

## **Con-sentiment: the ethics on the scene and the volunteer approach to interactive numbers in an aerial circus show**

**Gabriel Coelho Mendonça | Cesar Lignelli**

University of Brasília | Brasília, DF, Brasil.

bielcoei@gmail.com | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8359-9001>

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### **Abstract**

Heirs of the theaters with popular participation in the middle age fairs, the circus language made the participative act common, in which members of the public are invited to counteract with the artists. It becomes necessary the reflection about the ethical limits and the transformative potential within this relation. In this article I lean over my first adventures in performing aerial acts with the participation of members in the audience in order to propose an emotional complicity as an ethical conduct in the volunteers approaching.

### **KEYWORDS**

Circus. Interactivity.  
Complicity. Risk.

**Con-sentimento: a ética na cena e a abordagem aos voluntários dos números interativos em um espetáculo aéreo-circense**

### **Resumo**

A matriz popular da linguagem circense, herança dos artistas das feiras medievais, tornou comum o número participativo, no qual membros do público são convidados a contracenar com artistas. Neste artigo, reflito sobre minhas primeiras aventuras na realização de números de técnicas aéreas com participação de membros da audiência, para propor uma relação de cumplicidade emocional como conduta ética na abordagem dos voluntários.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Interatividade no circo.  
Cumplicidade. Risco.

Bolognesi (2006) discusses the diverse forms of dialogue established between the circus and theatrical languages, their approximations and distances, since the constitution of the circus show, in the end of the XVII century, up to nowadays. The author looks after a trend that arises in the 1980's, that, searching for an approximation of circus towards the theatre, causes significant transformations in the circus shows:

Algo que chama a atenção nessa transformação é a abolição da presença do apresentador no espetáculo. Os espetáculos desta nova tendência, denominada (erroneamente, na minha concepção, conforme se demonstrará) de “circo novo” ou “circo contemporâneo”, abdicam do fator “épico” e comunicativo do espetáculo para investir no aspecto, pode-se dizer, “dramático” e expressivo. O espetáculo e os números, com isso, fecham-se em si mesmos e a plateia é colocada na condição de espectadora quase que passiva: o público é concebido como receptor de um espetáculo que se desenrola por si e em si. O espetáculo circense, que sempre primou por criar relações e contatos com o público, tende agora a dissipar essa característica. Esta concepção quer colocar o público circense na mesma condição de fruição artística distanciada, marcas originais dos conceitos de arte e da estética que a acompanha, tal como consolidada pelo pensamento filosófico, a partir do século XVIII. O objetivo é alçar o espetáculo à condição de “belo”. (BOLOGNESI, 2006, p.12)

Researches (BOLOGNESI, 2003; CASTRO, 2005; SILVA, 2007; TORRES, 1998) state that the proximity to the audience comes to Phillip Astley's<sup>1</sup> circus as an inheritance from the medieval fair's artists. Since one century before the circus' emergence, only the official theaters, recognized by the court, were allowed to use speech in their representations, both in France and England. To dodge those prohibitions the street artists used diverse scenic strategies, one amongst those was the active participation of the audience in the shows.

Em 1680, a *Comedie Française* conquista o privilégio de ser a única companhia autorizada a representar em francês. Uma intensa luta se estabelece por quase dois séculos. Os teatros oficiais conseguem leis que garantem que ninguém mais possa representar comédias em atos, nem utilizar diálogos em cena. A resposta dos teatros populares de feira é ir burlando as regras e enganando as autoridades policiais. Os espetáculos não podem ser feitos em atos? Surgem as peças de cenas curtas. É proibido dialogar? Inventam o monólogo. Criam cenas em que um personagem fala e o outro responde de fora de cena. Criam também a genial estratégia de escrever as falas em cartazes e é o público que faz a leitura aos gritos. A necessidade havia criado o teatro de participação popular... (CASTRO, 2005, p. 38)

The modern circus comes up only as an equestrian show, but it started little by little to incorporate the mountebank, the artists from the fair theaters, the gypsies, and the remnants from *commedia dell'arte*. (BOLOGNESI, 2015, p. 10).

<sup>1</sup> Accordingly to the same authors mentioned above, the creation of the modern circus is accredited to Philip Astley by the amphitheater Astley opening on 1770 at London.

These fair artists bring to the circus the popular participation, mentioned before, even because, as well as the mountebank, the English and French circus suffered with the limitations imposed by the strict regulations and laws, which controlled the shows and guaranteed privileges to the dramatic theater. (CASTRO, 2005).

In this way, the circus allow and stimulate its audience to behave as audiences of streets, fairs and squares:

O público pode comer pipoca, tomar refrigerante, pode levantar a hora que quiser, pode xingar, pode aplaudir; esse elemento vem de uma linhagem de espetáculos de matriz popular, que vão chegar no teatro de feira, com uma sequência de atrações, e essa estrutura é absorvida pelo circo, a montagem de atrações. A atração, o número, tem vida artística por si (BOLOGNESI, 2015 *apud* MATHEUS, 2016, p. 157).

