

Ancestral Gestures: the passage between Candomblé and theatre

Gestualidade ancestral: o trânsito
entre o Candomblé e o teatro

Daniela Bany Polito Moraes¹

ABSTRACT

Through understanding the use of the body and orality as a means of transmitting knowledge within Candomblé, this article aims to discuss in academic dialogue - using the studies of the authors Zeca Ligiéro, Richard Schechner and Diana Taylor - the possible methods of scene artist preparation using Afro-Amerindian cultural motifs as a way of restoring behaviour and the transmission of incorporated knowledge.

Keywords: Afro-Amerindian Studies. *Performance* Anthropology. Candomblé.

RESUMO

Compreendendo o corpo e a oralidade como meios de transmissão de saberes dentro do Candomblé, este artigo visa trazer para o diálogo acadêmico, a partir do estudo dos autores Zeca Ligiéro, Richard Schechner e Diana Taylor, os possíveis caminhos para a preparação do artista da cena partindo das motrizes culturais afro-ameríndias como forma de restauração de comportamento e a transmissão de conhecimento incorporado.

Palavras-chave: Estudos afro-ameríndios. *Antropologia da Performance*. Candomblé.

1.
Master Degree by
Performing Arts Graduate
Program, University of Rio
Grande do Norte/UFRN.
ORCID: [http://orcid.org/
0000-0001-9284-8938](http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9284-8938)
E-mail:
daniela.beny@gmail.com

Submitted on: 25/03/2017
Accepted on: 17/01/2018

In the Western societies of Judeo-Christian origin/influence, the transmission of knowledge was established through writing, requiring that subjects involved in the teaching-learning binomial be minimally literate and therefore capable of being able to understand the codes written there. It should however be remembered that in the composition of Brazilian society, the mode of transmission of knowledge passes through bodily practices inherited from Afro-Amerindian populations. This finding leads us into direct dialogue with the anthropologist Diana Taylor (2013), who defends the concept of incorporated knowledge – which we will focus on later – as one of the main forms of knowledge transmission of Afro-Amerindian peoples, given the structural characteristics of these cultures. According to Dr. Inaicyra Falcão dos Santos (2008),

The study of Yorubá ancestry, the respect for the memory of the terreiro communities, and the dialogue with their mythical matrices strengthens us as a Brazilian nation, helping us to better understand our culture and value our diversity. The art of dance, as a language of sensitivity, has enabled us to have a rich experience in content that guides the creative process (SANTOS, 2008, p. 01)

Using this premise, we intend to share here the experience of the Iansã dance practice from *Xirê*² to *Afoxé*³ Oju Omim Omorewá⁴ presentations to the rehearsal rooms. It is important to point out that the goal is not to bring the representation of the Orixá as it occurs in the liturgical environment to scene; here the corporal codification of the dance will be re-signified for the artistic environment as a way of accessing the ancestral gestures already present in each artist, but that may appear dormant or ignored.

Approximations between Candomblé and Theatre: the Orixá that dances, sings and tells

Before pointing out the methodological procedures themselves, it is important to stress that part of the epistemological development of this investigation uses the Performance studies defended by the anthropologists Diana Taylor and Richard Schechner as a base, at first intuitively then after with a theoretical foundation. They both propose that “performances function as acts of vital transference, transmitting knowledge, memory and a sense of social identity” (TAYLOR, p. 27, 2013), as this form of transmission is considered incorporated knowledge.

Three stages were proposed as a methodology for investigating this passage, namely: Observation, Incorporation and Conduction.

2.
“(…) *Xirê* is a general designation used to nominate the sequence of ritual candomblé dances, which begins with Exu and finishes with Oxalá. A pre-established order follows, as if it were a theatrical script, gathering together related orixás: water, earth, hunt, creation of the world - in a functional order that fulfills the meanings prescribed by the Yorubá model (LODY, SABINO, 2011, p. 103)”

3.
“Afoxé is a street procession that traditionally happens at carnival (...) It is important to observe the mystical, magical and therefore religious aspects in this manifestation. Although Afoxés appear to simple carnival block parties to the uninitiated, the practices are based on religious precepts linked to Orixá cults, which was the motive for the existence and realisation of these processions in the first place. Thus, Afoxé is also known as Street Candomblé (...) Despite modifications and dis-figurations, these groups seek to maintain ‘African’ values and characteristics, such as: chanting in African dialects (...) and the use of colours and symbols that have specific meanings within the religious precepts of Candomblé terreiros (LODY, 1976, p. 3)”

4.
Group founded in 2009, composed by the artists Daniela Beny (Actress, playwright, director and producer), Arnaldo Feju (Actor, storyteller, set designer and lighting consultant) and Erick Silva (set designer, cinematographer, photographer and videomaker), as well as artists invited to form the cast and technical team. Projects: “Voo ao Solo” (2009), “A cor da chuva” (2011 - contemplated for the Incentive Prize for the Production and Circulation of Performing Arts Projects in Alagoas, Secretary of State for Culture of Alagoas and the University Foundation of Extension and Research) and “Rosas, carroças e dramas” (2012 – contemplated by the Banco do Nordeste Culture Program / BNDES - 2012 Edition, category Integrated or Non-Specific Arts with the project “Rosas, carroças e dramas”, Banco do Nordeste Brasileiro and BNDES).

