

LUME THEATER

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## Music and Corporeal Mimesis: creative frictions for the dramaturgy of the musician-actuator

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ABSTRACT – Music and Corporeal Mimesis: creative frictions for the dramaturgy of the musician-actuator – Built as a cartographic report, this article aims to give insight to the practical and conceptual procedures carried out during the research process that culminated in the scenic and musical creation of the show Uji - O Bom da Roda. Based on the cartographic method, we focus on encounters and contaminations produced between the theatrical universe and the *roda de samba* (samba circle) in its multiple expressive dimensions. Within a territory of creative frictions, Corporeal Mimesis presented itself as a fundamental element of articulation between music, body, scene and dramaturgy.

Keywords: Corporeal Mimesis. Music. Presence. Cartography. Actor Dramaturgy.

RÉSUMÉ – Musique et Corporal Mimesis: frictions créatives pour la dramaturgie du musicien-actionneur –

Construit comme un rapport cartographique, cet article vise a donner un aperçu des procédures pratiques et conceptuelles menées au cours du processus de recherche qui a abouti à la création scénique et musicale du spectacle Uji - O*Bom da Roda.* Baseé sur la méthode cartographique, ce texte apporte comme un découpage des rencontres et des contaminations produites entre les univers scéniques et le cercle de la samba dans ses multiples dimensions expressives. Dans un territoire de frictions créatives, la Mimesis Corpórea se présente comme un élément fondamental d'articulation entre la musique, le corps, la scène et la dramaturgie.

Mots-clés: Mimesis du Corps. Musique. Présence. Cartographie. Dramaturgie de L'acteur.

**RESUMO – Música e Mímesis Corpórea: frições criativas para a dramaturgia do músico-atuador** – Construído como um relato cartográfico, este artigo tem como objetivo dar destaque aos procedimentos práticos e conceituais realizados durante o processo de pesquisa que culminou na criação cênica e musical do espetáculo *Uji – O Bom da Roda.* Tendo como base o método cartográfico, o texto traz como recorte encontros e contaminações produzidas entre os universos cênico e da roda de samba, em suas múltiplas dimensões expressivas. Dentro de um território de fricções criativas, a Mímesis Corpórea se apresentou como elemento fundamental de articulação entre música, corpo, cena e dramaturgia.

Palavras-chave: Mímesis Corpórea. Música. Presença. Cartografia. Dramaturgia de Ator.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

*Uji – o Bom da Roda* is a theatrical and musical show produced as a result of a PhD research carried out in the Graduate Program in Performing Arts at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). This journey of research and creation, integrated into the activities of *LUME Teatro*<sup>1</sup>, had as PhD advisor the actor and researcher Renato Ferracini and as stage director the actor and researcher Ana Cristina Colla.

Although the creative process carried out throughout this research has been the field itself from which practical procedures and their theoretical and methodological developments could emerge, rather than being just an exposition of the show's stage structuring and dramaturgy, this article focuses on examining, at first, the conceptual and methodological bases that informed the research as a process of mapping a specific artistic and cultural territory; next, the article looks into the practical and conceptual procedures that made it possible to create a process of friction, intercrossing and contamination between music, historical/cultural memory, body and scene. Thus, in the course of this narrative, I will try to emphasize how the expressive, hybrid universe of the *roda de samba*<sup>2</sup> and the Corporeal Mimesis were brought closer to each other.

Understood as a procedure for the technification of physical actions and dramaturgical creation that can be structured around the performing body, being guided by the sequence of its actions, Corporeal Mimesis was created by *LUME Teatro*'s founder and developed throughout the history of this theatrical research center. Mimesis<sup>3</sup> will be better defined and contextualized along with the presentation of the practical and creative procedures. Meetings with LUME members will be occasionally addressed for having contributed decisively to enhancing the compositional processes carried out in the course of the research process.

The path that I am going to trace as a report of my experiences has been part of what I consider to be a living research process. This movement is marked by the formation of a musician and researcher whose interest focuses on the *roda de samba* and who, by virtue of the meetings occurred along this path, have started to observe and produce frictions between the multiple expressive materials that make up this cultural, affective and aesthetic universe.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

Conceiving the research process as a whole inseparable of the flow of experiences and affective encounters was central to the methodological choices that shaped the procedures developed in each step of the practical and conceptual process, including during the compositional journey that resulted in Uji - O Bom da Roda. Therefore, I emphasize that it was the path of actions and reflections that have defined the field of research itself, understood as an existential and expressive territory capable of being mapped.

From now on, I mean by cartography an act of experiencing culture and, thus, of studying the "[...] relations of forces that constitute a specific field of experiences" (Farina, 2008, p. 9). This cartographic approach to the field of research allows me to understand it as a territory of relationships intrinsically associated with the movement of life and culture in their dynamic process. In this sense, the experiences with the *roda de samba* in its relationship with Corporeal Mimesis are the basis that enabled the expressive elements of the *roda* to become the very territory of theatrical and musical creation.

In this context, the act of mapping leads us to the possibility of observing the production of affects – *affectus*, understood, after the 17th century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (2009) – as compositional forces, as a process of variation in the power of acting and being that invariably occurs in the relationships established within the territory experienced in its objective and subjective dimensions. Based on this understanding, the research was then driven by the interest in producing, experiencing and apprehending how each encounter by itself generates an increase in the power of acting and being in the course of the relational processes governed by presence.

After Gumbrecht (2010), presence is associated with the production of meanings arising from how the materiality of phenomena affects our perception. For Gumbrecht, this process of perception affected by bodies in relation does not involve the mediation of conceptual thinking. The production of presence, in turn, arises from the implications of the relationships between bodies and the surrounding world, and can be conceived as an opening of the bodies to the relationship with space, as well as to the aesthetic experience. This first notion of presence articulated with the Spino-

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

za's idea of *affectus* allows me to understand the researcher-musicianperformer as a subject for whom the compositional relationship between expressive bodies and materials offers the possibility of eliciting meanings that can unfold beyond the culturally, previously established meanings.

