

Who do you dance for?

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the creation of a dance work and the analysis of its reception considering the context and the spectators which it was created for and presented: female babassu coconut breakers and Terecô dancers. The dance research and creation method, Dancer-Researcher-Performer (BPI), was used in research and creation to gather data here under discussion. In the journey described and discussed here, the purpose is to highlight the deepening provided by the displacement of places considered as normative for the creation and presentation of choreographic works, for topologies considered as others, such as communities and *terreiros of Terecô* [Terecô meeting places] in the north of Tocantins State.

KEYWORDS

Dancer-Researcher-Performer. Creative process. Reception.

Para quem você dança?

Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo discutir a criação de uma obra de dança e a análise de sua recepção considerando o contexto e as espectadoras para as quais a mesma foi criada e apresentada: mulheres quebradeiras de coco babaçu e baiadoras de Terecô. O método de pesquisa e criação em dança, Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete (BPI), foi utilizado na pesquisa e criação que deu origem aos dados em discussão. No percurso aqui descrito e discutido, procura-se evidenciar o aprofundamento propiciado pelo deslocamento de locais tidos como normativos para a criação e apresentação de obras

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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coreográficas, para topologias tidas como outras, tais como comunidades e terreiros de Terecô ao norte do Estado do Tocantins.

The dancer-researcher-performer (*BPI - Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete*), a practical-theoretical method of research and creation in Dance, presents, since its creation, the procedure called Return to the Field. Returning to the Field concerns the action of presenting to the people who one cohabited with in field research, the work resulting from the experience in question. Such a procedure has a complexity that gains new developments according to the research field and the situation which it occurs in.

At BPI, fields of research, communities, social niches, celebrations and rituals are considered, often with tones of forgetfulness and invisibility due to, above all, their social, ethnic, racial and religious context, the region they inhabit. Thus, occupying a marginality that is not always and not only geographic, but mainly established by the economic power that flattens existences in their specificities.

The focus of the field research located in the BPI Co-inhabiting with the Source axis, is the encounter between researchers and *baiadoras* [Terecô dancers], healers, farm-laborers, women and also men who resist, inhabiting such social strata, in an exquisite work of human relations. The work is developed in the structure of the method that is mainly established in three axes: *Body inventory, Cohabiting with the Source and Character Structuring* (RODRIGUES, 2003), also in the tools used in all stages (RODRIGUES, 2010), and a multitude of procedures in constant creation in each ongoing process. The objective is to move towards the development of something (be it dance creation, cohabitation, writing about practices and / or other aspects) that is alive. Although there is an extensive and dense bibliography on BPI, as well as works and dance spectacles created with the method, and a permanent practice for more than 30 years in universities and public and private schools, there is work committed to not crystallize their ways of doing and researching.

One of these BPI fruits, a Phd research guided by the creator of the method, proposed to analyze the reception of the work by the cohabited source, that is to say: 1. Create a work addressed to the people he/she cohabited with in field research; 2. Return to this field; 3. Dance the work created for the people who he/she cohabited with; 4. After this action, perform an analysis of how the work was received by its viewers. Thus, the research to be discussed in this paper, which is about the BPI and also used it as a method, brings a deepening from the use of the Return to Field tool.

As noted earlier, the complexity of Returning to the Field unfolds according to some aspects, such as: the field in question, the type of work to be presented and, mainly, the perspective adopted for the procedure. In the case to be presented and discussed here, we dwelt under the perspective of receiving the work and creating it addressed to the cohabited people. Along the way, the question of choices focusing on an ethical approach was imperative. These choices, in turn, were taken from a series of questions launched and repeated several times by the project director and research advisor. Such a state of questioning enabled the appearance of irreversible fissures in the way of creating and thinking about the creation of the dancer-researcher.