At certain moments of the research, these stages occurred concomitantly and were fundamental to understanding the process of transition between each of these environments.

As Observation is considered a stage of field research, rehearsals for Afoxé and saída-de-orixás⁵ (orixá exit/departure) were accompanied with the purpose of recording videos and photographing and mapping the movement characteristics of the Iansã dance in the context of both the sacred and the artistic, perceiving differences and convergences.

Incorporation denotes the research stage in which the researcher not only experienced the Iansã dance in a trance state, but also tried Iansã dance lessons with an Afoxé Oju Omim Omorewá choreographer. The researcher sought to recapture the elements presented during the classes in the rehearsal room, but adapted them to a training proposal⁶ for actors and actresses, thus embodying what would be proposed as a possibility for access to ancestral gestures, collaborating with the process of scenic creation and restoring behaviours. It is fitting at this point that Richard Schechner's (2003) concept be introduced, explaining that:

Restored behaviour is symbolic and reflexive. Their meanings therefore must be decoded by those that possess knowledge (...) To become aware of restored knowledge is to recognise the process by which social processes in all their forms are transformed into theatre, apart from the limited sense of staging dramas on a stage (SCHECHNER, 2003, p. 35).

The understanding of the term Restored Behaviour in this research serves as the basis for what we are considering as Ancestral Gesture, since it is about the artist's awareness of his or her body energy potential that emerges through the stimulation of elements not considered in the everyday body.

After Observation and Incorporation, the next step is Conduction, which is nothing more than a compilation of what was seen and learned and that will be shared with volunteers, whether they be Master's degree or graduate students to which this research is related, or extension project participants from the same institution.

In general terms, we can show that the passage of body codification of the Iansã dance and its elements occurs as follows: Saída-de-Orixá → Afoxé → Individual Laboratories → Rehearsal Room.

As a starting point for this passage, body coding within this context is initially understood as:

[...] a communication element of choreography through which the aspects of the Orixá archetype are observed and recognised. This

5. Public departure of the medium incorporated by their Orixá. This departure occurs during Xirê and is usually associated with either medium initiation or an anniversary ceremony of the saint's making.

6. Despite being a rather controversial term, here we have used the concept of Savarese (2012) as a base, proposing that "While training is proposed as physical preparation linked to the craft, it is also a type of personal growth for the actor which goes beyond the professional. It is a means to control one's body and guide it safely, and is also the achievement of physical intelligence (SAVARESE, 2012, p. 293)".

body codification meaning is re-signified when its execution as a dance leaves the sacred space of the terreiros and occupies stage/street/rehearsal rooms; it is the researcher's responsibility to question and discuss the appropriation in a secular field of a sacred element, since the body is fundamentally important for Candomblé and Umbanda as it is the medium of contact/communication between spiritual and material planes. (BENY, 2014).

In this research, body codification will help in understanding the categorisation of movements and the relationship between them and the liturgical elements of dance and its dramatic elements, and also as knowledge transmitters of non-verbal communication. Even though Candomblé as a religion is based on oral tradition, what is observed is that the corporeity of the Orixá dance - both the movements and the gestures - are closely linked to the *itans*⁷, for according to Zenicola (2011) "The body signs express feelings and men's acts, they are printed codes of their intellectual and spiritual achievements, memories of themselves and their ancestral group" (ZENICOLA, 2011).

7. Term in Yoruba for the full set of myths, song and story components of the Yoruba culture. It is spelled *itã*.

By re-purposing the religiously coded body for the arts and including it as an enhancement process so that the scenic artist can improve the development of their craft, we resort here to a quotation of Eugenio Barba (2012, p. 230) when he defines that "Body coding is a visible consequence of the actor's physiological processes, to dilate them and produce an equivalent of the mechanics and forces that function in life. The coding is formalisation".

Although Barba proposes that coding is formalisation, the use of the body in this practice runs away from what may be considered formal, since the goal is for the individual to explore his corporeity from specific stimuli but without abandoning what is part of his body repertoire, since "the body is our general means of being in the world" (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1999, p. 203). If we want to access Ancestral Gesture, we cannot ignore the life stories that each body carries within itself.

