

# The collage and the director-performer in the accessible scene of Pippo Delbono: an analysis based on Questo Buio Feroce and Vangelo

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**Abstract** | This paper aims to investigate some aspects about the organization of theatrical compositions based on the analysis of two performances, Questo Buio Feroce (2006) and Vangelo (2016), by Italian director Pippo Delbono. The purpose of the study is to introduce the aspects of collage and the director-performer as compositional principles that guide an accessible scene.

**KEYWORDS:** Pippo Delbono, Disability theatre, Theatre.

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## A colagem e o encenador-performer na cena acessível de Pippo Delbono: uma análise a partir de Questo Buio Feroce e Vangelo

**Resumo** | O presente artigo busca investigar aspectos relativos à organização de composições cênicas através da análise de dois espetáculos, Questo Buio Feroce (2006) e Vangelo (2016), do encenador italiano Pippo Delbono. O objetivo do estudo é apresentar os aspectos da colagem e do encenador-performer como princípios composicionais que são um indicativo a uma cena acessível.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Pippo Delbono, Cena acessível, Teatro.

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## El collage y el director-performer en la escena accesible de Pippo Delbono: un análisis a partir de Questo Buio Feroce y Vangelo

**Resumen** | Este artículo tiene como objetivo investigar algunos aspectos de la organización de las composiciones escénicas a partir del análisis de dos performances, Questo Buio Feroce (2006) y Vangelo (2016), del director italiano Pippo Delbono. El objetivo del estudio es introducir los aspectos del collage y el director-performer como principios compositivos que orientan una escena accesible..

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Pippo Delbono, Escena accesible, Teatro.

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## Introduction

Seeing the theatre of Pippo Delbono and his company is an invitation to enter a universe of open signs that feed a constant friction between the desire for joy and its breakers and the fury of violence to which bodies are subjected and against which they struggle to survive. The violence of diseases, religion, discrimination, prejudice and abandonment affect us, but before we seek to run away, looking to the other way, Delbono brings us the very ness of calm speech and the festivity of the body that dances without strings attached. Contradictions perfectly articulated in a theater that does not hide being theater, which, in itself, insists on bringing us to the surface of pulsating life.

In this paper we intend to investigate some aspects about the organization of scenic compositions from the interaction between artists with and without disabilities, seeking to map some compositional principles that are indicative of an accessible scene. To this, we have determined as the object of analysis two shows by the Italian director Pippo Delbono. They are: *Questo Buio Feroce* (2006) and *Vangelo* (2016).<sup>1</sup>

The understanding about the accessible scene that guides this writing brings as a starting point the assumption of accessibility as a condition for people's interaction and access to any property, resource or service. We understand, thus, that the accessible scene recognizes different ways of people's relationship with the environment and cultural artefacts, in an ecological perspective centered on interaction. Singular, unique, the person's interaction with the environment is crossed by particular contexts, backgrounds, trajectories and modes of existence. An accessible scene stimulates these particular modes of existence, whether in its doing or in its reading/receiving (ie, of scenic action and reception).

Our starting point for the analysis were the principles of organization of scenic composition pointed out in the doctoral thesis "Abordagens à cena inclusiva: princípios norteadores para uma prática cênica acessível" (BERSELLI, 2019). In this approach, we initially recognize the collage as a very present principle in Delbono's works, which besides enabling an articulation of the scene through the juxtaposition of different focuses, elements, images and bodies, it was also our initial guide in the analysis of the shows. During the analysis, there was a need to approach other materials, such doctoral thesis by José Amâncio Tonezzi Rodrigues Pereira entitled "O teatro das disfunções ou A cena contaminada" (2008) and the article by Martha Ribeiro "Corpos sublimes: o teatro-festa de Pippo Delbono Il vangelo della teatralità" (2018). In this search for references we realize that there are still few studies and researches in Portuguese that aim to discuss and problematize the modes of organization and operationalization of the scene

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<sup>1</sup> This is one part of the study developed by Teatro Flexível: práticas cênicas e acessibilidade (CNPq/UFSM), during 2020, with the support of the Fundo de Incentivo à Pesquisa (FIPE-CAL/PRPGP/UFSM). The study methodology involved analysis and description of the shows, as well as a bibliographic review. The shows were accessed in their recorded versions, made available during 2020 by Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione and Pippo Delbono Company in free streaming on the Vimeo channel of Emilia Romagna Teatro. Subtitling was available in eleven languages, including Portuguese. The online sharing was connected to the moment of lockdown and physical and social distancing experienced worldwide as measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the show was only available online until September 2020, we present extensive descriptions of the scenes in order to share considerable information that contributes to readers following our analysis.

established by Delbono since the 1980s. We believe that the reduced number of materials may be related to the restricted circulation of his works in Brazil.

By delving into Pippo Delbono's work, we find several poetic aspects to be analyzed, as well as other guiding principles that can be problematized when we seek to investigate an accessible scene. However, in this article, we focus our analysis on the aspects of collage, the guiding principle that articulated the beginning of the analysis, and on the figure of the director-performer. These two guiding principles evidence not only the way the scene is operated, but also the aesthetics of the director's work, consolidated over several years.

