



Bodies that Danced their Voices

Gisela Reis Biancalana

Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – UFSM, Santa Maria/RS, Brazil

ABSTRACT – Bodies that Danced their Voices – The article makes a reflection about the relevance of the voice perceived as body in movement. This understanding is first discussed under the light of the assumptions of authors from performing arts, theater and dance. Next, it was made a proposal for a creative process in dance which considered the collaboration of performers on their path. Dance work was developed with actors and it had the voice as the main driving element. This artwork aimed to discuss a possible move towards a vocal pedagogy for the scene performers.

Keywords: **Body. Dance. Voice. Creation. Collaboration.**

RÉSUMÉ – Les Corps qui ont Dansé leurs Voix – L'article se penche sur la pertinence de la voix considérée comme corps en mouvement. Cette compréhension est d'abord éclairée par les contributions d'auteurs des arts de la scène, théâtre et danse. Ensuite, un processus de création en danse a été proposé, prenant en compte la collaboration des artistes dans son parcours. Le travail de danse a été développé avec des acteurs et a eu la voix comme élément moteur principal. Cette proposition cherche à poser les jalons d'une pédagogie vocale pour les artistes de la scène.

Mots-clés: **Corps. Danse. Voix. Création. Collaboration.**

RESUMO – Os Corpos que Dançaram suas Vozes – O artigo faz uma reflexão sobre a relevância da voz entendida como corpo em movimento. Este entendimento é, primeiramente, pensado à luz dos pressupostos de autores das artes cênicas, teatro e dança. Em seguida, foi lançada uma proposta de processo criador em dança que considerou a colaboração dos performers em seu percurso. A obra de dança foi desenvolvida com atores e teve a voz como principal elemento propulsor. Este trabalho buscou discutir um possível encaminhamento voltado para a pedagogia vocal de performers da cena.

Palavras-chave: **Corpo. Dança. Voz. Criação. Colaboração.**

The reflections developed here discuss the voice work aimed to the creation of artistic performances in dance. This purpose understands the voice as body in movement, as well as the dance. The perspective of the thought unfolded in these lines is the reflective reverberation about the collective creative process of a dance choreography performed by actors. The laboratory path was proposed and canalized by the teacher, author of this text, in a discipline of the Course of Performing Arts at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. In order to discuss the practices of performers and the voice pedagogies that may support them, the investigation has been based on some references from the performing arts, theater and dance, which address the issue, especially Sara Lopes (1997), in her study and proposal of voice application in performative works. Paul Zumthor (1997) was also briefly consulted in order to endorse the laboratorial course, just in a few aspects of his approach to the voice presence and poetic orality, recurrently found in other publications of the author. Subsequently, the conducting of this proposal, based on practical activities with actors which culminate in a scenic dance exercise, was prepared. From this scenic exercise it was possible, finally, to think of a vocal pedagogy for scene performers. Why develop a work of dance that has the voice as its driving element?

Before entering the issues that underlie the work of the performing artists, the discussion elucidates some thoughts about the work of the voice artists. This sort of art results from the vocal materiality, which is poetically organized as sounds and/or words. The construction and poetic elaboration of the voice, in verse, in prose, or even in sounds unrecognized rationally, depend, only in part, of the vocal qualities of these artists, be them rhythmic, tuning, diction, timbre, projection, and others. It also depends on the knowledge of the metier, but, especially, comes from the creative sensitivity enabled by the availability of elaborate sounds which are supported on the presence of the voice: body moving.

The beginning of this discussion focuses on the peculiarities of the everyday voice and the poetic voice. The difference between the materialization of everyday voice and the materialization of the poetic voice is the same difference which could be seen between human movement in everyday life and in the art of movement, the dance. However, these ways of communicative/expressive manifestations

outlined above - the everyday voice, the poetic voice, the everyday body movement, the body movement in arts - come from the presence of a materiality, a consequence of the moving bodies. In fact, what matters here is the poetic voicing as a springboard for the creation in dance. The arguments and procedures presented in this path are not intended to be stated as a rule or as a model to be reproduced. They seek only to think of possible ways to build creation procedures involving the performers' vocal works in the contemporary scene.

Human beings use the sound of their voices to express and to communicate themselves in daily life. This vocal sound, in most cases, is organized in words defining the meaning shared in the world. Both the voice and the word precede the existence of writing in the so-called civilized societies. The daily word was created to establish the necessary communication in the social relationships that happen in daily life and aims to utilitarian functionality. The word used in artistic context has a poetic destination, being its use quite different from the first one applied to everyday word.

