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Laboratory, Spectacle, Disassembly: Dialogical-theatrical Experiments of the Carmen Group in *A Serpente* [The Serpent], by Nelson Rodrigues / *Laboratório, espetáculo, desmontagem: experimentos teatro[di]lógicos do Carmen Group em A serpente, de Nelson Rodrigues*

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ABSTRACT

On the border between theater and dialogism, this article proposes reflections on the process of staging *A Serpente*, by Nelson Rodrigues in 2017 and 2018 by the Carmen Group - Body, Art, Movement and Staging Training Center. From a perspective that reports and analyzes at the same time steps of scenic creation, the text dialogues with the Bakhtinian theory, seeking to understand the constitutive aspects of three dialogical-theatrical experiments: the group's laboratory work, called *Serpentes de laboratório*, the assembly of *A Serpente* [The Serpent] in its Show format and the session of Disassembly Scenic. In addition to the theoretical, technical and methodological specificities of each one of the experiments, results signal aspects concerning authorship, reception and significance of the different situations of theatrical communication experienced by the group.

KEYWORDS: Staging; *A Serpente*; Theater theory; Dialogism

RESUMO

Nas fronteiras entre teatrologia e dialogismo, o presente artigo propõe reflexões sobre o processo de encenação do texto A serpente, de Nelson Rodrigues, nos anos de 2017 e 2018 pelo Carmen Group – Centro de Treinamento em Corpo, Arte, Movimento e Encenação. A partir de uma perspectiva que relata e, ao mesmo tempo, analisa etapas de criação cênica, o texto dialoga com a teoria bakhtiniana, buscando compreender aspectos constitutivos de três experimentos teatro[di]lógicos: a mostra do trabalho laboratorial do grupo, denominada Serpentes de laboratório, a montagem de A Serpente em seu formato de Espetáculo e a sessão de Desmontagem Cênica. Os resultados sinalizam, para além das especificidades teóricas, técnicas e metodológicas características de cada um dos experimentos, aspectos relacionados à autoria, recepção e significação nas diferentes situações de comunicação teatral vivenciadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Encenação; A serpente; Teatrologia; Dialogismo

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When a director finds himself in front of a dramatic work, his role is not to say: "What am I going to do with it?" - his role is to say: "What is it going to do with me?"
Jacques Copeau, 1990¹

Introduction

The one-act play *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*], written by Nelson Rodrigues in 1978 (RODRIGUES, 2013), dismisses formal introductions as a masterpiece of the Brazilian theater in the second half of the 20th century. The play's several stagings and versions for theater are easy to access and consult for researchers, as well as the original text, published by different houses and available on-line.

The aim of this paper is to propose [Bakhtinian] reflections on the production process (Laboratory, Show and Disassembly) of *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] in the years of 2017 and 2018 by the *Carmen Group* (Body, Art, Movement and Staging Training Center) currently under my artistic responsibility at Universidade Federal do Paraná [Federal University of Paraná] (henceforth UFPR). The group is composed of students from the undergraduate Program in Show Production and the Graduate Program in Education, both offered by UFPR. Their participation in the group is not fixed as they come into the group and leave it according to their research purposes and/or personal demands.

Group meetings are held weekly in the scope of the elective courses I offer. They are oriented towards issues of show production, either by focusing on dramatic aspects of the body and the actor or by centralizing its interests in the fundamentals of acting and/or theater direction. Preserving the content and relations inherent to theater, the elective courses are of a practical nature and constitute the *Carmen Group* project (experimental and advanced laboratories), allowing undergraduate students the contact with the *production process at university*, an issue that has been of interest to me since the beginning of my academic career.²

¹ COPEAU, J. The Role of the Director. In: RUDLIN, J.; PAUL, N. (ed.) *Jacques Copeau: Texts on Theatre*. Translated by the editors. New York, NY: Routledge, 1990, p.124.

² See *Teatro e universidade: Cena. Pedagogy. [Dialogism]*, published in *Coleção Teatro*, a series on Theater Pedagogy by Editora Hucitec (GONÇALVES, 2019).

