feel themselves evaluated when they face the challenge proposed by the new group from a different field of knowledge; they exchange the body of knowledge acquired by them during the periods of study in dance.

At the first class meeting, we tried to demystify the idea that there are ready-made body preparation formulas for the scene. At first, they are more frightened to foresee that they will have to make decisions, to discover new ways, to risk ideas, to overcome resistances, to find ways to help the actors to understand the body language; likewise, they help the actors to select the most interesting language to express their characters in relation to aesthetics and the main concept indicated by the group (direction, scenography, costume designer, vocal direction). They develop their creative potential and feel themselves as part of the scene applying exercises with different fundamental elements to the evolution of the expressiveness created by the space-time of the scene.

It is interesting to notice the stages – already mentioned – studied by them during the lessons: active listening, meeting and friction. From the initial stages of active listening in which the process is characterized as something unattainable to them, and the students consequently feel themselves fragile and incapable, a friction process arises articulating ideas and actions by the involvement in the work and by sharing the experiences acquired during the dance course; it is applicable in the preparation of sensitive and expressive actors.

The ordinary actions, abstraction, the creation of an aesthetic characteristic of

movement scores, body training for the awareness and mastery of expression possibilities, the memory exercise of the movement scores, as well as the understanding of the memories of a body / character through their movements; all of these processes are experienced by our students as body preparers. It is evident to them that all the gesture of the body in the scene must start from a necessity; therefore, it becomes a movement of "great efficacy to lead to oblivion of spoken language" (Artaud, 1999).

It is important to remember the students: "it is not difficult to trigger the same emotion in everyone. What is difficult is to trigger complex associations so that everyone has a different experience" (Bogart, 2011, p. 111). Thus, we can work towards renewing the content of actors' creation forms: their movements, their actions, with total freedom to change their interior in each repetition. This is fundamental not only to the scenic artist's qualification, but also to the audience's experience. From an immersion into the space-time of a work, the observer articulates his experiences and modifies what he observes by constructing his own work of art.

When we are watching the plays elaborated with the participation of our students, we can notice the development of a sensitive perception concerning the application of their own possible elements for the actors' corporal preparation in scenes. We also noticed the impossibilities discussed by them in our meetings; it was explicit in the presentations. Nevertheless, it was nothing so serious as to put at risk the creative process developed by the actors and planned by the group.

The project results are rewarding as well as the meetings involving the students from Dance courses and their integration to the Theater Direction course practices. The writing of this paper was motivated by meetings with students as body preparers and the work developed at plays we appreciated in the years 2014 and 2015. Our aim is to report this professional experience and describe how our certainty increases concerning the importance of body preparation for the scenic arts. Equally important, the actors' body preparation has recently been established as a vast field of research to the artists of the movement, especially for the professionals of the dance.

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