



## **Bodies in Expansion: the art of encounter in the Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI) method**

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**ABSTRACT – Bodies in Expansion: the art of encounter in the Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI) method** – This paper replies to the text of Höfling published in this journal in v. 6, n. 2 (2016), clarifying aspects of the research in the Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI) method. Procedures and approaches of the method, concerning field research, artistic creation and presentation of performances are fully expressed. Throughout the text, practical examples of investigations carried out over 36 years of research in this method are given, as well as theories of psychology, which promote a deeper understanding of the contents that are articulated in the body and, as consequence, provide subsidies to guide the emotional processes inherent to artistic creation.

**Keywords: BPI. Body. Dance. Creation. Psychology.**

**RÉSUMÉ – Corps en Expansion: l'art de la rencontre dans la méthode Danseur-Chercheur-Interprète (DCI)** – L'article présente des aspects de la recherche de la méthode Danseur-Chercheur-Interprète (BPI), en réponse au texte Hofling publié dans ce journal en v. 6, n. 2 (2016). Des procédures et des angles d'approche de la méthode touchant aux recherches de terrain, à la création artistique et aux spectacles sont explicités. Sont donnés des exemples pratiques, de travaux réalisés au cours de 36 ans de recherches dans cette méthode, de même que des théories de la psychologie sont abordées, qui aident à la compréhension plus profonde des contenus qui s'articulent dans le corps et, conséquemment, apportent des recours pour une conduite des processus émotionnels inhérents à la création artistique.  
**Mots-clés: BPI. Corps. Danse. Création. Psychologie.**

**RESUMO – Corps em Expansão: a arte do encontro no método Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete (BPI)** – O artigo esclarece aspectos da pesquisa no método Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete (BPI) em resposta ao texto de Höfling, publicado neste mesmo periódico, no v. 6, n. 2 (2016). São explicitados procedimentos e enfoques do método concernentes às pesquisas de campo, à criação artística e às apresentações dos espetáculos. No decorrer do texto são dados exemplos práticos, de investigações realizadas ao longo de 36 anos de pesquisas, bem como são abordadas teorias da psicologia, que auxiliam em um entendimento mais profundo dos conteúdos que se articulam no corpo e, consequentemente, fornecem subsídios para dar uma condução aos processos emocionais inerentes à criação artística.

**Palavras-chave: BPI. Corpo. Dança. Criação. Psicologia.**

## Introduction

This article clarifies some statements about the Dancer-Researcher-Performer method (BPI) made by Höfling, in a text published in this same journal in v. 6, n. 2 (2016). Due to the large number of aspects that need to be clarified, including quotes used incompletely or out of context, it was necessary to select those that are considered important. Thus, we explain the option present in the method of not separating the personal from the artistic development, and its implications for the theoretical resources that support this view. About the field research carried out in the method, we clarify: the complexity inherent to the social groups that we researched; the Physical Structure and the Symbolic Anatomy in BPI; the interpersonal relationships in the field; and the connection of the field research in the scope of a performer's body identity. Another aspect is related to artistic creations and, in this regard, we encompass: the question of *Brazilianness*; the opening of the performer to what is around him or her; the choice of *lively* contents; what the character is in the BPI method; and the alignment between reason and emotion in the works executed through the method, of which catharsis is not part. Lastly, we throw light on some aspects of the content present in the artistic creations and their reception by the audience, including people from the field research.

The Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI)<sup>1</sup> is an artistic method of research and creation in dance, based on specific axes and developed from its own tools<sup>2</sup>, favoring the latent power in the dance of each performer<sup>3</sup> in connection to singular social segments. Each performer, through BPI, reaches his or her own body structure, built through the processing of memories, images, emotions and sensations from his or her encounter with the people with whom he or she lived during field research<sup>4</sup>. In the search for a strong and internally prompted body, many artists use the BPI method or its aspects for performing arts creation.

This method has a systemic nature<sup>5</sup>, because its axes act together – in an integrated manner – and its division only occurs as a matter of didactic resource. Besides, the human being behind the artist is also seen in an integrated manner, and there is no separation between personal and artistic development in the creation process in the method. Tavares (2003, p. 50) reinforces this point, noting

that BPI is a body approach that aims to “[...] develop human beings holistically, expanding their relationships with the world”.

When dealing with the movement in depth, often, the performer is faced with his or her own emotional references that, through contact with bodily sensations, come to the fore, many of them unknown to him or her until then. Because of this situation, in the BPI method, the personal and the artistic development of the performer are worked together. In everyday practice with the method, we observe the power of this personal recognition, for example, when one recognizes one's own defense mechanisms in action<sup>6</sup> and it positively affects the physiology of the movement. Thus, the performer is given the possibility of accessing knowledge from Psychology, as an additional tool to provide him or her with artistic and personal development.

The question of human development is also central in the quality of the interpersonal relationships that take place through the whole creation process. By having a greater awareness of oneself, the individual will notice one's processes of incorporation, identification, projection<sup>7</sup> etc., which will allow one to see the other better, and take care of the relationship with him or her.