It should be remembered that in this investigation the trance medium's body can - and should - be thought of as the place where a liturgical (and thus sacred) procedure occurs. One can also consider that the dancing body during a trance is responsible for the embodiment of elements that manifest forces of nature, a matter to be discussed below. So, we have here two uses of the body within religiosity. However, when observing actions within a sacred environment, using the artistic experience and designing a work methodology from the religious dance, we realise that it is not dance for the sake of dance. One can see that during Xirê

each Orixá tells its story, sharing its drama with spectators, as proposed by the philosopher Johan Huizinga (2008), for:

The ritual is a *dromenon*, that is, a thing that is made, an action. The subject of this action is a drama, that is, once again, an act, a stage portrayal. This action may take the form of a spectacle or a competition. The rite, or “ritual act,” represents a cosmic event, an event within the natural process. However, the word “portrayal” does not express the exact meaning of the act, at least in the vaguer connotation that currently prevails, because here “portrayal” is actually identification, the mystical repetition or a resubmission of the event. The ritual produces an effect which, more than shown figuratively, is actually reproduced in action. Thus, the function of the rite is far from being simply imitative, leading to a true participation in the sacred act itself (HUIZINGA, 2008, p. 18).

So, beyond body practice as a form of knowledge transmission and the possibility of knowledge perpetuation, the particular characteristics of Xirê approximate us closer to theatre by the performative elements present in it, besides the spectacular aspects that revolve around the canonicals and costumes specific to each Orixá, in the use of specific songs of calling, firmness and departure of each divinity and mainly in the presence of an audience that attends the sacred terreiro space, just as one attends the theatre to watch a show.

According to Candomblé practitioners, in the Yorubá tradition the body is understood as a microcosm and each part of it will develop a specific function within the symbolic field of dance performed in dialogue with spirituality. The body that dances in trance carries the writing of the *itans* of each Orixá in its codification. So, by using the Iansã dance as a starting point for access to the sleeping ancestry in each individual, we are also bringing other elements that relate to the Orixá in question from the terreiro to the rehearsal room, comprehending corporeity within a context in which the Yoruban legends dance-sing-tell-play.

Before any deep discussion of epistemological concepts and processes, we must understand that Orixá is the one to which we refer. Initially, the understanding of Orixá is proposed here as the personification of a force of nature on earth. That said, we can then consider Iansã as a goddess who possesses the body of the medium in a trance state in order to materialise wind, storm, fire and lightning bolt. Using these natural phenomena as a reference, Iansã’s personality is correspondingly characterised as an untimely, courageous, curious, restless and active person. This is how she is described in several *itans* that report her feats.

Moreover, one of the functions performed by Iansã in the spiritual world is the transit of *eguns* (dead spirits) from *Aiê* (the

material world) to the *Orum* (the spiritual world). Iansã uses two instruments to perform this function: the *eruexim* - a kind of shaker made from horsehair, referring to the idea of a buffalo's tail - and a whip. Each of these instruments is manipulated during the execution of the dance in the moment of the mediumistic trance, in which the *eruexim* Iansã makes fanning space movements, forming the winds and promoting a transformation of place. She whips those dis-incarnated spirits with the whip, as if forcing them to leave the world of the living.

Some of the many legends of Iansã tell of her capacity of transformation of other living beings like the butterfly and the buffalo. It is interesting to note that these two beings have completely opposite physical characteristics; one being easily associated with metamorphosis, delicacy and softness, while the other is associated with earth, physical vigour, strength, and brutality. These beings are also present in the Iansã dance when on earth in the medium under trance.

All these aspects and characteristics of the Iansã dance were observed during the *saída-de-Orixá* and *Afoxé* rehearsals, but only with the help of the Iansã dance lessons was it possible to appropriate and re-signify the movements, thus enabling them to be categorised and organised in order to propose a methodology for access to Ancestral Gesture. It is appropriate to consider that, according to Santos (2008):

[...] the interpreter's creation is first defined as an act of communication, since he himself is above all the producer of his work, constructed by signs of a gestural and sonorous nature. The interpreter becomes the sign itself. It is perceived that the scenic body reveals the expressive and organic dimension. (...) In principle, it is intended to be a search for the essence and ritualistic roots we carry as human beings, and secondly a search for the mythical narratives, the *raison d'être* of traditions. This moment involves the construction of images and the perception of feelings; it opens the way for a creative and imaginative body that articulates bodily matrices, its memory and expressiveness. It is the moment that the link between tradition and contemporaneity in cultural diversity is established, through the work (SANTOS, 2008, p. 1).

To understand and seek approximation with these ritualistic roots, the categorisation and organisation of these three elements that was related to the Iansã dance/mythology were wind, butterfly and buffalo. It would be possible to choose other elements related to Iansã, such as bamboo, owl and sheep, but a series of specifics permeated the researcher's incorporation process, such as the fact of the three elements highlighted in the field observations.

The choice of the elements in this order was due to the supposed neutrality of wind - which can vary from a breeze to a storm - and by the energetic opposition between the butterfly and the buffalo, as a variation between the energy quality *Anima* and *Animus* that would allow participants to experience states of comfort or discomfort, enhancing artistic work and expanding the body repertoire of the interpreter.

When I refer to the *Anima*-energy and the *Animus*-energy, I report again to Barba (2009) when he himself points out that:

Anima-energy (soft) and *Animus*-energy (vigorous) are terms that have nothing to do with the distinction of masculine-feminine, nor with the archetypes of Jung. They refer to a polarity pertinent to the anatomy of theatre, difficult to define with words and therefore difficult to analyse, develop and transmit. However, the actor's possibilities of not crystallising himself in a technique stronger than him depends on this polarity and the way in which the actor comes to dilate his territory (BARBA, 2009, p. 102-103).

