



Training as a Path to *Ethos* in the Formation of the Actor

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ABSTRACT – Training as a Path to *Ethos* in the Formation of the Actor – In this article, the authors discuss training as a way of shaping the *ethos* of the actor. The laboratory practice developed by the artists of the Odin Teatret and LUME Teatro serves as fundamental reference. Beginning with a historical contextualization of the European theater laboratories of the 20th century, the text moves on to focus on training within the context of the aforementioned groups. From the analysis of their artistic practices, the article proposed an interpretation of the training session as a place for developing and consolidating the *ethos* of the actor, understood as a catalyst for a set of practices and knowledge that artists acquire by through their work routines. In conclusion, the authors reaffirm the perspective that they offer by explaining how the laboratory practices of these theater groups has been reinvented, in light of the global pandemic restrictions of COVID-19.

Keywords: **Theater Laboratory. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Training.**

RÉSUMÉ – L’entraînement comme Voie pour d’*Ethos* dans la Formation de L’actuant – Dans cet article, les auteurs proposent de discuter de la formation comme moyen de former l’éthos de l’acteur et de l’actrice, en prenant comme référence la pratique de laboratoire développée par les artistes d’Odin Teatret et de LUME Teatro. Dans un premier temps, l’article présente une contextualisation historique de la dimension laboratoire européen du début du siècle. XX. Puis le texte se concentre sur la formation des groupes susmentionnés; à partir de l’analyse de ses pratiques artistiques, l’article développe une lecture pour la session de formation comme lieu de manifestation et de consolidation continue de l’éthos de l’acteur et de l’actrice, la compréhension comme catalyseur d’un ensemble de pratiques et de connaissances acquises par les artistes dans leur routine de travail. En conclusion, les auteurs réaffirment la perspective donnée en ajoutant des informations sur la façon dont les pratiques de laboratoire de ces groupes se sont réinventées en raison des restrictions pandémiques mondiales du COVID-19.

Mots-clés: **Théâtre-Laboratoire. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Training.**

RESUMO – O Treinamento como Caminho para o *Ethos* na Formação do e da Atuante – Neste artigo, os autores propõem discutir o treinamento como caminho para a formação do *ethos* do ator e da atriz, tomando como referência a prática desenvolvida pelos grupos Odin Teatret e LUME Teatro. Apresenta-se, na introdução, uma contextualização histórica sobre a dimensão laboratorial europeia do início do século XX. Em seguida, o texto se concentra no treinamento realizado pelos grupos citados e, a partir da análise de suas práticas artísticas, o artigo desenvolve uma leitura do treinamento como espaço de manifestação e consolidação contínua do *ethos* do ator e da atriz. Na conclusão, os autores reafirmam a perspectiva dada, acrescentando informações sobre como as práticas laboratoriais desses grupos têm se reinventado diante das restrições da pandemia global do COVID-19.

Palavras-chave: **Teatro-Laboratório. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Treinamento.**

Introduction

To conceive of training for the stage as a path in the construction of an actor's *ethos* is to conceive of theater as craft. We approach it here as an internal dimension of theatrical practice, as practice geared toward the acquisition of theoretical and ethical knowledge, and in which the actor's training gains importance and relevance in defining the knowledge that enables a live presence on stage.

The theater-laboratory, born in response to the needs of the director-pedagogues of the early 20th century (Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Vakh-tângov, Sulerjítiski, Copeau, Craig, etc.), became a fundamental reference for creative thinking within western theatrical practice. Breaking through the borders that separated countries and combating excessive focus on text, it continues to instigate today's directors to demand the autonomy of the stage, theatricality and the actor's art, as banners of struggle within a scenario of veritable reinvention and renewal of theater languages.

The actor, from this perspective, is moved into the space of the studio (Mollica, 1989). As proposed by Stanislavski, the studio ran parallel to the work of the young actors at the Moscow Theater of Art and served to establish a new center for research, one from which a *new theater* would be born. Within this context, new acting procedures were developed. They were based on daily exercises and creative processes that sought to solve issues arising from bodily practices, as well as through improvisation and onstage creation exercises. These studios, which mediated and helped to train an entire generation of actors and director-pedagogues who took part in the *Wielka Reforma* (Great Reform), revolutionized not only practices but also the aesthetics of traditional theater, consolidating a new dimension of the actor's craft: its pedagogy.

Among the master teachers (Ferracini, 2012) of the acting arts, we give salience to a number of director-pedagogues (although is not our intention here to examine each one of them in detail): Vsevolod Meyerhold (theater of convention and Biomechanics), Leopold Sulerjítiski and Eugene Vakh-tângov, central figures within these studios and persons responsible for the birth of new ideas on the ethical and spiritual training of the actor. They also contributed to the dissemination and synthesis of the system developed

by Stanislavski, which spawned fertile terrain for creative work in its organizational, ethical and methodological aspects. When conjoined within the notion of a *commune* of members, the new method created an unprecedented theatrical collective. And through these paradigmatic experiences, theater was reborn – as utopia, school, community and refuge (Warnet, 2013).

The studio thereby became the place where actors could recycle or initiate pedagogical training. This was a new idea within the realm of theater, and one that revolutionized its practice, through the continuity and systematization designed by a director who now also took on the role of pedagogue. Such training, based on the above-described pedagogical context of theatrical practice, has since then been defined as a space for learning and enhancement of artistic abilities. Exercises created by actors or their director-pedagogues are elaborated on the basis of other systems of action, or even from research processes carried out within the continuous formative environment of an authorial *poiesis*. They serve as a fundament for technical and creative training, and to broaden actors' bodily and vocal repertoire, sensitive to the demands of the interplay of *on* and *off* stage relations, as well as to the demands emerging from studies carried out in relation to a specific task of theatrical representation.