### **Pippo Delbono Company: the search for an unconventional theater**

*"[...] deep down, my theater is a search for freedom, above all, from conventions, such as the one that says what is or is not a disabled person"*  
Pippo Delbono<sup>2</sup>

Pippo Delbono's theater is an invitation that mobilizes us to see beyond the demarcations of the body and the scene itself. Delbono invites us to instability, turns us upside down, confronts us with the real life we pretend not to see. From the streets to the stage, the scene becomes the scream of those outside who are insistently silenced, exposing the illness of a world that does not fit in the theater, and a theater that, wanting to contain the lived experience of the world, strips itself of its conventions.

Like many of us performers, Pippo Delbono began his theatrical studies focused on traditional dramatic art, however, throughout his career he collaborated with various artists such as Pepe Robledo, Iben Nagel Rasmussen and Pina Bausch, to name a few, who influenced his journey in search of a non-traditional theater.<sup>3</sup> But, it was mainly two events that changed his perceptions about the body and the theatrical work. The first was the moment when Delbono found out he was HIV positive, and the second concerns his meeting with Vincenzo Cannavacciuolo, better known as Bobò.<sup>4</sup>

From these events, Delbono's poetic research began to be marked, throughout the 1990s and 2000, by the presence of marginalized people from different contexts, such as Armando Cozzuto, Nelson Lariccia, Gianluca Ballarè, among others who became part of his company. In this way, Pippo placed singular bodies at the center of gravity of the scene as the essence of the theatrical work, exploring its creative and expressive possibilities. And as Ribeiro recalls, "if the real world is a desert for them, the theater will be the place where everyone can repopulate or create a new body for themselves, stop being invisible before disappearing"<sup>5</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 318- 319). Thus, the disabled, old, thin or small body gains new dimensions in Delbono's work, other performances and discourses beyond representations and

2 In the original version: "[...] no fundo, o meu teatro é uma procura de liberdade, antes de mais, das convenções, como aquela que diz o que é ou não é um deficiente". SARDO, M. J; BARRADAS, N. Mendigos, deficientes e sem-abrigo no Festival de Avignon. In: Ípsilon. 04 Ago. 2002. Available at: <https://www.publico.pt/2002/08/04/jornal/mendigos-deficientes-e-semabrigo-no-festival-de-avignon-1734>. Accessed on: Jan 21, 2021.

3 To learn more about Delbono's formation, the beginning of his trajectory in theater and his first scenic experiences, see Pereira (2008) and Berselli (2019).

4 Bobò (1936-2019) was a short man, microcephalic, deaf-mute and illiterate. Bobò and Delbono met each other in the Aversa asylum, where Bobò was hospitalized for 45 years. For more information about Pippo Delbono Company and performers, access: <https://www.pippodelbono.it/biografia-pippo-delbono.html>

5 In the original version: "se o mundo real é um deserto para eles, o teatro será o lugar onde todos podem se repovoar ou criar para si um novo corpo, deixar de ser invisível antes de desaparecer".

social ties.

Delbono clearly admits the influence of actors in his creation process. Always devoted to the study of the body, he builds his shows based on the poetic possibility present in each of the participants. For him, disability is an intellectual concept, which makes people see decrease and disability before anything else.<sup>6</sup>(PEREIRA, 2008, p. 147).

Through the articulation of a group of artists formed by people with and without disabilities, with and without previous repertoire in the area of theatre, Pippo Delbono has established with his company over the years a scenario of contrasts, which previously aimed at the abstraction of theatricality, it shows the deconstruction of this and also the dismantling of models that see disability as an impossibility. By moving away from a hegemonic view of the bodies that occupy the scene through the bias of a high physical performance (possible or merely projected) or of a constructed normality, Delbono operates a rupture with reference points that indicate to the (dis)ability and notions of ability (of the skillful and of the unskillful). His practice is premised on the uniqueness of his collaborators, which is immediately exposed by the high visibility given to his physical characteristics, and by the investment in an unconventional theater based on autobiographical materials, both of him and of the actor-performers.

Thus Delbono brings art and life together, as a way of valuing the simple and genuine gesture combined with the desire to transform theater and society, through a revolutionary art that is not at the service of established models, but rather seeks to tension them, blowing up borders, mixing languages and, above all, launching new provocations to the performing arts.

## Collage

One of the first aspects that can be observed in Pippo Delbono's works, in addition to the presence of people with and without disabilities on stage, is the structuring of the shows through collage and even the juxtaposition of different scenes, bodies and elements. Collage as a way of organizing the scenes of an exhibition is linked to collage made in cinema and was also very present in the works of Pina Bausch (CALDEIRA, 2010), an artist with whom Pippo Delbono collaborated in his artistic trajectory. Due to this collaboration, it is possible to see in Delbono's works many organizational and poetic aspects also used by Bausch.<sup>7</sup> This recognition of influences can lead us to observe a certain trajectory that involves Bausch's own studies with Kurt Jooss in Folkwang Horshcule of the 1950s. One of the main names linked to the history of dance-theater, Jooss already used collage as a dramaturgical strategy.