### Field Research

In the BPI method, the field research conducted in the *Co-inhabit with the Source* axis is one of the centralizing body works, leading to different psychophysical dynamics. In this axis, the artist lives a situation of otherness in his or her body, which, at that moment of the method, is experienced with vigor.

The observation made in the field is not only through gaze, it is a relationship of synesthetic apprehension in the contact with people of the research, due to the expansion of the performer's perception achieved through specific work previously carried out in studio.

Through field research, the body of the performer gets prompted and what he or she recognizes as being part of him or herself expands, mainly from the cohabitation with people who achieved a resilient condition. According to Cyrulnik (2004, p. 207):

Resilience is the art of navigating in torrents. Trauma pushed the subject to a direction one would not take. But, once one fell into a stream that made one roll and be car-

ried to a cascade of injuries, the resilient one should appeal to impregnated internal resources in one's memory, fight not to get carried away by the natural inclination of wounds that make one navigate tumbling down [...]

Cyrulnik (2004) explains that, along with the internal resources of the individual, a loving relationship, a helping hand, is needed so one can pass through an overcoming process.

The speech of the people found in the field research in the BPI method often shows an established resilience process, which can be seen, for example, in this statement of a farm worker: "I'm cut in half like a eunuch, but I will not weep" (Teixeira, 2007, p. 91). The performer who conducted this research noted: "[...] what impressed me was that even limping they were there, insisting, tapping their feet before the altar of Saint Gonçalo, as long as they had strength" (Teixeira, 2007, p. 102).

Field experience is not simple: while the researched social context – to which the performer connects his or her entire body – is very different from the performer's, it is also emotionally very close to his/her own body identity<sup>8</sup>. The performer grasps what is in close relationship with his or her body<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, there is an internal content of the performer, which comes from the body – linked to the emotional field of the research experience – and that gets prompted in the relationship with the people from the field research and will only be identified during the directed lab<sup>10</sup>. This emotional content, the result of the encounter between performer and the people who were researched, still latent in this stage of the process, will be the core of artistic creation.

The continuous field research, over 36 years of this method existence, has taken place in sites located in the margins of the Brazilian society. These are socially invisible places, subject to prejudice, away from the center of government or media's attention, and they can be considered as *forgotten*.

People who occupy these margins often have a body power that is not seen in other segments of society. This data is something that has persisted in various field research undertaken. We see in these people a motion quality in which there is an integration of the whole body, imbued with meanings through emotions that prompt it internally, reverberating in its expressiveness. The movement of many of

these people is endowed with plasticity, density, speed, articulating their senses through different levels of muscle tone. This is a body expanded by its connection to an ancestry that, in its dance, connects the sacred with everyday space-time and constantly updates its myths and meanings. We observed that the sense of sacred does not necessarily come from a connection to a specific religion, but, from the perception of the individual who knows he or she is part of something greater than him or her own. Thus, his or her individuality is placed in favor of a community in which resistance and resilience movements are active when facing difficulties. In these niches that lie on the margins, we find senses of hope that are renewed every day. It is clear that not everyone from these social segments holds this quality of movement in their bodies, however, when it occurs – which has been common in the research with the BPI method – it is something undoubtedly special.

These researched manifestations are in constant movement of transformation, updating and adaptation, presenting a dialectical relationship with the cultures of the dominant society, as Gomes and Pereira (1992, p. 74) put forward:

There is a tension, which means both acceptance and repudiation: in this dialectic, there is not only passivity. The elements of popular culture resist the imposition of standard rules, as they are not controlled, by disappearing here to be reborn there, a dynamic process of re-creation.

We emphasize the diversity of manifestations, corporeality, cosmologies and worldviews found in many different regions. In each researched field, there is something new to learn in terms of movements, their functions and meanings, as well as in the context of human relationships.

Physical Structure and Symbolic Anatomy, characterized as tools of the BPI method, are a body decoding that stems from the field research conducted by Graziela Rodrigues – between 1980 and 1995 – involving *Umbandas*, *Candomblés*, *Capoeiras*, *Congadas*, *Maracatus*, *Folias de Reis*, *Folias do Divino*, *Batuques* and various regional dances. These researches also encompass a Xavante indigenous community, the community of Arturos and groups of rural workers and healers. These researches comprise different states of Brazil, from Bahia to Rio Grande do Sul, being centered most notably in the Federal District, in São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Goiás and Mato Grosso.

We dare to write about this body from the learning experiences in the field research. It is important to highlight that each manifestation has its specificities, it is peculiar in each region, and each group is unique in its expression. Therefore, we present a summary, pointing out common and outstanding aspects. Each reference has an impact that would be impossible to express in this first account (Rodrigues, 1997, p. 27).

This synthesis, which gave rise to Physical Structure and Symbolic Anatomy, relates to body techniques in which working in the land – planting and harvesting – is the basis. This is a dynamic body organization that proposes the experience of symbolic complexity present in the movements of the dancers in their relationships with votive masts, in which the memory of the senses nourished by ancestry establishes a psychophysical configuration enabling increased perception.