Most often, training, within the context of theater laboratories, is made up of acrobatics, gymnastics, stretching, *plastique* exercises, vocal technique, use of voice resonators, dynamics involving use of objects, exercises of pantomime, mime and improvisation, and score composition, among other elements. Thus, training attends to the basic needs of actors who must remain open in the face of the demands of their profession, incorporating the daily discipline of confronting a psycho-physical reality and their needs as actors/composers. It revolves around their own physical actions (Bonfitto, 2002).

Pedagogy and Training in the Laboratory Dimension of Theater

As we have already made clear, the theatre underwent complete transformation at the beginning of the 20th century – a change that resides both on and off stage. In terms of both plays and developments in staging, as the latter unfolded over the course of ensuing century, and using the image of an iceberg – or rather, the tip of an iceberg –, it becomes easy to understand

that what is visible is not only a surface, but a very small part of something that runs much deeper, something that is dense and that is what enables the surface itself to appear. Theater scholars must move beyond the maritime surface, plunge into the depths of this iceberg and set the plays aside a bit, in order to submerge themselves more deeply in the phenomena of stage, interplay and training. That is, they must move from play rehearsals to the logic of the laboratories, immersing themselves in the research carried out by directors of past and present, with their heritage, their traditions and their betrayals – all of which are so necessary for the economy that is inherent to the theater laboratory or studio.

The pedagogy of theater and actors' training is not a matter of prescriptions or formulae, but of a particular concept of theater and reflections on how to put the latter into practice. The practice and teaching of the theater arts are intricately interconnected, since within this singular history, plays and performances themselves translate into images of the major discoveries and innovations that have been made within the isolated spaces of theater schools and laboratories. Within the laboratory, according to Lassale e Rivière “[...] the school is based on transmission, and transmission involves a series of techniques and knowledge put together through a tradition” (Lassale; Rivière, 2010, p. 3).

Thus, we can assert that the laboratory is closely linked to pedagogy and the training of actors. In this section we intend to provide possible conceptual definitions of it, as well as clarifying its relationship to pedagogy. For these purposes, we employ discussions that have been carried out within an ambit of research – the theater research that has been done at the ISTA¹ – as well as looking to other bibliographic sources.

What is a theater laboratory? What is its role within the economy of the theater?

Even today, such questions serve as a protective shield for practices that run counter to the current that sees theater as little more than plays offered within the context of the theater market, or focuses on the immediatism of performances without any greater examination of theater language itself. Nonetheless, it is not our intention here to argue against such positions. Furthermore, theater, as it took shape over the course of the 20th century, is still with us today, in these early decades of the 21st century. It

has been able to establish a time and a space for a quest that seeks to solve problems that concern directors and actors, in their roles as artists of the stage. The latter should be thought of as a category, in similar terms to those we use to speak of musicians, poets, and painters, that is, with the right to be recognized within the context of artistic creation, to be able to speak of the human being and the world, not only through a specific text but through textuality as presence and relations of affect. This niche is depicted as a place in which the theater can be seen vertically, where its depths can be excavated and its yet unvisited spaces can be discovered, in order to better understand and enrich the crafts of acting and directing, and to establish new bases for the relationship between theater and life, between the world of fiction and reality.

Theater has a logic of its own. Within it, the creative process becomes the major marker and an indispensable methodological tool for revealing the submerged layers of actors' work and the development of their training: the physical and mental space of objective, concrete relationships forged through the actions of the body-in-life, but also subjectiles (Ferracini, 2012) which become lines of force through which the actor on stage is territorialized and de-territorialized, in the multiple relationships that traverse this living space and an architecture that is credible and creates affects. Affects that potentialize fortunate encounters, as Espinoza advocated in his Ethics, and defended more recently by the philosophers of difference (Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, among others). Thus, training – whether this is initial formation or continued learning for the preparation of a specific staging (composition), endows directors and actors with a fertile terrain for exploring new expressions and artistic means for theatrical performance.

This process includes the issue of differentiating theater laboratory and experimental theater. Theater devoted to experimentation can be done in order to discover new possibilities within technical and aesthetic fields, to provide support for a specific set of researches or to sustain a multitude of theatrical endeavors with the purpose of presenting final results to an audience, as a confirmation of one or several ideas undergirding experimentation – regarding body, voice, space, relationship with text or textualities, reception, etc. The theater laboratory is a dimension that runs parallel to theater itself, resisting easy definition yet representing a space with the same designs as conventional theater, albeit conceived as a *home for actors*, tempo-

rarily distanced from their audiences, one “[...] in which spectators are guests rather than bosses” (Schino, 2012, p. 18). *Time* and *precision* are key terms for our understanding of the difference between theater laboratory and experimental theater. Within the laboratory:

[...] research depends not only on carrying out a large number of experiments, but on devoting enough time to specific experiments that have a precise objective and that are organically separated from others that are carried out for the sole purpose of experimentation (Schino, 2012, p. 18).

The theater laboratory can become a place devoted to alchemies, one in which the body (matter) and the mind are always conjoined, that is, in which what is manifested on the material level is directly connected to a person’s inner being. As we can conclude from the trajectory of the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, the laboratory is a place for solidarity between women and men of knowledge, people who come to their understandings through practice itself, thinking, experimenting and planning from within something that is structured, reproducible and transformable. The laboratory thus becomes a “[...] permanent empirical search for a stable team of apprentices” (Kolankiewicz apud Schino, 2012, p. 35).

In Chinese esoteric alchemy (*neidan*), chemical substances were shunned, and treatment carried out exclusively through the body and the mind of the initiated. Alchemy never employed science, or chemistry, as a static end, but as a means to construct the foundations of the laboratory, whose central experiment concerned life itself. If we understand theater as possibly a science, theater laboratories are deeply connected to the logic of alchemists (Schino, 2012). Theater is taken as a means for working on spiritual qualities, and in this specific case, what is expected from the stage or from artistic training is less a construction of technical virtuosity and more a vehicle to construct in people ethical and spiritual qualities which, according to Italian teatrologist Ferdinando Taviani, literary advisor to the Odin Teatret, can best be understood in terms of “[...] a non-religious place of dwelling” (Taviani apud Schino, 2012, p. 46).