It is especially this lineage that gives us an understanding of the collage used here. When weaving a study on the work of the Italian director through the analysis of the shows *Questo Buio Feroce* (2006) and *Vangelo* (2016), we can see that in both

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<sup>6</sup> In the original version: "Delbono admite claramente a influência dos atores em seu processo de criação. Consagrando-se desde sempre ao estudo do corpo, constrói seus espetáculos a partir da possibilidade poética presente em cada um dos participantes. Para ele, deficiência é um conceito intelectual, que faz as pessoas enxergarem a diminuição e a incapacidade antes de qualquer outra coisa."

<sup>7</sup> Delbono participated in the creation of the show *Ahnen*, in 1987. "Pina Bausch è stata una grande maestra" (DELBONO, 1999, p. 34).

there is the use of collage as an articulating principle of the scene. This principle is used as a way of structuring the show as a whole, organizing the different scenes without a dramatic and linear connection between them; it is also present in scenes that explore the collage of different images and focuses that happen simultaneously; and, furthermore, it is evidenced by the juxtaposition of different autonomous elements on the stage, creating plural meanings and discourses. Thus, it seems possible to mention at least four aspects in which collage is present in Delbono's work: the collage of the different blocks that make up the show, the collage of the different scenes that make up each of the blocks, the collage of different focuses of the scene/images in the same scene and collage/juxtaposition of different significant elements throughout the work.

When analyzing the two shows, which have their births marked by a decade of difference, also relating them to the director's other works, we can see that collage, as a strategy for articulating the scene, is a consolidated feature in scenic aesthetics developed by the director. And, as Pereira pointed out, "Pippo Delbono's creative work is established as a process of montage, or even collage itself, with the junction of autonomous elements, placed side by side and disconnected from each other, without the constitution of a previous sense"<sup>8</sup> (2008, p. 159). That is, by exploring collage in his creative processes, Delbono breaks with the linearity of the scene, seeing the multiplicity of significant elements juxtaposed, also breaking with the possible linearity of the various non-textual dramaturgies present in the scenic event. Likewise, there is a mobilization of the notions of space and time, due to the discontinuity and fragmentation of the show.



Figure 1 Espetáculo *Questo Buio Feroce* (2006). Promotion.<sup>9</sup>

The show *Questo Buio Feroce* (2006), for example, begins with a white body

<sup>8</sup> In the original version: "trabalho criativo de Pippo Delbono se institui como um processo de montagem, ou ainda, de colagem propriamente dita com a reunião de elementos autônomos, colocados lado a lado e desvinculados entre si, sem a constituição de um sentido prévio".

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.agendalx.pt/events/event/questo-buio-feroce/>. Accessed on: Jan 20, 2021.

lying sideways on stage, half-naked, skeletal, apparently male, wearing a tribal/African mask painted with worn white paint. He is still, as if watching the audience. After some time he moves by crawling towards the spectators, stands up and goes from one side to the other watching them. During the actions performed by the masked figure it is possible to see an empty scenic space completely white, both the floor and the side walls and in the back of the stage, there is also a very strong white lighting. He sits on the floor for a brief moment and then lies down on his side again, in the center of the stage, one hand on his mask, he watches the spectators. At this point, the director begins the narration of a text: "This Fierce Darkness is the title of a book I found by chance in a village in a distant land, Burma. A land of poverty, of dictatorship, of people who live in huts. A land that welcomes you with great sweetness. In this book, the American poet Harold Brodkey tells of his journey towards AIDS".<sup>10</sup>

At the end of the narration, a female figure enters the scene in a wheelchair, apparently without her lower legs, wearing a very vibrant red outfit and a long wig of the same color and shade. She crosses the stage from the back to the proscenium, where she stops exactly in line with the skeletal figure in the center of the stage, and stands watching the spectators, breathing heavily, as if expressing a feeling of pain.

When she stops close to the spectators, in the back of the stage the white walls open up, causing a crack in the center, through which a figure appears wearing a white lab outfit, boots, gloves and face protection. The figure closes the opening in the wall as if closing a sliding window and begins inserting white chairs at the back of the stage, one next to the other. Meanwhile, the woman in the wheelchair starts waving a red fan, while another figure in a lab coat enters the scene and takes her offstage. Currently, there are eight chairs at the back of the stage and the figure in the mask remains lying in the center.

A woman, in a shoulder-length black wig, wearing a white dress reminiscent of a nurse's attire, enters the scene carrying a white chair, places it in front of the skeletal man in the center, and appears to be looking at him. At that moment it seems that they are going to relate, but when the woman sits in the chair with her back to the spectators, the man gets up and leaves in awe, at this moment in addition to a change of expectation, since the relationship is not established, the lights fade and the scene is taken by a shadow. The woman, then, starts a count that gradually increases, which takes us to the end of the first scene and the beginning of the second. For study purposes, we identified that when the woman enters the scene with the chair, the transition from one scene to the other begins, a transition that occurs when the skeletal man leaves the scene and the low light establishes another environment. However, we realize that both scenes deal with the same aspect, a relationship with the hospital space, diseases and the waiting room. In this case, it is possible to first notice the collage of several focuses/images in the same scene, the collage of several significant elements (for example: white space, mask, completely white and completely red costumes, skeletal man, silence) and the collage of two scenes that, despite exploring the same theme, have neither a linear connection nor a cause-consequence logic between them.