This attentive and questioning look at the correlation of forces produced by the encounters between bodies, expressive materials and concepts in friction was the key to tracing a path to the understanding of artistic actions considered in their aesthetic, social and political dimensions. This way of listening, which necessarily opens itself up to the process, establishes what we can understand as a guiding, ethical-compositional criterion for cartographic actions and observations. Based on this criterion, one may choose to fuel and map those forces of Spinozian joy.

According to the conception formed through the relationship with Spinoza's Ethics (2009), in short, joy results from meetings capable of enhancing the life of all parties involved in shaping the collective body that we are calling territory. Unlike a way of looking at things that divides the body into separate parts, Spinoza proposes a shift in perception that affects the rationalist and separative paradigm itself, making it possible to understand the territory as an irreducible whole, as a body experiencing a constant process of interrelations, of waxing and waning of forces, in a continuous dynamic of affecting and being affected as a way of producing itself. In this sense, we are not interested in dissecting the body, separating the parts, but in understanding what forces are involved in the concatenation that produces the whole.

For the artistic research presented here, this understanding made it possible to consider the resulting show as one of the culminations of a process carried out in its practical, conceptual and spatio-temporal dimensions, that is, the show is ultimately seen as the culminating aesthetic event of a cartography of experience. In summary, this cartography is formulated from a specific, workable perspective that the researcher adopts throughout that singular journey in which he brings with him a set of references he uses to compose the territory.

In introducing the expression aesthetic event, my aim is establishing a dialogue with the phenomenology of the perceptual act in order to deepening the understanding of the presence and its relational implications for the

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

artistic processes undertaken. In this sense, Bergson (2006) proposes that we think about the time of experience as an absolute time, as an indivisible duration. We can think about the arts of presence, popular culture expressions, music, theatrical performance as forms of expressive manifestations taking place in the indivisible flow of time. In this context, the presence becomes inseparable from the duration; it becomes the perceptual opening for observing the relationships occurring within the flow of experience itself. Although the result of the time of experience can be approached through a chronological structure, the perception of the flow is the connection with the very duration of the event in its unfolding.

Operating as one of the important conceptual keys to the research and creation process, the idea of duration, when addressed in a direct relationship with the presence within the artistic field, contributed substantially to the recognition of the roda de samba itself as an aesthetic event. I thus present here brief outline of the German theater scholar Érika Fischer-Lichte's (2012) approach to the presence. Initially, Fischer-Lichte invites us to think about a scale of intensity for presence. A first level, defined as weak by the author, is related to the daily use of the word, that is, presence at this level is primarily associated with the physical concreteness of the body that occupies a place in space-time. At this level, no qualitative dimension needs to be addressed. This is the level at which the presence is first recognized when you perceive something or someone in front of you. However, in the flow of experience, it is possible to observe that this perceptual level allows other relationships to be established. A second level is formed and begins to qualify the presence of the body, and now a deepening of its relational and affective dimension occurs.

When a specific quality of presence arises or is intentionally produced, it can trigger the emergence of other historical, cultural or aesthetic relationships linked to the quality created. Therefore, the presence categorized as strong by Fischer-Lichte (2012) generates experiences and signs loaded with multiple meanings. If in in-person art experiences the production of meanings, even if not following a rational logic, presents itself as an intrinsic factor to the communicative process established by the relationship with the event (the artwork), I thus consider the qualitative aspect as fundamental.

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

From this perspective, the qualitative aspect of presence raised some important reflections concerning the friction and contamination processes generated during the research. What qualities can we aim for in an artistic composition process in order to enhance the potential of our communicative and poetic action as artists performing with presence? Thus formulated, this question pointed to an intensification of the procedures that put the Mimesis in relation with the roda de samba. Likewise, it invites us to reflect on the third level, that of radical presence. According to Fischer-Lichte (2012), this level is achieved through affects self-produced when the perception of presence becomes collective. Multiple crossings are involved, resonances generated in the space-time of the performance, in what we understand here as an intra-inter-body event. This presence, for Fischer-Lichte, can collapse the body-mind dichotomy. In a complementary way, Gumbrecht (2010) sees the experience of presence constituted in a process of material interrelationship between bodies and in an affective process in which bodies, in relation to each other, affect and are affected in varied and specific ways, becoming subject to effects of greater or lesser intensity in the flow of relationships.

After this look into the effects and levels of presence that may be achieved in the flow of experience, I will now address the roda de samba as an event experienced in its indivisible duration, as an aesthetic event of presence, endowed with an opening to the production of multiple meanings. For this, and understanding the roda de samba as a catalyst for a variety of expressive materials and a forming force in the territory where encounters and contamination between music, scene and corporeality were observed and produced over the course of the research, I propose to think of the *roda* as the creator of a flow essentially linked to the presence, to the living body, to the *time-being (Uji)* that manifests itself and that by establishing potent relationships with other bodies produces the effects of its presence, constituting the expressive manifestation and the event itself. With the term *Uji*, I make a reference to Japanese philosophy; more specifically, I draw a parallel with the teachings of the founder of Soto Zen Buddhism, master Dogen Zenji - who lived from 1200 to 1253. In Dogen Zenji's approach to contemplative practices, I find the possibility of approaching the roda de samba through what Zenji (1988) presents as a synthesis of being

E-ISSN 2237-2660

and time. "Uji - time (ji) itself is being (u), and all being (u) is time (ji)" (Zenji, 1988).