According to Lopes (1997), historical registrations show that in the period marked by the oral culture, the emergence of the written word was directly connected with the body, being a kind of extension of it. A text was written to be spoken or had first been spoken to be written after that, with a registration purpose or as documentation and historic preservation. In this context, the hearing was implied in the vocalization and also had a direct relationship with the body who was listening. Mouth, tongue, saliva, air and ear are concrete elements, matter, body move. The act of providing poetry to the voice, whether its content is improvised or memorized, will imbue it of senses. This conception believes that the voice is moving body because it happens from breathing and vibration of the vocal cords. It causes bodily sensations in those who produce it, affecting the body image in the space for those who observe it. This materiality of vocalization is approached by Zumthor (1997) in his discourse on the poetic orality, highlighting the voice presence as a sound which is the "most subtle and malleable element of the concrete" (Zumthor, 1997, p. 11).

The spoken text often convinces by the moving body. This tangibility of the text derived from the oral culture is perceived through typical features as references, repetitions, circulation elements

in temporary combinations, discontinuity. The registration of the spoken text may not have the persuasive power of its oral emission. This power emanates from the rhythms applied and their melodic curves which shape the text by way of saying it and can also modify the contents of its information. There are artists who seem deeply realize the power of their voice when they dominate their technical qualities, when they send contents full of unusual nuances or, simply, when they assing a strong presence to their voice performance. Such artists are skilled to touch the sensitivity of the public by the power of their voice.

On the other hand, the status of abstraction of the written word emerges at the moment when it loses its sound, its concreteness and it is detached from the body. The oral code was, gradually, separating and distinguishing itself from the written one. While the word remains separated and distant from the body, the oral word language, in turn, remains embodied. The increasing appreciation of reason in the western history smothered, for a long time, the manifestations of oral culture, which remained alive as a survival instinct. This reality is mostly perceived in the popular universes and in the art environments which need the voice to manifest themselves. The last ones are the singing, the recitation, the theater, among others, manifested through poetic voicing. Thus, throughout the civilization history, the languages were separating gradually from the body through the writing, fostering the emergence of an interesting paradox. The word originated from the sounds produced by the moving body reaches a level that gives it a certain independence of the body which created it, inventing another form of power for it. This power is then associated with the registration to set it historically and increase its reach in the memory.

Lopes (1997, p. II) clearly defines the poetic voicing binomial. First, voicing is understood as the ““immediate use of the voice” calling for expression and which is embodied by” copresence”. The voicing happens in the exchange when the voice reaches the body(ies) who hear. It means body(ies) interfering in another body(ies) from the assumption that both are available. The poetic word, in turn, creates the vocal gesture. Poetic is an adjective able to provide to the voice the transcendence of the merely functional use. The poetic voicing reaches a deeper level of expression/communication. The

poetic materialization of the voice is able to generate impressions, directions and/or sensations. It proposes another speech, infringing the utilitarian discursive schemes and, when it brings the brand of the experiences lived in the world, transmuted into unusual shapes, it overlaps the exact and functional meanings of the everyday world.

The action of the voice, especially in the shape of art, gives authority to the performer. This authority, moreover, is enhanced when supported by the traditions or artistic contexts in which they operate. According to Lopes (1997, p. 6), the “[...] voice itself of those who were singing or speaking assigned authority to its carrier. The power of the tradition contributed for its valuing, but what integrated this tradition was the action of the voice.” In this context, the sounds produced by a moving body allow the artist to try creating processes that will emerge from the concreteness of the body as a producer of meanings.

The sounds produced in everyday life and in the arts are countless and diverse, but the most common are the words present in languages spoken around the world. The alphabet present in most occidental cultures, for example, consists of vowels and consonants. Breathing produces the resulting sound which comes from the emission of vowels and is responsible for emotion, as it provides the tone, sets the time, extending it or reducing it, and establishes the volume of air responsible for the pitch of the voice. The articulation produced by the mouth muscles produces the sound of consonants which engender the thoughts being transmitted. The sound production of emotions, feelings, impressions and ideas, among others, is physical and, therefore, concrete. The daily speech aims to point to what people want to communicate objectively. The poetic speech, in turn, comes from the art world, it tries to shape vocal sounds into an art form, doing it with the power and involvement of the whole body.