Still considering the *Anima*-energy and *Animus*-energy, one must concretely understand the characteristics of the Iansã dance as proposed from these three elements, so therefore we can demonstrate the following table, using the experience of the researcher in the Incorporation step as a reference.

Character [I-Element]	Energy Type	Bodily Sensation	Difficulty of Execution	Feet Position	Arm Movements
BUTTERFLY	<i>Anima</i>	Lightness	Intermediate	Half tip	Loose
BUFFALO	<i>Animus</i>	Weight	Easy	Spread on the floor	Straight
WIND	<i>Anima</i>	Fluctuation	Difficult	Half tip	Circular

In addition to the information above, the Iansã dance ends up with polyrhythmia as a fundamental characteristic, which leads to the dissociation of the lower limbs. Although the Wind, Buffalo, and Butterfly are different from each other, this aspect of execution remains, still respecting the singularities of each energy quality.

As a brief description, one could say the Iansã dance choreography associated with the Wind element is done with elbows raised to the shoulders, and hands open outwards, the movement of the arms is circular as if they were spreading something, always from the inside out, wrists loose for fluidity of the hands, chest with open sternum, chin positioned on the horizon line with the head

accompanying the movement of the spine, torso slightly tilted backwards while the hips are slightly inclined forward. The feet are maintained supported at the tip much of the time, completely flattened on the floor only for weight transfer during strides. The displacements are sinuous, pointing in all directions. There is a dissociation of the movements of the shoulders and hips, as if they follow in opposite directions, but not very accentuated, thus the polyrhythmic actions being able to occur.

These movements associated with activities that Iansã develops in the spiritual plane are directly related to the action of scaring *eguns* and the cleaning of the environments.

In respect to the Buffalo movement, more specifically at the time of attack, the animal positions itself a few steps back to acquire a running distance and then attack its target. The attack displacement is straightforward, and on returning to the starting position the footsteps are taken backwards, never turning one's back on the one attacked.

Unlike the wind movements, the buffalo action uses the hands as if protecting the trunk, with elbows pointed out, hands open and straight outwards as well, the sternum remains open and the torso slightly tilted back, while the head remains part of the time pointing to the horizon line, but not hanging sideways. The feet are fully supported on the ground and, as a consequence, in all actions related to battle in the Iansã dance choreographies the feet are flattened, thus suggesting a relation with the buffalo and its firmness on the ground.

For the Butterfly, the actions are associated with sinuosity by light and expansive movements like someone who is showing themselves, the feet spend part of the time on the tips with small jumps and the knees slightly flexed. The arms will make movements that suggest wings, accentuating the joints of the shoulders, elbows and wrists, starting from the clavicle that, in opposition to the sternum, opens and closes chest and back.

Quebra-Louças (Break-Crockery) and dances that suggest the use of some canonicals, like the sword and the *eruexim*⁸, can also be included in the repertoire of the Iansã dance. Although these dances have not been the focus of this research, it is important to share them, as some of these gestures were accessed and present during improvisations, both in the individual laboratory and the rehearsal room.

We can use the Buffalo portrayal as a base for Quebra-Louças, but the main difference of posture is the direction of hand movements, suggesting the throwing of dishes on the floor, maintaining opposition between shoulders and hips, the knees slightly flexed and feet flat for weight transfer.

8. A liturgical tool similar to a mop; its cord is usually made of wood and the bristles made from ox or horsehair. It is a tool used within the symbolic context of Candomblé by Iansã and Oxossi to scare *eguns*.

When investigating the body coding of the sword dance, one perceives the interaction of Iansã with Ogum, and this choreography can be considered as a variation on the portrayal of the Buffalo, with the foot position being maintained, however the modification is in the execution of the arm movements.

The arms continue as if protecting the thorax, but now they look like swords/machetes, in a lateral movement suggesting the cutting of vegetation to make a path, and when the action is executed facing forward, an arm will assume the posture of a sword and the other a shield.

The *eruexim* dance has some peculiarities, first because there is an interaction with characteristic movements of the Oxóssi dance, which consists of a feet trot, making the walk more accelerated with the feet mainly supported on the tip, accompanied by little jumps.

The trunk tilts to form a diagonal between the hips and shoulders, thus maintaining the opposition of these two parts of the body.

While maintaining the fists relaxed and hands loose, the arms shake as if dusting something, being *eruexim* itself. The elbows are raised to shoulder height and the movements are performed in all directions. The hips and chest move back and forth, the same as the back, thereby increasing the feeling of imbalance.

By observing these characteristics, one can propose an approximation of the body uses in the sacred environment - or one strongly influenced by it, as is the case with Afoxé choreography - with the body practices experienced in the theatre.