The circus, therefore, communicates directly with the audience. It possesses a presenter to execute such function, to speak directly with the audience. In the circus show even the pause made by the artist to rest and thank for the applauses has the goal of bringing the audience within, of summoning the participation of those in the stands. (MATHEUS, 2016, p. 156)

A risk show that was part of the “Circo Nazionale Orfei” in the end of the 1940 decade, exemplifies how the audience in the circus show is driven to participate in the scene, in this way, even the silence of the spectator is an active response, a mute interference, which highlights the thriller moments of the acrobatic acts:

Com o circo totalmente escuro, um foco de luz o iluminava, enquanto subia em uma pequena escada de corda até a cúpula do circo. Ao chegar lá em cima, onde havia uma pequena passarela a uma altura de dezesseis metros cumprimentava o público.

O locutor anunciava:

- Catanos vai executar agora o ‘Pulo da Morte no Abismo’! Partindo daquela pequena passarela, saltará sem rede de proteção até atingir aquele pequeno trapézio. [...]

- Senhoras e senhores, peço para fazerem o máximo silêncio durante este número! O acrobata precisa da máxima concentração!

- Atenção... Catanos... Pronto?

Ele respondia:

- Pronto!

Os tambores rufavam. Ele dava uma corrida e pulava em direção ao trapézio. O público segurava a respiração. A luz o seguia, até o trapézio, que ao apará-lo, quebrava-se. Catanos caía na direção dos camarotes. Os ocupantes, ao verem aquele homem cair em cima deles, jogavam-se para fora gritando assustados.

Mas ele estava amarrado pelos tornozelos com cordas que no escuro não se viam. Estas duas cordas, uma em cada perna, estavam presas à cúpula do circo por meio de dois grupos de elásticos. Ao chegar próximo dos camarotes, os elásticos puxavam-no de volta e ele ficava balançando acima do picadeiro, passando com a cabeça a pouco mais de quarenta centímetros do solo.

Ao término desse número, havia sempre alguém passando mal, em consequência do grande susto. (ORFEI, 1996, p. 99)

The description above served me as a bibliographic confirmation of a knowledge that has been printing itself in my artistic practice. Since my first presentations as a swing trapeze student under the supervision of Alex Brede<sup>2</sup>, at the Cia do Circo in Campinas, São Paulo, I realized that my mother's screams in the audience, results of the fear she had for her son's safety, reached the entire audience. In addition, the same audience reacted to my jumps and falls tricks in the pendulum trapeze in an amplified manner if compared to the normal. In some way, my mother's feelings reverberated in the other members of the audience, intensifying their reactions. Such a fact was recurrently reinforced in my performances, as when during a season of the show "O sonho vai começar", from "Circo dos Sonhos" through the São Paulo's coast in 2017. In certain occasion, during my swinging trapeze act, I noticed that a woman seated in the third row had her legs trembling in fear, visibly terrified. A man, seated next to her was trying to calm her down. The surrounding audience notably behaved much more alert and distressed than normally. Episodes like these show the power of audience's reactive action in circus' acts and shows. The response of a single member in the audience turns to sensorial information to all the other present spectators. This tends to provoke a chain reaction, amplifying the circus ring artist's capacity to stimulate the emergence of feelings and sensations in the audience.

Bolognesi (2006) states that there is, in contemporaneity, a dominant trend of distancing from the audience, erecting a fourth wall in the circus shows, in order to reach the levels of beauty, giving up the epic character of the traditional circus language<sup>3</sup>. For Matheus (2016), the dominance of the fourth wall lifting is not clear in the post-schools circus productions. In this manner, the Bolognesi's analysis is considered a risky generalization (p.156). Even though, Matheus alerts:

o espetáculo circense, nas suas diversas formas e estilos, dificilmente logrará assumir a forma dramática inteiramente (exceto o circo-teatro), já que sua estética será sempre voltada para a utilização de elementos metafóricos/fantásticos que tiram os artistas da

<sup>2</sup> Eight-generation member of the Brede family of acrobats. Founder, director and teacher at Cia do Circo in Campinas-SP.

<sup>3</sup> The terms "traditional" and "contemporary" have been utilized to aesthetically differentiate the circus shows. "Traditional" intends to define the shows structured in a succession of circus abilities acts tied by the presenter oratory, very common in the itinerant canvas circus. "Contemporary" intends to nominate the shows that propose other dramaturgic structures, not the one described beforehand. This terminology is very criticized by many authors (BOLOGNESI, 2003; CASTRO, 2005; SILVA, 2007).

ação e os colocam na narração da ação, ainda que essa narração não seja verbal, seja gestual/visual. Os artistas que, no trapézio, simulam uma relação amorosa-sexual, sugerem mais do que vivenciam, propõem, para o público, uma versão simbólica da relação amorosa, já que essa não ocorre normalmente em trapézios, em se respeitando os princípios da verossimilhança. Essa distância colabora para que a narrativa seja “epicizada”. O tipo de gesto proposto pela linguagem circense pós-escolas de circo é, em grande parte, o truque circense, resultado da técnica. Esses truques só são verossímeis, se o universo temático do espetáculo for exatamente o circo. Se não, o truque distancia o espectador, colaborando para a “epicização” da narrativa. (MATHEUS, 2016, p. 160)

Influenced by the theoretical discussion above presented, and certain that a direct language with the audience, if well explored, through the aerial techniques, has the capacity to deeply influence the audience, I started to nurture the creation of aerial acts with the audience participation.