However, the performing artists, participants in this creative process, carried a paradox in their discourse. On the one hand, they claimed being consciously thinking their body, their posture, their way of acting or use the vocal apparatus and seemed to realize that voice is body moving. On the other hand, sometimes, these artists performed disconnecting their actions of their voice. If the voicing results from body movement and poetic voicing is vocal action, it is the whole body that speaks, that manifests its presence, that expresses and communicates while thinking. It seems that some artists

thought before speaking, and their performances were fragmented. Their thinking and action were disconnected in the performative space/time. Why did this fact happen? Would it be because the artists know in advance what will happen? Even in the artwork in which improvisation prevails there is a proposal for action and an awareness of the possibilities to be followed by the artists. Is this a phenomenon similar to that of stuttering actors who do not stutter when they are on stage? It may be hard to get an exact answer to these questions, perhaps not so much for researchers from specific areas, such as speech therapists, for example, to whom this task is assigned.

What matters here is the exercise of not disconnecting thought and action, different from the exercise of connecting. Similar to the ancient discourse about connecting body and mind, this reflection chooses to escape this stereotype to understand that thought and action, as well as body and mind, are naturally connected. This option does not want to escape the understanding that historical overvaluing of reason may have stifled the human nature and diverted some of its features to other ways of being in the world. This last point is admitted and considered because the perception of body and voice disconnected in some actors was the trigger of this reflexive proposal. What differentiates this way of work here proposed, which tries to connect body and voice, is to understand and to practice the vocal work by means of a pathway which stimulates the voice to bloom in the moving body, discovering the flow of thought/action at the time of the performance.

In everyday life, the use of the performers' voices has two different functions, the everyday utilitarian/functional function and the poetic function. The care to be taken lies on not appealing to some preelaborate artificiality of the vocal emission possibilities when the performers recognize and practice the poetic function. It should not be forgotten that this second function concerns the work of artists who need it to express their poetic voicing. If the daily vocal sounds are intended to point out what people want to communicate objectively, the vocal sounds invest in how to shape poetic forms immersed in their own universe. The way of voicing of the performing artists merges the content of their expression/communication to the act of molding it poetically. The word coated with art has a historic charm. In music, according to Tinhorão (2001, p. 200-206), the sung word

expands its power of impression on the senses and of persuasion. Diniz (2001, p. 208) also addresses the power of music processing voice, stating that “the voice that speaks is not the voice that sings”. However, this discussion focuses on the poetic voice in theater and dance understanding that in any of the mentioned functions and applications the voice is a bodily built attribute.

The poetic voice, in its desire of expression/communication, should not be inhibited by the intellect, but designed by the thinking in action. The poetic voicing of artists is not merely descriptive when it is supported by the word. Their textures cause bodily states which reveal pulses and impulses through the investigation of internal processes from vocal sounds. Thus, when thinking the poetic voicing as moving body with an artistic function, the term adopted by the discussion proposed here becomes poetic corporeity in an attempt to clarify the desired body/voice unit.

What has been sought in laboratory creation is this poetry which is established in the space/time by the movement and/or by the bodily action. When the movement comes from the voice that is artistically projected, it may assume other forms beyond those ones that are daily encoded and, therefore, recognizable and shared. Sometimes it seeks rationally unrecognizable shapes, sometimes partially recognizable ones, because distorted, or sometimes quite recognizable but substantially revisited by the poetry conferred on it by the moving body.

Barba (1994, p.23-24) addresses this discussion by means of the daily body perspective and a body endowed with qualities developed with artistic purposes, which he called “extra-daily”. Ferracini (2003, p. 85-88) also develops a similar thought to propose the terms “everyday body” and “body-subjétil” when he reflects on the body in art. The author states that he distinguishes the concepts to prevent the Cartesian fragmentation when he establishes two merely conceptual bodies. Indeed, both are the same body, but in the art state. The first one would be the “[...] physical, cellular, nervous, physiological, mental body, inserted into daily life”, while the other one would be this everyday body nurtured by the art power. Therefore, these two bodies are only an abstraction because they are a variation or projection of themselves in art. For this reason, according to Ferracini (2003, p. 86), his concept is vectorial because “[...] the *subjétil* body is an artistic artificial and thus inorganic, made possible by the everyday body, thus organic. The moment of Scenic State is, then,

an organic/inorganic, coexistent and paradoxical, and it is the very paradox that makes it possible the 'live' state of the actor”.