In order to achieve the objective of this paper, I report and analyze the creative process experienced by the *Carmen Group* by looking specifically at three dialogical-theatrical experiments. The first experiment was the exhibition of the laboratory work named *Serpentes de Laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents] in two sessions in July 2017 at the auditorium of the Setor de Educação Profissional e Tecnológica, SEPT-UFPR [Sector for Professional and Technological Education] for students from the undergraduate program in Show Production and the Master's program in Education. The second was the group's participation in the Mostra de Teatro Universitário [University Theater Show], part of the *Festival de Teatro de Curitiba* [Curitiba Theater Festival], through the production of *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] (as a show) in two sessions for an open public in March 2018. The third was a presentation under the *Scenic Disassembly* format: *A Serpente – Desmontagem* [*The Serpent - Disassembly*] in June 2018 in the Teatro Experimental [Experimental Theater] at UFPR as part of the event *Outras Palavras – Dramaturgias Contemporâneas* [Other Words – Contemporary Dramaturgies], promoted by the *Núcleo Criativo Palavração* [WordAction Creative Center] from the Office of Extension & Culture of UFPR.

Choosing the term *experiment* rather than *experience* does not implicate the semantic value of one word over the other, but it points to the fact that every staging process of *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] is constituted by three distinct moments – Laboratory, Show and Disassembly – each with their own features and specificities to be investigated, which translate into situated and contextualized experiments that integrate and convey their own experience.³ The experiments reported and analyzed in this paper are considered theatrical-dialogical, for they embrace, at the same time, theater studies – investigative study of theater theories and aesthetics – and dialogism – the Bakhtinian perspective on the study of dialogue in different spheres of human activity.

Based on the report and analysis of three theatrical-dialogical experiments – Laboratory, Show and Disassembly – I aim to understand the meanings of doing theater in college, especially when related to an openly amateur and anti-professional scenic

³ For further debate on the words 'experiment' or 'experience,' see Curriculum, experiment and experience: Science Education contributions by Ferraro (2017).

research (COPEAU, 1990)⁴ that refrains from providing the audience with a finished and finite production. Furthermore, university theater research conducted by the *Carmen Group* finds, in the unpredictability and uncertainty of chaotic and unconventional creative processes, the motivational capsules that justify the existence of theater in contemporary educational contexts: an existence that resists and survives due to its own denial of safe and ready-made formats that may mean and accept sameness and conformity, adjacencies that cannot converge with doing theater nowadays.

Laboratory Serpents

The notion of laboratory is well articulated by Schino (2003)⁵ in her detailed account of theater laboratories in Europe. She claims the notion of laboratory in its proximity to the Russian word *studinnost*, a direct reference to the studio as a place of learning. Scene studios are characterized as triggers for various aesthetics and possibilities derived from pure research interested in the organic processes of creation and not the mere production of shows. It is from this perspective that participants of the *Carmen Group* support its scenic projects understood as the observation and awareness of their author-bodies rather than transforming these bodies in presentable scenes. Therefore, meetings/rehearsals are a site of theoretical-practical crossroads that favor self-involvement in artistic-pedagogical situations coinhabited by participants while they dedicate and donate themselves to the creative process.

In addition to the interest in producing a show, attending to what student-actors want to say about/in relation to their bodies, wishes, and identities motivates different arrangements and performance states, translated by the intertwining of music sheets, texts and different meaning-making materialities.

The notion of training is also of interest to the group because it is from the perspective of a physical-expressive *training* that the development of new behaviors become possible as well as “new models for moving, acting, listening, reacting that

⁴ For full reference, see footnote 1.

⁵ SCHINO, M. *Alchemists of the Stage: Theater Laboratories in Europe*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2003.

must not be simply repeated and copied but that must attend to the artist in their most intimate being” (PICON-VALLIN, 2008, p.69).⁶

Combining theater classes to the expectations of a theater laboratory is one of the fundamental aspects in the courses I have offered in the Program in Show Production at UFPR. Besides the axiological weight conveyed by the word *laboratory* in these courses, infinite possibilities converge in their scope for laboratorial investigation on the relations between body, art, movement, staging. In other words, beyond the interest in creating a show, students are incited to get involved in research on acting, training, in subjectivity studies as well as in fields that are close to scenic arts.

The space of the classroom seen as a laboratory is, therefore, reconfigured and acquires a chronotopic dimension by locating itself in the relation between time and space. In previous studies (GONÇALVES, 2019), by claiming the classroom as a rehearsal room, it became important to emphasize that even if synergistically conceived as a laboratory, theater classes carry marks of the schooling process, such as teacher authority, social imaginary of the teacher-student relationship, and physical characteristics in the distribution of class furniture that change the ways of sharing the space.