As we could not fail to mention, in the Yoruba and Bantu worldview from which samba originates, the *roda* is formed as a point of connection between the broad and open base, between the creative space of *Orum* (the spiritual realm) and the manifestations of *Aiyê* (the physical realm). From this point of view, the *roda*, through the sharing of memory, in addition to integrating the present and the past, puts the sacred and profane dimensions in contact with each other. Or rather, it fosters the recognition of the inseparability of these dimensions which were separated along with the consolidation of Cartesian thought, both rooted and expressed in the constitution of post-colonial Western civilizations. It is in this field of forces, within which the *roda* is formed, and in the expressive territory in which it is constituted, that we find its material dimension, the layer of reality observable through the senses, which is inseparable from its subtle dimensions, from which the expressive movement emerges, presents itself and receives its meanings.

### Corporeal Mimesis and the Path of Musical-Acting Contaminations

Although as a musician, composer and founding member of the *Núcleo Cultural Cupinzeiro*<sup>4</sup> I have had a long acquaintance with the *roda de samba* territory, the encounters that guided the research that culminated in the production of Uji - O Bom da Roda provided me with new perspectives on this field. The closer contact with the artistic, technical-poetic and training work carried out by LUME actors, especially the first experiences of physical training for actors under the guidance of Carlos Simioni, were crucial to the series of procedures and experiments that gave rise to the creative and research process formalized throughout my doctoral studies.

As my musical practice and training had been directly linked to samba as song, my contact with the vocal work of Carlos Simioni, back in 2006, was justified by my desire to find new technical approaches for improving my singing technique. A wide field of possibilities was opened for me, however, bringing with it questions about the body-voice as an expressive unit. The procedures associated with the opening of this universe started to gain

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

even clearer contours with my deepening in the Corporeal Mimesis approach.

Initially, the Corporeal Mimesis was defined by its creator, Luís Otávio Burnier, as being "[...] a technification process of everyday actions based on the observation, imitation and codification of a set of physical and vocal actions taken from predetermined contexts" (Burnier, 2009, p. 62). On the course of the research developed by LUME, we can also find Mimesis defined as a "[...] work process based on the observation, codification and later dramatization of physical and vocal actions observed in everyday life, whether they come from people, animals, photos or images" (Colla, 2010, p. 20). This definition has been expanding and developing specific connections and contours in a dynamic way. In the work of actress Raquel Scotti Hirson, the Mimesis started to be mobilized by memories linked to words, as well as by the observation of places and monuments<sup>5</sup>. In my contact with the writings and some of the pedagogical practices and processes of LUME members, I began to view the Mimesis as a living process, as a technical and poetic methodology that is still in development in each context within which it is articulated.

Therefore, the Mimesis traverses this research as a means for the articulation of experiences in (with) the *roda de samba* in its various expressive and technical dimensions – whether bodily, musical or dramaturgical. Although they can be regarded as pre-existing in the context of the *roda*, understood as a hybrid artistic and cultural expression, I started to embrace, observe, rework and submit these dimensions to a process of technification in the path traced in the encounter of the *roda* with Mimesis.

In the course of the encounters and technical re-elaborations necessary for the creative process, it is important to highlight the parallel deterritorialization process experienced by the musician in his circumscribed domain, leading to a reterritorialization enabled by the opening, by the affective, technical and poetic encounter created by the intersection between music, body, scene, Corporeal Mimesis, samba, memory and presence.

Based on the clues found during the process of technical appropriation and construction, on the work of developing the potential energies of the performer, of the body in its relation with space, objects, words, sounds, rhythms and melodies, a path was opened for a performance that I have

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

been understanding as *musical-acting*. This compositional performance was the basis of the laboratory work which set the territory to be occupied by the physical actions, the memories lived, the reports collected, the historical and social aspects related to samba and its formation process, in addition to the poetic and musical aspects (text, melody and performance) – which formed what Claudia Neiva Matos calls the "[...] semiotic and aesthetic triangle [...]" (Matos, 2012, p. 01).

I set out in this journey to go beyond the idea of a musician who uses acting resources to perform songs; or rather, the idea of an actor who sings or produces his music on stage. In fact, it was this broader field of songs, understood as intrinsic to the existential and expressive territory, that provided the elements for the dramaturgical constitution of what was conceived as a *roda de samba-show*<sup>6</sup>. The dynamics of the *roda* together with the set of songs started to play a fundamental role in the show dramaturgy, and a process clearly revealed itself in this experience in which the songs began to weave and drive a chain of actions; a procedure that, little by little, started to unveil the dramaturgical paths. Thus, the dialogue with the actors of LUME and the actor Eduardo Okamoto led me to start reflecting on how this process could point to the constitution of a song theater<sup>7</sup>: a type of dramaturgical construction in which the articulation between songs and the related set of expressive materials give rise to actions and physical qualities related to the sound, musical, textual and contextual dimensions. From this perspective, the field of songs allows a poetic discourse to be produced within which physical actions go beyond a mere performance of the song.

Luís Otávio Burnier, LUME's director and founder, presents us with the possibility of going beyond performance as a mere translation or communication of information from a text given beforehand – the most common meaning of the term performance (*interpretação*, in Portuguese), when referring to the work of the performer of a song. Guided by his experiences with LUME and by various references to history and the theater anthropology, Burnier (2009) systematized the bases for actors to use themselves to develop their work, one that gives physical and vocal actions a central role in technical as well as in creative and dramaturgical development. Contributing to the understanding and development of the actor's potential energies, as well as to clarifying further the issues related to non-performance,

E-ISSN 2237-2660

# which initially arised from the contact with Carlos Simioni, Ferracini (2003, p. 34) points out that:

The actor creates from himself. Thus, without preliminary information or data for building his character, he needs to operationalize a new way of building his art. He needs, therefore, objective parameters that allow him to build a scene independent of literary, analytical or psychic information. These objective parameters will be the *physical and vocal organic actions*.

