



Poetical mediation rites

by Julia Guimarães

On the first critical essay I've written to TePI, I hypothesize, dialoguing with Ailton Krenak's¹ remarks, that the connection between the performing arts and the indigenous peoples' culture could be a meaningful act to decolonize the secular and extremely occidental concept of theater as an institution. However, in the essay I hereby present, my proposal is an inversion of the problem and I throw the following question: how can the performing arts (and arts, in general) contribute to the development of a sensibility of its own, intrinsically related to the indigenous peoples' issues.

While reflecting on what would be the development of this "sensibility of its own", I think about a space for poetical mediation and ethical incisiveness capable of mobilizing the audience in a way they would feel like deepening their knowledge on indigenous cosmovisions and reflecting upon their responsibility in view of the problems faced by these communities. This way, not only the show *For the sky not to fall*², by carioca choreographer Lia Rodrigues, but also the research done by Amazonian artist and educator

¹ In the Open Talk "Crossing worlds through art", also available at TePI – Digital Platform.

² The show video will be streamed at TePI Platform on Feb 18, 2022 (Friday, at 9 p.m.) and on Mar 10, 2022 (Thursday, at 9 p.m.).



Raquel Kubeo (who talked about her activities to TePI Podcast) are examples of this sensitive work.

In the first case, we are faced with a dance creation establishing connections between the daily routine of the Maré community, a district in the North Side of Rio de Janeiro, where Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças is located, and the shamanic manifesto by Yanomami indigenous thinker Davi Kopenawa – the book *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, conceived through his talks with French anthropologist Bruce Albert.

Like many other works dialoguing with the indigenous cosmovisions, this show presents itself as a ritual space. Naked, the company dancers build a delicate game of “outrar” – a Brazilian neologism coined by Lia Rodrigues to designate something like “the effort made to inhabit a body and a condition that doesn’t belong to you. Trying to get out of yourself”³.

On stage, the artists transpose and reconfigure rites narrated in *The Falling Sky*, such as blowing dust into the face and writhing in the sleep. Other features intensify the ritualistic dimension of this creation. One of them is the shared space joining dancers and audience. This area is reconfigured all the time in order to create different perspectives to peer and interact with the dancing bodies. Moreover, the sound is composed of nothing more than

³ FROTA, Gonçalo. O ritual de Lia Rodrigues para manter o céu lá em cima. *Público*, Lisboa, 13 dez. 2017. Available at: www.publico.pt/2017/12/13/culturaipsilon/noticia/o-ritual-de-lia-rodrigues-para-manter-o-ceu-l-a-em-cima-1795753. Accessed on: Feb 5, 2022.



breaths, grunts and the stomping noise produced by the dancers which brings out an immersive, sensory and pulsating sphere to the performance.

The sensory slant is even present in the choice of the elements which are blown by the artists and become some kind of second skin over their bodies, which can be seen as a poetical translation to the act of “outrar”. In many different moments, the performers cover their bodies with coffee powder and turmeric, releasing smells that could only be reproduced in a face-to-face gathering. In fact, For the sky not to fall is a creation that loses a significant part of its potency when transposed to the video language. Besides the loss of the olfactory dimension, it's crucial to imagine how it would be, in a face-to-face experience, some of the most emblematic scenes of the show: those in which the performers face their audience and pick some of the spectators to a eye-to-eye encounter, a stare of complicity that seems to work as a call, at the same time intimate and collective, so that the audience can also engage in the suggested mission brought by the title of Lia Rodrigues' work.

In the book by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, the falling sky appears as a metaphor for the very attitude of violence and depredation that non-indigenous people insist on perpetrating, not only with the Yanomamis or the Amazon rainforest, inhabited by these peoples, but also, in the limit, with the whole planet. From this point of view, the sky fall ceases to be a danger related only to the Yanomami cosmogony to become an urgent alert at a time when the imminence of the end of the world, at least the one as we know it, turns into an increasingly concrete reality.



Thus, it's through a vibrating poetic mediation that the show by Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Dança manages to reach the affections and pores of the audience, establishing an ephemeral community around a rite that refers simultaneously to the forest peoples and the urban outskirts from Rio de Janeiro. This alliance reflects into a dance rooted and, at the same time, full of obstacles, giving room and plenty of time for the spectator to contemplate the silence, the slow movement of the performers' bodies or, even, the cathartic moments and collective pulse emanating from the choreography. The silence and the dilated temporality, added to a state of complicit presence with the audience, are perhaps the elements that better produce this poetic mediation over the indigenous worlds, mostly because they allow the building of a favorable space-time to a reflective and sensitive opening by the spectator.

Crossing between worlds

It's also the interest in weaving bridges between different universes that permeates the path of indigenous artist and educator Raquel Kubeo, who talked to Naine Terena and Flávio Fêo, both researchers and educators, for TePI Podcast, in partnership with the project "Paraskeué: podcast for life!". Born in Manaus and belonging to the Kubeo people (ethnicity inhabiting the region surrounding Uaupés River), Raquel lives in Porto Alegre now, where she's got her master's degree from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul on inclusive education, weaving connections between accessibility, technology and indigenous literature. While relating her activities to a gesture of a poetical



mediation that works as an invitation to the approach between the indigenous and non-indigenous worlds, the educator has turned part of her research on the Kubeo people myths into a children's book with accessibility resources beside the research group Multi, which she is a member of. Moreover, she performs, teaches ethnic-racial training courses at the university, besides acting in artist-in-residence programs and working as a consultant in the fields of culture and education.

While reflecting on the alliances woven between indigenous and non-indigenous worlds, one of Raquel's most incisive statements for the podcast concerns the dangers of invitations made to this group that are based only on a "paternalistic" attitude regarding the inclusion of indigenous people in this process. The most relevant partnerships, according to her, are those escaping from the proposal of placing the indigenous people in "supporting roles or as project boosters" and those who crave, for real, "to promote exchange of experiences, encounter of cultures".

Whether dancing to hold the sky, or amplifying the accessibility to indigenous peoples' tales and culture, the works hereby commented could be seen as political-poetic mediation rites to awake, among their interlocutors, a sensitive approach to the forest peoples' universes.