Several theorists could offer support or be a reference for this dialogue, so because of this we have chosen to approach this categorisation/description of the Iansã dance with elements that are the basis of Theatrical Anthropology, researched and disseminated by Eugenio Barba - using as principles precarious equilibrium, the dance of opposites, coherent incoherence, equivalence, and the omission/absorption of the actions and *sats* - but in this research the concepts and observations of these principles will be analysed from the point of view of the researcher, actress and director Luciana Saul, who in 2006 presented the dissertation “Rituais do Candomblé - uma inspiração para criativo do ator” (“Rituals of Candomblé - and inspiration for the actor’s creative”), at the University of São Paulo/USP about the process of creating the show “Itãs Odu Medéia”. This view was opted for due to the approximation with this research and for being one of the few authors who resort to Candomblé practices as the basis of actor preparation work. For Saul:

Precarious equilibrium is related to unstable position control – this generates new tensions and resistance in the body, producing a new muscular tone, propitiating the dilation of scenic presence in a live body. It is about consciously deforming one's balance, generating a permanent instability, even while immobile. Immobility becomes dynamic, that is to say that there are constant readjustments of tensions and pressures on the footrests. (SAUL, 2006, p. 21).

If we think about the aspects that make up the principle of *precarious equilibrium*, we can draw a parallel with the Iansã dance in relation to the foot contact with the ground, where a good part of the time the feet remain at half point, raising the focus of attention, we find the knees flexed and the hips in circular motions or in eight. In the case of the lower body, this already requires another body organisation from the actor: not only the strength and resistance of the leg's muscular groups, but also of the abdomen and special attention to the spine that maintains the body in harmony and equilibrium, which makes it possible to observe the *dance of opposites*.

The dance of opposites is related to antagonistic forces perceived in opposite body parts, in opposition to different energies, in opposition to effecting action, in opposition between equilibrium and asymmetry, or still between rest and movement (SAUL, 2006, p. 21).

Opposition and asymmetry may also refer to the Iansã dance, justly because of its characteristic polyrhythmia and constant changes of direction. One can observe that downward pelvic girdle movements obey one direction, and upwards pelvic girdle movements another. The feet mark one time, while the shoulders, elbows and wrists rotate the upper limbs at another speed. Even if the two arms perform movements that follow the same principle, there is no sense of symmetry, so we can already see the *coherent incoherence* that, according to Saul (2006, p. 22) “relates to the incoherence of action in relation to everyday logic, both in terms of saving energy and in relation to the artificiality of scenic behaviour,” as both in everyday activities and in the Iansã dance the act of dusting is performed, but in the second case the movement tends towards stylisation in addition to using more energy.

These three principles already exist by themselves in the Iansã dance, either as an artistic or religious *performance*. Taking into account their characteristics, they fit very well into actor “training” in the manner we are proposing and that we will discuss later.

Then, through experiencing elements of the Iansã dance, be it in the Incorporation or Conduction step, it is possible to reach the other three principles. Thus, for the actor's work the experience of these elements makes them seek the *equivalence* principle which, as Saul (2006, p. 22) points out "is related to the displacement of a tension, that is, if in everyday life a given action involves a set of specific tensions, the actor must find another arrangement of forces in his own body that recreates a similar action on stage".

During the laboratories, the researcher tried to experience the extremes of use of space and the energy mobilised with/for these extraordinary gestures, together with the Conduction participants, and thus we arrive at the *omission* principle:

The omission principle relates to action absorption. To absorb an action is to restrict the action's space, or to contain the action, as if it had returned to the state of impulse. The action can be absorbed from the bodily extremities to the trunk, and then to impulse level - in a dynamic immobility - arriving at a state of total external omission. Nevertheless, the intensity of the tension engaged in the action must be maintained or intensified, inversely proportional to such retention of the amplitude of the action (SAUL, 2006, p. 22-23).

The greatest challenge at this moment is that the actor doesn't give up; we also consider that the consciousness achieved through omission completes the *equivalence* principle and culminates in the access and recognition of *sats*, which

[...] is related to a change in body tone, impulses, changes of direction, and potential difference. It refers to a moment of transition before the action is performed when the body is already determined to perform such action, i.e. the action is in a potential state of being performed. The *sats* can also be related to dynamic immobility, that is, the articulation of micro-movements in a maximum action containment that dilates the presence in a body that is decided (SAUL, 2006, p. 23).

It should be noted that we are not seeking physical training for actors with the pretension of making them resistant like athletes or Afro Dance or Orixá dancers: the proposal is to seek other paths that lead the actor to a state of consciousness about their own body using characteristic elements of the embodiment of this *Iyabá*.