The field investigations carried out by researchers of the BPI method, throughout these many years, have been, to date, largely confirming the data systematized in Physical Structure and Symbolic Anatomy. Nevertheless, there is no generalization; therefore, it is important to look at the differences.

For example, in the field research carried out with Pankararu Indians, we were able to expand the view we had concerning the performance of the body in motion in space. In the dances of Pankararu (Picture 1), they deal with *invisible* forces, attributed to their magical-religious entities, which establish dynamic flows, renewing spaces through the bodies of the dancers in circular paths carried out in large unpaved or sand yards, sacred places for the Pankararu. The specificity of this dance lies in the intensity of the pathways of the body in endless flows of power, moving in circles and spirals.



Picture 1 – Pankararu dance. Source: Personal archive (2013).

In another field research, carried out with Xavante women, we saw that their physical strength to work in demanding everyday chores – carrying and chopping wood, planting and harvesting etc. – was directly related to the quality of movement of their dance. The researchers, after some time in the field, realized that the principle of Xavante female dance was the uterus, which reverberated when grounding their feet. It was a movement that started from a deep place in the bodies of these women, providing them with a force with which we have never had contact in previous research.

However, when researching the Assurini, we observed that the mast axis was not present in the bodies of these people: “Upon considering the axis-mast, posture unveiled by the BPI analysis [...] we found here its absence, as the movement is, all the time, in relation to the ground, which is the generator of this body” (Rodrigues; Müller, 2006, p. 132)<sup>11</sup>.

Physical Structure and Symbolic Anatomy are used, thus, as a reference for body reading in the field, which, in most research, has been confirmed, but they can also be complemented and even opposed. This tool is used also in the body preparation of the performer during the process, helping to create physical and sensitive conditions, so that feelings and emotions can consciously move through his or her body,

The focus of the field research on the *Co-Inhabiting with the Source* axis is the interpersonal relationships. Before the performer

starts to research, he or she goes through a preparation involving physical and emotional work, as well as reflections on various aspects involved in this relationship with the people who were researched, as relationships of power, limits and states of receptivity. The conditions of attention and concentration worked throughout the whole process in the BPI method must be the best possible at this time. The performer in the field keeps his or her focus on the relationships with the researched, while he or she is aware of his or her own sensations and feelings.

We expect the performer to reach in the field a loving relationship with the researched, to act with less defense mechanisms, with openness and empathy, which allows him or her to see the other fully. This kind of relationship refers to the depressive position and the loving core described by Klein (1991), in which the subject achieves an emotional stability, opened to tolerance and to see people as wholes, i.e., to be capable of realizing both their failures and their virtues as well. This implies accepting the losses related to idealizations.

In the field, questions arise and they often can lead the performer to internal conflicts. Clash of values, strangeness and feeling of powerlessness, which can be generated in the field, make the performer, in this method, to deal with his or her own ethnocentrism. According to Rodrigues (2003, p. 109):

In Co-inhabiting with the Source, it is important that the researcher contacts the other without judgment. It involves conflicts, but when the researcher redirects his or her prejudices to understand them, he or she gets to see the other and their mirroring. We noticed that, through this attitude, the person being researched gets genuinely interested in the researcher, and thus the researched becomes the researcher. For both, there is a transfusion of energies, which are mixed and combined, making a human entity that is the result of this type of interaction: fully professional where the affective element becomes part of it.

In the field experience of a performer with farm workers from Minas Gerais, she could clearly see how the researched tested and investigated her, before reaching a relationship of trust:

With him, I passed through significant moments in which I was tested, until I gained his trust. For example, when, in the first day, I had lunch in his house, he told me: 'Sorry about it, but food today at home is packed lunch'. While we were eating, I noticed that he was watching me to see if



I really would eat it. Only when he saw that I ate a lot and with much pleasure, then, he felt at ease. Gradually [...] estrangement was decreasing between us. He taught me how to harvest grapes, carefully, to 'not leave trace of hands on them' (Teixeira, 2007, p. 12-13).

In the perspective of the BPI method, if the researched is not open, if there is neither empathy nor connection between researcher and researched, if there is no reciprocity, this will not be a field research that will continue and the performer must try another place. The researched people themselves put forward whether there is such reciprocity, through their gestures, their statements and attitudes of openness and acceptance in relation to the researcher. The genuine interest of the researcher towards the researched often makes the later feel recognized for the kind of life they live. In a field research in Tocantins, the following testimony of the researched about the researcher's work was given:

The person is engaged in a work, to see the situation of the poorest communities. And this is part of life, the world, right? But not everyone knows, I would like that many people travel, right? Travel to know, to disclose what goes on with people in the interior, in the suburbs, to condole [...]

We observed that, in these exchanges in the field, both researcher and researched are valued from the moment one begins to feel a sincere availability towards the other<sup>12</sup>. There is a flow of body images that favors their development, strengthening an interpersonal connection.