Even if a theater laboratory does not have desks or chairs distributed in rows or in a circle, it has places of speech that eventually become configured spatially. Even if a professor-director makes every effort to bond with students-actors in a participative and integrated manner, they are not easily free of the imaginary of professor and his/her voice (of which a word of authority is expected – authoritative or internally persuasive) (BAKHTIN, 1981).⁷

The work for *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] was then idealized by me, in agreement with the students, from a laboratory perspective. Assuming that students from the major in question did not intend to become professional actors, at least not academically, the presentation of a show was not expected initially. The “mission” assigned for the first

⁶ In Portuguese: “novos modelos para se mover, agir, escutar, reagir que não devem ser simplesmente repetidos e copiados, mas que vão atingir o artista em seu ser mais íntimo.”

⁷ BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas, 1981.pp.259-422.

semester of 2017 was much closer to conducting scenic exercises based on the text rather than turning the experiment into a product/a show.

Different scenic exercises were conducted, of which a detailed account would not correspond to the purpose of this paper. Anchored theoretically in different aesthetic trends and theater pedagogies, plays, situations and experiences gradually became something *to be presented*. Nonetheless, we were all aware, professor-director and students-actors, that we were not handling the play *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] by Nelson Rodrigues, but studies on characters (actions, music sheet, text play) roughly sketched and oblique.

Notwithstanding, I decided to challenge the group to perform these sketches by the end of the semester in two sessions for a limited audience (freshman in Show Production and a class from the Master's in Education both from UFPR). The work was named *Serpentes de Laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents]. The goal at that moment was to display laboratory fragments that helped us to get acquainted with two characters in the play: Lígia and Guida, the sisters who become involved in a family tragedy. The name *Serpentes de Laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents] referred to the text – *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*]; at the same time, it protected us from a direct bond to the play as the title announced the investigative nature of the staging.

It is important to discuss, based on Vološinov (1973),⁸ that a word only means when used in interaction, which reaffirms the dilution of any project of neutrality in discourses; that is, the words *serpent* and *laboratory* in the title of a presentation of scenic processes are filled with meaning(s) that are distinct from the point of origin (the play by Nelson Rodrigues and the theater classroom, respectively).

I highlight, for example, the sign information embraced by the title that the work was still in process and still under construction – the serpents were still in the lab. The discussion of the notion of *word* for theater studies, therefore, is not simply connected to the meanings of the text. It must mediate all aspects in the approach of theater discourse in its expanded form; i.e., studying words in theater cannot be reduced to the

⁸ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Landislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.

text of the play, a common and historical fact, especially in investigations focused on the relation between theater and discourse.⁹

Student-actors and I agreed that the staging of *Serpentes de Laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents] should not display fragments of the work developed without informing the public about the context of the Rodriguean drama. From our perspective (albeit limited and to a degree, uniformed), it would not make any sense for the audience to deal with the absence of the dramatic narrative. A flyer¹⁰ was designed to try and situate the viewer in these special sessions by bringing, on the back, an informative synopsis with aspects and moments of the end of the play. This synopsis was also read before the audience entrance.



Figure 1: Flyer: *Serpentes de laboratório* – Face

⁹ For a dialogical approach of theatrical discourse see Circo Negro: o discurso teatral em perspectiva dialógica [Circo Negro: Theater Discourse in a Dialogical Perspective], published in the book *Dialogismo: Teoria e(m) Prática* [Dialogism: Theory and/in Practice], edited by Beth Brait and Anderson Salvaterra Magalhães (GONÇALVES, 2014, 267-279).

¹⁰ All images (art and photography) in this paper were produced by Fernanda Caron Kogin, a producer, visual designer, and performer of the Carmen Group.