When the Orixá dance is transposed to the artistic environment, initially in Afoxé, we perceive that there are some traces of its own knowledge transmission from the sacred context, since as Professor

Teodora de Araújo Alves (2006) points out when speaking about the knowledge transmission of Afro-Brazilian dances inside and outside the liturgical field

[...] dance, more specifically Afro-Brazilian, seeks to understand ethnic and cultural knowledge and makes us perceive the body as a space in which language and existence are produced in the world, and that much of the knowledge built and experienced by our ancestors ended up staying in us via incorporation throughout the generations (...) I am referring not only to genetic inheritance, but also to a type of body inheritance, of an expressive, gestural dimension, which in this sense is not conditioned by a genetic determinism, but which in the context of life engages with the unusual, with knowledge, plurality, and transcendence, emerging in experiences, contacts, and dialogues between bodies that possess intentionalities, expressiveness, and life (...) the idea of embodied knowledge amongst the generations in our view transcends the moment of conception and the heredity of each individual. It is a predisposition to the realisation of actions that, to a certain extent, have already been carried out by previous generations or between people of different generations who live in the same historical period, or not. Accordingly, this disposition is not only of a genetic nature but also of a cultural and ethnic nature. After all, coexistence and the dialogue established between individuals makes the construction and transmission of this knowledge emerge (ALVES, 2006).

Yet, in this research, some important aspects need to be highlighted: we first consider that, because it is an Afoxé, all participants are initiated in Candomblé, which in fact, in this specific Afoxé, does not happen since it is not officially linked to any terreiro and it is proposed more for the service of the black community, independent of religion. The second aspect is that, when the choreographic elements move from the saída-de-orixá to the rehearsal rooms of a staging, it must be considered that the actors are not part of Candomblé and that they do not have any in-depth reference of the body of the Orixá dance.

So, if the individual does not necessarily live with the religious aspect of the Orixá dance, what brings them closer to this corporeality? The cultural drivers, that are conceptualised by Zeca Ligiéro (2011), who states that

The concept of Cultural Drivers will be used to define a set of cultural dynamics used in the African diaspora to recover African ancestral behaviours. We call this set performative practices, which refers to the combination of elements such as dance, singing, music, costumes, and space (among others), grouped in religious

celebrations in different manifestations of the Afro-Brazilian world. (LIGIÉRO, 2011, p. 130).

And he supplements this, considering that

The purpose of this study is to define the main dynamics of these celebrations, namely: 1) the use of performative elements, such as: singing, dancing, and music; 2) the simultaneous or consecutive use of game and ritual in the same celebration; 3) the praise of ancestors through worship or trance; 4) the presence of a master who safeguards traditional knowledge and who, through initiation, transmits a legacy and in most cases is also a *performer* who leads the ritual and/or celebration, and 5) the use of circular space: *performers* move inside the circle while the audience watches in a round (LIGIÉRO, 2011, p. 130).

In other words, this set has the capacity to surpass sacred space to approximate itself to the community and artistic practice, since it contains performative elements that approach theatre, as already mentioned.

Moving from Candomblé to theatre: the artist who dances-sings-tells

In addition to the practice of the ritual itself, other points that approximate a *saída-de-orixá* to theatre are convergences that are produced by both to be considered as *performances*, because according to Schechner (2013a),

[...] *performance* can be: ritualised behaviour conditioned/permeated by a game. Rituals are a means for people to remember. Rituals are memories in action, coded into actions[...] The game gives people the opportunity to temporarily experience the taboo, the excessive and the risky (SCHECHNER, 2013a, p. 49).

Moreover, Schechner (2013b) argues that

“*Performance*” (...) is a “broad spectrum” of activities, ranging from ritual and play (in all its disconcerting and difficult to define varieties) to popular forms of entertainment, parties, the activities of daily life, business, medicine, and aesthetic genres of theatre, dance and music. It was not a question of affirming that *everything* in these activities is performative, but that each of them possess qualities that could be effectively analysed and understood “like” *performance* (SCHECHNER, 2013b, p. 37).

Schechner (2013b) calls these qualities points of contact, which means that anything can be considered as *performance*, but that it

in fact only is a *performance* if it is determined within a specific cultural context. Six points of contact are discussed by Schechner, which are:

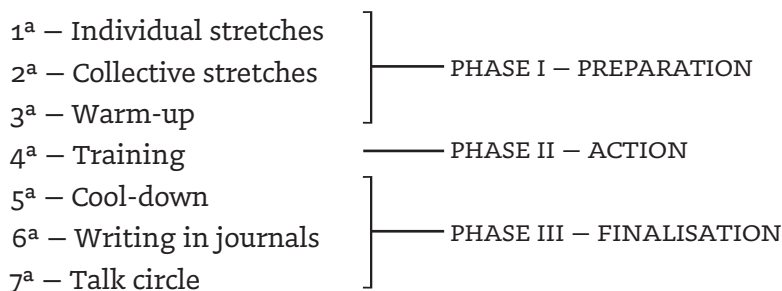
1. Transformation of being and/or consciousness
2. *Performance* intensity
3. Interaction between public and *performer*
4. The sequence of *performance* as a whole
5. The transmission of performative knowledge
6. How are *performances* generated and evaluated?

Considering that in this research I observed at least two types of *performances* - the religious ritual (I accompanied the saída-de-Orixá in Iansã) and the artistic one (in Afoxé practices and in classes and laboratories) - in addition to contact points, we can also identify seven phases of *performance* in both practices: training, workshops, trials, warm-ups or preparations immediately prior to performance, actual performance, cooling and equilibrium (SCHECHNER, 2013b). Even though in each context some of these phases become more emphasised than others, these seven phases will be taken up later when referring to the Conduction structure of the creative-practical process.