The spectator is confronted from the start by the exposure of the disability,

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<sup>10</sup> Excerpt taken from the version available on the Vimeo channel of Emilia Romagna Teatro, with subtitles in Portuguese. The program was available for free on the platform until September 30, 2020.

whether by the stripping of a skeletal body or a body in a wheelchair, exposing disability as a significant element, and which also present elements in their bodies that point to signs such as, for example, the bright red that resembles blood on the clothes, hair and objects of the female figure; and the mask on the skeletal body that points to a disfigurement and impossibility of defining the body, which generates a certain strangeness. According to Berselli, collage as a scenic composition strategy,

[...] it implies a non-accommodation in a continuous lens that could lead to a convergence of situations to the ways of seeing already stabilized in the spectator based on their patterns. The continuous questioning of the logics established by the pattern of seeing directly implies the scenes in which the disability is present.<sup>11</sup> (2019, p. 118).

Thus, what we can see in the first scene is the juxtaposition of different bodies, figures and resources, three images with different focuses that stick together in the same scene, bringing significant elements, such as the weakened body and the disabled body that are outside the expected standards to be seen in the scene, the director's narration that reveals one of the themes (the AIDS), and which is also one of the elements present in the collage, the laboratory clothes that refer to a protection against possible contamination, the chairs that resemble a classroom, and the space of the scene all white that reminds the room of hospitals, hospices, mental institutions and even a solitary room. Later, the presence of the figure of the woman dressed in white refers to a nurse.

Bringing together different resources, presenting the simultaneity of actions and keeping open signs in the scene, the director leads the spectator to a complete reversal in the ways of relating to the scene. No longer a synthesis, no longer a safe reference point to anchor to assign value, here the spectator deals with an affectation that is not necessarily linked to an external reference given a priori. In other words, as Berselli points out when she analyzes other shows that originate from the interaction between artists with and without disabilities and who use collage, the spectator is like,

[...] placed in front of a plurality of actions that happen concurrently, having to deal with the juxtaposition that does not offer a synthesis and that stimulates its reading beyond the common place [...] expanding the spectator's need to choose which its focus of attention and reduction of spaces for maintaining a sequential logic in the reading of actions.<sup>12</sup> (2019, p. 177).

By losing the sequential logic in reading and the affectation derived from it, the spectator is left with the responsibility to deal with symbols beyond social constructions, and the engagement with aspects of the sensitive is crucial. The spectator is then invited to interact with the elements, recovering points of

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<sup>11</sup> In the original version: "[...] implica em uma não acomodação em uma lente contínua que poderia levar a uma convergência das situações para os modos de ver já estabilizados no espectador a partir de seus padrões. O questionamento contínuo das lógicas estabelecidas pelo padrão de ver implica diretamente nas cenas em que a deficiência se faz presente." (2019, p. 118).

<sup>12</sup> In the original version: "[...] colocado frente a uma pluralidade de ações que acontecem concomitantemente, tendo de lidar com a justaposição que não oferece uma síntese e que estimula sua leitura para além do lugar comum [...] ampliando a necessidade do espectador de escolher qual seu foco de atenção e reduzindo os espaços para a manutenção de uma lógica sequencial na leitura das ações." (2019, p. 177).

connection in their social and cultural repertoire, in their depths. There is no imposed reception standard and the most diverse itineraries are possible.

The plurality of actions and elements that the spectator is faced with gains even more intensity in the show *Vangelo* (2016). In many moments, the director explores a frenzy in the scene, everything happens very quickly and there is a great overlap of scene focuses, compositions, elements and bodies, in addition to a frantic sequence of images that make up the scene. In many moments the scene is so contaminated by the resources and actions and by a frantic pace that it is difficult to follow all the actions and it is necessary to make choices about what to follow.



Figure 2 *Vangelo* (2016). Promotion.<sup>13</sup>

This is noticeable, for example, in one of *Vangelo's* (2016) scenes where the director is in the hallway between the stage and the audience and the lighting in the space seems dim, just so we can see him. When Delbono finishes reading a text, a very frantic classical music starts, the lights go out and the director starts to light the spectators with a flashlight, following the fast pace of the music. He climbs onto the stage, which is now glowing red, and moves from side to side moving his hands as if he were catching something, like a mouse. At this moment, it is possible to observe from one side of the proscenium some objects on the floor and, on the opposite side, a chair. The director interrupts his movement with his hands in the center of the proscenium and then starts making movements with his arms as if showing his muscles, holds the waistband of his pants with both hands and throws his hips forward, as if showing a certain virility and masculinity. Then he goes to the objects on the floor, takes a little dress that he holds close to his neck and starts dancing.

At this moment, an actor with horns on his head and an actress with what

<sup>13</sup> Available at: <http://www.questaodecritica.com.br/2017/02/pippo-delbono/>. Accessed on: Jan 20, 2021.



looks like school clothes, they bring a chair in which she sits, the actor is behind her, crouching, putting his arms between the actress's arms, so that we can visualize his arms as if they were her arms. He makes a few movements with his hands and then the two start a kind of choreography with the arms and then the body while she is sitting in the chair. Bobò enters the scene with horns on his head, he enters and sits in the chair that was on stage since the beginning of the scene and which is now illuminated by a spotlight. Meanwhile, the director continues doing a kind of arm dance to one side of the stage. Then begins a recorded narration by the director. Delbono is back on stage, now at the back of the stage with a blazer and horns on his head, and as he approaches the stage, the actor and actress who were doing a choreography in the chair leave the scene.

