



Going with the Flow: tracing the Theatre Laboratory in the Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies

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ABSTRACT – Going with the Flow: tracing the Theatre Laboratory in the Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies – This article proposes a dialogical reflection on the legacy of the theatre laboratory, drawing on the experiences of Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret, and Lume Teatro. Based on special issues of the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença* (particularly the editions dedicated to Grotowski, Odin Teatret, and LUME Teatro and *Laboratories in Flux*), we discuss how these practices emphasise encounters with the self, with others, and with cultural otherness. We also reflect on the contemporary relevance of these approaches in light of current urgencies and the challenge of sustaining such processes in the face of the immediacy imposed by neoliberal logics.

Keywords: Laboratory Theatre. The Workcentre of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Cross Pollination.

RÉSUMÉ – Suivre le Flux: traquer le Théâtre Laboratoire dans la Revue Brésilienne d'Études de la Présence – Cet article propose une réflexion dialoguée sur l'héritage du théâtre-laboratoire, en s'appuyant sur les expériences de Jerzy Grotowski, de l'Odin Teatret d'Eugenio Barba et du LUME Teatro. À partir des numéros spéciaux de la *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença* (en particulier ceux consacrés à Grotowski, Odin Teatret et LUME Teatro et à *Laboratoires en mouvement*), nous analysons comment ces pratiques mettent l'accent sur la rencontre avec soi-même, avec autrui et avec l'altérité culturelle. Nous réfléchissons également à la pertinence actuelle de ces approches face aux urgences contemporaines et au défi de la continuité de ces processus, dans un contexte marqué par l'immédiateté imposée par les logiques néolibérales.

Mots-clés: Théâtre-Laboratoire. Le Workcentre de Jerzy Grotowski et Thomas Richards. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Cross Pollination.

RESUMO – Segue o Fluxo: rastreando o Teatro Laboratório na Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença – Este artigo propõe uma reflexão dialogada sobre o legado do teatro laboratorial a partir das experiências do Workcentre de Jerzy Grotowski e Thomas Richards, do Odin Teatret de Eugenio Barba e do LUME Teatro da Unicamp. Com base nas edições especiais da *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença* (especialmente os números dedicados a Grotowski, Odin Teatret e Lume Teatro e o *Laboratórios em Fluxo*), discute-se como essas práticas enfatizam o encontro consigo mesmo, com o outro e com a alteridade cultural. Reflete-se também sobre a atualidade dessas abordagens ante as urgências contemporâneas e o desafio de continuidade desses processos diante do imediatismo imposto pelas lógicas neoliberais.

Palavras-chave: Teatro Laboratório. Workcentre de Jerzy Grotowski e Thomas Richards. Odin Teatret. LUME Teatro. Cross Pollination.



Patrick

Revisiting the special issues of the *Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies* dedicated to the Theatre Laboratory proved a provocative exercise – akin to perceiving currents in constant motion. The themed dossiers focus respectively on Grotowski (2013), Odin Teatret (2019), and LUME Teatro (2021), culminating in the issue “Laboratories in Flux” (2021), which functions as a coda to the collection.

In returning to these publications, I was struck in particular by the notion of *flux* – perhaps because we are traversing a moment of post-closure of cycles. The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards has concluded its trajectory as a centre; Odin Teatret, although still active, left its historic headquarters and underwent a radical reconfiguration as a group; LUME remains active and resilient. More broadly, we are living through intense sociopolitical and economic transformations that profoundly – and at times devastatingly – affect theatre collectives.

The historical articles gathered in these dossiers share a focus on training and creative processes as forms of encounter with *alterity* – understood at multiple levels: personal, interpersonal and transpersonal, encompassing both self-knowledge and encounters with the other and with different cultures. The investigative impulse characteristic of the Theatre Laboratory demands a significant investment of time, which today poses a major challenge.

We live in an age marked by crisis and by the contraction of time – a temporal compression that places the continuity of laboratory practices in contemporary theatre in question. In this context, sustaining an ongoing research process has become a privilege available to few.