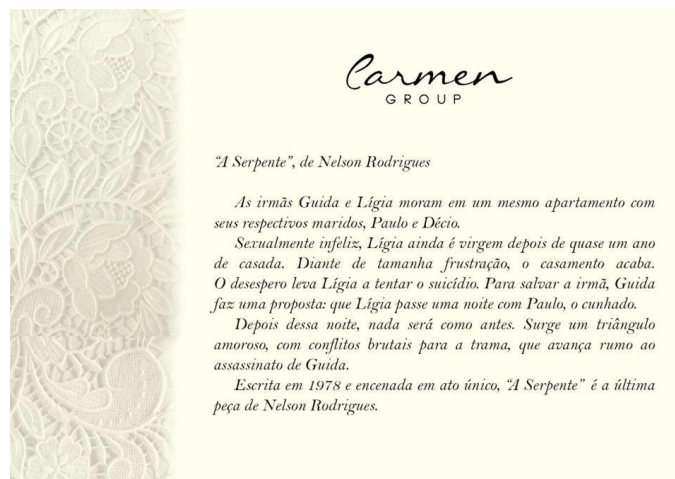


Figure 2 – Flyer: *Serpentes de laboratório* – Back¹¹

Reviewing the particularities of the experiment today, we can affirm that the audience did not need to be aware of the linearity of the events in the text. By trying to inform the public about the events and their linearity, the Group underestimated the audience's interpretative skills which includes, according to Bakhtin, their evaluative aspects and their own degree of depth and universality (1986, p.159).¹²

In the closing talks of one of the sessions, a viewer pointed that out and claimed that they would have gotten more involved with the process had they not had access to the synopsis at the entrance. At this point, it is important to turn to the notion of *understanding*, thoroughly discussed by the Circle, related to evaluative elements and specific dialogic contexts. Understanding means actively entering the enunciative-discursive play and setting oneself in an arena of voices of ceaseless asking and answering. Even if viewers had not had access to the synopsis of *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*], they would have been capable of joining the artistic communicative project of the Group – deprived of only some elements of text linearity but still able to relate to the lab exercise in all its possibilities of meaning and sense-making.

¹¹Translation of the text in Figure 2: *A Serpente* by Nelson Rodrigues. Sisters Guida and Lígia live in the same flat with their respective husbands, Paulo and Décio. Sexually miserable, Lígia is still a virgin after being married for a year. Given such frustration, her marriage ends. Desperation makes Lígia attempt suicide. Guida makes a proposition to save her sister: that Lígia engages a one-night-stand with Paulo, her brother-in-law. After that night, nothing is the same. A love triangle is established with brutal conflicts in a plot that moves toward Guida's murder. Written in 1978 and performed in a single act, *A serpente* is the last play written by Nelson Rodrigues.

¹² BAKHTIN, M. Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences. In: Bakhtin, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: Texas University Press, 1986. pp.159-172.

In addition, as we exposed fragments of the laboratory, we did not dare designing a flyer that would display images of the process. Insecurity regarding what was done in class and what was about to become public made the divulgation limited to an “almost” white poster, in which a piece of lace in light color was visible. It made reference both to the idea of marriage and to a wedding dress – a direct dialogue to Nelson Rodrigues, for whom the *bride* character was always the backdrop for an announced tragedy.

Then, it was possible to establish a dialogue with the proposition of a philosophy of the ideological sign, articulated by Vološinov (1973)¹³ in *Marxism and the Philosophy of the Language*. The author, by discussing a science of ideologies, makes explicit that the sign is the real materiality of ideology that binds the study of discursive interaction necessarily to the spheres of discursive production and the inherent theoretical-practical phenomena.

Producing the sessions for *Serpentes de laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents] encouraged the group to continue in the following academic term (second semester of 2017) to investigate characters, text, bodily sheets, and acting training. During the second academic semester some presentations were made in the form of plays, having professors and artists in training from the university or different educational contexts as the audience.

***A Serpente* [The Serpent] – The Staging**

The invitation to present during the Festival de Teatro de Curitiba [Curitiba Theater Festival] as part of the Mostra de Teatro Universitário [University Theater Show] in March 2018 was groundbreaking. The group was led to the inevitable confrontation with an experience with *A Serpente* [*The Serpent*] yet not lived: presenting the show in a theater, in the center of Curitiba, for an open and diversified public (I recall that previous sessions involved a limited audience from specific contexts): it was not possible to predict how we would relate to an *unknown* viewer.

¹³ For full references, see footnote 8.

The prediction and anticipation of the audience's response became an obscure datum, with no clues to predict any aspect of the communication that was about to happen. In previous experiences, this anticipation was minimally predictable, as the spheres in which we performed carried meaningful identity marks regarding their subjects.

Anticipating the other's response is a recurrent theme in Bakhtin's works and it always refers to the notion of the concrete utterance. Uttering is a movement towards someone and it is in the transposition of this enunciative-discursive act to the other that lies the potential for meaning: who is talking and to whom? (BAKHTIN, 1986).¹⁴ It is in the infinite possibility of meanings that the actualization of questions and answers (questions and questions/answers and answers) that constitute an interactional event – in this case, the show – is realized.