All the work involving physical and vocal actions becomes then the driving force of practical research procedures. We can observe here a work the musician-performer does on himself; based on it, I attempted to expand the expressive limits of the encounter between the theater and song universes through new forms of relationship. The Italian musician and composer Luigi Nono, in a series of writings on theater and music, saw in the musical theater the possibility of breaking with the early twentieth century's operatic standards; the composer understands that "[...] singing, action and mime alternate and develop simultaneously, and each is not an illustration of the other, but each independently characterizes several situations" (Nono, 2016. p. 20). Although this article does not focus on deepening the study of musical theater, it is important to highlight that several composers and playwrights from the early twentieth century experimented with the contamination between music and theater. Nono (2016) emphasizes this as a decisive need to communicate, a drive that starts to be expressed in the ideas and political struggles of modernity, which has in Bertolt Brecht an important pillar.

Also addressing the possibilities of producing frictions and contaminations between the musical and the acting, the Portuguese-Mozambican philosopher José Gil (1994), in his book *O Espaço Interior* (the inner space), refers to a theory by the poet Fernando Pessoa, in which the writer saw the possibility of transforming sensory images: visual into auditory; tactile and olfactory into visual; etc. From this, Gil deepens the idea of contagion between different expressive materials. "This passage from poetry to music, from painting to sculpture, from poetry to dance – often occurs in a movement that goes beyond translation: a movement of contagion or contamination" (Gil, 1994, p. 71).

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

For Gil (1994, p. 71), this movement of contagion is what allows the very emergence of the poetic form: "[...] it emerges in an 'environment' or in an 'atmosphere' of sensation." Creating this atmosphere of sensation, this poetic field, seems to point to one of the purposes of the aesthetic event. The creation of this environment of perceptions, in Gil's perspective, is as a kind of invisible but sensible global composition. From this perspective, this seems to me a territory, a *zone of turbulence*, as Ferracini (2014) calls it, where contagion and the production of presence can take place.

For the actor and singer Barbara Biscaro, the possibility of creating this common territory of contagions and frictions opens a field of research that needs to be deepened.

> My interest is in a research that seeks territories that do not start by imposing a possible subordination of one area to the other: without predominance of one over another, an artist working in that context would be one who does not see separation or hierarchy between making music and doing theater: these are overlapping actions, which create their own logic, a project for the world (Biscaro, 2015, p. 15).

During the research process, the Corporeal Mimesis made it possible to produce a friction between the musical and the acting, so I tried to find a form of creative action capable of creating a flow line where songs, physical actions, texts and contexts, jointly and in dialogue with each other, could compose a field of poetic expression.

Associating no longer means, here, translating. There is no transposition from one form to another, but a fusion or contamination of the two domains – with a quasi-dissolution of the pre-existing forms and, in a unique atmosphere of sensations, the outline of a single melodic line, of a single flow line that will give a particular form to poetic expression. As the integral of all the differentials that compose it (Gil, 1994, p. 77).

As a subject-researcher, imbued with this perspective, I started to use the exploratory work with the expressive materials that shape this territory of encounters and frictions to create. After addressing all the above, the path to the *song theater* opens so that we can take a brief look at the process of building Uji - O Bom da Roda.

### The Field of Practices: contaminations in process

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

From now on, you, reader, and I will re-enter the field of practices through the path of memory. The narrative that follows was woven from the marks and affects produced in each period of technical and creative work. It is, therefore, a recreation of the training room's solitary process made up of fragments, splinters that cannot reconstruct all the experiences that took place there, but that can nevertheless draw a map of what, step by step, have constituted the dramaturgy of the show.

Seeking to outline a logical path of the practical procedures performed, we could, in a didactic way, divide this narrative into three moments: 1) Training; 2) Creation; and 3) Staging and dramaturgical structuring.

As all spaces and moments were permeated by the Corporeal Mimesis, I define them as layers that overlapped during the constitution of the territory. These layers started to connect with each other and create symbioses between the development of the corporeal technique and the theatricalmusical creation itself.

Training is configured as the layer where "[...] the actor *works himself*, regardless of any other external element, such as scene, text or character" (Okamoto, 2010, p. 54). Or, as Konstantin Stanislavski chose to name it, it is "[...] the work of the actor upon himself" (quoted in Okamoto, 2010, p. 54). For Ana Cristina Colla, this work upon oneself is a search that takes the performer to "[...] dive into his own corporeality to create a private dance" (Colla, 2010, p 21). The word *dance*, metaphorically, indicates the possibility of the performer finding his own way of creating with his body. Training expands the possibilities of technical articulation, allowing the performer to enter a space of manipulation and perception of one's own physicality. It is in this space that the bases for the codification and production of physical actions in their materiality are built – forces at play, tensions, densities and energies that travel through the muscular systems and modulate the dynamics of movement, rhythms, and which also increase the diversity of physical qualities and actions. Everything involves a perceptual work of paying attention to the sensations produced in the flow of the activation and motion of joints, bones, muscles and skin. Therefore, it is a practice that involves the performer in his entirety.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

As in a feedback system, proprioception starts to generate an expansion of the technical mastery and a deepening of the flow of actions. Thus, expressive possibilities are expanded and refined at the same time that proprioception itself is also being sharpened. This refinement enables the emergence of actions capable of expanding the everyday physical patterns, allowing the performer to engage his body in an expressive, extra-ordinary plane. In this context, in addition to stimulating the production of new forms of action logic, the Corporeal Mimesis contributes to the discovery of internal impulses capable of giving life to codified physicalities, decisively helping the performer to enter the creative dimension of physical work. Within the field of creation, the production of actions engage the same set of articulations, tensions and movements codified as parameters; however, the performer's body is now permeated by memories, images, texts and sounds. This encounter of the material body with the immaterial components that affect it produces a new layer for the performer's work. This layer is constituted in the expressive dimension that emerged in the encounter between the living body and what was technified.