Returning to the field: ethical implications in encounters of different natures and topologies

Since the spectacle that founded BPI, “*Graça Bailarina de Jesus ou Sete Linhas de Umbanda Salvem o Brasil*”, by Graziela Rodrigues, the creator of BPI, returning to the field with the work born of the encounter and cohabitation between people surveyed and the dancer-researcher, has been a constant (COSTA, 2012). The realization of this stage triggers a series of deepening for the research and its artistic work, but there is, above all, a relationship of respect in relation to the researched communities, once the work is taken (as well as other materials from cohabitation) and the listening is opened for the reception of the same. It is an ethical attitude towards the exchange that took place in the field of research, because the work is filled with content emerging from the relationships established.

Regarding the aspect of ethics in this doing, it is anchored in the exercise of conscience. As punctuated by Chauí (2010, p. 433) “For there to be ethical conduct, there must be a conscious agent”. Still according to the author, such an agent has knowledge about the differences between:

good and evil, right and wrong, allowed and forbidden, virtue and vice. The moral conscience not only knows such differences, but also recognizes itself as able to judge the value of acts and conduct and to act in accordance with moral values, being therefore responsible for its actions and feelings and for the consequences of what it does and feels. Conscience and responsibility are indispensable conditions of the ethical life. (CHAUI, 2010, p. 433)

When at BPI, one opens oneself to the cohabitation with individuals located in cultural and social contexts distinct from the researcher’s place of ori-

gin, it starts from the premise of the difference in social classes that affects “various morals”. Still according to Chauí (2010), moral concerns the values that each society establishes in relation to “good and evil, allowed and prohibited, and correct conduct, valid for all its members” (ibid. p. 437). It is not, however, a matter of setting rules, but a delicateness in entering places that may operate in a different way that one is not familiar with. Within the sphere of the field research of the Co-inhabiting with the Source axis, there is a permanent state of observation with a “whole body look”, on the specificities of the field. In this sense, the dancer also has the resources to pay attention to the way his/her perceptions of difference reverberates in him/her. The aim is to establish a relationship of respect for the singularities of the context and its individuals.

In the cutout of Return to the Field, when opening to receive the impressions of the spectators-sources, the dancer-researcher seeks to open himself/herself up to their validation, since something present in the work concerns what the cohabitation experience was. Listening to what emerges from this reception involves divesting yourself of a desire for some kind of acceptance, since what matters in this area is the reading of these viewers with regard to what emerged from the previous contact.

It is noted that, in the action of dancing to the cohabited source, there is still another deepening: in view of the fact that the impressions from the co-inhabited viewers carry values in the context they inhabit, there is a possibility to refine the previously learned data; there is a new field, but now with the body performing the work (and character) and, therefore, metamorphosed by / in the encounter with the cohabited people, the dynamics of the context, its cosmology, among other aspects.

Several BPI researches have already entered this phase of the process, but with different focuses. Elisa Costa’s master’s degree research, mentored by Graziela Rodrigues, investigated the Return to the Field procedure with the aim of “emphasizing the exchanges and interferences between Xavante and ‘*Nascedouro*’, through what appeared in the body of the interpreter from that return to the village (COSTA, 2012, p.14). Paula Teixeira’s master’s degree research (2007), did not contain the Return to the Field as a focal point, but it presents the occurrence of such after decision taken with her advisor. At this juncture, her interest dwelled on, according to her “(...) and I, curious to know how they would like my presentation and, mainly, how it would resonate for them

as identification and/or strangeness” (TEIXEIRA, 2007, p. 94). As for Larissa Turtelli, she dwelt upon the reception of her work whose field research took place in several Umbanda temples, both by spectators at official dance venues and the Umbanda temple itself (TURTELLI; RODRIGUES, 2014). Besides the aforementioned researches, there are a number of examples of occurrence of returning to the field with different characteristics.

The doctoral research “Who do you dance for? The creation and the reception of the dance in the Dancer-Researcher-Performer method: an experience with female babassu coconut breaker and with Terecô” proposed as a main objective, dwell on the reception of the work by the cohabited source. The effectuation of this objective involved looking at what was in question through different perspectives: both from the dancer who went through the experience and has this data embodied in / from the presentations to the cohabited source and afterwards analyzed the various audiovisual materials captured at the time of the presentations, and from the advisor-director who was also on site and analyzed the material.