Cultural and libidinal aspects take great importance in this stage of the process in BPI. The choice of the performer in relation to the field is connected to unconscious issues of his or her inner self and, at the same time, with a cultural identification with this field. As we stated earlier, the experience of this research mobilizes these specific contents of the performer.

On the other hand, the performer may also find out during the field research that the focus that he or she chose has already been part of his or her family history. It shows that, although a diverse social context is being sought through field research, it may be very close to the performer, as part of his or her body identity.

[...] the current post-colonial studies in dance [...], for example, Ethnocenology and researches embraced by the

Dancer-Researcher-Performer method, among others, are taking on the challenges of uncovering lost languages, local knowledge and genetic memory inherited from a chain of oral transmission, which probably can tell us about what that, though a secret hidden from ourselves, is tightly kept as inheritance in our bodies (Lobato, 2012, p. 43).

Although we had stated until now the researcher's relationship with the researched, the research will, from that core, expand and result in connections with the context of a community, of an entire social segment.

What I seek to emphasize is that it is about deeper dimensions of identity, as the research takes us to territories rarely traveled: the symbolic dimension of the own body produced in a certain process of socialization [...] silenced mechanisms of exclusion and social inequality from this same socialized order, in which we are differentially inserted as 'researchers' and 'researched'; at best, going towards the mutual meeting that overcomes this 'us and them' division to be a 'do together' process. The research challenges us in relation to who we 'were being' [*fomos sendo*] and who 'we want to be being' [*queremos ir sendo*], with the permission of gerund neologism, to move in the dynamics of the production of identities (Vilas, 2012, p. 72).

The body identity, in BPI, is understood as something that operates as an axis of the individual in process – as he or she is at any given time – encompassing both his or her personal history and the sociocultural context in which he or she is inserted. However, the body identity is not a fixed, closed or predetermined thing, it is likely to change, particularly with regard to the dynamics of his or her body images, in accordance with Schilder's understanding of this term (1999), which points out the interconnection of social, psychological and physiological aspects. According to Schilder (1999, p. 211) “[...] in our psychic life, there is always a tendency to form units, *Gestalten* [...] But whenever Gestalt is created, it immediately tends to change and destroy itself”. The body images, therefore, are dynamic and inserted in an individual context in which personal history, environment, culture, physiology and psychism are part of the body identity of the individual.

Thus, in the BPI method, the body is conceived as made of a number of factors such as its physicality, the flow of its body images, history, memories, cultural connections, libidinal structures etc.

In the dynamics of the field research, the performer becomes an accomplice of the researched environment, to the extent that he or she recognizes within him or herself the paradoxical situations he or she was able to experience. The paradox lies in the conflictive moments because, on the one hand, the performer passes through full situations that satisfy him or her; on the other, he or she has to constantly deal with a feeling of helplessness, given the impossibility of changing social situations in which he or she finds him or herself during research. Thus, what the body of the performer will express in the directed labs stems from multiple exchanges between researchers and researched. In this method, it is impossible for the performer not to bring within him or herself a social complaint: “[...] therefore, the process will be in the hands of the dancer, from the moment he or she learns to lead the oppositions. Upon accepting the conflict in his or her body, the performer is able to elaborate it and turn it into poetry” (Rodrigues, 1999, p. 108).

### Artistic Creation

The relationship of the scenic dance with aspects of *Brazilianness* can happen in different ways. According to Navas (1994, p. 44), Rodrigues is among the dance professionals who, in the 1980s, returned to the study of national culture issues, but, in a different way than had been done so far. According to the author, these professionals did not seek to reproduce the structures of the dances from popular manifestations but, through their research, they intended to build a “personal writ”. “Interestingly, the focus of their attention was the transformation of their bodies towards a new dance. A theme, a song, or some authentic steps of the manifestations being studied were not enough to structure their choreography” (Navas, 1994, p. 44)<sup>13</sup>.

The artistic works in the BPI method are distant from a direct reproduction, or a stylization of what was researched, because, in this process, creation stems from the encounter of each performer with the research field; and this encounter would trigger dynamism of the performer’s images, emanating from his or her body identity. As Villas points out (2012, p.63-64), through the research of Brazilian popular manifestations, one can “multiply the imaginary” and create from a space of displacement from both researcher and researched:

[...] beyond the reducing reproductions or the expropriations, we seek to provide the multiplication and not the capture of this imaginary. The scenic performance is a space to produce knowledge about the displacement and transformation of oneself assuming the encounter with the 'other', master art in the exercise of otherness.

The experience with foreign performers has shown how the BPI method works in the body image of the subject, leading one to access content of one's own nationality, although the initial field research had taken place in Brazil. This route occurred, for example, with an Ecuadorian performer who started a field research in Brazil, and the process in directed labs – in which the body identity is worked – caused her body to bring contents related to social groups in her country. Based on this situation, she was coached to conduct a field research in these groups.