Theater can thus be seen as a privileged environment for spiritual research that is not connected to any religious institution. Theater laboratories do not refer to an invariable genre or category. Research on the ingeniousness of the actor may be, and sometimes is, a recurrent characteristic of the work of artists and groups that have taken or take this path of theat-

rical practice. Yet the laboratory may also include theaters that focus their research on political conflicts or social issues; it may work along the lines of academic premises or research, as a nucleus from which emanate or around which gather research experiments aligned with the pedagogical practices of institutions. It may also propose research that goes beyond the boundaries of theatrical activity yet resorts to the stage in a search for inner values or different forms of artistic creation.

Training as a Path to *Ethos* in the Education of Actors

Moving further in our thoughts on theater laboratories, we select two models that enable us to reflect upon the workings of the theater laboratories that emerged in the second half of the 20th century and continue to function today: Odin Teatret and LUME Theater. They have both similarities and elements that distinguish their objectives and activities. Their differences flow from the fact that theater laboratories always develop autonomy in their activities, which mature over the course of their existence and the deepening of their research – and in the results, which crystallize in the form of plays and performance, demonstrations of working methods, workshops, theoretical study and training.

A key element in the construction of actors' labor is their training, their exercise routines, the moments of preparation which precede any on-stage appearance and the practices of self-development, such as the studio work to which we made reference above. Based on practical experimentation, training becomes an important part of one's initial or continuing education within the craft and can remain stable or evolve over the course of experiences, demands and personal desires. According to Picon-Vallin, the exercises that comprise training:

[...] have as their goal the actors' training for onstage work: they teach actors to deepen the knowledge of their bodies, to test and master their gestures and movements, to evolve within a particular time-space, that of the stage. They seek to distance actors from the habitual physical, psychic and social conditioning that marks their bodies. They help them to struggle against the behavioral stereotypes that every society imposes on the men and women who belong to it [...] in order to conquer and appropriate a body-for-theater (Picon-Vallin, 2008, p. 62).

Within the logic of the group, Barba (1997) tells us, training constitutes a sphere of friction between two elements: discipline and resilience. Discipline is connected to the set form of a particular exercise, whereas resilience refers to overcoming the limits imposed by the very form that the exercise takes on. That is, it means going beyond the stereotype that the exercise implies and attaining determined personal motivation regarding training practices and what they represent.

Training, as it is carried out by the Odin actors, is related to a personal work ethic. According to Barba, in the early days of the group's activities, training was done collectively by all actors. Exercises originated in pantomime, in ballet, in gymnastics, sport, yoga and other practices that the actors were already familiar with or had reconstructed for the purposes of the group at that moment. As time went on, it became evident that the rhythm was different for each person and, from then on, members went on to create their own exercises. Barba argues that this was a necessary change, since the core value of training lies in “[...] daily self-discipline, personalization of work, the demonstration of what can be changed, stimulus and effect on peers and over the environment” (Barba, 1991, p. 55).

The personal work ethic, realized through daily training, implies an ideal which he expounds here:

Training is an encounter with a chosen reality: whatever you do, throw your entire being into it. [...]. But in order to attain this moment of freedom, self-discipline is needed. For this reason, everyone needs training, regardless of how long they have already been working in theater. Anything you do, throw your entire self into it. That may seem like a cliché or mere rhetoric, and it is. Anyone can repeat it. But in truth we have only one choice: to live it, in other words, make it come to life every day, through our actions. And training serves to remind us of this (Barba, 2010, p. 80).

We note that the model for actors' training, shaped according to the principles that guide the theater laboratory, did not emerge ready-made, in the form that is recognized today. Rather, it is the fruit of trial and error, and of the enduring relationship between the maintenance of rules and the need to reinvent them, or even invent them. When we speak of *ethos*, within the context of training actors, we refer to the way training unfolds within the laboratory environment to which we associate the practices of certain theater troupes that ever more frequently seek to pattern themselves after

particular historical and contemporary examples. These troupes have invested consistently in the realization of activities that stretch the potential of their activities, towards other relational forms that enrich their artistic practice – in terms of relationships between members, duration of collective life, diversity of activities, need to establish shared habits that promote respect for differences, and the maintenance of continuous processes that aggregate values to the group of human beings that they represent, or that they seek, as possibilities for social and artistic existence.

In this regard, we think of the craft of the actor in terms of a category that negotiates with the styles and aesthetics to which it is devoted. Furthermore, we are trying to establish a field of acting in which, even prior to political or aesthetic commitment, or to appearing onstage, artists are led to an encounter with their most intimate nature. In this space, which to us is the laboratory, a borderland between art and life is carved out, in the conflict between what we are as beings and our search for the virtual², constituted by the figure of the actor.

We can examine the theater-laboratory in Brazil, from the perspective of a tradition of research, pedagogy and training, through reflection on the experiences of the LUME Theatre. LUME is a group of actor-researchers who have devoted themselves to work in the field of the *non-acting*³ techniques of the actor (Cf. Burnier, 2009; Ferracini, 2003; Hirson, 2006; Col-la, 2013). The LUME Theater was founded in 1985 through the initiative of the actor, professor and mime Luís Otávio Burnier and the research group, Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisas Teatrais, at the state university of São Paulo at Campinas (UNICAMP, or (Universidade Estadual de Campinas – São Paulo). It is a collective made up of seven artists who have gained international recognition for research that has reshaped technical and ethical aspects of the craft of acting in Brazil. Their activities bring practical and theoretical studies together, based on the historiography of great masters of 20th century theater (Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Decroux, Eugenio Barba, the Colombaioni brothers, Tadashi Endo's Butoh, and the clown Sue Morrison, among others). At the same time, their work has also been connected to the premises of Anthropology of Theater and guided by the search for a Brazilian corporeality, with research that enables profound elaborations on the training and personal technique of the actor.