It should be noted that the research path began even during the master’s degree, so that the contact with the research field occurred over four consecutive years, between master’s and doctoral research. On this path, questions arose that called the eye to adjust its lenses in relation to the material it was dealing with. In the operation of the BPI method, the excellence of this work is through, especially, always looking at the specificities of the cohabited people, with the purpose of not engaging in a violent work. For Butler, (2015, p. 16), the ethical standard must be constantly “subjected to critical review”, for “if it ignores the social conditions, which are also conditions under which all ethics must be appropriated, that ethos becomes violent.

In the research group discussions, guidelines, procedures, basic readings for development with/in BPI, themes such as ethnocentrism, otherness, psychology focused on psychoanalytic issues, are widely addressed. It is even possible to affirm that the Inventory in the Body axis itself plays a role in enabling the execution of a dance and research where ethics is permanently in question. Its objective is to allow the dancer to get in touch with his/her gestural history through dance (by means of the Physical Structure and Symbolic Anatomy) and also of a research, so that he/she is situated socially, historically, physiologically approaching the crystallized values in themselves, such as pre-

judices and veiled discrimination (RODRIGUES, 2003). When approaching this reality and accepting it as part of himself/herself, the researcher-dancer becomes aware of the risk of influencing the field with such values, often never questioned because they are naturalized by the family and society.

According to Chaui (2000), values refer to what is considered good or bad, which can be rewarded or scolded. Also, according to this author:

We are formed by the customs of our society, which educates us to respect and reproduce the values proposed by it as good and, therefore, as rights and duties. Thus, values and ways seem to exist for and in themselves, seem to be natural and timeless, facts or data which we relate with since our birth: we are rewarded when we follow them, punished when we transgress them (Ibid. P. 437)

In contact with their own personal history, either through a search carried out outside the studio, but also in a search of the body in motion, when perceiving, unfolding and elaborating content from Brazilian popular manifestations that arouse relationships of proximity-distance, familiarity-strangeness, empathy-rejection, the dancer-performer goes through a questioning of the established values, which before were hardly reached under a critical, but non-judgmental perspective (RODRIGUES, 1997). Although this is a state of greater prominence in the Inventory in the Body axis, it is also of paramount importance in the Co-inhabiting with the Source axis, where contact with the difference tenaciously hatches judgments, prejudices and projections, which the dancer is ready to deal with, not only in the intellectual aspect, but also in the body.

Creation process: from the surface to the depth

The doctoral research here in question had its field research of the Co-inhabiting with the Source carried out in the state of Tocantins, in the region known as Bico de Papagaio, where babassu areas are located due to the transition of ecosystems that are found there: savanna and Amazonian forest. Thus, added to social and economic issues, the main activity of women that inhabit this region is the breaking of the babassu coconut. Therefore, the first trip to this field aimed to get immersed in the universe of female babassu coconut breakers in rural communities in the region in question. Over three weeks, during which it was possible to stay in two different communities, the dancer-performer lived a daily life with the coconut breakers, including learning to break the babassu coconut. This first contact fructified in several trips to the field the following

years, which opened a series of questions concerning the established creative process, the analysis of movements and writing about the bodies which she cohabited with.

The Terecô religious manifestation, which features rituals of incorporation of spiritual entities known as Enchanted, was a prominent point through the research, where the researcher dwelt upon along the field researches. Terecô has the function of reestablishing the balance, be it physical, spiritual or social (CÁLIPO, 2012). The context which it occurs in is extremely precarious with regard to access to a structure that is both tangible, such as piped water, paving, sewage system, effective health system, and intangible.

When proposing, with the advisor and director of work, to create for these women who she cohabited with, the whole conception that the researcher had about the creation and elaboration of an artistic work needed to be revised, often refuted. That is because in this exquisite work with the other, be it from the director to the dancer in process, from the dancer to the people who she cohabited with, or with the spectators who the communication is intended with, all the singularities and its specificities must be considered.