In a matter of fact, it is hard to precise what came first, the contact with the theoretical discussion about a direct approach to the audience, or the desire of creating a show that gets closer to the audience, conducting the same to reflections about the human existence. I believe that the affectedness by the theoretical discussion above presented already demonstrate an artistic identification with the aesthetic proposal highlighted by Bolognesi, a resonance in which the words of the circus researchers reverberate in the artist, creating or feeding creative desires.

I participated, in June 2017, as a guest artist, in the show “Pisando as nuvens” from the Panamanian company “LaTribu Performance”. In a conversation with the company’s director, Eleonora Dall’Astra<sup>4</sup>, about our creative desires, I stated my will of creating a show based on aerial techniques that strongly invested in the audience interference. The director got interested in knowing which would be the strategy to achieve this goal. I answered that I was not so clear on it, but I was thinking about inviting members of the audience to perform aerial acts along with me. Dall’Astra warned me: “You will find difficulty in finding spaces opened to such a proposal. To get a volunteer with the courage to do it will also be difficult. Everybody want to fly as we do, but from there to have the courage...It is too risky!”

Indeed, according to Gaston Bachelard (2001), in the human subjectivity fear predominate desire. By treating the dialectics amongst the Dream of Flying versus the Fear of Falling, as psychic components that unfold in all the

<sup>4</sup> Graduated in Contemporary Circus Arts at the *National Institute of Circus Arts* in London and student of the Master’s Program in Contemporary Circus Practices at the School of Dance and Circus at UNIARTS in Stockholm, Switzerland.

desires of rising and in all the fears of failure and death, he exposes:

Se fizéssemos o duplo balanço das metáforas da queda e das metáforas da ascensão, não deixaria de surpreender-nos o número muito maior das primeiras. Antes mesmo de qualquer referência à vida moral, as metáforas da queda são asseguradas, ao que parece, por um realismo psicológico inegável. Todas elas desenvolvem uma impressão psíquica que, em nosso inconsciente, deixa traços indeléveis: o medo de cair é um *medo primitivo*. Vamos reencontrá-lo como componente dos mais variados medos. (BACHELARD, 2001, p. 91 – grifos do autor)

The book excerpt above alerts of a difficulty I would find for the completion of my artistic project. Faced with the risk, the predominant feeling would be fear. Which, in its turn, would make it difficult for someone to volunteer.

For a long time I did not allow myself the audacity to dive in the creation of aerial acts with participation of members of the audience. I was searching for references of other works made by artists, groups or circus companies that had adventured themselves in aerial participative acts. I did not succeed in my quest. I did not find any bibliographic, audio-visual or oral reference from any other artist or researcher. It all indicated that the implementation of an aerial act with an unknown person sitting in the grandstand was something rare. Would it be due to the risk of involving someone with no previous training in an aerial act?

In August 24 2017, during the eleventh “Encontro Goiano de Malabarismo e Circo” the festival production invited me to present my swinging trapeze act at the “Noite de Variedades Circenses”. The canvas used for the festival, with only two masts, did not have enough aerial space in order to perform such an act. The producer insisted, saying he would like to have an aerial act in the program of the “Noite de Variedades Circenses”. Then asked me if I had any other aerial act.

I found in the invitation a unique opportunity to put my project into practice, and perform for the first time an interactive act with circus aerial techniques. I, then, filled me up with courage and said I would perform an act of aerial-stripes<sup>5</sup>. From that moment on, up until the show time, for the lack of reference of any act or spectacle that merged these two classic universes of the

<sup>5</sup> Aerial equipment, made with malleable material, which consists in two handles by which the acrobat is suspended, normally by its wrists. In this equipment strength exercises, flexibility and dynamic movements are executed. It is normally associated to a pulleys and ropes system, which, operated by a counter load, elevates the artist to the air and brings him back to the ground during the performance.

circus universe, participative acts and aerial techniques, my mood oscillated between the euphoria of finally putting an artistic desire in practice and the fear of the possible failure.