The importance that the LUME Theater acquires, as a center that generates practices for the acting craft through its diverse artistic and academic activities, gives new salience to the notion of training, as initially launched by the first masters of 20th century theater. The latter engaged in practices that conjugated creative aspects and the desire for effective professional training of the actor, incorporating practices and technical studies from codified traditions coming from theater and dance, both Western and Eastern, such as training exercises, visual art elements, Biomechanics, improvisation and acting experiments, studies of voice and sound, among others. Such endeavors are a part of the systematized research that the group has carried out regarding the corporeality of Brazilian actors, through studies on technical training and the deployment of energy, on individuals' dance and movement, on bodily mimesis, on clown technique and the theatricalization of the spaces of public and daily life – recognized lines of research that it has focused on over the 35 years of its existence. In this context, it becomes worthwhile for us to take a closer look at the activities the LUME Theater realizes, its methodology and its technical and ethical dimensions as a model of the theater laboratory.

Over time, the LUME Theater has been researching the various routes that ensure and legitimate the important role of a pedagogical vision that is necessary for and capable of providing the actor with the conditions for developing body and vocal languages at an adequate technical and artistic level. These *non-acting techniques* (Burnier, 2009; Ferracini, 2003) developed by the LUME Theater have an impact on the methodological axes that serve as guidelines for the following research projects that the laboratory has been devoted to, since its inception: Training Technique and Presence Energy, Personalized Dance and the Clown and Comic Corporeality.

Training Technique and Presence Energy for actors become the basis of work carried out by the LUME Theater, as well as of many groups that emerged from within the tradition of theater laboratories. Presence Energy training is comprised of intense and dynamic physical training which has as its goal working with the energy potential that actors create as they go about cleaning and purging themselves of the vices and personal clichés that became lodged within their bodies over the years, or the baggage they bring from daily life. This then allows them to build up greater organic energy flows, deeper and distinct from those of the quotidian, enabling them to

perceive and master new ways of being onstage. It creates a new space of body-mind that then allows actors to get in touch with their expanded and extra-quotidian energies.

Technical Training, usually done after the Presence Energy work, employs exercises and studies of this expanded body-mind through the incorporation of principles that intensify and sustain the onstage precise of the actor, with the purpose of molding their body, operating more kinesthetically than symbolically with the perceptions of the spectator, according to Barba and Savarese (1995) and Burnier (2009), in the maintenance of their theatrical *bios*. Within the context of this training, it is not only the body of the actor that is worked on. Voice is also considered important, and is not dissociated from body. In this process of technical training, we observe, alongside the aforementioned authors, that more important than incorporating foreign techniques (acculturation) is the assimilation of their principles, through which the actor begins to acquire “[...] a new bodily-artistic culture” (Burnier apud Ferracini, 2003, p. 145).

As we see, within the LUME Teatro, as well as at the Odin Teatret, work with the voice is in tune with Grotowskian research, examining the potential of resonators and of the vocal apparatus, molding the energy of the voice in space and developing its physical and sound structure. For the LUME Teatro, the voice *is* body and, like the latter, must undergo technical treatment that eliminates blockages hampering its use, projection and effective reverberance on stage. The voice, similarly to other physical actions, is treated as a source of energy for impulses that dilate it and project it into space like an “[...] invisible hand” (Barba, 1991, p. 56).

The Personal Dance of the actor who, for Burnier (2009, p. 140), may be seen as a “child” of energy training, is a procedure that goes beyond the boundaries of *codified* technique and has the goal of overcoming stereotypes of acting or training, in order to potentialize actors’ expressiveness. It serves to get in touch and “[...] reveal, free from the filter of the intellect and the rational, the geography of the deepest regions of one’s person” (Burnier, 2009, p. 139). Personal Dance seeks to elaborate and codify, through an expanded and dynamized body, a more ‘personal’ technical procedure of representation. If Energy Training dynamizes and expands the energies of the actor, Personal Dance reaps the fruits of the actions that usually manifest themselves in this process, in order to articulate the potentialities that

emerge from it, transforming them into language that can give shape “[...] to the different tones and nuances that make up the corporeality (body and voice) of each actor, sculpting the dynamics of actions found in time and space” (Ferracini; Hirson; Colla, 2020, p. 27-28).

Personal dance enables the concentration and investment of the actor in the singular dimension of that which is fluid, organic and alive. In this regard, personal dance deals with the non-predetermined aspects that codified technical training tends to bring out. The difference between Personal Dance and the other technical procedures that LUME works with is that the former emphasizes the quality or direction of more convergent energies, while Energy Training places its emphasis on the divergent (Hirson, 2006), a quicker pace that seeks to overcome physical exhaustion and to release the blockages that separate body and mind:

By provoking this kind of purging of actors’ primary energies, dynamizing potential energies, it induces and provokes actors’ contact with their own being and teaches them to recognize, in the darkness [...] unknown, their ‘forgotten’ corners, which may come to be one of the sources in creating their art (Burnier apud Hirson, 2006, p. 70).

Another pillar that is developed in LUME Theater is research on the Clown and on comic deployment of the body. It is important to emphasize that this pillar becomes an opportunity to penetrate a field of acting that is different from that which the group is accustomed to researching. For Burnier, the Clown “[...] is never acting, but simply is. Rather than a character, the clown is the actor himself or herself, exposing him/herself to ridicule, showcasing his/her own naiveté” (Burnier apud Ferracini, 2003, p. 218).