In the beginning, there was a principle, a concern with a certain type of “scenic finish”, uncovering an aesthetic concern closer to the surface of the body, than to its depths. This, obviously, was not situated on a conscious level of the dancer-researcher. Although there is an aesthetic derived from BPI’s dramaturgy due to its structure as a method, it is not based on rigidity, that is, there is no fixed choice for a particular aesthetic, mainly because the choices are based on what emerges from the body in process. It is in this aspect that “depth” is regarded, since the material to be worked on in creation is what the body lets out, dealing “with the possible reality of the interpreter and with its singularity” (MELCHERT, 2007), with what is not yet shaped by the layers of the consciousness, adapted to the values impregnated in the person.

Although there is no concern about communicating a decodified message, or make oneself understood linearly, at BPI the relation with the spectator receives a especial attention, where the dancer tries to feel, while on the scene, what comes from his/her audience and allow, in a guided way, with the character dwelling there to impregnate with it and respond, in his/her performance, to what comes. Turtelli (2014) details that:

There is an active attitude in both directions by the interpreter, to make sure that the audience perceives what the character in his/her body is feeling and to make sure to perceive what the audience is feeling. (TURTELLI, 2014, p.43).

What is of interest to this kind of work is a type of porosity that allows the conscious transit of sensations, emotions and movements between dancer and spectators.

In this sense, considering the practice time of the dancer-researcher who proposed to this experience, there were striking records of how this relationship occurs in constant openness, exchange and search for listening, with the body, to the spectators. It turns out that it was necessary to consider firstly the difference of contexts in which previous experiences had taken place, because although most of them had not happened in places considered normative for the performing arts, but in sheds, gymnasiums, among others, the spectators lived in an environment close to theirs: the city. In the case of her experience of returning to the field, the same occurred in an event in which a spectacle, whose creation was not addressed to a specific audience, was presented, which differs diametrically from the proposal that followed: creating and dancing for them, the cohabited women.

The first aspect considered was the relationship that women in the communities surveyed had with spectacular arts such as: dance, theater and circus. Which led to the reflection of what relationships were established with dance, the main means of Terecô events, regardless of the event considered as spectacular. It is an aspect that directly affects the ethical issue in dealing with difference: considering it and exercising relativization and criticism. As a strategy, questioning these people who there was an intention to create for and having them as interlocutors was used. The first step was understanding which codes, in the sense of the performance, these individuals dealt with. Was there familiarity with the almost institutionalized structure of the performing arts, in which the space is divided between stage and audience (regardless of their disposition), the time with a beginning and an end in which the attention is held on almost only what happens there, and also in relation to the fictional character of what occurs on the scene? These spectators had not experienced a spectacle of performing arts (in the institutionalized sense) and the relation with dance was, mostly, through Terecô rituals.

At Terecô, everything begins with “a body uneasiness”, which turns into a

“getting not quite right in the head”, until “almost going crazy”. At some point, movements break out in the body without an outline, uncontrolled impulses, and the women and girls who live this process, run out through the woods, throw themselves at the floor and walls, injure themselves. A master is called to deal with the situation which, usually, is controlled by relatives and neighbors who even tie women up so that movement impulses that hurt them can be contained. This is the potency of the force dealt with at Terecô.

When an episode such as this occurs, there is no doubt on the part of the community in which the woman is inserted. Sometimes a neighbor hears “a strange noise” coming from the house next door and identifies the need to check what happens. In the presence of the woman who is affected by body impulses, this other woman (neighbor, friend, relative) notices that there is a Terecô event happening there. He/She observes the characteristics modeled on the body of the other, as well as the dynamics present there and, often, identifies which enchanted (spiritual entity) is incorporated in that body and, thus, what are the first procedures to be adopted before asking for help from a master.

These are existences which have heightened senses and are necessary, even, in caring for the other. His/Her listening, gaze, reading of the movement and his/her dynamics are based on sensitivity. Affection permeates all care relationships at Terecô, where the master embraces the physical and emotional body of her mediums. It was essential to consider that these were the spectators who the creation was addressed to.