After some moves by Delbono at the proscenium, directed at the spectators, three dancers enter the scene, with a beam of red light in their direction, two of them dressed in white and with a white mask on their face and horns on their head and the third one wears clothes black and also with horns on the head. The dancers have their shadows reflected on the back wall, start to make movements with their hands, as if they were mice, and walk from one side to the other until they leave the scene. The director's narration audio continues playing as well as the frantic classical music that gives a fast pace to the scene. The director continues to dance and move around the stage, interacting in some way with the elements and with his recorded narration, later kneeling at the back of the stage as if praying and asking for forgiveness. At the same time, on the side of the stage one of the actors is in front of a red light to produce shadows on the back wall of the stage, in the shadows it is possible to see a three-pronged fork, an arm and the silhouette of a figure with horns, which refers to the figure of the biblical "devil".

When the director leaves the scene, the actor who made the shadows enters carrying the three-pronged fork, along with him the two dancers in white clothes enter and start a dance. The man continues making some movements with the fork as if he were chasing the dancers, even taking them off the stage. At the back of the stage it is possible to see that the dancer in black clothes enters the scene and is making some moves. At this point, the director enters the scene again carrying a violin, which he offers to Bobò, who promptly begins to play it.

What is left on stage is Delbono doing a disorderly dance, Bobò playing the violin sitting in the chair, and the dancer in black clothes at the back of the stage pacing back and forth. When the dancer leaves the scene, at the back of the stage there is a projection of mice running around. Then there is another projection of body parts that fit and fall apart. Enter the actor again with the three-pointed fork and horns on his head and the dancer in black clothes, the two perform some movements, the dancer lies down on the floor and the actor walks over her, both leave the scene. The song ends, Delbono interrupts his movements at the back of the stage and faces the spectators. Bobò continues to play the violin, in the background it is possible to see a projection of a video in which Bobò is sitting in front of images of three crucified bodies. In the video, Bobò wears an outfit that resembles a priest and, holding a microphone, makes sounds with his mouth. Everything you hear on stage is the sound produced by Bobò in the projected video. Delbono goes to Bobò who is sitting on the chair playing the violin and invites him to go to the front of the stage, at that moment he starts playing a serene song about "Jesus", the two leave the scene and

we can see a figure with long hair wearing a white robe enter the scene. In our view, this moment marks the end of the scene described and the beginning of the next scene.

Unlike *Questo Buio Feroce's* scene, *Vangelo's* described scene is much more contaminated by the elements and the collage assumes almost an apex in terms of the juxtaposition of focuses and significant elements, making the description of all actions performed simultaneously during the same scene complex. In addition to the different collage modes described above, which are used by the director, such as the collage of blocks, scenes, focuses and elements, in the last scene described it is also possible to notice the constant presence of the director in the scene. The presence of the director on stage as a performer is evidenced in the scene described in the show *Vangelo* (2016), which points to an aesthetic characteristic that is very present in the director's works. Delbono, in addition to organizing the elements of the scene, also takes on the role of the performer, that is, he tensions the boundaries that exist between the figures of the director and the performer. Involved in the scene, his provocative speech, his maladjusted body and his unpretentious actions enhance the juxtaposition of images, bodies and meanings offered to the viewer.

### **The director-performer**

In the course of this study, we seek to understand this figure assumed by Pippo Delbono in his works, the figure of a director who is also a performer. During the search for materials that could support this investigation, few studies were found in Portuguese about the work of the Italian director. However, one of the materials found, the article "Corpos sublimes: o teatro-festa de Pippo Delbono Il vangelo della teatralità" (2018) by Martha Ribeiro, helped us to deepen our reflection on the director's work, functions and actions performed by him throughout the shows.

The presence of the director on stage, whether through narration (on stage or off stage) or through movements - sometimes indicating some actions to the actors, sometimes acting together with the other actors - is identified as the compositional principle of his works, since his works are strongly marked by his presence on stage. In addition to the autobiographical aspect, another mark of the Italian director, the presence of his body acting in the show and revealing himself to spectators, shows how difficult it is to separate his existence from the existence of his works. According to Ribeiro (2018, p. 316):

[...] the artist, in his relationship with otherness, instead of observing differences, demarcating his identity, proceeds by shuffling all cultural and/or artistic codes, valuing his own existence by accumulation, pasting his face to the other, in a coincidence movement with itself, which causes the erasure of the entire territory, by sliding.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, this significant element on stage, the figure of the stage director, makes space for us to think about the principle that we call the director-performer<sup>15</sup> and

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<sup>14</sup> In the original version: "[...] o artista, em sua relação com a alteridade, ao invés de observar diferenças, demarcando sua identidade, procede por embaralhamento de todos os códigos, culturais e ou artísticos, potencializando sua própria existência por acúmulo, colando sua face com a do outro, num movimento de coincidência com ele mesmo, que provoca o apagamento de todo território, por deslizamento."