The unpredictability of the audience's (the other's) discourse thus demanded that the group restrict what was exactly to be communicated in relation to the work (*A serpente* [*The Serpent*], revisited, updated, now with plenty other authors of the homonymous text by Nelson Rodrigues) in such a way the alibi-words used before (process procedures/construction/laboratory) would not make sense, given the commitment to the festival.

One of the most insistently difficult tasks of the staging process of *A serpente* [*The Serpent*] was limiting its closure as an artistic piece that goes public under a different signature – ours. The responsibility is gratifying; at the same time, it is surrounded by risks regarding private tastes, specialized criticism as well as the expectation regarding a Rodriguean production by university students in 2018.

The *mise-en-scène* of the show, always ephemeral and yet geographically situated, is an ideological product already distinct from its origin – the play. Turning to the discussion on the science of ideologies, by Bakhtin/Medvedev (1978),¹⁵ it is possible to affirm that as a staging, faced with an audience, *A serpente* [*The Serpent*] by the Carmen Group is filled with the ideological content of the whole creative process,

¹⁴ BAKHTIN, M. From Notes Made in 1970-71. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: Texas University Press, 1986. pp.132-158.

¹⁵ BAKHTIN, M./MEDVEDEV, P. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*. Translated by Albert J. Wehrle. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

lived by student-actors and the professor-director. It conveys the sign materials of the very process and their communication in a given situation of collectivity. Consequently, our concern as a group for the resonance of the experience mitigated not only the fearsome discourse of staging Nelson Rodrigues but also the obsession with a likely resistance to the ways of contemporary staging – granting theater texts our tones, our views, our voice.

Contrary to the *Serpentes de laboratório* [Laboratory Serpents], a series of flyers with pictures of the staging was produced for the festival, thus announcing a relation a little more aware of the aesthetic choices – specially the visual ones – that percolated the presentation. Pavis (2003),¹⁶ in his suggestions for a perspective of analysis of plays that dialogues in many ways with Bakhtinian premises, defines staging as a set of juxtapositions of sound, noise, image and bodies that are perceived by the viewer, in combination, as temporal totalities manifested as scenic signs which shelter the coherence that enables meaning in the act of communication.

¹⁶ PAVIS, P. *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*. Translated by A. David Williams. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003

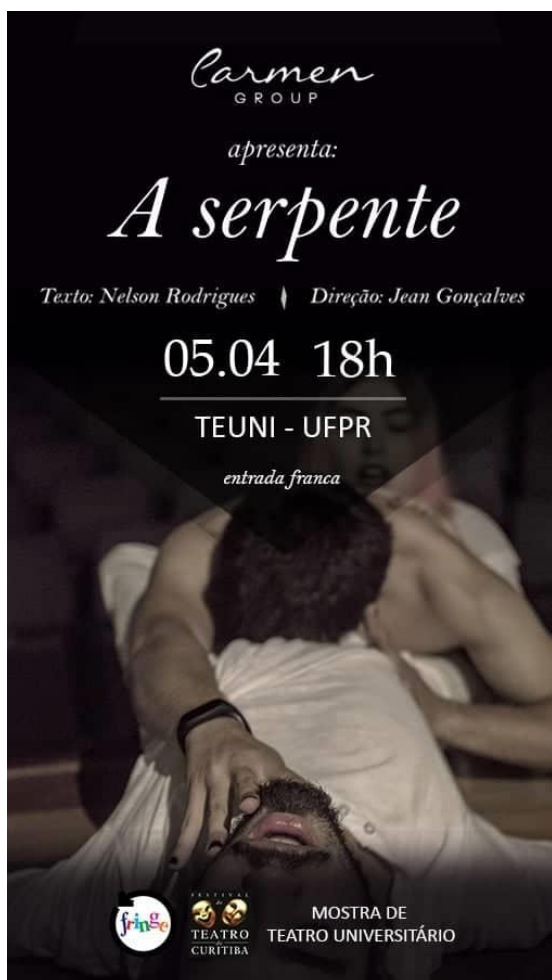


Figure 3 – Flyer: *A serpente* [*The Serpent*]



Figure 4 – Flyer: *A serpente* [*The Serpent*]

Presenting the shows during the Festival de Curitiba [Curitiba Festival] as part of a Mostra Universitária [University Show], especially for the participants of the project, offered a practical experience that allowed more than the opportunity to present something final to an unpredictable audience: the contact with a type of theater production as lived by professional companies, in its various dimensions, when the project of a show gets to the stage.