Furthermore, Schechner (2013b) argues that these six points of contact cannot exist in isolation; they will always be in interaction with each other and can be analysed in terms of: “1 - Incorporation - experience as the basis of native knowledge that is shared through *performance* (...) 2 - The sources of human culture are performative (...) 3 - The brain as a place of *performance* (SCHECHNER, 2013b, p. 39) ”.

It is worth emphasising that for this research, terms 1 and 2 will have greater relevance than the third term, since native knowledge can be interpreted as knowledge existing in the saída-de-Orixá or Afoxé practices, as these two manifestations are performative and thus giving its transmission and sharing of ancestral knowledge itself. Consequently, with this ancestry in mind, the notion of a cultural source is based on the resistance of Afro-Brazilian *performances* in which its practitioners sing-tell-dance-play.

Due to these approximations and the presence of the six principles mentioned by Barba (2012) and already cited, when structuring the roadmap of Conduction practices in a rehearsal room with volunteers, we seek to adhere to the following phases: I – PREPARATION, II – ACTION and III – FINALISATION, which were organized in seven stages:



This structure was designed so that the work develops in a crescent (Phase I), reaches its apex (Phase II) and decreases until its termination (Phase III). Also for this reason, the first element to be worked will be Wind, because it is the one that most associates with Iansã when one thinks about this Iyabá. In this case, stretching and warm-up will focus on calf-strengthening exercises - since in this energy quality the body tends to rest on the tip of the feet - for the arms to work, especially with the joints, to perform circular movements and the back so that the upper and lower limbs acquire a floating sensation with greater comfort and safety.

The second element to be worked will be the BUFFALO for its characteristics of energy quality (closest to *Animus*) and for the body parts mobilised - usually the lower part and column deformation - in different way to WIND. The third element will then be the BUTTERFLY for mobilising a quite distinct energy quality from the BUFFALO, as it manifests itself more like *Anima*.

In case of working with all three elements on the same day, I will keep this sequence in an attempt to equalise the energy of the scenic artist by analogy with the relationship that can be established between fire and water - two elements ever present in Iansã mythology - as follows: WARM-UP (Wind) → BOIL (Buffalo) → COOL DOWN (Butterfly).

To better clarify what was pointed out here, a description of one of the Conductions is used as a research demonstration. Because of the short practice time (around thirty minutes) it was necessary to work with the three elements proposed without going deeper and in only thirty minutes, so we divided the time into three stages: I - PREPARATION, II - ACTION and II - FINALISATION, which are described below.

I – PREPARATION

We initially instructed participants to do their stretches and warm-ups individually. Then we asked them to walk through the room. During the walk, we asked them to bring images to mind that suggested wind (from breeze to storm), butterflies/moths,

and buffalos/oxes/cows. The next step was to ask them to try the verbs - in the form of movement - LAUNCH, RECEIVE and PUSH. It is of interest to point out that these three verbs were explored with several parts of the participants' bodies. On trying the three movements, we gave some commands of expansion, speed, and after a slowing of the rhythm and return to zero point, the body stopped, but still in a state of alertness. At this point, we asked them to observe how the body was reacting, which muscle groups had been worked, and where the tensions were.

II – ACTION

For the second moment, we oriented them to try the verbs related to Iansã in the form of action, which were CUT, DUST and WHIP, asking the participants to focus on the actions themselves rather than on any possible objects (sword, shaker, and whip) that they might be using.

With the actions tried, we suggested that they return to the first three images, merging them in their actions on the following commands:

- How would the wind be shaking/whipping/cutting?
- How would a butterfly move shaking/whipping/cutting?
- How is the body of this buffalo shaking/whipping/cutting?

At this stage, relationships between the participants began to be established, so we suggested that they expand their movements, explore them in totality and gradually minimise their movements, but without losing the energy sensation that was established in their bodies.

III – FINALISATION

While maintaining the energy of the Individual Iansã Dances and sustaining the relations established in the previous moment, we asked that they resume the THROW, RECEIVE and PUSH actions, observing changes in the body and quality of movement from stage I to stage III. It was interesting to observe how much the Iansã Dance verbs energetically potentialised the verbs from the Preparation moment. To finish the practice, I asked the participants to decrease their movements until they were zeroed and returned to an everyday body state.

After the practice, we made some clarifications as to the choice of wind, butterfly and buffalo images so that they were related to

the Iansã archetype and the choice of the CUT, SHAKE and WHIP verbs, which are related to some legends and liturgical tools used in the ritual dance.

Even though the practice was very short - just an encounter in this case - it was possible to note from observation that, in addition to pre-test training, systematisation and conduction may enable the *performer* to create a score. As they are provided Iansã dance elements through commands and not choreography, the *performer* has the freedom to re-signify these moments/verbs, since each one very particular references of CUT, DUST and WHIP in their body and imagery repertoire, making the construction of several dramaturgies as a consequence of this Individual Iansã dance possible.