Resorting again to Ferracini, we see that within the LUME Theater, the clown is understood as an expansion of the naiveté and purity that are inherent to each individual. Actors, when working with the clown arts, must “[...] plunge into the depths of their selves and have the courage to flesh out the human condition that give them a body” (Burnier apud Ferracini, 2003, p. 218). The work of the Clown provides, within the context we expound on here, the opportunity to dynamize actors’ potential energies, as a process of *initiation*⁴, sometimes painful— since plunging into ridicule may be something difficult to deal with. This is because the clowning arts imply the revelation of intimate aspects of our singular human experience, a state that induces the actor to act through a logic very much his or

her own, through a real relationship that puts him or her in touch with everything in their surroundings, including the audience upon whom their survival depends, “[...] the corporeality of the clown must be taken up by (or filled with) an organic state of relationship and through the real, surrounding world” (Ferracini, 2003, p. 220).

In this regard, generosity, courage, pleasure and playfulness make the Clown’s relationship to the audience one of complicity, just as the actor must remain in a constant flux that permeates not only this pillar of research on the comic use of the body, but all the creative work unfolding within the collective of LUME Theater actors – as principles that are shared by all, each one complementing the other. According to Ferracini, clown arts create the opportunity for the actor-researcher to come into contact with other human and bodily elements that have not yet been *touched upon* nor worked through by the group: “[...] the subtle, lyrical and delicate energy, the courage to deliver and assume the ridiculous, the real and truthful relationship with the audience, the simple pleasure of being” (Ferracini, 2003, p. 229).

Corporeal Mimesis, or the imitation of corporealities, is considered as a methodology that has been created specifically by the LUME Theater, as an enlargement and unfolding of its research over time. It is understood as a process of recreation and codification of people’s physical and vocal actions, and of photos, objects and animals, among other stimuli that are collected through the gaze and through the observation of the outer world and daily life. The concept emerges as a result of research that has been carried out by several actors from the LUME Theater over the course of their travels to different parts of Brazil. It allows for the imitation of these actions and their later organization into complex matrixes in which actors have the role of giving life to this *universe of the other*, in the words of Carlos Simioni, actor and member of the LUME Theater since its inception, as well as one of the people who is responsible for the group’s pedagogical project (Simioni apud Ferracini, 2003, p. 203). If within the group’s other research pillars there is an intention to guide the actor further within himself or herself, diving in deeply and working on energies and technical potential, in Corporeal Mimesis the actor is called upon to experience a moving beyond oneself, to look toward the outside through a body that has been readied for a new plunge, through “[...] an external and objective experience” (Simioni apud

Ferracini, 2003, p. 203). This does not mean that the actor abandons inner search. Embodiment and codification of actions observed in people or animals, as well as in paintings, photos, etc. should not be confounded with a simple copying of such actions, as the work of mimesis refers to “[...] a process of recreating the corporeality that one is perceived in daily life” (Ferracini, 2012, p. 225). During this process, the artist searches for equivalences within his or her own body, in order to enable the theatricalization and recreation of these actions within a *body-subjectile*⁵.

In his doctoral thesis, Burnier (2009) introduces three stages that comprise work within Corporeal Mimesis: observation, codification and theatricalization. This path is pursued through the process of observation and imitation of an external object (a person, a photo, etc. – as we have already explained), which is memorized and codified by the actor, through work which seeks to perfect, to the highest level possible, detailed observation of these external actions, not only in their physical form but also in their corporeality, in which organic aspects of imitation have a key role, between the definition of *imitation* as it is usually understood and in terms of how it relates to Corporeal Mimesis. It is a matter, as Ferracini tell us, of seeking:

[...] To imitate not only aspects, but also organics, finding equivalences for the latter [...] as well as for a better understanding of the precious tool that corporeal mimesis becomes in actors’ training [...] both in mechanical and organic ambits (Ferracini, 2003, p. 204).

Another pillar that we can add here is the theatricalization and poetization of non-conventional places (Ferracini, 2020), for the purpose of studying locales that are not usually considered as places for the stage (that is, the theater itself, enclosed spaces, the classic Italian stage, etc), through the use of music, the relationship between body and musical instrument, body and space, the use of clown technique and other resources that actors research in their training. Within this research, the actor is understood in terms of the way she or he occupies the spaces of the street, city squares and other *uncommon* places, imploding the customary restricted space that theater is awarded and thus enabling greater freedom and contact with the population: “[...] it is the actor in his or her non-quotidian state, taking part in the quotidian, poetizing space” (Cesarolli, 2010, p. 104).

From the above reasoning, we can infer that training is configured here as a decisive and continued stage in actors’ education, in a process car-

ried out through collective or individual exercises, in which the goal is to master one's own energies and build new conditionings, just like a child learning to walk and move. Training, as a “[...] second colonization of the body” (Barba; Savarese, 1995, p. 245) and a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of a body in constant *becoming*, is based on exercises and techniques that not only aim at making the actor learn, but a *learning to learn*, allowing them to get in touch with the deepest layers of their being and with others, understood here as stage partners, as well as objects, space and, not least, the other humans who watch and relate to them: spectators.

For Richard Schechner, anthropologist and theater director, training is knowledge, and “[...] knowledge is power” (Schechner apud Barba; Savarese, 1995, p. 247). He lists five functions for training, understood in its intercultural condition: the first is that the actor is not the primary author or guardian of a text. S/he is a conveyor. The second function of training is to make the actor capable of transmitting a *theatrical text*⁶, as a total communication process with many channels that come together to comprise a spectacle. The third function refers to the preservation of secret knowledge, which can only be acquired personally, through a very intimate process. The fourth function is to assist actors in developing their self-expression, in other words, to tease out that which is ensconced in one's interior, and finally, there is a fifth function, that of training as the formation of groups, created to *overcome individualism*.

A “[...] training that puts one to the test”, that, as Schechner points out (apud Barba; Savarese, 1995, p. 248), brings out possible similarities between the rites of initiation in particular cultures and the forms of training developed by Grotowski, Barba and Luís Otávio Burnier, conjoining “[...] group expression, the transmission and the transmission of theatrical texts⁷” (Schechner in Barba; Savarese, 1995, p. 248). Here, we understand theatrical representation as *re-presentation*, that is, to present something again, through physical action worked out from within a collective that plunges more deeply into technical and ethical knowledge (its secrets), a set of procedures and knowledges that breathe life into theater culture, and especially acting culture⁸.