A good show, according to Azevedo (2016), needs to distance itself from the black box, the limelight, and reach its climax in a sort of communion. It is as if artists could take the public by the hand to their shop, their backyard, and together share the discoveries of scene creation, the paths and weavings of creation. In both sessions during the Festival de Curitiba [Curitiba Festival], we attempted to take the public to

this place of communion, to have an encounter with Nelson Rodrigues's work from our perspective of investigation.



Figure 5 – Flyer: *A serpente* [*The Serpent*]

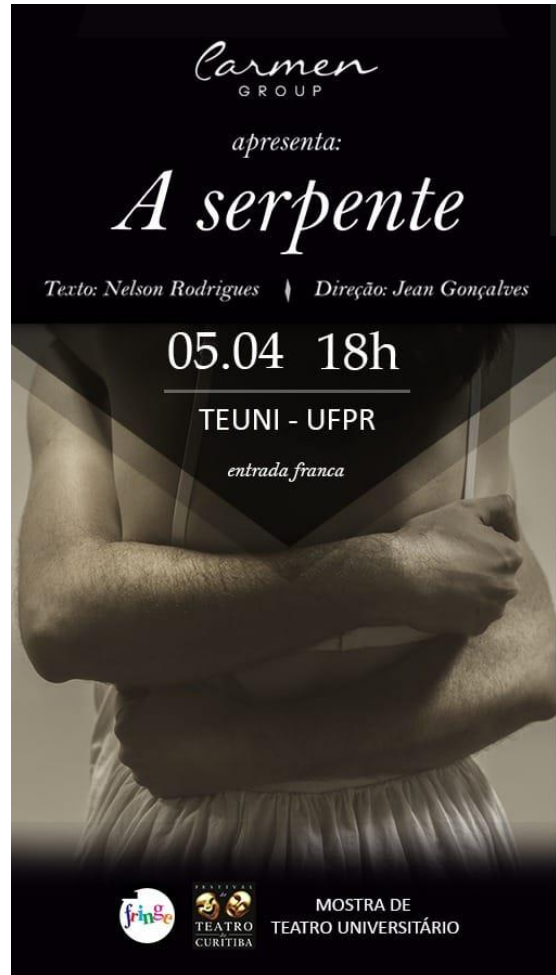


Figure 6 – Flyer: *A serpente* [*The Serpent*]

The experience did not grant us any certainties regarding the technical quality of the show. Answers were not provided; rather, there were impressions from the audience through the talks at the end of the sessions: suggestions, compliments, unfamiliar and unpredictable situations, such as the case of a viewer who questioned us about the theme of the show. There were enquiries regarding the staging of a Rodriguean play in 2018 as well as questions concerning our unfaithfulness to the author's narrative.

All these questions led us to think about the Bakhtinian concept of authorship, which implicates more than identifying who the authors of the play are. It implicates understanding how the process of constitution and dialogue with texts is established

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 14 (3): 15-35, July/Sept. 2019.

27

amidst the intercrossing of several voices in the threads of discourse in which words (mine and the other's) are situated at the borders of the development of a tense dialogic struggle (BAKHTIN, 1986).¹⁷

The proximity between the Bakhtinian thought and authorship in theater is verified in the proposition of a “new method”¹⁸ by Stanislávski, through which the Russian director rejects, for example, “the previous reading by the actors of the drama text, that is, that which was the first *sine qua non* condition in the process of staging a show” (VÁSSINA, 2015, p.125).¹⁹ In a way, Stanislávski denounces the director's and the author's violence upon the actor's creation; that is, he places the actor's authorship first, suggesting that the line of action of the play be experienced in such a way that the whole responsibility of the creative composition of the character (the role) rests with the actor.

The notion of authorship in *A Serpente [The Serpent]*, from a Bakhtinian perspective, which relates in part to the Stanislavskian approach to the creation of a role, has always been a subject of discussion and reflection, as it was evident in the presentation of the show in its “final” form. At this point, actors and the director were more aware of their wishes for the production and its expressive potential and could trace or measure possibilities of communication with the audience (although calculating and/or measuring the effects of reception was impossible as the viewers' profile was absolutely unknown).