Through this set of technical and poetic operations in a constant process of elaboration, deepening and re-elaboration, it was possible to observe the emergence of a dramaturgy of the body, or dramaturgy of the actor as defined by Eduardo Okamoto (2010, p. 52):

> The dramaturgy of the actor, as I see it, is a modality of theatrical creation in which the narrative of the show has its foundation in the organization of the performer's physical-vocal repertoires. Unlike the work founded on the structuring of a literary narrative, the dramaturgy of the actor focuses on the body's narrative potential. The actor reveals his bodily narratives and organizes them poetically.

Within the specificity of this approach in which the research produced a territory of contamination between the theatrical and musical performances, the body's poetic and narrative potential was constituted through what I came to call the *dramaturgy of the musician-performer*. When the musician-performer acts, his physical and vocal repertoire is articulated in the relationship of the body with the sound, musical and song dimensions, which are constitutive and inseparable elements of the inhabited territory.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

To approach the dramaturgy of Uji - O Bom da Roda in its articulation with the Corporeal Mimesis, I will now present some aspects of the composition of the three figures (characters) that weave their paths in the staging structure of the show. They are: Cícero – urban worker; the Sambadeira and the Sambador Violeiro, characters brought from the universe of the Recôncavo Baiano's Samba de Roda. Each figure was composed in a particular way based on different references from my field observations<sup>8</sup>, memories and encounters that took place within the universe of samba.

Cícero arose from the observation of garbage container washers in the city of Campinas. This character articulates the relationships between the world of work and the world of fantasy, within which he plays with the musical elements extracted from his work objects and creates amalgams of his memories.

At the beginning of the show, while the audience enters and settles down, in a corner of the room, Cícero explores the sounds he produces with the metal bucket he uses to wash the garbage containers. Through the sounds he learned to extract from his metal bucket, Cícero also reveals the disenchantments of his strenuous work. As he begins to walk among the public and begins his performance, the metallic percussion, the melodies and his private dance produce his re-enchantment with life. *Am I going to work angry?* becomes his catchphrase.

Although Cícero appeared to me at an early stage of my research with Corporeal Mimesis, he starts to gain strength within the dramaturgy and becomes the representation of the small-town man from São Paulo who has a profound relationship with the culture his ancestors brought from the Brazilian Northeast. A picture began to take shape with the presence of Cícero, with his memory and ancestry connecting with Northeastern cultural expressions, with the workers who produced, with their arms, the colonial black gold. Coffee production concentrated the labor force in the Southeast, previously employed in Northeastern sugar cane and cotton plantations. The economic process with its fluctuations already showed that it wanted to own the workers' bodies. However, as Muniz Sodré (1998) points out, samba is the true owner of the body of those who gathered to celebrate the symbolic, the sacred, the ancestry, as well as to sing and ease the anguish of the diaspora, and thus managed to maintain themselves alive

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

and intact. These bodies pulsed, vibrated with the music, with the rhythmic contact of the feet with the floor and with the exchanges that occurred in the *roda*.

In one of the scenes of the show, there is a text that marks the transition in which I abandon the figure of Cícero, an opening for the *Sambadeira*'s arrival. It is an excerpt from Isabel Allende's novel *Island Beneath the Sea* (2010). Allende's is a novel set in the context of liberation and expulsion of the French colonial government from São Domingos, a period known as the Haitian Revolution, which took place at the end of the eighteenth century. This specific fragment deals with the relationship between freedom and the expressive action of the character Zarité:

My first memory of happiness, when I was a bony and messy-haired

little girl, is that of swaying to the sound of drums...

Music is a wind blown by the years, by memories and fear, this caged animal

that I bear within me.

As the drums play the Zarité of everyday disappears and I turn into that girl who would dance

when she could barely walk. My soles hit the floor and life runs up my

legs, goes through my bones, it takes control over me, it ends my sadness and

sweetens my memory.

The world trembles. Rhythm is born from an island beneath the sea, it shakes the earth and strikes me

as a lightning bolt, rising towards the sky and taking with it my worries...

'Dance, dance, Zarité, because a slave who dances is free... while they dance'.

I have always danced (Allende, 2010, p. 07).

As part of my work with the Mimesis of the Word<sup>9</sup>, this text is not presented to the audience in its literary structure. More than revealing words with meanings, the text operates, on stage, as a way of producing images capable of affecting the body of the *musician-performer*, thus leading to

E-ISSN 2237-2660

the actions that would come to characterize the transition from Cicero to the *Sambadeira*.

Before introducing the *Sambadeira*, it is worth noting that the figure of Cícero carries in his body the contradictions that, throughout the Mimesis process, were responsible for adding other dimensions and compositional layers. I call *Cícero-corporeality* the way I carry the marks that the observed body started to impress on my body. More objectively, I bring from the notes of my technical and creative work some indications of the constitution of this corporeality:

> The focus for entering Cícero's corporeality is a slight inclination of the vertical axis to the left as a way to balance the weight of his bucket. The hip and belly are pulled backwards with a slight projection of the pubic region. His walk, due to this inclination, makes his right leg to open with each step; consequently, the weight is heavier on the left foot. The right shoulder draws backwards, while the left shoulder is slightly projected. His eyes open to the space with a tension in the forehead, the jaw is projected to the left side while the lips weigh. The voice has a frequency pattern concentrated in the middle and high parts of the spectrum, which generates a predominance of resonance in the head and nasal cavities; however, this vibration is pulled backwards in order to concentrate its vibrating focus on the back of the neck (Souza, 2018, p. 198).