At this moment, above all, it is necessary to go through some perspectives of the body in contemporary times, especially in arts. Thus, in the course of this thinking, the same line of reasoning which guided the discourse on voice and voicing can be applied to body and corporeality, whether utilitarian or poetic. The physical body in its biological approaches, whether physiological, genetic, anatomic, among others, is a component of nature. The corporeity, on the other hand, is an attribute artificially constructed in daily life. It depends on a socio-cultural context appropriate to their functional and utilitarian objectives. In turn, the poetic corporeity also is an attribute constructed by artificial ways. What distinguishes it from the everyday corporeity is the fact that this effort is systematically and consciously prepared with its aim focused on art. Each scenic work builds a different, ephemeral moment, which dynamically restores itself like a sculpture of the instant. The corporeity is visible through the body attitude. The performers manifest themselves in the attitude of shaping their movement and action, carving out the time/space with their body and dealing with the ephemerality. This attitude reveals a body which is art or an art which is body in performance. Barba (1994, p. 22) refers to the actor as a “[...] craftsman of a craft that, at the time it is executed, disappears”.

Many changes took place in the arts in general during the 20th century, and the performative body absorbs them and, at the same time, it proposes other changes. One of them refers, more closely, to the issues raised here: the attempt to recover the union between art and life. The body becomes a privileged place of artistic action in its recurrent claims. In the middle of the last century the body in art leads in manifestations such as body art and live art, for example. In the performative arts the body was the driver of this task and, therefore, it will be rethought, reorganized, reinvented. The body ceases to be thought as a component of the human being and becomes, simply, being. According to Greiner (2001, p. 91-93),

[...] we are nothing without our body. Not because 'we have a body', a kind of 'hostel' for our 'self', but because, as Heidegger said, our existence is one of embodied nature [...]. It is he who displaces the question from body to embodiment. 'We do not have a body, we are embodied'.

This excerpt, regardless of the agreement with Heidegger's philosophical presuppositions, shows an integralized conception of body or a being that is body. More important, indeed, would be to pay attention to the significance of this repositioning of thought about body on artistic labors. In this complex context of contemporary art, the body also repositions itself before the scientific and technological advances, suffering the consequences of the current times, especially in performance condition. The arts, which have the moving body as a radiating center of their practice, absorb these reflections of scientific and technological developments sometimes in more, sometimes in less depth. However, there is an effort to follow the speed of the dynamic system to which they are subject. Facing the numerous proposals of performativity, the body presence in art has been fragmented, distorted, suppressed according to the needs of expression/communication of the artists.

In order to answer to so many demands from the new possibilities of performing, the artists resort to body interventions. These interventions are quite valid and allied of the arts. Records on techniques of making art, theater and dance, refer to millennia of history, considering the various forms studied until nowadays. It is known how Schechner (2002) named this attitude of intervention in the body: restored behavior. What seems worrying in face of these effervescent possibilities is not the attitude of intervention in the body, of restoring the behavior for the artistic labour - the voice, in order to reach its poetic function, needs intervention -; what worries is some exaggeration and/or violence sometimes imposed on the body/voice in artistic action with too much void artificiality, dedicated, solely, to the virtuosity and excessive spectacularization. This attitude, often, loses its bond with art because it is unconcerned with the poetic sensitivity which should be primarily compromised. The violence referred here is not addressed to the performing arts predominantly established in mid-twentieth century and based on self-flagellation, as these proposals had clear their expressive/communicative intentions which are not part of the discussion raised in this study.

In this context, there were many proposals opposing that path. The somatic approaches of the movement arise, well reflected in Brazil by authors such as Strazzacappa (2012), among others, who has been one of the bastions of this proposal. Similarly, there are

several authors who reflect on theatrical practices suggesting paths based on caring for oneself, as Gilberto Icle (2010), just to name one of them. Thus, the performing artists have a challenge to meet in the contemporary art and in the prospects of the current glance to the body. The task is to do an upgrade in bodily art, lapidate the body by way of the techniques available and others able to be created, but conscious of the care and respect with themselves and others. Above all, the paths should be alert to rethink, reevaluate, transform, and, if necessary, avoid solidified attitudes.