Thus, we emphasize that the BPI method is aimed at the field research of Brazilian popular culture, due to its focus on working with the body identity of the performer, the body power found in these manifestations, as well as the creation purpose for stage works that bring a perspective about the social contexts of the country in which the performer is inserted:

The fact that the process is connected to a national context, basis of various cultural manifestations, it does not mean that its main goal aims at a Brazilian aesthetic, but what it gives us: the development of artistic potential in a more direct relationship of the dancer with life around him or her (Rodrigues, 1997, p. 147).

When the performer returns from the field research, the procedure of directed labs is established and what was prompted in his or her body from the research begins to be expressed. In the performer's body, there is a multitude of images, sensations, emotions that, in the labs, become movements. At this point, there is no concern on the part of the performer and director, neither about interpreting what is being expressed in the body, nor about delineating the dramaturgy.

In this flow, through movement, there are moments of silence – in which movements externally seen are minimal – in an exercise of a deep awareness of micro bodily reactions. Little by little, what the artistic creation will be becomes clearer; it is achieved through the perception of a quality of movement that goes from unconscious to conscious, being related to something that belongs to the life

story of the performer in confluence with the field research that was conducted.

There is a stage where the space is taken by objects – materialization of what was previously in the imagination – which creates a place of representations that the performer dwells. As the landscape that is formed in this space, and the memory of the senses placed in it, become clearer, a draft of the script is created. The performer is encouraged by the director to be aware of the events of our time, what is going on in the *world*, so that it provides a reflection that will expand the contents of the creation process. This high perception body reached by the performer until then rearranges the contents of the creative process, integrating multiple experiences and reflections. It is important to point out that the act of questioning and reflecting is a constant process in the method.

An example can be given from the development of a creative process involving a group of five performers who conducted field research in Bahia, focusing mainly on *Candomblé*, which culminated in the performance *Depois daquele canto*<sup>14</sup> (Picture 2). In this process, five distinct characters were outlined; however, a common content among them gradually came up, something that concerned *nowhere* people, refugees, and local migrants from places that were destroyed. A dynamic of escaping from and searching for a new place was strongly initiated in this creation. There were also more directly related aspects connected to the researched field that permeated this process, however, the dramaturgical axis was the condition of *nowhere* in which one must always leave something behind.

The spaces individually built in the labs of this creation process were full of meaningful objects for each character. When the dynamics of escaping was established, the objects were removed, just keeping those that were essential to the characters, the ones that could be carried in the body. The aesthetics of this artistic creation came from a refinement of the body by the removal of objects, strengthening a language in which a *terreiro's* body was identified in an extreme situation, in an eternal cycle of taking refuge elsewhere, in which the most significant things were taken with it in the body memory.

This process had already occurred when the media vehemently reported the situation of Syrian refugees, and, at the same time, the social networks would show news about *terreiros* that had been

vandalized. Such events affected the performers of this artistic creation, as these situations converged with the contents that were in their bodies.



Picture 2 – Performance *Depois daquele canto*. Picture: Marina Pirez (2015).

Therefore, the artistic creation in the BPI method is a move the performer makes towards what lies in his or her inner self, what happens around him or her (including what has been researched in the field), and more global situations, all of which are contingent by content that is triggered in artistic creation.

In this creation process, not all of the contents expressed in the body of the performer are developed in order to constitute scenes. Movements in which we identify links to death drive<sup>15</sup> and defense mechanisms as their main drivers are recognized – an open space is established, so that the performer can elaborate them – but they are not taken to artistic creation.

Sometimes, when the body of the performer has a very low muscle tone, with difficulty in modulation, which prevents the performer from having contact with him or herself – for example, with his or her feelings – and there is a repetition of the same movement pattern, this is related to death drive. This is just one of the possible examples, not always loss of tone will occur in movements related to death drive. Thus, the director must be aware of the probable meanings of expressiveness of the performer movements in order to

give him or her feedback about it. This is not an easy reading, the movements linked to death drives can become mixed up and look beautiful.

Knowing what the defense mechanisms are and figure out when they occur is important, as, when acted unconsciously, they tend to prevent the flow of creation. They also damage both the contact of the individual with oneself and the interpersonal relationships. When the performer is in a denial process of certain content, upon rationalizing it, or forging any movement of his or her body in order to cover up a deeper content – by which the performer nourishes any rejection, related to something painful regarding his or her life story – he or she may be acting from his or her defense mechanisms, i.e., obstructing the creative material that was emerging.

To tell the difference between the creative material, and that one emanated from the work of defense mechanisms is crucial in the BPI method. Then, it is up to the director to be wise to know when a mechanism is working and create means for the performer to be aware of this fact and leave this mechanism behind.

In the directed labs, the performer experiences in his or her body in motion the most diverse images, including those related to people from his or her life story, from the researched field and imaginary people who run through different landscapes – places where life experiences that are established in the body are developed (Rodrigues, 1997). These images of distinct spaces, times and bodies converge to a great dynamism of body images that start to model the performer's body, leading to certain synthesis content of the process, which we call character:

The character in BPI neither is a composition of autobiographical elements, nor made of elements from the field research. The character is not a content cluster. The goal of BPI is not making a character. Character in BPI means a nucleation of senses at any given moment of body images integration of the person in process. By the character, the performer can recognize other realities that are part of him or herself (Rodrigues, 2008, p. 2-3).