When this structure of forces and tensions started to be permeated by the characteristic gestures of his work, a logic of physical action began to form as a new layer of the *Cicero-corporeality*. The first draft of an orchestration of Cicero's actions began to emerge, initially focused on his chest and arms. The movements associated with the act of scrubbing, soaping and rinsing, as well as the handling of his bucket, start to punctuate his actions, also interfering with his speech dynamics and rhythm. As a result, a bodily quality emerged in which the segmentation between the arms and head caused the chest to move more linearly. I started to associate this quality with a certain robotic character. This logic of action became a reference to the world of work and reason, thus, due to a certain linearity and accuracy of movements drawn in space, I started to call it Apollonian quality. Throughout the training process, I was able to deepen and refine this Apollonian corporeality by associating the actions with the rhythmic structuring of rap music<sup>10</sup>.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

In contrast, Cícero engages in play with the musicality and syncopation characteristic of samba and rhythmic cells of African origin<sup>11</sup>. I attempted to introduce this musical element to generate a certain swinging rhythm in the leg movements, but, at times, it contaminates the whole body. To achieve this, I used the image of *Delegado da Mangueira* as a reference for my technical work. Delegado was a *passista* (samba dancer) and a *mestre sala*<sup>12</sup> (master of ceremony) of the *Estação Primeira de Mangueira* samba school. A very tall and slender man, he became known for his elegant and characteristic way of dancing samba with a very skilful and loose leg technique. Delegado was the inspiration for what I have called swinging (*malemolente*) quality.

Regarding the presence of music in my research on physical qualities, it is worth mentioning that, throughout the research process, the musical elements were integrated into the technical work together with images, texts, reports and memories. These elements were articulated and used to inform the creation and structuring of the corporealities put in relationship with the Corporeal Mimesis. Of course, due to the uniqueness of the inhabited territory, as well as because it is the work of a *musician-performer*, the sound and musical materiality became a mobilizing element of fundamental affects in my work with the physical qualities of each figure:



Figure 1 – Cícero Drummer in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

E-ISSN 2237-2660



Figure 2 – Cícero with metal bucket in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

After an almost dreamlike passage in which Cícero has his corporeality transfigured, Zarité's memory begins to run through my body. I strike the ground with the soles of my feet, and a proud quality rises up my legs, affects my hips, travels through bone and muscle structures, reconfiguring the body of the *musician-performer*, who starts to expand toward the sky to bring to the scene a slender woman eager to experience the *roda*.

The *Sambadeira*, with her wiggles and fluttering movements, presents herself like an ancestral flame, a fire around which the *roda* has been forming since time immemorial. This is how I could see the masters of the *Samba de Roda*, inspiring women, references for the composition of the *Samba deira*. Women like Dona Dalva Damiana de Freitas, *sambadeira* and composer, born in 1927, which I met during my trip to the city of Cachoeira, and Dona Aurinda da Anunciação, *sambadeira* and septuagenarian master, player of plate and knife<sup>13</sup>, were fundamental references.

In addition to the meeting with Dona Dalva and the magic of the *rodas* experienced in the city of Cachoeira, having access to audiovisual materials about the *Samba de Roda* of the Recôncavo Baiano<sup>14</sup> was also important for my work with Mimesis. Dona Aurinda, even if only through video, has captured me and came to inhabit the stage with me. These masters of the Recôncavo gave rise through their reports, eyes, postures, silences and unpretentious songs to an image of great vitality, strength and joy in

#### E-ISSN 2237-2660

keeping up the samba dance. This has reinforced the Samba de Roda as a sensitive and poetic universe of great wealth for the composition of the show. As a researcher of musical and collective expressions, I was already attempting to understand what meanings samba brought to those whose life stories have been pervaded by it, by this way of expressing oneself and living in community. This perspective introduced some questions that then began to guide the process of collecting and organizing the material that I was finding and bringing to inhabit my creative territory: what affects does the roda produce? How does the roda participates in the creation of the spacetime of sociability, celebration, creation and sharing of the sensible (singing, dancing, eating and drinking together)? In the search for Spinozian joy, for the production of presence as a potentializing force of the ways of acting and existing in the world, the Bom da Roda show seemed to present itself as the very configuration of this space-time of sharing and celebrating collective life. From then on, when the Sambadeira enters the scene among songs and narrated memories, she little by little shows how samba and the roda become vital forces. Even in the face of life's difficulties and hardships, she affirms her desire to keep up the dance. Getting closer to the audience, she exchanges looks and tells:

I tell you, my legs are stiff with rheumatism, the pressure is circulating, my spine, too, but when the tapping of samba sounds, I feel I get all right, I dance samba... I look like a fifteen-year-old girl. (Laughs...) (Excerpt from an interview with Dona Dalva Damiana, transcribed from the documentary Samba de Roda do Recôncavo Baiano (Samba..., 2004)).

E-ISSN 2237-2660



Figure 3 – The *Sambadeira* in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.



Figure 4 – The *Sambadeira* with plate in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

After twirling her skirt like she were in a dream, she adds:

Me, there was a time that I went to the samba, about four o'clock in the afternoon I started to dance samba. The other day, eight o'clock in the morning I came home crying! I wanted to dance more!

And she goes on singing:

Let me, let me

E-ISSN 2237-2660

### Let me dance samba

*For Our Lady let me* (Excerpt from interview with Dona Davina Vicente Ferreira, *sambadeira* from Cabaceiras do Paraguaçú – Recôncavo Baiano. Speech and verses transcribed from the documentary *Samba de Roda do Recôncavo Baiano* (Samba..., 2004)).



Figure 5 – The *Sambadeira* singing with plate in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.



Figure 6 – The *Sambadeira* with plate in *Uji – O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

Eduardo Conegundes Souza – Music and Corporeal Mimesis: creative frictions for the dramaturgy of the musician-actuator Rev. Bras. Estud. Presença, Porto Alegre, v. 11, n. 3, e108346, 2021. Available at: <a href="http://seer.ufrgs.br/presenca">http://seer.ufrgs.br/presenca</a>

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

Inspired by Dona Aurinda, the figure of the *Sambadeira* brings as part of her composition her enameled metal plate and little knife. Among songs and *chulas*<sup>15</sup>, accompanied by the rhythmic scraping on the plate, the *Sambadeira* speaks of the satisfaction of being part of the samba and, proudly, appears empowered in recounting how she broke with the tradition that women could not enter the *rodas*. At the same time, when she is recognized as Quadrado's sister<sup>16</sup>, she reveals, in her speech, other dimensions of this treatment given to women. This is one of the moments during the show in which the *Sambadeira* brings to the surface its discontent and resistance in the face of a context still marked by machismo and inequalities.