The short period between the invitation, the decision-making and the performing of the act, added to the emotional instability the situation provoked in me, prevented me from elaborating a precise script. I was only able to define some general guidelines:

- To Enter the scene reporting the invitation I received the night before, and to extend the invitation to a participant of the crowd with the argument that for me to say yes to the invitation, directed to me, I would need the yes from someone from the crowd;

- To perform with the volunteer a sequence consisted of:

1. one entrance of mine in the equipment, flying over the participant which is positioned at the center of the stage;

2. one big spin with the participant in my arms with both of us tied to the aerial-stripes;

3. one sequence of two difficulty tricks on my own (ascent and descent rollups + back plank);

4. to put the participant in a static figure with its feet tied to the ropes (the participant seems to be in the squat position with one of its knees on the ground, like a soccer player in pictures) and accompany it on the ground, guaranteeing its safety while the volunteer is elevated and lowered in a solo flight;

5. a concentric spinning flight, tied by the right wrist, and the participant, who initiates with one of the ropes tied to its own right wrist frees itself in the apex of the flight surrendering itself to the safety of my left arm<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://youtu.be/FP6-wmB-P-8> (part of the act filmed at 10/22/18 during the Festival Goiânia em Cena – Teatro Goiânia, where is possible to see the technical sequence described)

I chose, yet, the song “Mal Necessário”, composed by Mauro Kwito, interpreted by Ney Matogrosso, as the sound track to the act. The music would start right after I summon up and position the volunteer in the scene, at the right corner of the stage in relation to the audience, and it would play uninterruptedly up until the end of the act.

At the moment of the performance, I enter the scene, released the aerial-stripes which were anchored outside the stage, letting them well seen by the public and made the invitation I had received in the night before, affirming I needed a volunteer to with me realize a pas-de-deux with the equipment occupying the center of the stage. It was an open invitation to the public.

Several persons stood up from their seats. A good part of them was participants of the event, in other words, artists already initiated in circus techniques. These were not suited to my proposition, which consisted in performing an aerial act along with someone not familiar with aerial techniques. Many others were children under the age of ten, and I did not want to propose a childish act. Lastly, the other volunteers were bigger or heavier than the ideal for the smooth functioning of the load reduction system, which would allow our flight, available at that moment.

I decided, at that moment, to redirect the invitation to a young woman seated on the ground, before the chairs, right in front of the stage. I had not yet noticed her presence in any of the activities of the festival. Such a fact suggested she was not initiated in the circus techniques. In addition, her weight and size seemed adequate for the ropes and pulleys system, which operated by a technician would elevate us to the flight.

Right after the performance, some of the present artists criticized the action of making an open invitation and then ignoring the volunteers turning myself to a specific person. The fact was interpreted as a negative to the game proposed by myself. However, it was a readjustment necessary to guarantee an interesting scene, as well as the safety of the participant. Choosing an acrobat would mischaracterize the proposal of an act with a non-initiated participant. A child, too young, would make the act too childish. Anyway, after the conversation with the public, everybody agreed I had chosen the ideal participant.

The chosen volunteer, facing my direct invitation to participate in the



aerial act, answered with a head gesture and the words: “It may be!” I felt a bit bothered with her answer, which, although expressed permission, did not made explicit the desire in being part of the scene. I felt the urge to confirm her interest in participating, and that I was not doing nothing in a coerced manner. So I said: “No, ‘It may be’ is not enough. You either really want it or you do not!” In addition, she, standing up right away answered: “I do want”.

I think it is important to highlight, about the passage above, which in the context of the scene, even though there is no power relation clearly established, we cannot consider the relation between the artist and the public to be exactly a horizontal relation. The spotlight position occupied by the artist, to which he proposed and prepared itself, tends to make the relation vertical. When we dialog straightly to a member of the audience, we highlight someone who was up until that moment unnoticed to the eyes of everybody else. This situation may generate a discomfort feeling and even embarrassment, which may lead the person to have difficulties in saying no to the artist proposal.

In this sense, I think it is important that the artist open the space for the member of the audience to express its feeling freely about the invitation to participate on the scene, including the possibility to refuse the received proposal. Only in this way, the artist can really act accordingly to the consent of the volunteer. It is a dilemma to be solved by the artist, who depends on the participation of a member of the audience to continue with its scene, act or spectacle. It may be a good strategy to consider, while planning its performance, the possibility of the participant to refuse. Being able, in this way, to create ways out of the negative forward its proposal. Because no artist, as experienced as it can be, may guarantee that its public will be always available to its proposals.

At a previous work, in which I perform the figure of an eccentric acrobatic clown, I invite a child to realize the act of rope jumping. In a certain occasion, presenting myself at the Coco Square in Barão Geraldo, I allowed a boy that every moment was trying to invade the stage, to participate in the act. It seemed that there was no chance of refusal by that boy, so eager to invade the stage through all the moments of the act so far. To my surprise, when I proposed him to position in order to rope jump, while I was swinging the rope, tied on the other end to a pole. The kid positioned himself at the end of the scenic space, leaning over a wall with his hands at his back and the head down repeating non-stopping: “I will not be able to do it! I will not be able to do it” I tried

to stimulate him saying that I would help him and that the stage was a magic place, in which we accomplished, at easy, unimaginable things. I did all that crouched to stand at his eyes height. The kid kept in the negative. In a sudden turnout, the volunteer, so eager to enter the stage, did not want to participate anymore.