It is also worthwhile remember that theater and dance have a tradition inclined to work in groups. There are performers who work alone, create their solos and prefer a more isolated environment to develop their artistic projects. On the other hand, the group works are still predominant as companies, collectives, and other names. However, the collectivized labor, currently, also suffers the effects of the contemporary world, raising questions about the roles of artists, about conventional hierarchies, about authorship, among others. This aspect on the collectivity touches the care and respect for the others when egos, personalities, circumstances, desires, in short, an immense web of relationships which complicate the labor slip. Working collectively involves, above all, being flexible in a necessary and worthy extent for the group and still share their gains and losses proper of the dynamics of every moment. This ability also depends on exercise: the exercise of alterity. There is not a recipe for that. The relationships are rebuilt at every moment, constantly needing revaluations nurtured by generosity, and especially reciprocity. The effort to answer to the respect of the wishes in this group at the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, led to the first discussion of what would be the creative work in the laboratory. The group of actors wanted to have a dance experiment conducted by their knowledge in theatrical art. In contemporary times, the arts have mixed themselves, sometimes they are mixed in order to escape from labels or marks needed in other times. Thus, without neglecting the autonomy achieved in the arts over time, this investigation sought to develop a process which culminated with a choreographic work, but which emerged of some knowledge acquired by the actors along their path in theatrical art, the vocal work.

Therefore, the creative process in which the commonly discussed points in practical creative exercise were taken into account

to conduct the work began. The points considered were technical mechanisms of the body work (the understanding of the body/voice unit as body moving), the trials by improvisation, the composition of small cells as the matrix of action, exploring various combinations of possibilities and nuances of movement/action produced, as well as the final composition work. However, the direction of this proposal received attention focused on two aspects that are essential to the progress of creation. First, it was strongly concerned about the creation of the movement/action touched by the blooming of the poetic voicing of the actors, always thought through the body/voice unit. Second, it was determined in trying to keep a possible harmony in a group thought to act without authoritarian hierarchies, that is, all the actors were creative artists and proponents of the process in its wholeness. In this sense, the course's teacher served as a channel of this process, providing some directions deemed necessary for the actors from an external look at the action.

The primary concern on how to conduct this study also considered what would be the technical mechanisms applied to achieve the objectives of this creation. Thus, the technical arrangements of the vocal work, such as the various ways of breathing, the timbres, pitch and tone of the voice, were visited in the laboratory. This sort of technical exercise tried to escape from the strict referrals excessively directed to the use of the voice and which seek, often, to define the location of resonators, for example. Working with the resonators is very important, but it was not implemented in that path. Here, the actors sought to discover, in themselves, how the internal perception of the sound inside them, passing the body and going away from the body was. Especially, the sounds were experienced bodily without the requirement of certain positions or movements. Instead, they encouraged the positions and movements which were generated from the activation of the vocal sound.

The nuances that the voice could experience initiated by the perception of vowels followed by the consonants, always thinking of exploring the features of the voice above mentioned. The work started without trying to impose senses/meanings, just the voice as presence. The process sought to approach Laban's investigations (1978) regarding the elements, qualities and efforts of the human movement. Such intent was thought only in an attempt to make an

approach to the study called by the author of Eukinetics. According to the aforementioned author, the elements of the movement are space, time, weight and flow, each one with its own qualities. The Eukinetics combines the qualities of movement factors to arrive at eight pure efforts which, in turn, may deploy in other possibilities. At first, Laban did not consider the flow in his combinations of movement qualities. In this paper, the flow was built to understand it in its qualities, free or bound to enable the experimentations of the sounds in these two extremes. It was thought, then, to adapt the other three factors to the vocal job considering the voice pitch (spending too much or too little air in the emission of sound), the time of the vocal sound (fast or slow sound), the voice weight (lower or higher). Also other nuances of movement qualities were experienced which move between their extremes. The proposal was, after a while, to let the emerging sounds of corporealities in movement to liberate themselves from mere experimentation to let flourish the overflowed senses, in case of happening.

Subsequently, some syllables were being introduced until forming words and, finally, short. Syllables, words and sentences were not imposed or chosen from external sources to work, as literary texts or images, among others. The choice of some external source or random words can also be developed in these proposals, however, here they emerged from the senses produced by the body sounds in movement. During the preparation of the sentences, some auxiliary and connecting words were deliberately introduced to contribute with the definition of the material. From that moment, there was enough material for the composition of small movement/action cells.