<sup>15</sup> Renato Cohen uses the term director-performer [encenador-performer] in his book *Performance como Linguagem*

which points to a hybridized figure that performs different functions and actions on and off stage. When the director's presence is present on stage, it becomes significant and destabilizes the theatricality itself, the one who in traditional molds would be seen as the organizer of the scene becomes a performer as well. But a performer who destabilizes and displaces signs, creating other environments, performing parallel actions, narrating texts, participating in the composition of the scene and mainly transforming theater into a big party (RIBEIRO, 2018). In some scenes, Delbono moves from the main action in a parallel composition, promoting a game with the space-time of the scene from the simultaneity of actions; at other times he connects with the actors as a stage director, apparently presenting nominations; and on other occasions he acts alongside the actor-performers, playing the same game.

This second compositional principle, which we call the director-performer, is an aspect of Delbono's work that highlights the performativity of the scene and of the theater itself developed by the artist, in an act of denuding the scene and the bodies. The spectators are thus constantly reminded that they are in the theater and that everything that is done in front of them is the result of a theatrical praxis, a creative process that involves the agency and articulation of various functions, bodies and resources, which ends up breaking with a possible totalizing fictionalization of the scene. The presence of Delbono on stage, whether through the body or voice in the narration, reveals the theatrical action, whether through the presentation of the figure of the director, which refers to one of the other functions - acting, technique and expectation - or through a narrative which consists of real facts of his life and the lives of his actors.

The narrative is intrinsically linked to the figure of the director-performer, as it is composed from the presentation of facts, affections, memories, places he knew, passages from his life and the lives of the actors, memories of the "ruins of each city he visits, of each unusual encounter that happened by chance, are bridges that Pippo draws to reach the other, finding himself"<sup>16</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 315). Thus, a documentary narrative is presented on stage, which is present both in the image produced by the bodies and resources, and in the director's own voice. This is because, both in *Questo Buio Feroce* (2006) and in *Vangelo* (2016) this narrative is "[...] written on paper and read on stage by Pippo himself, in a kind of wild performance, it remains what it is: an enactment, a strategy of appearances and not a simulation of a real"<sup>17</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 318).

In addition to making his own history present on stage, highlighting his political position - even when exposing themes that in some contexts are still considered taboo -, the director also inserts his body in the performance, performing movements, dances and actions that express freedom and truth, giving meaning and life to your work. According to Ribeiro (2018, p. 316), Delbono's work, in theater or cinema:

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(2013, p. 106) pointing to a figure that performs and that generally coincides with the figure of the director in performances and performative events that use performance as an investigative language.

<sup>16</sup> In the original version: "ruínas de cada cidade que visita, de cada encontro inusitado, ocorrido por acaso, são pontes que Pippo traça para alcançar o outro, encontrando-se".

<sup>17</sup> In the original version: "[...] escrita em um papel e lida em cena pelo próprio Pippo, numa espécie de atuação selvagem, permanece sendo o que é: uma encenação, uma estratégia das aparências e não a simulação de um real".

[...] it is populated by volatile material from travels, experiences, poetry, testimonies and confidences, yours and others, joys and pains, but mainly, it is made of living flesh. It is his flesh that Pippo exposes in every movement he performs, in every show, adding to his voice, his scream, other screams, composing a mosaic, a constellation of voices, mosaic-shrieks that he absorbs for himself, for belonging, for making they are materials of their own intimacy.<sup>18</sup>

From this, the author presents Delbono's theater as an intimate theater, as its "[...] narrative does not want to be real precisely because it is an intimate report"<sup>19</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 319). But, precisely because of this level of intimacy, it makes it possible, even in physical absence, to create the presence of the director's absence on stage from their own stories.

According to Pereira, however, we can think of the director's work as a contaminated scene, as his shows speak directly about his life story, his body and his issues, as well as those of other collaborators.

From his presence and participation in all the shows that he directs to the conditions in which it takes place, it can be said that the Italian Pippo Delbono is the literal synthesis of a contaminated scene. The theater he performs is intrinsically linked to the story of his own life.<sup>20</sup> (PEREIRA, 2008, p. 144).

In this way, his theater is based on experimenting with new possibilities from autobiographical materials, in which the spectator lives his own theater, promoting an experience that affects and transforms them (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 316). Thus, as it is a theater that presents an intimate story, when inserting his body into the scene, it is as if the director implied truth and intensity to the feelings, memories and facts placed before the spectators. When reading the narrative written on paper, the director evokes friends, family and other artists to make themselves present not in the physical presence, but in the imagination, action and poetry, intensifying the distance from the framing models of social conventions.

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<sup>18</sup> In the original version: "[...] é povoado pelo material volátil de viagens, experiências, poesias, depoimentos e confidências, suas e de outros, alegrias e dores, mas principalmente, é feito de humanidade em carne viva. É a sua carne que Pippo expõe em cada movimento que executa, em cada espetáculo, somando à sua voz, ao seu grito, outros gritos, compondo um mosaico, uma constelação de vozes, gritos-mosaico que ele absorve para si, por pertencimento, tornando-os material de sua própria intimidade."

<sup>19</sup> In the original version: "[...] narrativa não se quer real justamente por se tratar de um relato íntimo".