In this sense, we observe that the groups that have devoted themselves to laboratory processes as a pedagogical dimension, whether for their own use or to transmit knowledge to other artists, are obliged to face what Barba

has referred to as the *myth of technique*, as if the latter were a lifeline for the actor, unquestionable and rigid in its formal strictures. Thus, we see, when the term *technique* comes to mind, it invokes the idea of training as if within a military school or through monastic discipline, a code with strict rules that are conveyed almost like a prescription. The figure of the actor is invoked as a finished ideal.

This artistic program does not seem to materialize in the majority of theatrical practices. Thus it seems to us when we take the LUME Theater and the Odin Theatret as our examples (while taking due care not to canonize their stories and their singular practices in relation to training). During their early years, they had no other goal than to find a safe path for their artistic practices, one that would not deteriorate over time, and that could serve as a concrete foundation for their research. Training, in this light, was to serve as a path to discovery and for maintaining the research posited by actors' needs and posited on a daily basis as that which upholds the technical and ethical knowledge of the craft.

Within these two groups, the road to technique progressed – and progresses – through constant revision, through *earthquakes*, as Barba puts it. An *earthquake* is a more or less conscious and sought-out form to avoid sinking into a comfort zone, in a stagnation of live processes that should be the ground where technique is implemented, in which training plays a fundamental role: that of keeping the embers of life alive, those that emerge from this confrontation between what is already well-known and that which is hardly known, permeated by doubt and by the loss of direction or the security of foundations that were established through many years of contact with technical procedures, emerging from voice and body training and improvisation exercises. The latter have sometimes remained at the level of the obvious and well-known methods of work used in training, especially when the group is confronted by a new challenge for work or staging.

For the LUME Theater, to sink into this comfort zone is the same as restricting one's steps to familiar territory, which in turn makes the daily discipline of work fastidious and lacking in meaning. One procedure that became a shared group routine was the *detrterritorialization*, whenever possible, of group practices and ideas for the theater. To detrterritorialize, or *cause earthquakes*, emerges as a strategy toward a more proactive attitude in the face of the reality that an actor chooses for his or her acting craft and for in-

tragroup coexistence – observing safe parameters for the discipline and freedom that a real theater laboratory has to maintain, as compass and orientation for its endeavors. It is at this moment that ethics kick in, as a set of principles (artistic and existential) that guide the relationships and practices, as well as the productions of the aforementioned groups, maintaining cohesion in their quests and concerns. An *ethos* thus comes into being, one that has become increasingly evident within the field, within the context of contemporary theater.

In an overview of the *ethos* of a group or community, the latter can be characterized as the set of habits or beliefs that define customs and behavioral traits, constituting and expressing the set of moral, social and affective values and characteristics that identify and construct them as a human group. The action that governs the *ethos* of a theater group can be read, for our purposes here, as a set of values and principles that build the internal strength of such a group, giving it cohesion and allowing it to recognize the behavioral expression of its actors within the working context of the group. These are habits and attitudes that, once acquired in daily practice and when constantly observed, produce the general character and way of being of the theater group.

In this sense, the way of being of the LUME Teatro, with its 35 years of existence, and Odin Teatret, with its 57, allow us to recognize that how practices work to enhance the singularities of the theatrical work of their actors. Regardless of whether they differ in their propositions, they certainly converge in terms of a way of thinking that is balanced in the respect and cohesion of the principles and values that have been chosen to keep the collective alive, pursuing a basic and fundamental idea of the group as expressed through the ethical conduct that organizes it.

Regarding the ethics of actors' work, or more precisely, in the construction of an *ethos* for their work within the perspective of the theater laboratory, we are able to confirm that the conquest of a space for learning emerges from the consistency of practices that build habits, techniques and aesthetics charged with pragmatic and existential value. These serve to create a dynamics for the functioning of the group, establishing common rules and practices that take root within their actors' action, whether when involved in training itself or engaged in the other relationships that constitute the organization of the group (administrative, pedagogical, study and re-

search, production, shows). This knowledge is then incorporated within the laboratory through training practices meant not only for the acquisition of techniques that enable one to be *alive* onstage and acquire a *second creative nature*, but to acquire the habits and customs that keep an actor involved and willing to work together with other actors and members of the group and their audience.

To create oneself, as an actor, means to situate oneself within the parameters of a philosophy for acting and being onstage, and that connects to the way actors think of their existence and their relationships. Onstage action and ways of acting upon and within a space in which one acts for others demands a willingness and responsibility in being, constituted through physical and mental presence (mind-body), yet also through the conviviality⁹ of theater experience, as Dubatti (2016) argues.

Training – and here we point to a conclusion that makes no pretense of being definitive – allows that actor to attain, through regular and personalized work, a certain perfection that is different from that of traditional theater, since through the laboratory, a form of physical and mental operation is built, using theatrical fiction and which the actor speaks candidly in first person:

A situation of sincerity can be obtained, through an elaborate process that begins with a fictitious scenario which is carried to such excess that it leads you to revealing yourself, in spite of yourself. This is the procedure for our actors to follow: to take advantage of their technical knowledge to infuse a play with life, surpassing their own limits, allowing personal need, and the need of the group, shine through (Barba, 1997, p. 101).

The technique that has been attained through training is a result that imposes a limit within which, according to the Italian master, “You have to go beyond it, but first it must be reached” (Barba, 1997, p. 101). In this regard, both in the Odin Teatret and the LUME Theater, technique exercises a fundamental role, yet – as stated above – it must be surpassed, allowing the creation of a Personal Technique.