Presenting the show in its final form did not signal, however, the end of the scenic research. Eager to investigate the contours of silhouettes and shadows that insisted on marking the experience, the group decided to continue the process of *A Serpente [The Serpent]*, accepting the limits of a university immersion that, among other difficulties, had to deal with farewells, absences, and losses. Certain that theatrical processes also walk their Gaussian curve, we slowly prepared for the Scenic Disassembly.

¹⁷ For full references, see footnote 14.

¹⁸ See the excellent paper by Elena Vássina titled The ‘New Method’ of Stanislavsky according to his Last Text ‘Approach to Building a Character, Finding Oneself in a Character and a Character in Oneself.’

¹⁹ In the original: “a leitura prévia pelos atores do texto dramático, ou seja, aquilo que era a primeira condição *sine qua non* no processo da encenação do espetáculo.”

A Serpente [The Serpent] – Disassembly

Scenic Disassembly is a theatrical practice that has been gaining followers in Latin America, particularly those interested in scenic research and actor pedagogies. The expression *disassembly*, in reference to the demonstration of the practical process by actors in after-sessions, dates back to 1993, during the 10th Workshop of the *Escola Internacional de Teatro da América Latina e Caribe* (EITALC) [International School of Latin American and Caribbean Theater] in Havana, Cuba, when actor Victor Varela from the group *Teatro Obstáculo* [Obstacle Theater] thus named the presentation of his work process. Afterwards, the 16th edition of the workshop in 1995, in Lima, Peru, was announced by the hosting group under the title *Disassembly: Meeting Yuyachkani* (DIÉGUEZ, 2014). Henceforth, the term has been recurrent in Latin America, and more recently, the concept and practice of disassembly has been investigated by Brazilian researchers interested in its artistic and pedagogic purposes.

Disassembly has been conducted as a session shared with the audience in which actors and actresses share elements that were part of their creative processes in the construction of characters and/or narratives and/or images of the show. By presenting the insights of a group for the project of a show, disassembly is characterized as lenses through which artists in the show (actors, directors, and others) can reflect on their work, present the viewer with elements of the trajectory that reveal their research, and recollect the amplitude of possibilities that the creative act bestowed on the group. By putting participants in touch with their memories, recollections and even materials that integrated their experiences, disassembly sessions contain in themselves the character of a show, thus becoming a new show that offers the public new relations with the play, imprinting and pulverizing other aesthetics, approaches, and narratives.

Although the practice of technical demonstration of creative processes by actors²⁰ is not as recent as disassembly, in this particular case, the production of a show is a necessary condition for disassembly. Disassembling a production that has not been staged finds no plausible justification. This is, thus, the subtle difference between

²⁰ Since 1980 the group *Odin Teatret*, founded in 1964 and directed by Eugênio Barba, has conducted technical demonstrations in which actors share with the audience the technical rigor of their daily training. A deeper approach to the theme is found in Eugênio Barba: *memória e resistência no teatro* (COPELIOVITCH, 2016).

technical demonstration, viz., the exhibition of scenic processes that not necessarily will meet the creation of a production, and scenic disassembly, viz., a narrative process in a work session that presupposes staging.

Disassembling *A serpente* [*The Serpent*] took place at the end of the third academic semester (second semester of 2018) of the group's work in the *Teatro Experimental Universitário* (TEUNI) [Experimental University Theater] at UFPR, as part of the event *Outras palavras – Dramaturgias Contemporâneas* [Other Words – Contemporary Dramaturgies], promoted by the *Núcleo Criativo PalavrAção* [WordAction Creative Center], which is part of the Extension Group *Teatro PalavrAção* [WordAction Theater Extension Group], sponsored by the Office of Extension & Culture of UFPR. Members of the group were invited to read the text *Desmontagem Cênica* [*Scenic Disassembly*] by Ileana Diéguez (DIÉGUEZ, 2014) to better understand its concept and to reach collective agreements as to the format of the session.



Figure 7 – Flyer: *A serpente* [*The Serpent*]: Disassembly

Directing the group, I was aware of the risks offered by a moment that pushed us farther into the unknown than any previous moment. Recalling the Bakhtinian concept of utterance, which always presupposes utterances that precede and follow it (BAKHTIN, 1986),²¹ we were left with the understanding that disassembling was somehow characterized as a link in the chain of communication of the discursive project of *A serpente [The Serpent]* by the *Carmen Group*.

In order to face a disassembly session, we needed to acknowledge our own frailty regarding both the staged production and the certainty of not knowing which narratives and elements could compose a scenic disassembly, as this practice still holds a set of unknown elements concerning procedures and formats.