<sup>20</sup> In the original version: "Desde a sua presença e participação em todos os espetáculos que dirige até as condições em que isto se dá, pode se dizer que o italiano Pippo Delbono é a síntese literal de uma cena contaminada. O teatro que realiza está intrinsecamente ligado à sua própria história de vida."

[...] in the textual part, which includes writings by his tutelage, in addition to poetry, quotes and excerpts from various authors, Delbono tends to meet and identify with those considered crazy and helpless, whose content usually deals with borderline situations or unique ways of looking at life: Rimbaud, Sarah Kane, Beethoven, Pasolini. They also join the marginal troupe, of crazy people, clowns and bums that make up the company, in defense of the right to be without copying, to act without mirroring the model [...].<sup>21</sup> (PEREIRA, 2008, p. 159).

We have identified at least two categories of stage director presence in what we present here as director-performer. They are the director as narrator and the director as interpreter. We emphasize that the action of narrating also involves a performance by the director in front of the spectators, but, from an analytical perspective, to facilitate understanding, we decided to separate these two modalities that we infer, narration and performance.

As a narrator, the director can be on stage together with the actors or even outside the stage, behind the spectators, in the theater rooms, in front of the stage, etc. This mode of narration, in which the director is not on stage, makes the space of the scene expand to the entire theater and the scene takes place in several places, thus creating displacements in the separation between artists and spectators, causing the spectators are moved to the center of the space organization of the scene expanded by the entire spatiality of the theatrical building. In this way, the spectator has the possibility to shift his gaze in search of the director in the theater, or in the same way be confronted with him at his side, which brings art and life, artist and spectator together, in a theater that materializes intimately in the narrative and also in the proximity between the subjects.

During the narration, the director is always holding his sheets with the written text and also a microphone, which in itself also highlights the construction of the textual narrative, as he reads his own texts and not only speaks them as if he had memorized them. In addition, in some moments of his narration, he talks about the creative process that gave rise to the show that the spectators watch, which somehow brings out the theatrical praxis and strips the action that is present in front of the spectators, making them remember that this is a scene built in process through the action of different resources and bodies.

As a performer, in the sense of acting on stage, the director can either establish a game parallel to the actors' game, performing movements and actions that seem more spontaneous, as well as being integrated into the game of the scene as a whole, directly relating to the other actors and participating in the construction of the scenes. In this category, the director does not narrate texts,

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<sup>21</sup> In the original version: "[...] na parte textual, onde se incluem escritos de sua tutoria, além de poesias, citações e trechos tomados de autores variados, Delbono tende a se encontrar e a se identificar com aqueles considerados loucos e desvalidos, cujo conteúdo geralmente trata de situações-limite ou de modos singulares de enxergar a vida: Rimbaud, Sarah Kane, Beethoven, Pasolini. Também eles se unem à trupe marginal, de doidos, palhaços e vagabundos que compõem a companhia, em defesa do direito de ser sem precisar copiar, de agir sem se espelhar num modelo [...]."

but makes his body present on stage through actions that generate speeches. Which in itself causes a change in expectations, since the actions performed by the director are undisciplined and spontaneous, breaking with the expectations of spectators who could expect well-defined choreographies and actions.

His scenic language feeds on an extraordinary fluidity between different codes of theatricality and performativity, which, in our view, brings his artistic experience closer to the organless body of Antonin Artaud, producing an extreme differentiation on stage, the delirium of a theater-party, baroque, that escapes the representational logic and that is invested against the desert of an excess of the real, that ecstasy of the real that so trivializes contemporary life.<sup>22</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 317).

In many moments, the intense performance of the director on stage ends up taking over the entire scenic space so that a kind of party is established throughout the show, a theater-party as the author points out, with music, free and expressive bodies following just your flow of life. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Delbono appears as:

[...] example of the most indiscreet director of all time. The Pippo's theater, a fundamentally intimate theater, due to its specificity, [however] does not abandon the scenic play, much less the space of staging, of editing. In the visceral game of the director and performer, there is a careful construction of the scene, in every detail, which he does not deny.<sup>23</sup> (RIBEIRO, 2018, p. 319).

Of course, there are other directors who are not limited to established conventions, go on stage, play different roles, provoke and destabilize the viewer, Tadeusz Kantor can be an example. However, unlike Kantor who stood on stage acting as a 'maestro' leading the actors and scene elements, Delbono explores a unique way of being on stage, taking on a hybrid figure that involves the roles of director, playwright, narrator and performer.

By proposing a theater that reflects and at the same time tensions the own construction of the artist who creates it, the director makes his body and memories present on stage through the text, narration and exhibition of his own physical and visceral body, acting:

[...] actively, intervening in the scene to quote or say texts and poetic passages of different authorship. It is an extremely personal practice, in which he evidences his memories, his perception of the world and references, a fact that proves to be decisive in his scenic relationship with the dysfunctions, since the author-director-actor lives involved in a dysfunction, contaminated by the HIV virus, which makes the participation of people in particular or "atypical" conditions very welcome.<sup>24</sup> (PEREIRA, 2008, p. 149).