Personal Technique is a path through which the actor uses training in order to construct and codify a personal corporeal and vocal technique. S/he must:

Discover how to dynamize one’s potential energies, how to overcome bodily and vocal difficulties, how to ‘move beyond’ [...], to learn and to embody

pre-expressive elements that enable one to connect an extra-quotidian technique of acting and a specific way to manipulate one's energy and organicity (Ferracini, 2003, p. 120-121).

Conclusions

Training, as a place to manifest and consolidate the *ethos* of actors, finds within the theater-laboratory its ideal space, one which enables them to find inspiration and take the greatest conceivable freedom to live their own artistic lives. This is what LUME Theater and Odin Teatret achieve.

These groups adopt a creative and pedagogical work model that develops and intensifies issues that unfold continuously over the course of their training and research practices. The Odin Teatret works to preserve an artistic tradition and heritage (or how to stay alive) through transmission of the meaning of and capacity for resilience of their theater. In the LUME Theater, we are able to observe continuous processes of updating *praxis* and an unsettling of concepts that gestate new fields of research, or better yet, that expand and widen these fields, through a flow of energy and potential that creates unending challenges in terms of attempts to define them.

Inscribed within this turbulence and redefinition of the concept/action (Ferracini; Hirson; Colla, 2020) of training, its practices and its displacements of actors' creative processes, LUME Teatro places its wager on the search for *good problems*, ones with which their training can be understood, not only in the sense of bodily training of the body, but also as a practice of intensifying the self, expanding capacities and qualities of affective force, in a paradoxical terrain (learning of skills X intensification of the self) that generates and expands the concept of training:

An intensification of the capacity, as an increase in the receptivity of the performing artist's body (a greater ability to attune oneself to space, time, the other; expansion of a porosity) and also an intensification of affect as the ability to update physical actions in time and space, both in a dynamic relationship of co-creation (Ferracini; Hirson; Colla, 2020, p. 44).

The theater has a capacity for resilience and reinvention that accompanies it since its early days, promoting constant reformulations and adaptations in order to accompany the trajectory of human civilization over time. In this sense, the year 2020 will be marked in world history as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the dissemination of the coronavirus

has rampantly claimed thousands of lives, causing significant changes in the routine of the entire world population, paralyzing its activities and bringing, in its wake, social, sanitary and economic devastation. The rupture of face-to-face activity and partial or total lockdown has led to the emergence, as an alternative for socializing, of virtual integration through the internet of people, services and information, on a scale and intensity never before seen. The circulation of cultural goods suffered a huge blow and professionals in the area found themselves strangled financially.

Pandemic contexts placed on performing artists the demand to reconfigure their activities, adapting their work to the socio-cultural conditions of quarantine, social distancing and lockdown. Sanitary measures, social distancing and restricted audiences were among the factors that had to be considered when physical shows and events were held. Thus, the vast majority of activities in the performing arts (theatre, dance, circus, performance, etc.) migrated to virtual spaces and found, in streaming and *lives*, a space for discussion, dissemination and presentation through the internet. This included shows, seminars, demonstrations, performances, reproduction of previous works from their repertoire and experimenting with processes of collective and interactive creation. In other words, an infinite number of possibilities that were, and are, being explored by artistic groups and collectives, as well as through the initiatives of individual artists.

What this most immediately reveals is that, in the context of limited physical opportunities, an entire new universe of connections, hybridizations and poetic creativity has emerged, demonstrating its affective force, provoking fissures, ruptures and agencies, on a territorial level that had already been intensified by the propositions of contemporary art. Now, given the emergency of the moment, it represents other challenges that further intensify the relations between artists and audience. Although already intersected by internet forms of communication, this territory has further expanded the virtuality – in Pierre Lévy (1996)'s sense of the virtual – of the *becoming* of the “[...] embodied being of the actor” (Ferracini; Hirson; Colla, 2020, p. 42) in the composition and dynamic recomposition of relationships that are established and traversed by the multiple spaces made possible *with* and *by* the internet.

Neither the Odin Teatret nor the LUME Theater have shied away from this new opportunity for learning and training, and have continued

their activities in online mode, discovering the potential of this new space for the performing arts. On the Odin Teatret's official webpage, we are able to observe the numerous alternatives that have been created, including the suspension of in-person activities (workshops, public presentations, seminars, trips, etc.), and their readjustment and transformation to an online platforms well as free access to their entire repertoire, with suggested donation to non-profit organizations and human rights causes (such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*).

The LUME Teatro, which had plays showing at the Oswald de Andrade Cultural Center, in São Paulo, the most recent show was KINTSUGI, 100 MEMORIAS (2019), part of the MITsp FAROFA project, was obliged cancel presentations. Soon thereafter, they were taken by surprise when their home university, UNICAMP, suspended its activities. They waited, in the naive hope that the situation would resolve itself in a matter of weeks or months. When this did not happen, the LUME Theater was similarly obliged to take its courses and training onto home-office mode, something which they have been doing since March 17, 2020.

The LUME Teatro attempted to reinvent itself, through this presence/non-presence of virtual reality. Activities stopped so that books could be written and conversations carried out with guests regarding research themes and processes. The group also organized the *on-line* event of the ABRACE theater association, whose current president is LUME Theater actor Renato Ferracini. LUME also organized an international event, the *Jornada Internacional Atuação e Presença* in its 18th edition, in February of 2020. This included 18 practical and theoretical courses that took place online, 4 roundtable discussions carried out within the context of the *Simpósio Internacional Reflexões Cênicas Contemporâneas*, as well as film showings, cabarets and the final showcasing of course works, through the *Terra LUME*. The group also offered online performances and took part in innumerable national and international events in the field. On the basis of our knowledge of its members, we can safely assure that the LUME Theater will continue to offer online activities until face-to-face presence can be resumed.

How can presence be worked on, without the chance to *be present*? How can experiences of presence that are mediated by a screen be offered? Even in the absence of answers, these questions, for which immediate an-

swers are hard to give, are part of the DNA of the work carried out by both LUME Theater and Odin Teatret. To reinvent themselves during this pandemic, was and has been, for these two groups, a new and important learning process. A test for their training methods and a boost to their *ethos*.