Then, a skateboard (a narrow board with wheels) was taken as working material, and members of the group were asked to try it, even if they did not know the exact technical approaches. The most familiar practices (balancing while standing on the skateboard and making it slide on the floor) were first explored. Afterwards, possible movements were attempted by executing actions that were the most distant from the ones usually executed by *skaters*.

Skateboarding had one single purpose: making actors launch an unknown proposition or at least one with which they were not familiar by using the metaphor of risk as a creative motif for the disassembly session. The exercise reached its goal. Disassembling was filled with dialogue about a process that was tattooed on each and every one of our bodies.

During the sessions, an audio recording was reproduced, featuring members of the process reading fragments of the Rodriguean text. There were also references to the play by Nelson Rodrigues, such as an interview with actress Lucélia Santos, in which she discussed her relationship with the author. We also read academic texts on theater studies that had been part of the production of the show.

The audience also played an essential role during the disassembly session because they were encouraged to participate effectively in the experiment, which produced interference in the session: viewers would ask questions and answer promptly to our invites. Two moments must be highlighted: the first, when the public in unison

²¹ For full references, see footnote 14.

voiced excerpts of the Rodriguean text and the second, when one of the viewers accepted joining a scene to replace a missing actor. Such experiences could only be shared due to the scenic disassembly format, which provided the session with specificities that distanced that moment from the previous experiments (the laboratory and the show).

Reflecting on the concept and practice of disassembly from a Bakhtinian perspective, it is possible to argue that, out of the three experiments, the latter best enabled the effervescent dialogue between the production and the audience, interspersed with the actors', the director's, the audience's and the author's voices. Thus, disassembly can be set as an efficient form of making visible the intimate layers of a process of scenic construction, comprehending technical aspects that imply the transposition of a text to its staged form as well as the investigation of distinct points of view that cross the path of a group that assumes the task of staging a show.

Disassembling the architecture of a show is accepting the possibility of sharing experiences by exposing techniques and procedures. It means accepting research as an inevitable component of an artist's constitution. By endeavoring never-certain itineraries and always following unpredictability, aesthetics bound to precise prescriptions is also disassembled. Such level of disassembly however demands staging, and its realization is only effective by means of a laboratory in which it is possible to envision the creation of a scenic research process.

Conclusion

Scenic processes do not necessarily need to undergo all the phases discussed in this paper to meet its provisory end. The theatrical-dialogical experiments that were the subject of reflection herein are not always possible. However, I argue that they are fundamental, especially in the university context, where the artistic factor is not the only one at play.

Theater educational processes must be realized in a minimally healthy manner, integrating the bodies of participants to sensations that under recollection can change practices of future scene professionals as they face demands, competitions and egos in the labor market of scene production.

The greatest aim in directing student-actors was to leave memories, marks of experiences that can be reproduced (never repeated) in other spaces and times with different subjects. Reflecting on scene creation at university is therefore a solid justification for my student-actors and I to come to a theoretical-practical dialogue of our experiences. The scientific act of writing implies not only reporting creative processes but also analyzing them to understand their gaps and limitations; it also means revisiting successes and failures that may establish different modes of orchestration in future works (for me, for other artists and professors).

Theatrical-dialogical experiments reported and analyzed herein are certainly blurred by the reader's unfeasible access to the totality of events. However, there is the possibility of understanding them. According to Bakhtin (1986),²² understanding is an act that shelters dialogical struggle, a primary condition for otherness, which changes subjects mutually and enrich them. Living in a world of others' words, one's life is completed in a universe of culture and activity in which complex relations of reciprocity to the other's words are established. Constructing, from this perspective, a text that can function as a report of a process and, at the same time, analyzing it become a challenge that displays, without repression, its incapacity to seek any type of neutrality on behalf of its author (me) – even if we do not exclude exotopic movements.

Therefore, considering the process of *A serpente* [*The Serpent*] as an essentially Bakhtinian movement, the theatrical-dialogical experiments that compose this paper, in their version by the *Carmen Group*, reflect the faithful testimonial of the practical application of the epigraph that opens this article: facing the production of a drama play is launching oneself to a world of discoveries not knowing for sure its points of origin and arrival. It is the responsibility of the professor-director and the student-actors to let the path lead them through the risks of the scenic adventure and the certainty of a textual communication, which is living, pulsing and in a state of presence that only the theater can offer!

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²² For full references, see footnote 14.

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