Figure 7 – The *Sambadeira* in the *roda* 1 in *Uji* – *O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.



Figure 8 – The *Sambadeira* in the *roda* 2 in *Uji* – *O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

Eduardo Conegundes Souza – Music and Corporeal Mimesis: creative frictions for the dramaturgy of the musician-actuator Rev. Bras. Estud. Presença, Porto Alegre, v. 11, n. 3, e108346, 2021. Available at: <a href="http://seer.ufrgs.br/presenca">http://seer.ufrgs.br/presenca</a>

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

The Sambadeira takes part in structuring the dramaturgy as she deepens the relationship of the show with the roda de samba itself. Because the roda is configured as a field of relations where a collective body takes form, at this point the show is thus effectively understood as a roda-show. In this sense, the dramaturgical construction itself began to demand a scenic configuration culminating in the formation of a roda in which the audience also participated and where it could experience its field of forces. In other words, the formation of the roda through this spatial reconfiguration of the audience is the key to its materialization and to the audience, together with the Sambadeira, to effectively and actively participate in the aesthetic event.

With this mobilization of the audience and by understanding that the *roda* demands proximity between its participants, the show is held for a maximum attendance of 45 people, and is intended for rooms allowing the participants to move and reposition themselves on the scene. Initially, the audience occupies the entire room and the chairs are distributed in a seemingly random manner. Within the space occupied by the audience, Cícero builds his relationship with those present until the moment he creates the conditions for the arrival of the *Sambadeira*, which then invites the audience to form and participate in the *roda*.

Tthe *roda-show*, therefore, is configured as a collective construction led by the figure of the *Sambadeira*. After this reconfiguration the music becomes more present, guiding the actions and interactions within the *roda*. Because the *roda de samba* is founded on its musical dimension, the musical aspects of the show also needed to be very well developed, three musicians thus became part of the cast; initially, they are seated among the audience and, after the *roda* is formed, they produce together with the characters that succeed each other the *roda*'s central rhythmic and harmonic base.

E-ISSN 2237-2660



Figure 9 – *Sambador* at the roda with Anabela Leandro, Roberto Amaral and Xeina Barros (Musicians in the cast) in *Uji* – *O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Dilermando Santos.

The Sambador Violeiro enters the scene with the roda already formed and joins the participants to tell and sing his stories until the show ends. As one of the pillars of the figure of the Sambador Violeiro – together with Mr. João do Boi, composer, singer and *chula* player – Seu Zé de Lelinha, late guitarist from São Francisco do Conde, crosses through me on the scene bringing with him the synthesis of my reflections on the presence in the research context. When Zé de Lelinha finishes playing a *Chula* in his viola de machete, he says of his experience:

When I'm playing my little thing here, I don't remember anything bad or good for me. I'm just remembering this. I just have all my senses here (Excerpt from an interview with Seu Zé de Lelinha, transcribed from the documentary: Samba de Roda do Recôncavo Baiano (Samba..., 2004)).

24

E-ISSN 2237-2660



Figure 10 – *Sambador* with *cavaquinho* in *Uji* – *O Bom da Roda*. Photo: Roniel Felipe.

Through the figures of the Sambadeira and the Sambador Violeiro, I bring the affects to the dance. With them, my technical work took a different direction; in the case of these figures, I started to use as reference not a single matrix, a single body. These figures were constituted by the varied physicalities of several masters, older women and men, I have observed. I added elements to create the Sambadeira and the Sambador that I have brought to Uji - O Bom da Roda. At the same time, there was a period in this relationship, right after my visit to the Recôncavo, in which my technical work consisted of spending hours doing samba to approach these female bodies and the old male sambadores. I pursued, in my body, the becoming of the sambadeira and the sambador. I thus started to understand these figures as corporealities that I have in me, that permeate my memories, and I started to create upon them, in an expansion to encompass various relationships and affects that bring forth the presence of the women, the old women and man that inhabit me, from my mother to D. Dalva and D. Aurinda, from Master João do Boi to the maternal grandfather with whom I spent so much time in childhood. The refinement of these corporealities was developed each time I reentered the room throughout the process. Physical characteristics, vocal qualities, dynamics of the actions were constituted as creation, based on fieldwork memories and a set of selected images to enable the technical access to each figure. As I have said above,

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

they were constituted as an aggregate and had their outlines defined already in the dramaturgical construction process, during which a range of technical details was being worked on to arrive at a final contour for each figure along with the design of the costumes and scenic elements.

### **Conclusions Emerge from the Empty Room**

When the show ends, and the room is empty again, traces of what was lived linger on like burning ashes. The echoes of each figure still sound in my ears. In the space recently inhabited by the *roda*, inert objects remain. The *sambador*'s hat rests on the back of the chair, beside it reposes the *cavaquinho*, companion of all the *chulas* and laments I have sung, marks of the lives that find encouragement and continue to expand along with the vibrations of the *roda*.

In this atmosphere of sensations still pulsating, I conclude that the roda de samba constituted in this work a territory of encounters, expressive freedom and reconstruction of memory. In this sense, developing the show established a new relationship with my own experiences and researches. Bringing the Mimesis to inhabit the *roda*, as in the *sambadeiras*' dance, has produced certain methodological and conceptual spins. This spinning described a spiral path within which relationships with body, scene, presence and with the music itself gained new meanings and depths. Technical procedures fueled poetic compositions and co-created with me the very existential territory I inhabit. The dialogue between the experiences with the roda *de samba*'s expressive universe and the Mimesis allowed me to meet people, relate with them and bring with me workers and samba masters in their entirety, people who inhabit the poetic universe of the *roda* and carry it with them to their lives. Through these encounters, I was able to reconnect with the creative act, an act that creates as a mode of production of presence, a *time-being* that activates a poetic field, and thus experienced as a territory of frictions, amalgams and contaminations between expressive materials that, when positioned in the same map, potentiate each other.