In that same scene, I had been through something similar. At Triunfo, a city in the countryside of Pernambuco State, a kid jumped in the stage when I launched the invitation to all the presents in the audience. It seemed to me that the kid did not want to give chance to nobody else to perform before him. When I started to propose his movement through the space, in a comic way, the kid put its head down, covered its face and started to cry, not making any sound. I noticed there was no consent by the kid to become the cause or target of the audience's laughter. Facing my proposal of comic moving the participant showed discomfort feeling, embarrassment, and shame. I immediately changed my conduct, excluded any comic proposal, keeping myself only to the acrobatic action of the boy in rope jumping. With the expression yet not altered and a few tears in his face, the volunteer started executing his tasks. First jumped the rope and got a few applauses. In his face, the expression of discomfort started to decrease. At the end, I got him to execute the hardest task of all, rope jumping with his eyes folded. The applause were many. At the small city, almost all the audience knew the name of the volunteer, which was being shouted along with the applauses. In me, besides the relief of being able to contour the presented difficulty, there was a feeling of euphoria, thus the success of the scene was enhanced thanks to the overcoming of the trouble in conducting a volunteer who showed emotional discomfort towards my proposal at the scene.

In Barão Geraldo, at Coco Square, the situation presented itself more complicated, the volunteer, previously willing to participate, then started to refuse my proposal, and, facing my persistence, suggested: "Call somebody else! I will not be able to make it" It seemed there was no other option considering the volunteer negative to participate. I could not convince him, and could not force him. However, it did not seem ethical to bring a child to the scene and put it back out right away. The refusal in participating was not exactly the problem, but the reason of the refuse was. "I will not be able to make it". If I had simply replaced him, I would have highlighted a supposed incapacity of the child. The proposal in the scene was exactly the opposite; highlight its capacity to perform an act of difficulty. I answered, then, that I would call another kid, but I propo-

sed him to help me swinging the rope. I said that it was a very important task, and that he would help a friend to execute a hard task. I chose a child younger than him to highlight his responsibility. At the end of the performance, the kid felt very important due to his contribution with his colleague in overcoming the difficulty proposed in the scene. He kept repeating to everyone who came close to him that, while his colleague with eyes folded struggled to rope jump, he said at the right time: “Jump, jump, jump...”

Fernando Cavarozzi, the clown Chacovachi, brings the attention to the fact that a street clown may use anything in the game with the audience, but its dignity. In order to treat the relationship between the artist<sup>7</sup> and the public Chacovachi uses the metaphor of a chess game. Making a clown presentation is like playing chess. We all know how it is played. We play with and against the public (CHACOVACHI, 2016).

From this metaphor, the argentine clown treats the personality, abilities, routines and jokes a clown may use in analogy to the pieces of chess, being the king the most important piece.

No xadrez, cada jogador conta com seis tipos de peças. A mais importante é o rei, seguida da rainha, depois vem as torres, os cavalos e os bispos e, por último, os peões. O rei é a tua dignidade e tua fonte de energia, se você perde alguma dessas qualidades, você está morto. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 12)

In this manner, in case the dignity is lost, the game is also lost. It is important to notice that at no moment Chacovachi says that the artist should overthrow the audience's king, in other words, Chacovachi does not propose to take away the dignity of the public. Specially, when you summon up someone to compose the scene along with you. By the moment we invite a volunteer from the audience to act with us, we propose a relationship of alliance and partnership. The complicity with the public is fundamental (CHACOVACHI, 2016). Allowing the dignity of the volunteer to be shaken would break such a complicity relationship. Breaking down, as a consequence, our own dignity at the scene.

In this sense, I think that by proposing a participative act, the artist should be willing to give up of everything in the scene, even its continuity. However,

<sup>7</sup> Chacovachi talks about, specifically, of the street clown. At the text here proposed we think of the artist in any given situation, who takes the teachings of a street clown because this is, certainly, the scenic figure that most intensely deals with the public active participation on the scene.

should never give up on the ethical responsibility towards the volunteer. Search, even at a moment of improvisation, resources for the participant to get in and out of the scene without harming his dignity, independently of the feelings arose there. Even because the success of the scene is not necessarily in opposition to the failure, but in how to keep your dignity up until the end of it.

Um palhaço está preparado para o fracasso e não perde a partida quando um número sai mal: até pode transformar essa falha no ponto chave do êxito de sua apresentação. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 13)

A dignidade se relaciona diretamente com a função do rei com peça que define se ganhamos ou perdemos uma partida. Dignidade é crer no que se faz. Perdemos a dignidade quando deixamos de crer no que fazemos. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 34)

Let us go back to the case of the “Noite de Variedades Circenses” at the “Encontro Goiano de Malabarismo e Circo”. At that occasion, the risk that I was inviting the volunteer to did not resume itself to the emotional and moral sphere. I intended to involve her in an adventure where the physical risk was present. Possibly experienced by previous situations, as the described above, before allowing the entrance of the participant at the stage, I wanted to confirm her desire in participating on the proposed act.