To achieve a result which would meet the wishes of expression/communication of everyone, on the next moment there was a break for discussion. What could be common to everyone from the material which had been produced until that point? This was the question posed. After some time of verbalization on the possible theme to be concretely held, the composition work began. The issue touched upon was not seeking to tell a story with a definite line of action, linear or transversal. Students decided to talk about the similarities and differences which are established during the emotional relationships in everyday life. Along this stage of the way, it was decided that the teacher of the discipline, who was channeling this process, would

make the selection and arrangement of the material produced in order to meet the proposal of the group.

During the completion of this work, the group decided to use a song as part of the scene on the dance composition. Some songs were suggested, heard and one of them was elected to lead the choreography. The work could be done without music or could keep the sounds produced by the body work during the process, and even other possibilities could be chosen. Thus, the selection of a music to be incorporated into the work was only an option. The material produced was mixed, sometimes reorganized by suggestion of the actors and thrown to experimentation with music. Many of the sounds used as propulsion for creation were being suppressed. Other sounds, considered extremely necessary, remained in the final composition: a ten minute long dance choreography.

Driving this creation procedure revealed, in creative practice, how much the poetic word can enlarge the potential power of everyday word when issued with the entire body. Every word, before receiving a molding intervention to become poetic, is an everyday word. The articulation of the poetic voice proposed differentiated interweaving and created nuances which undulated melodic drawings on the body in movement/action. Perhaps it happens because, according to Bondia, poetic sounds produced may be able to act as “a powerful mechanizing of subjectivation” (Bondia, 2002, p. 21). These processes help in the production of meanings which can create unusual realities. In addition, according to Bondia (2002), the human being is the word, does not have the word himself. In this context, the functional transformation that the spoken word suffered to reach the poetic word provided, often, that the oral production could sublimate itself in art. In this creative environment, the vitality of the presence from the vocal sound issued early in the path, its rhythms and melodies appeared through this vitality of the presence on the movement/action. The choreographic work went on to evoke, now indirectly, the concreteness of the presence and the throbbing power of the voice, optionally suppressed in the end of the creative process.

The bodies that crossed paths in which many moments full of opportunities and obstacles coexisted were the same bodies that have become art. The achieved metamorphosis emerged in these moments that are, at the same time, engendered systematically and mixed as

procedural unity in art. For Strazzacappa (1998, p 164), "As an agent, the body is a technique; as a product, it is art." However, they are bodies in a unified process. Knowledge from different sources, such as the techniques, traditions, experiences, is brought into the body. There is a huge arsenal of possibilities which converge to the act of making art during the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge by the performers. Mostly, this process matures during life in art and can transcend to the production of new knowledge which accompany the dynamics of the contemporary world in constant transformation.

To find possibilities which produce new knowledge it is necessary having predisposition to experiment. The experimentation promotes self-awareness and conscious control of body movements, which are enablers of an expanded perception of self in the space, in the time and in the act of sharing. Often, it was necessary to distance themselves from established models and seek other ways to make their art. The incessant reproduction of models may fall in complacency, generating apathetic and seemingly static forms, even on the movement. The lack of challenge, of desire, of mystery, of motivating curiosity, the instigators elements of the art making, the relationship with oneself and with the other can become the greatest enemies of performative art.

Finally, the poetic voice can be labored for expression/communication focused on performative objectives, including dance creation, as it was done in this process. The voice was understood as a manifestation of the poetic corporeity of the artists, marked by their own ways to express/communicate, their socio-cultural universe, their experiences, as well as having paid attention to the collectivized labor. In this sense, the joint processes, without the imposition of hierarchical authorities, were also great motivators of this art, because they allowed the achievement of the individuals' performative desires, at the same time boosting corporealities exchanges that emerged in the group. Thus, the blooming voice which became choreography was materialized by the presence of movement/action conducted from singular corporealities collectivized and built with artistic purposes. They were, therefore, bodies that danced their voices.

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Gisela Reis Biancalana is graduated in Dance, MSc and PhD in Arts from Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP). She was a Performing Art Course professor at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM). She is Adjunct Professor of Dance at UFSM. Acts as a permanent member of the PPGART/UFSM and is the leader of the CNPq Research Group “Performances: art and culture”. She finished her post-doctorate stage at De Monffort University, Leicester, UK.

E-mail: giselabiancalana@gmail.com

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