<sup>22</sup> In the original version: "Sua linguagem cênica se alimenta de uma fluidez extraordinária entre diversos códigos de teatralidade e de performatividade, o que, em nosso entendimento, aproxima sua experiência artística do corpo sem órgãos de Antonin Artaud, produzindo no palco uma extrema diferenciação, o delírio de um teatro-festa, barroco, que escapa da lógica representacional e que se investe contra o terreno baldio de um excesso de real, desse êxtase do real que tanto banaliza a vida contemporânea."

<sup>23</sup> In the original version: "[...] exemplo de encenador mais indiscreto de todos os tempos. O teatro de Pippo, um teatro fundamentalmente íntimo, por sua própria especificidade, [porém] não abandona o jogo de cena e muito menos o espaço da encenação, da montagem. No jogo visceral do encenador e performer, observa-se uma construção cuidadosa da cena, em cada detalhe, o que não é por ele negada."

<sup>24</sup> In the original version: "[...] de forma ativa, intervindo na cena para fazer uma citação ou dizer textos e passagens poéticas de autoria diversa. Trata-se de uma prática extremamente pessoal, em que ele evidencia suas memórias,

In this sense, when we look at Delbono's work, we come across our constructions regarding what we understand by theater, by artist and by a functional and healthy body. We are called by tensions that are established both by the presence of the disabled body on stage, and by its own figure in the same scene, both bodily materialities crossed by verbal or imagetic discourses that indicate "dysfunctions". Thus, we recognize the figure of the director-performer as one of the compositional principles of his accessible scene, revealing keys to the unmistakable aesthetics of this creative artist.

### Final considerations

*"The words are very important, but not everything. I think theater, as Artaud says, is a plague, it must take me with my eyes, nose, mouth, with all the senses, with the heart"*

Pippo Delbono<sup>25</sup>

Pippo Delbono's work challenges us to go beyond traditional theater conventions, demanding, from the beginning, an openness to the approximations between art and life. In this sense, observing the compositional principles that articulate the Italian director's scene allows us to get closer to his ways of operating in the scenic creation process. The director manipulates the composition in such a way that the spectator is invited, or perhaps called, to insert himself as an artisan, who relates to the scene through the assimilation of signs that often confuse his senses.

Naming Delbono's scene as accessible reveals our attempt to highlight that accessibility is not restricted to the presence of artists with and without disabilities on the scene, but it is determined by the way the director articulates compositional aspects in order to provoke the sensory involvement of the spectator. Here, the spectator does not necessarily name or objectively relate to what is on stage, but relates through intersections, changes in expectations, ruptures from previous concepts. The distance from normalizing standards - in relation to being in the theater; related to viewing, reading or receiving theatre; to interacting with theater, which suggests an opening to particular perceptive and receptive possibilities.

The collage and the director-performer were presented here as compositional principles of Delbono's scene intrinsically related to the political and social aspects that mark the existence of his company. The displacements, resignifications and juxtapositions of the elements present in the scene establish an "effectively authentic scene with a strong existential character"<sup>26</sup> (PEREIRA, 2008, p. 144), founded on the presence of different bodies and repertoires, hence its poetics.

The works analyzed here show, above all, the director's desire for collage, juxtaposition and fusion of resources, bodies, images, sounds, colors and lights that meet and dissipate in the scene, in order to materialize the contaminated scene, as indicated by Pereira (2008). Furthermore, the aspects of Delbono's work discussed here show the hybridization not only of the languages and significant elements of the scene, but also of the artistic functions themselves that merge in the figure of the director-performer and point to new developments of the creative functions in the contemporary scene. These characteristics also bring to light new procedures of organization and scenic creation, from the search for a theater that reconciles the taste for genuine, intimate and spontaneous gestures, without leaving aside the aesthetic and artistic elaboration. In this sense, Pippo Delbono tensions the real and fictional dimensions, putting into play the aesthetic, poetic, political and social aspects present in the scenic production and also in

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sua percepção de mundo e referências pessoais, fato que se mostra decisivo na sua relação cênica com as disfunções, já que o autor-diretor-ator viveu ele mesmo uma disfunção, contaminado que foi pelo vírus HIV, o que torna a participação de pessoas em condições particulares ou "fora de padrão" muito bem vinda."

<sup>25</sup> In the original version: "Le parole sono importantissime, ma non sono tutto. Penso che il teatro, come dice Artaud, è una peste, mi deve prendere con gli occhi, il naso, la bocca, con tutti i sensi, con il cuore." (DELBONO, 1999, p. 55).

<sup>26</sup> In the original version: "cena efetivamente autêntica e de forte cunho existencial".

the artists' bodies themselves.

Delbono manages to bring art and life closer together, artist and spectator, through a theater that presents itself as theater and reinforces this fissure by denuding the scene and its conventions, evidencing a raw reality through bodies marked by their singularities. Thus, tensioning borders, models and social constructions to which we are all subjected, in a contaminated (PEREIRA, 2008) and festive (RIBEIRO, 2018) scene, capable of mobilizing the gaze and confronting expectations, reflecting and enhancing reality. It is not, therefore, a simulation of the real, but an unfolding of the captured and experienced reality, through the articulation of new possible realities, inside and outside the scene, promoted by a broader sensory interaction that invites each spectator to create and validate their own perceptive itinerary.

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