O público pode te dar permissão ou não, e você pode tomá-la, ou não. Se você tomar a permissão para fazer o que quer fazer tudo sai mais fluído. O palhaço, na cena, tem uma autoridade, o público lhe dá uma autoridade e ele deve usá-la. A não ser que o público faça uma revolução e lhe destitua, mas isso raramente acontece. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 34)

The volunteer gave me the permission and together we flown in front of the audience, which suspires, laughed and applauded. There was a question left yet, because my need of confirmation on her desire to participate in an act that involves physical risk took me to ask her more than once if she was willing to step up at the stage and take the risk to execute an aerial act. This cautious attitude, of questioning her verbally, before each acrobatic evolution, made the scene too long, diminishing its dynamic and fluency, making it a bit uninteresting to the audience as a whole. How could I be more assertive in my invitation without exercise any arbitrariness, without violate the right to the negative?

In the search for answers to the question rose above, I proposed to the organization of the sixth edition of the “Festival Na Ponta do Nariz” to include the act on the program of “Show de Variedades”, which would happen at the closure of the festival. I intended to continue investigating the aesthetical proposition, which by its nature, makes the contact with the audience essential for

the possibility to play with a volunteer.

Considering the previous experience, I chose to structure the summoning of a volunteer. Starting from the lyricism of the word inspiration both in its biological meaning: process of sucking in the air inside the organism, to afterwards release it outside of the body through expiration, completing a respiratory cycle (GUYTON, 2017), as well as in its meaning of a synonym of enchantment, fascination, lighting, wonder. I created a speech based on the fact that every living being breathes, and if it breathes, it inspires. Along with the speech, I proposed a game with balloons. At that moment, in between the chairs of the audience, I started distributing balloons, to the people in the audience, asking them blow and tie the balloons they were given. Meanwhile, I perceived the people most willing to my proximity. I observed, as well, those that demonstrated some discomfort. At the end of the game, I recollected nearly all the balloons, leaving only one balloon in the hands of the chosen volunteer. Right after that, I directed myself inside the scenic space, beside the aerial equipment, and requested, at a distance, that such a member of the audience came to me, bringing the balloon in its hands<sup>8</sup>.

With this scenic proposal, I wanted to manage a few questions. To check the dynamism for the moment of picking the volunteer. To wrap the scene in a poetic speech based on the word inspiration and its biologic and emotional meanings. To create a space of approximation to the public, in order to establish a relationship of interest. To allow that, through a previous contact with the public, I could notice both their physical characteristics, as well as the possible availability to and interest on the game that was about to be proposed. Intending, so, to make a good choice on a volunteer. To realize an open invitation to the chosen volunteer, guaranteeing space for its negative.

By making an invitation, far from the volunteer, who kept itself seated on its place while I was at the center of the stage, I chose to let it answer authentically. I did not impose myself physically over it. I did not grabbed it by its hand, not even press it with a close presence. I only opened the way for the entrance of the volunteer on the scenic space.

Luckily, the volunteer, stood up, looked to the colleague besides him, and

<sup>8</sup> <https://youtu.be/fK2L7sqVbTI> (part of the act filmed at 10/03/18 during the opening season of the spectacle "Causos de voos e risco" at the IFG Campus Goiânia Theater, where the invitation to the volunteer can be seen).

said: “Oh, My God!” and walked to me without any other word being needed to be said. By my side said, in a low voice: “I don’t know how to do nothing”. I answered, only to him: “You will learn right away!” Moreover, kept on with the scene, presenting my partner to the rest of the audience and initiating, together, an acrobatic scene accompanied by a live band.

The manner of this participant to present itself showed the conscience that he would live a risky moment. In other words, the invitation, even made esthetic, makes the contents of the proposition clear: a risky adventure. It demonstrates, as well; spite his conscience, the participant decided on his own, with no pressure, to take the risk. .

With the same structure, I performed three other times. At the three situations the volunteer, even expressing some tension, thrill or fear, chose to be part in the adventure without the need of insistency a single time. I was left with the question: Is it really luck? Is it the availability of the volunteer dependent on random factors, over which I had no control or influence?

The absence of negatives, by the members of the audience, to my invitations in different situations indicates that I am not only lucky. Does it suggest there is something in the way I conduct the proposal that makes it assertive? Does it mean there is the existence of abilities, which were not only conscious? Which would be those abilities?

Let us go back to the Chacovachi clown reference. The chess game as an analogy to the relationship with the public. About the king, he says:

*A dignidade se relaciona diretamente com a função do rei com peça que define se ganhamos ou perdemos uma partida. Dignidade é crer no que se faz. Perdemos a dignidade quando deixamos de crer no que fazemos. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 34)*

Thinking about my process, I think that every time I got into the scene to perform an aerial act, the aerial adventure upon which I had no previous reference, I believed in my capability to pull it through. I brought with me a feeling that it was possible and safe to invite someone with no previous experience, or rehearsal, to accomplish an aerial duo in front of the public.