The participants of this Conduction all had in common the fact that they were scenic artists - be it in theatre, dance, circus or *performance* - thus they understood that the body references were very particular. It was possible to identify through observation which people already had memory references by the stylisation of movements in the first instants after being given an orientation. For the others, even with a slower response and a less stylised action, ended up approaching their gesture of what was executed as if they were in the sacred field or of that already re-signified in Afoxé choreographies.

Final thoughts: the form that transforms

Since we have used the principles elaborated by Barba (2012) as a basis, we understand that the potentialisation of the actors' work during preparation for a scenic setting permeates the (re) discovery of diverse forms of using their own body, thinking about it as being more than a support and artist's work tool. Part of these principles are based on the deformation⁹ of the everyday body for access to the extraordinary body, which Barba himself seeks in the coded dances of the Far East, which were the basis of his training.

If we deal with a transformation of the everyday body to achieve the extraordinary one that enhances states of attention and energy in scenic artists, we can indeed resort to Afro-Amerindian dances. In this research, when observing the uninitiated performing actions that are driven by observation of the dancing body in Candomblé and Afoxé, we perceive that, apart from access to Ancestral Gesture the expansion of their body repertoire, we see their epistemic body processes and references. The I-Buffer experience for a circus artist holds certain specificities that are

9. In this case, deformation is considered as the use of the body with different supports and postures from the everyday body. Among the most recurrent postures, one can mention arched back, walking on the edges of the feet, or at medium or low level.

different from the I-*Buffalo* of an actor who has worked their entire lifetime with a base in Brechtian theatre, which will consequently be different from the I-*Wind* of a contemporary dancer, which will be different from the I-*Butterfly* of a *Boi-de-reis* (traditional dance from the North-East of Brazil) dancer/practitioner.

It is concluded that, regardless of their trajectory or access to expressions of Afro-Amerindian ancestral religiosity, something helps one to access one's ancestral gestures, be it through music, image suggestion, or through movement repetition. Whatever the path, it restores what has been incorporated and mobilised by these motives/roots of an Afro-Amerindian body and of a being in the Brazilian ancestral and contemporary world.

REFERENCES

- ALVES, Teodora de Araújo. **Heranças de corpos brincantes: os saberes da corporeidade em danças afro-brasileiras**. Natal: EDUFRN – 2006.
- BARBA, Eugenio, SAVARESE, Nicola (Org). **A Arte Secreta do Ator – Um dicionário de Antropologia Teatral**. São Paulo: É Realizações – 2012.
- BARBA, Eugenio. **A Canoa de Papel – Tratado de Antropologia Teatral**. Brasília: Dulcina Editora – 2009.
- BENY, Daniela. **A codificação corporal da Dança de Iansã nas coreografias do Afoxé Oju Omim Omorewá**, 68 p, Especialização em Antropologia, Universidade Federal de Alagoas/UFAL, Maceió – 2014.
- HUIZINGA, Johan. **Homo Ludens – O jogo como elemento da cultura**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2008.
- LIGIÉRO, Zeca. O conceito de “motrizes culturais” aplicado às práticas performativas afro-brasileiras. In: **Revista Pós Ciências Sociais**, Maranhão – v.8, n. 16, 2011.
- MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice. **Fenomenologia da Percepção**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes – 1999.
- SANTOS, Inaicyrá Falcão. Corpo e Ancestralidade: ressignificação de uma herança cultural. In: ABRACE, V., 2008. Belo Horizonte. **Anais V Congresso: Criação e Reflexão Crítica**. Disponível em: <<http://www.portalabrace.org/vcongresso/textos/pesquisadanca/Inaicyrá%20Falcão%20dos%20Santos%20-%20Corpo%20e%20Ancestralidade%20ressignificacao%20de%20uma%20heranca%20cultural.pdf>> Acesso em: 19 de Março de 2017.
- SAUL, Luciana. **Rituais do Candomblé – Uma inspiração para o trabalho criativo do ator**. 276 p. Dissertação de Mestrado. CAC/ECA/USP. São Paulo, 2006.
- SCHECHNER, Richard. O que é performance?. In **O Percevejo**, ano 11, 2003, n. 12, p. 25 a 50.
- SCHECHNER, Richard. (Org. de Zeca Ligiéro). **Performance e Antropologia de Richard Schechner**. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X Editora, 2013a.
- SCHECHNER, Richard. “Ponto de Contato” revisados. In: DAWSEY, John C.; MÜLLER, Regina P; HIKIJI, Rose Satiko G.; MONTEIRO, Marianna F. M. (Org). **Antropologia e performance – ensaios Napedra**. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2013b, p. 37-65.

TAYLOR, Diana. **O Arquivo e O Repertório – Performance e memória cultural nas Américas**. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2013.

ZENICOLA, Denise. Ubuntu (Partilhamento) In **Moringa – Artes do Espetáculo**. V.2, n.2, p. 85-92, 2011.