According to Dolto (2002, p. 38), from the birth of the individual, the given name helps structuring one's body images, allowing the domain of one's life drive over one's death drive. The narcissistic cohesion of the individual is ensured by the given name: “[...] I un-

derstand, in this sense, the narcissism of the subject as *subject of the desire to live*". Similarly, the synthesis content of the creation process in BPI – which brings a *new body* to the performer – when naming it, provides a social and symbolic identity, assuming the life drive in the body. "Once the character is structured, it is as if the character has 'taken off' the performer, coming to a unique, comprehensive life" (Turtelli, 2009, p. 157).

The character allows the performer to have another entry in the symbolic plot related to the field researched by him or her, because besides being a new identity, it is a synthesis, thus connected to a network articulating different contents. To digest, refine and rearrange the contents related to the field and the performer, the character is *faster than the performer*:

Through the character of the BPI method, the performer lives an 'othered self' in him or herself, who is made of something from him or herself. This other enables the connection with tangible realities of specific social contexts, in a way that would be hard to happen without the acceptance and construction of this 'other' in his or her body. The character in BPI is a structure that eases the performer axis (Turtelli; Rodrigues, 2012, p. 174).

The emotional field worked during the process in BPI is vast and intense. It is necessary to understand and study the emotions. They are worked aiming at an awareness of what is still unconscious, and that becomes possible to access. "Since we are dealing with an area of great subjectivity, we need to situate it objectively" (Rodrigues, 2003, p. 152). According to Damásio (2000, p. 60), the emotion is the most refined human skill. There is no way to be aware emotionlessly. Consciousness and emotion are intricate; both are part of the body (Rodrigues, 2003).

In the method, we observed that catharsis is not an option of procedure, because it is established and it ends without the performer being aware of what was going on with him or her internally. The state of almost catharsis mentioned by Levine (2012), in which, there is emotional release and, at the same time, awareness as to what this may be related, is considered a valid alternative in some specific situations:

To cover the body of sensations [...] one needs to develop the ability to withstand physical sensations and unpleasant feelings, but with an important sense that they do not take



hold of the individual. Levine refers to this act as being a restorer ability. In our practice, we observed that the condition of having free channels helps emotion not to take hold of the body. The performer feels the emotion, without going into catharsis, because he or she is in the movement flow, which requires transformation dynamism of images in motion. When moving through channels, upon converting feeling into movement, emotion is trapped, providing opportunities to become aware of it (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 4).

When artistic creation turns to public performances, the performer had already known and cleared the emotions that are present in the scenic work. This causes him or her to feel safe to surrender to the performance. These emotions are developed; he or she does not need to fear them. Thus, an emotional force comes up, favoring a body language that, at times, may cause discomfort to the audience. Because some may not be open to this kind of tonic dialog, possibly due to fear of waking primitive emotions that they do not want to contact.

### Reception

The dance critic Fausto Fuser (apud Teixeira, 2014, p. 95), referring to the dance works performed and later directed by Graziela Rodrigues, comments: “Her work is about the human being without makeup, it is about the naked individual! That is it, and it is disturbing [...] her work is not cute... It is not what people want to see”. Issues such as hunger, poverty, abandonment, loss, violence, prejudice, among others, are present in the performance scripts of the BPI method since its beginning. The characters bring these elements in their bodies, in their words, in their chants. There is a clear intention as to the content to be communicated through the performances. “We have the intention to express to people certain contents. In this sense, we have an engaged position, a concern about what we are telling people through our art” (Turtelli, 2009, p. 206-207).

The characters talk about themselves, but metaphorically, these voices also refer to an entire social segment:

They think we are equal  
plagued cow,  
train with no destination.  
Crappy life.

[...] in this valley of *Alvorada*  
of so many tears ...  
I walk these shanties  
where there are only hungry people  
sick, mud, so hungry [...]<sup>16</sup>

It has been noticed that such social denunciation forcefully reaches the audience, which is evident from the feedback given by them to performers and directors after the presentation of different performances. This fact can be illustrated by the testimony given by the audience about the performance *Fina Flor Divino Amor*<sup>17</sup> - Picture 3):

I was touched by the performance, which synthesized many injustices against women; it made me thoughtful and I felt struck for a long time and with great intensity.

It seems my blood is pulsing heavily. That I have a duty to comply with those women.

Many things; how many women suffered and still suffer today. The burden of being a woman in our society. What would be madness (when the contrast between pain and joy is shown), the generosity or sacrifice of the performer to be able of talking about this delicate subject.

About the social context to which many women belong, bringing into question to me society itself on the one hand, and weaknesses and strength of people to keep on living, on the other.