The brief dialogue with the volunteer of the sixth “Festival Na Ponta do Nariz”: “I don’t know how to do nothing”, “You will learn right away”, deno-

tes, both such confidence, as well as where does it come from. For more than a decade, I conducted several students with different characteristics, physical and psychological, diverse abilities and difficulties at their performances at the classroom, from the first contact with aerial equipment. At that period, I had the opportunity to teach aerial technique classes to children, teenagers, adults and even to people of the third age. I ministered classes in recreational courses, brief workshops, and artist graduation courses. I was a teacher at institutes for people with disabilities, such as autism or Down syndrome. I oriented, as well, students with crisis background, or panic disorder. Always with the need to encourage them to challenge themselves at the heights of the circus aerial equipment.

Such an educational experience allowed me to gain the abilities to see the possibilities and the limitations, physical and psychological, of someone who will use an aerial equipment for the first time. Knowledge needed to make the choice on the movements, which would be part of the act in question, without proposing an excessive risk. An ability trained daily and made conscious. Knowledge acquired, on an empiric manner at an educational environment, about the difficulty of teaching and learning acrobatics. Knowledge that I recognized and transposed to the participative aerial act, where I felt the confidence on conducting a strange in its adventure. A confidence expressed on the answer to the volunteer spoken about: “You will learn right away!”

My fear was located on the other, on the feeling it would arise in the supposed participant. In the beginning, I valued too much the possibility that the public would recognize, only, the fear on the scene. In other words, the participant would have no other feeling than fear. I forgot that my experience as a teacher allowed me to perceive the volunteers most willing to the risk, and seduced by it. I always had students with different degrees of interest and disposition to risk themselves in the aerial acrobatics. Learning, in this way, how to deal with their differences, besides perceiving them. The ability of mine got into the scene, along with me.

About the Chacovachi’s analogy to the chess game, by recognizing didactical and relational basis from the experience of teaching-learning aerial techniques as a developed capability, I became conscious of another piece that gets into the game with me, helping me to defend my king, in other words, my dignity. The queen. Which takes the form of an ability to behave myself facing

the risk shared with someone, to whom I become responsible, technically and artistically.

A rainha: personalidade e atitude

Como dissemos, o palhaço deve ter uma personalidade à prova de balas. Para isso, faz falta uma atitude particular ou, para dizer de outra maneira, faz falta muita atitude. Personalidade e atitude caminham juntas, porque sua atitude tem relação com a forma como você encara as coisas, partindo do seu olhar. E, aqui, trata-se de ser absolutamente você mesmo. (CHACOVACHI, 2016, p. 14)

A trait of my personality is to be an aerial technique teacher. This experience gives me the ability to choose an acrobatic sequence easy to learn by a practitioner in its first contact with aerial equipment. It brought to me, also, the capability to be assertive in the orientations, verbal and tactile, about the best way to execute an acrobatic movement in an aerial equipment and which precautions I must take so that there are no failure in the execution of an aerial exercise. It also gives me notions on how to protect a practitioner in case it makes an acrobatic error, avoiding injuries. Therefore, I can take a cautious risk along with such a volunteer.

Furthermore, the experience with diverse students and their characteristics helps me to identify a volunteer closer to the ideal. To choose a participant who is more willing to the risk and that have better physical capabilities to the execution of aerial exercises.

Lastly, and possibly most important, this personality trait gives me an assertive attitude towards the conduction of the volunteer. A set of empathic skills, practiced through years, which make it easy to arise a confidence feeling from the volunteer towards me and towards the proposed challenge. A feeling necessary for the chosen volunteer to be comfortable in accepting the invitation.

Going back to the episode on the “Festival Na Ponta do Nariz”, after the presentation I heard the first spontaneous feedback from a volunteer. The act took place within a variety show, along with other artists and their acts. The volunteer was there to appreciate another artist performance, of whom he was a friend. At the end of the spectacle, the volunteer told her artist friend that the best act of the night was mine, or better said, ours, precisely because she had participated.

Well, I have reached the first expectations of my artistic project. To cre-



ate a participative aerial act that could stimulate the experience of risk in a volunteer, which had received no previous training and that at the end of the adventure the feeling of pleasure was bigger than the fear experienced by such a volunteer. At that moment, I was more conscious about the skills involved, my attitude, my personality, or, in the words of Chacovachi, the queen in my game. Willing to take a higher risk, I started to devote myself to the creation of a circus spectacle composed by aerial participative acts to, through these acts, make the audience to feel the power on flying, as in the words of Gaston Bachelard:

sinta em ti tua força graciosa. Toma consciência de ser uma reserva de graça, de ser um poder de voo. Compreende que deténs, em tua própria vontade, como a jovem folha de feto, *Volutas enrodilhadas*. Com quem, por quem, contra quem és gracioso? Teu voo é uma libertação, um rapto? Gozas de tua bondade ou de tua força? De tua habilidade ou de tua natureza? (BACHELARD, 2001, p. 20)

The audacity, now, was not only to conduct a participant on the performance of an aerial act without rehearsal or previous training. It was about the creation of a spectacle capable of being more than just funny, a spectacle that would be an inspiring and transforming experience. To take a volunteer, and, with him, all the members of the public, to be conscious of being a grace reservoir, of being a flight power (BACHELARD, 2001), when such a flight is considered the metaphor to the human greatness.