Ethical dimensions of *ethos*, within an actor's work, imply constant self-re-invention, a continuous upward spiraling. A synthesis of this notion of self-reinvention can be found in one of the phrases that is often heard in the voices of LUME Theater actors: LUME is, rather than a *being*, a *becoming*.

Notes

- ¹ In 1979, Barba founded the School of Theatrical Anthropology (ISTA), an environment geared toward theoretical reflections based on practical evidence. The ISTA is an international organization made up of theater artists and scholars of diverse traditions and who devote their time to realizing “[...] dialogue and comparative research, with the intention of posing questions, raising issues and testing responses” (Schino, 2012, p. 8). The ISTA functions as a continuing seminar in which participants gather in “[...] working groups that last from two weeks to two months, held when and where they are feasible and in demand” (Schino, 2012, p. 8).
- ² In his work *O que é o Virtual*, Pierre Lévy (1996) introduces the Virtual as that which is not physical, but rather immaterial, and therefore, is signification. The world of signification, with respect to the virtual, emerges long before the creation of computers, with human language itself. The Canadian theorist further argues that the virtual is linked to whole series of immaterial forces which, sooner or later, transform the real by contemporizing it. In this sense, art, or the creative work of the actor, who deals in this immateriality, is not subjected to the construction of a message, and thereby “[...] in fabricating a device that enables the still muted part of cosmic creativity to make its own song heard. A new type of artist appears, one who does not tell a story but becomes an architect of the space in which things happen, an engineer of worlds for billions of stories to come. He sculpts the virtual” (Lévy, 1996, p. 149).
- ³ LUME Theater's *non-acting* approach to work refers to its methodological research on training and personal acting technique which, through the organic physical and vocal actions of actors, seeks the expansion of their bodily ener-

gies and, consequently, of their onstage presence, rather than the mere interpretation of a particular character or a text.

- 4 This line of research always encountered, in the LUME Theater, exceptional care, a certain protecting of the actor who worked within it – necessary for the emergence of the state of ingenuity, devotion and willingness to reveal one’s most intimate, enabling actors to feel safe in exploring their most delicate and subtle energies. Within this research, actors pass through a certain ritual, a moment of theatrical initiation of the discovery or transformation of the expanded energetic qualities of the subtle and delicate states of their human nature (Simioni, 1998). After an intense stage of inner-directed LUME Theater research, the path that was found was the creation of what was named the *Clown Retreat*, a stage of research with external participants, always held in a reserved spot that was distant from their daily lives (using, for example, a farm that was near the LUME Theater headquarters in Campinas-SP). Within this space, participants found the freedom to experiment with their potential in this language, in a full time, reclusive experience, which took them through rituals of discovery, birth and experimenting with these subtle and delicate states of the humorous and human nature, expressed through clown technique.
- 5 Term coined by Ferracini to make reference to a body in Performance State, that is, a body in art that finds itself in state between “[...] objectivity – subjectivity, a dualism that could easily lead to form X expression, or the mechanical X ‘life’, or even daily behavior X extra-quotidian behavior, yet it is not exactly either the one nor the other, but rather runs right through the middle, encompassing two polar points and all the other points that pass through these opposing lines. It is not one point, one line or another, but a diagonal that runs through these abstract poles and all the points and lines ‘in between’ (Ferracini, 2012, p. 87).
- 6 We understand that the word *text* refers not only to the literary production of a play or onstage representation of a dramatic text, but to the text in an expanded sense, a stage text that includes the construction of several dramaturgies: dramaturgy of the director; the set designer, the illuminator, etc. Among them are the dramaturgy of the actor produced through the body and vocal scores, as well in relation to the composition and production of the other elements of the show: light, spectators, scenery, etc. The deployment of the text in an expanded sense is even useful to coherently circumscribe the analysis of the creative process of both collectives, since both LUME and Odin Teatret

have, in their repertoires, numerous works focused on vocal and corporeal scores that abdicate the use of a conventional literary/dramatic text.

- ⁷ Although the author does not directly use the expression *stage text* or *expanded text*, we believe that it is possible to identify, in his writing, fragments that lead us to read the scripts in the broadest sense, in which the texts that are worked with are not restricted to those of conventional drama, going beyond the conveying or enactment of a literary work, in order to include gestures and body-voice scores: “The text that is performed refers to the total communication process of the many channels that make up a show. [...] they exist as behavioral networks rather than as merely verbal communications. Performed texts do not translate exclusively into written texts. [...] Training for the transmission of these texts is very different from the training that is given for acting out dramatic texts” (Ferracini, 2012, p. 247).
- ⁸ In reflecting on diverse aspects of the *culture of the actor*, Fabrizio Cruciani states that, in this case: [...] culture means the possibility of receiving and using a heritage of the past in order to transform it. This means being able to construct, to add on, without always having to start from scratch. It can also refer to the culture of a man who shapes his own activity in the company of other men, taking as a starting point his own personal needs and striving to fulfill his own human and social aspirations in a labor that, from an external perspective, takes on the appearance of art (Cruciani apud Scandolaro, 2006, p. 1).
- ⁹ Dubatti defines theater, in a logical-genetic sense, as “[...] an event consisting of three related sub-events: conviviality, *poiesis* and expectation” (Dubatti, 2016, p. 31). Conviviality is in-person gathering, without technological intermediation, of artists, technicians and spectators in a chrono-topic territorial crossroads (time and space), establishing shared and vicarious bonds that multiply its affects upon the group. *Poiesis* is the new entity that is produced through corporeal action, whereas expectation implies the awareness of the company of the other within this convivial moment, interaction, multiplying and contributing to its construction, in what he calls “[...] convivial *poiesis*” (Dubatti, 2016, p. 37).

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