About the struggle of women around the world, against hunger, sexism, social and political condition...

Because the many sufferings of women, and the human being in general as well, are present daily not only in my culture, but in many others as well.



Picture 3 – Performance *Fina Flor Divino Amor*. Picture: Andressa Coutinho (2011).

The return to field research after the artistic creation has been a constant process in the BPI method, in order to share it with the researched<sup>18</sup>. This is a unique experience, a moment of reunion between the interpreter and the people of the field researched from another perspective. A performing space is assembled in the field, and for many of those who were researched, this will be the first time they see a scenic presentation with this performing bias. For some moments, the performer will be the focus of attention, and the researched will be the observers.

In this situation, there is an exposure of the performer in front of the people from the field: he or she has to experience a state of vulnerability and this is captured by them. The content expressed in artistic creation is also part of them, so, there is often a mirroring situation, in which the researched people see themselves in the researcher, deepening their relationship. From this context, the researched comes to see the researcher in a new light.

For artists who develop themselves in BPI, such a circumstance is a moment of greatest validation of all the work – including the field research and the performance created. The testimonies of several people from the field, in relation to the artistic work presented to them, show that, besides the researched people often identifying with the characters and with what is danced, they understand better

the research process carried out and its reason. Upon appreciating the artistic work, they generally are touched and feel grateful.

Since the first performance created in the BPI method, *Graça Bailarina de Jesus ou Sete Linhas de Umbanda, Salvem o Brasil*, returning to the field was carried out. This presentation was commented in a local newspaper as follows: “A new show from *Ensaio Teatro e Dança* opens in the Federal District, surrounded by a rare dose of innovation, singularity and originality. For the first time in Brazil (and I believe this is the first time in the world), a performance is staged in an *Umbanda* tent [...]” (Farias, 1980, p. 19).

In this first presentation representing the return to the field, a significant statement was made about it:

The Charitable Tent *Xangô Ayra Caboclo Ytajacy* feels enlightened with the glow of its art. *Graça Bailarina de Jesus ou Sete Linhas de Umbanda, Salvem o Brasil* is a representation of pain and salvation; body and soul; life and death. This is the magical dance of suffering, misery, humiliation and everyday madness that, despite all this, is paradoxically beautiful and enchantingly divine<sup>19</sup>.

Other testimonials of the people from the researched fields in relation to the artistic work follow:

Exciting, because this is the story of our family [...] and, in a short time, you presented everything we lived here, everything that we live (Farm worker in Minas Gerais).

The greatest reflection from the performance is respect and understanding about African-based religion, respect for women and the understanding of the performance theme (*Umbandista* in Belém).

I am from Umbanda and congratulate this topic to be present in the arts scene (*Umbandista* in Recife)

This is not a dance like the others that you know. This is different. This is dance of feeling. The feeling from females [...] For example, (women) who are worried when their son is sick, who get sad about difficulties going on, the struggle to overcome it, to take care of their children. This shows the things that women pass through (Xavante Indian in Mato Grosso).

With this presentation [...] what you want to take is not an easy thing. It is a difficult thing. It is a challenge to your people. You are daring, you will challenge. But, in the beginning, this may be a problem for you, but if the person understands, they will look for you too. This is the right thing; this is very strong (Xavante Indian in Mato Grosso).

## Conclusion

Through the practical examples of research conducted in the BPI method, the support of psychology theories and descriptions of procedures belonging to the method, we tried to show some of its fundamental principles, as the balance proposed in the research field, the connection with *Brazilianness*, the alignment between emotion and consciousness and the ethical character of this research method. Regarding the field research, we highlighted the focus on interpersonal relationships, involving consent and reciprocity, the dialectical character of the researched cultures and the links of the research with a body identity of the performer. This body identity is also associated with the way the question of *Brazilianness* is established in the method. We sought to highlight the importance of awareness during the process, emphasizing reflection and questioning. We also encompassed the conjunction between personal development and art in the creation process within the method, which provides care in interpersonal relationships in the research field, so they are based on neither power relationship, nor opportunism.

Therefore, we hope to have clarified some of the questions posed by Höfling.

Every creative process from the body involves difficult knowledge to be accessed through words. For a better understanding of these processes, it is crucial to experience them and identify these experiences through which the performer passes through. The path to this level of knowledge is through body experience.

[...] do sciences, learn, then teach, take care of ... all the reactions we have to know are plural: there are many paths to knowledge. These paths are varied, sometimes being classified by the academy in such terms as 'popular', 'practical', 'theoretical'. Doing science is a walk: the method (the way) creates the kind of science that we will have. [...] Therefore, it is said that the path taken participates in the produced knowledge. The way to grasp knowledge defines a kind of specific knowledge (Gauthier, 1999, p. 20).

The body in the BPI method is regarded in its power to articulate meanings, moving among intimate, bordered and separated places; providing displacement and establishing linkages with a human collectivity. This body is the starting point for the construction of knowledge in the method. In its creative movement, it dives in



itself, it lives the encounter, complicity, conflict, emptiness, effervescence, and then it turns and conceives a *new life*. The refinement provided by this art of movement surpasses the walls of art knowledge itself, improving the transit of knowledge among the areas. When we cross the pathway of this refinement of the movement, we get in the domains of memory and emotion.