With respect to the moment of creation of this choreographic work, the dancer-researcher, when in guided laboratories, started to experience a series of body “blockages”, “emptiness” that remained for months. It should be noted that, when in process, issues contacted in the field may trigger personal issues that must be worked and elaborated, but not developed within the scope of creation. This was one of the aspects present, leading the dancer to experience (internal) images, sensations and emotions of devitalized and lost women, supported by guts, literally shattered. The difficulty in dealing with such contents was based not only on their nature, but also on a denial on the part of the dancer, who lived as a counterpoint, an idealization about what would become the work.

From then on, the director and advisor began to question: “who do you

want to dance for?” (CÁLIPO, 2016). This question, which took her time and a lot of work to be indeed understood by the interpreter, confronted her creative movement, which until then still wandered over the surfaces of the body, not touching the depths of the “women of remains” that inhabited her. The director, when launching such questioning exhaustively, was engaged with the principles of BPI and with future spectators. To enter their places and dance for them, there was a demand for a type of opening that involved the removal of any aesthetic attachment, and a firm grip on the senses impregnated in the body. Hence, the difficulty in this creation. The demand for honesty with what was bursting through the body, involved courage, sometimes delivered by forceps, to deal with the distant contents of the idealizations about the field, about what the body would generate as a work, including, about how this body would appear on the scene. Ultimately, it was about letting go of desires and holding on to what was actually present in the body.

Dancing for spectators whose dance comes to life and allows one to live another narrative through the internal senses, generating a potency of movement based on precision, required nothing less than opening one's own senses with the finish that was possible at that moment.

After all, who does one dance for? Reception issues

In addition to this established discussion, first of all, in artistic practice, there was also a questioning about the reception analysis which was proposed as the main objective. In view of the fact that the creation of the work for female babassu coconut breakers demanded such care, thinking about ways of analyzing the reception considering these spectators, was essential.

Regarding the look on the spectator of the work, Desgranges (2008) argues, anchored in Walter Benjamin, transformations established mainly from modernity, as responsible for changes in the perception:

It is pressed by an urban experience marked by risks and shocks of everyday life, by gestural standardization, by the boisterous consciousness, and by the discouragement of the actuation of deep and sensitive regions of the psyche.

Considering such a spectator, with his/her perception altered by the milieu, Pavis (2003, p.216) points out the need for him/her to have rehabilitated “his/her avid vision, touch, smell, kinesthesia: senses that are often sterilized or

anesthetized” (PAVIS, 2003, p. 216).

As previously described, the spectators who the work was addressed to, can be considered the antithesis of the state of anesthesia. In this sense, the bibliography was important to present the different aspects to be considered in the analysis of reception, but also to trigger the need to look at the specificity of the spectators.

The action of considering the differences between the spectator approached in the contacted bibliography, and the spectators in the cut of the research in question, also consists of an ethics in the work of the performing arts. It is not a question of refuting ways of doing things, but of dealing with plurality, submerging oneself in receptive fields far from a hegemonic logic. It is about considering the particularities of the contexts and their individuals.

For the analysis that took place in the research in question, audiovisual records were made from different perspectives during all presentations. Using such data together with the perception of the dancer and the director-advisor in the field, the body transformations of the spectators were considered as a source for the measurement of reception, since validated psychomotor reactions were triggered for it (OLIVEIRA, 2011). The bodies of the spectators, receptacle of the contents of the work, acted as “participant, reactive and affective” (PAVIS, 2003 p. 215). By observing them, it was possible to verify a correspondence between the bodily reactions observed in the records, and the reports they made after watching the work.

In this way, the methodology adopted to focus on the reception of this work, was guided by the experience itself, focusing on the speech of spectators, as well as the psychomotor reactions captured in the audiovisual records. The refusal to look at the spectator’s topological specificity runs the risk of affecting the universalization of the ways of perceiving and receiving.

Throughout the course of this research, the permanent state of questioning established by the advisor stood out: after all, who do you want to dance for? What do you have to say to them? The ways of listening, looking and feeling the materials from the various meetings established in the research were also questioned: between researcher and female babassu coconut breakers, between researcher and advisor, between researcher and the audiovisual records from

the experience. The assumption of the difference in position between research and its field, launched the responsibility of not working with certainties.

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