The set of images, texts, memories, reports, sounds and music, when placed in relation as part of the same existential territory, opened a path for the production of presence fundamentally considered as producer of a relational field where there is always a play in which to affect and to be affected

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

transforms and integrates the parts in relation. As a result, the research process that culminated in the composition of Uji - O Bom da Roda was directly related to a search for establishing a balance between practice, such as the research process itself, and all the theoretical and methodological discussions for the construction of a body that aims for its wholeness. If, to a large extent, we can seek in the arts (with and through them) the overcoming of rationalist paradigms, the deconstruction of the Cartesian split between the rational and sensible, mind and physical materiality, between object and observer, this overcoming starts in a relationship with the whole body, in the expansion of its expressive power. Experimenting and investigating, with and starting from the body, was part of the shift of being and knowledge initiated by the encounter with LUME, and which I continue to seek in my involvement with the arts of presence. From this perspective, the Corporeal Mimesis made it possible to weave threads, open trails that intertwined for the production of dramaturgy as a narrative of presence.

As a process, the research followed an open creative path within a particular territory, a territory in which it was possible to think and structure practical experiences of contamination between the thetarical and the musical, and fundamentally between art and life. In this territory, I continue to rebuild the *body-researcher-musician-performer-roda de samba*.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICAMP's Interdisciplinary Center for Theater Research Center, created by Luís Otávio Burnier in 1985.
- <sup>2</sup> Roda de Samba (samba circle) is a collective cultural event of Afro-Brazilian origin structured around samba the musical genre as expressive element; however, dance and poetry are inseparable from the pulsating music whose verses are punctuated by choruses sung collectively. In this article, I will specifically deal with the *roda* beyond samba, that is, the *roda* itself constitutes a form of spatial organization with important socio-cultural ramifications. In this sense, it marks the path of human and has historically been a space-time of sociability, of a community encounter where multiple relations of cultural and expressive exchanges occur. The Samba de Roda (circle samba), which will be one of the main focuses of this article, is one of the modalities of circle manifestations that the historical literature describes as one of the matrixes of the

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

samba genre. Traditionally performed in the *Recôncavo Baiano* region, its origins go back to the colonial period and are closely linked to Afro-Brazilian religiosity. I present a more in-depth bibliographic commentary about the historical and social dimensions associated with the *roda de samba* in my master's dissertation and PhD thesis. See: Souza (2007; 2018).

- <sup>3</sup> Whenever I write the word Mimesis starting with a capital letter (M) I will be referring to the Corporeal Mimesis.
- <sup>4</sup> Cultural center for musical research and creation based in Campinas, founded in 2001.
- <sup>5</sup> See Hirson (2012).
- <sup>6</sup> At a key moment in the show, the roda is formed with the entire audience as participants. This mobility and participation of the public underlies the hybrid character of the roda de samba-show. This procedure will be further detailed below.
- <sup>7</sup> Actor and researcher Eduardo Okamoto, professor of Performing Arts at UNICAMP, was a member of the qualifying committee, when the *song-theater* started to gain relevance in my reflections.
- <sup>8</sup> Field observations involved trips made at specific times to inform my work with Mimesis through field experiences and data collection. For the composition of the figures of the *Sambador Violeiro* and the *Sambadeira*, in August 2016 I visited the cities of Cachoeira, São Félix, Santo Amaro and São Francisco do Conde in the Recôncavo Baiano, a region where I was able to experience the Samba de Roda in more depth.
- <sup>9</sup> Mimesis of the Word approaches the text as another layer that generates images to drive the actions. Aa result of the Corporeal Mimesis, this methodology was developed by LUME actor and researcher Raquel Scotti Hirson in her PhD. See: Hirson (2012).
- <sup>10</sup> Rap Musical genre that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and has its origins in African-American and Caribbean-American communities. Rap music consists of a marked rhythmic base that accompanies a poetic discourse delivered in a form close to speech structured in rhymes. This music is considered one of the pillars of hip-hop culture and is very popular in peripheral areas of large urban centers around the world.

### E-ISSN 2237-2660

- <sup>11</sup> Syncopation can be defined as a shift of accent that occurs when a weak beat in a bar have its duration extended to the strong beat. This procedure generates a feeling of displacement of the strong beat and is very common in African and Afro-Brazilian music.
- <sup>12</sup> In the tradition of samba schools, which are carnival clubs that emerged in Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century, *passista* is the school participant that masters the samba dance and, thus, gains prominence in the parade. In this same context, the *mestre sala* can be considered a *passista* who dances in dialogue with the flag bearer the lady who carries the school banner the greatest symbol of the association.
- <sup>13</sup> Kitchen utensils traditionally used as a percussive musical instrument in the *samba de roda*.
- <sup>14</sup> Among these materials are documentaries from which I extracted some passages that transcribed and recreated were taken to the stage as texts by the Samba-deira and the Sambador Violeiro; see O Samba de Roda na palma da mão (O samba..., 2008); Samba de roda do Recôncavo Baiano (Samba..., 2004); and Cantadores de Chula. Dir: Marcelo Rabelo (Cantadores..., 2009).
- <sup>15</sup> *Chula* is one of the *Samba de Roda's* poetic and musical forms.
- <sup>16</sup> Dona Aurinda Raimunda da Anunciação is the sister of Gerson Francisco da Anunciação, a capoeira master known as Mestre Quadrado of the Island of Itaparica.

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