### Notes

1 BPI is allocated mainly at UNICAMP, and aspects of the method are experienced by students in disciplines both from the Undergraduate and Graduate courses. The method is fully experienced only when the individual chooses it and, in these cases, it is developed through Final Under graduation Papers, Scientific Initiation, Masters and PhD degrees projects, among others. The Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI) and Dance of Brazil research group, registered in the CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) directory holds the mentioned projects.

2 The BPI method is based on three axes - *Inventory in the Body*, the *Co-inhabiting with the Source* and the *Character Structuring* - and five tools - Dance Technique, Senses Technique, Field Research, Directed Labs and Records (Rodrigues, 2003; 2010).

3 The word performer is used to describe the artist who is in process in the BPI method. Performer is the scene artist who is willing to experience any human dimension in him or herself, thus expanding his or her ability to communicate with the audience, because he or she does not reproduce or play contents, but he or she assumes to live them in his or her body.

4 Field researches are the core of the experiences of the *Co-inhabiting with the Source* axis.

5 According to Capra (1982, p. 260): “The systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to smaller units [...] The activity of systems involves a process known as transaction – the simultaneous and mutually interdependent interaction between multiple components [...] Although we can discern individual parts in any system, the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts”.

6 According to Pruzinsky (1990), defense mechanisms are learned ways to deal with the world, including cognitive, emotional and physical strategies. These mechanisms are applied repeatedly, internalized and become unconscious. Long after the need to use them has passed, they continue acting.

7 “According to Schilder [...] body image of human beings is built from the internal history of the individual and their relationships with others. Throughout the development, the body parts of the others will become part of the body image (embodiment), as well as the attitudes received in relation to the body will be part of the personality (identification). An important mechanism to be remembered here is projection, because one’s own body image is often projected to the other. There is an intercommunication of body images through parts or the whole.” (Rodrigues, 2003, p. 119).

8 The body identity, according to Tavares (2003, p. 104), is connected to “[...] the experience and the recognition of our perceptions. It allows constant cohesion of these perceptions and the construction of a ‘bodily self’ [...] the basis of the sense of self is in the recognition of the body and in the development of mental representations of the body consistent with our existential reality [...] Through the recognition of the external world in a bodily manner, the subject is structured as a body identity”.

9 “The body we refer to [...] transcends the sum of all these aspects [body and mind, movements and perceptions, affective and social relationships], as it is an existential body

and, therefore, at every moment, it reveals itself as something inexplicable, an inexhaustible source of the 'new', the 'singular', which, at the same time, carries off the vulnerability of human beings". (Tavares, 2003, p. 118).

10 The directed labs are one of the BPI method tools "[...] prepared by the Director individually in order to achieve the recognition of memory in the Inventory in the Body axis, the recognition of the research material in the performer's body in the Co-inhabiting with the Source axis, and the nucleation of the character in the Character Structuring". (Rodrigues, 2010, p. 2-3).

11 Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SinFo62gNDE>>. Accessed: May 23 2016.

12 Body images are mental representations of the body related to body identity, which cover all sensory inputs and experiences, which are processed and represented in a mental maturation apparatus (Rodrigues, 2003, p. 19). According to Schilder (1999, p. 192) "[...] body image is not a static phenomenon, but acquired, built and structured in a continuous contact with the world [...] The processes that build body image not only occur in the field of perception, but they also are parallel to the construction in the libidinal and emotional fields".

13 Authors' translation.

14 Direction: Graziela Rodrigues and Larissa Turtelli. Performers: Carolina Constantino, Igor Manoel, Isadora Buonanni, Juliana Pedroso and Yasmin Berzin.

15 The concept of death drive means: "[...] a fundamental category of drives that is opposed to drives of life and tend to the complete reduction of tensions, i.e., tend to bring the living being to an anorganic state. Aimed primarily at the inner self and tending to self-destruction, death drives would be secondarily targeted outwards, being manifested then as drive of aggression or destruction" (Laplanche, Pontalis, 2000, p. 407).

16 Words from the character Graça from the performance *Graça Bailarina de Jesus ou Sete Linhas de Umbanda, Salvem o Brasil*, authored by Graziela Rodrigues, João Antônio L. Esteves and Celso Araujo.

17 Directed by Graziela Rodrigues, with Larissa Turtelli, funded by Programa de Ação Cultural (ProAC). Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxBzgL2Dzno>>. Accessed: May 23 2016. Survey on audience reception connected to the project *A Dança em Ato* funded by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).

18 Example available at: <<https://vimeo.com/64434127>>. Accessed: May 23 2016.

19 Letter from *babalorixá* Raul de Xangô given to Graziela Rodrigues after the presentation of the performance in his *Candomblé* and *Umbanda* tent.



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