I was able to get financial support, and with it I could take my project forward, counting on an artistic and technique team, time and space for the creation of the spectacle named “*Causos de voos e risco*” (Tales of flight and risk). Nearly to the end of the creation process, on the July 10 2018, at the headquarters of *Catavento Cia Circense*, in Goiânia, I performed an rehearsal open to the public, which had two participative acts in its program. In such occasion, with the same ethical-aesthetical posture described before, I invited a volunteer. In other words, I made a balloon game between the chairs of the audience, while making a speech structured around the word inspiration, and chose a participant. I left a balloon with her, moved myself to the center of the scenic space, about 6 or 7 meters away from the chosen volunteer, and solicited her to bring the balloon, which was in her hands, to me. Not luckily, she accepted the invitation.

We performed an acrobatic routine together. Routine that the volunteer learned on the moment she was performing it in front of the present public. At

the end, we were applauded. Along with the applauses, we could hear the audience shouting her name. I told her to go back to her seat and continued with the spectacle.

By that time in the spectacle production, there was a page in the social medias for the spectacle advertisement. The chosen volunteer, through such a communication mean, send a thanking message:

Parabéns pelo espetáculo e obrigada por ter me escolhido, mesmo sendo um ensaio foi super significativo pra mim, trouxe respostas que há tempo eu estava tentando entender... Algum tempo atrás, quando eu me arriscava a fazer coisas novas, onde causava um certo medo eu usava a expressão “nossa, vi a morte”. Hoje voltando para casa eu só pensava “nossa, hoje eu vi a vida”, e como é bom se sentir vivo. Muito Obrigada!

Facing such an important message, I think about the thanking words written. I think about which was my merit on the transformation of the volunteer's point of view? None, but to promote a space for her to experience the risk and the power of flying.

This space was grounded in a relationship stablished in few minutes on the stage, a complicity relationship between the artist and the member of the public. Complicity is, by the way, a pretty god term to define the necessary relationship in an acrobatic act of such nature. Accomplices are two or more people, who find themselves in collaboration. The term has two meanings, the first, with a certain negative connotation, is about the contribution on making a crime, an action against the law. The second, meaning that accomplice the one who helps somebody else to accomplish something.

That is just the ambiguity underlying our act. First, I need the collaboration of a member of the audience to perform an interactive aerial act. In counterpart, my posture and conduction on the scene favor the volunteer to make an aerial act, in other words, a flight. Therefore, I was her accomplice on defying the law of gravity.

The complicity relationship between the artist and the volunteer is essential for the feeling of trust towards the risk shared by both to arise. It is important to stress that al the technical and poetical procedures were used to help stablish and strengthen such a relationship.

The mentioned volunteer, from the physical experience of the risk inhe-

rent to the flight, was able to reframe her relationship with danger and the emotions involved with it. In this manner, concentrating myself, specially, on having an ethical conduct with a member of the audience, I was able to reach the proposal of taking a volunteer, and possibly through him all the other members of the public, to be conscious of being a grace reservoir, of being a flight power (BACHELARD, 2001).

Regarding the related experiences is good to get back at a few points of the text to make the final considerations.

In the first place, I believe to be important to return to the discussion between Rodrigo Matheus and Mario Bolognesi, presented on the text introduction. To realize that, even with the difference on their points of view, both defend that circus language carries a potential to the direct communication to the audience, being able to sharpen conflicts (BOLOGNESI, 2015). This recognition implies in being aware that is necessary to adopt attitudes, positions and aesthetical choices allied to an ethical responsibility to the dignity, and even the physical integrity of the volunteers.

The search for this ethical attitude may resume itself in stablishing an empathic complicity relationship with the member of the audience. Immersed in this relational condition, the artist will be more able to perceive the feelings that his proposed scenes cause in the public. Considering that, and using its artistic personality, which Chacovachi nominated queen, the artist should recalculate the scenic script, in search of, both its scenic ambitions, as well as the ethic compromise with the volunteer. Always prioritizing the dignity and safety of the volunteer.

Yet I believe it is indispensable to make the space for the negative of the chosen volunteer very clear and visible. The absence of imposition on the invitation strengthen the confidence and suggests there will be no pressure in any future moment, in case the volunteer decides to review its availability for any reason. A choice that besides being ethical, favors the effectiveness of the proposition.

It is still worth to emphasize that only guaranteeing a conduction of the participant on an ethical relationship, in which there is space for the autonomous expression of its desire and availability, we can come to propose a trans-

forming experience to the audience. In case this line is crossed, there is no chance of subjective transformation to occur from the aesthetical experience proposed.

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