I recall a conversation with Professor Dr Gilberto Icle – himself an actor and director linked to the Theatre Laboratory milieu – in which he suggested that performance may currently be the field that most resists and persists within this landscape of enquiry and creative becoming (Icle, 2023). This, he argued, stems from its capacity to operate processes and procedures of creation aligned with the plane of the immediate, offering prompt responses to the political urgencies of the present.



Yet, on returning to these articles, I was deeply moved by the beauty of the encounter with oneself and with the other enabled by Theatre Laboratory practices: by the force of an ‘oceanic experience’ (Federici; Roble, 2021) generated through psychophysical training and dramaturgies that place the energetic body at the centre of creation. It is a lived experience that dilates time and expands our capacity to be affected.

Given the current global political conjuncture – marked by authoritarian tendencies that verge on fascism – I continue to believe in the transformative power of this encounter with the Other as an act of resistance, care and profound listening.

Andrea

The three axes you delineate with such clarity render visible a dialogic prism of these approaches in ways that are at once expanded and expansive. *Presence Studies* has explored in depth the voices and methodological vectors that compose the Theatre Laboratory in its various configurations – from Grotowski to Odin Teatret, from LUME to the many groups that arose from these lineages.

It is particularly compelling how you position the three pillars – the self, the Other, and others – as traces that persist despite political contexts: traces that present themselves as possible embodiments of the vigour and rigour that constitute the legacy of these practices.

It is worth noting that these methodologies – or perhaps more precisely, epistemologies – emerge interwoven through this inseparable pair: vigour and rigour. They arise entirely entangled with the political context of their time. It is not possible to dissociate the Theatre Laboratory from the spirit of the 1960s. That *zeitgeist* of becoming is essential to examine –not only because no theatrical practice can be analysed outside its historical moment, but also because the way we view it today outlines the contours of its possible future unfoldings.

We may well ask: what, in that emergence of the 1960s, was so profoundly interlaced with these practices? The post-Second World War period is rich precisely because it presents a new paradigm of the world, marked by a radical break with the previous order. Performance, in this context, stands in direct proximity to such movements.



At that time, one witnessed the dissolution of grand narratives and the beginning of the collapse of the last of them: the polarity between communism and capitalism, symbolically sealed by the fall of the Berlin Wall. What seems radically amalgamated with Theatre Laboratory praxes is the question of a new human paradigm. This question was taken into artistic processes and deeply incorporated by these groups, producing a contribution that resonates directly in the development of collaborative work in theatre.

The subsequent decades are traversed by this impulse, especially in Brazil, where the tendency towards group theatre strongly marked the 1970s. In this current moment of closure of cycles, as you rightly underscore, there is a poignancy in recognising both the impulses that originated these practices and those that still remain. In what ways do such impulses persist? Perhaps Gilberto Icle offers a clue when he mentions the emergence of performance, precisely because it marks a territory of friction between art and life.

The question, therefore, is not one of merely preserving these practices, but of attending to the arcs they have traced out. Which territories did they set ablaze? What modes of making did they inaugurate? And, above all: what has the Theatre Laboratory left within us that now leads us to look at ourselves and at the other in a transformed manner – distinct from what was possible before the existence of these practices?

Patrick

I will risk a formulation that may sound somewhat reductive, but in the field of performance I believe the emphasis falls largely on personal subjectivity: the artist expresses themselves from lived experience, from an embodied life, from a situated “I”. This is not to deny that performance also stages encounters with the other; nevertheless, the centrality of the performer’s identitarian and political positioning has become one of the defining marks of the arts of presence.

By contrast, the Theatre Laboratory was characterised by a deep dive into energies, a search for discoveries – at times marked by a certain naivety – in relation to non-European cultures, clearly reflecting tendencies of the 1960s. From today’s perspective, it becomes apparent that many of the tactics derived from these so-called “intercultural” processes operated asym-



metrically, revealing significant imbalances. There was, within these encounters, a hauntological presence of colonialism – a persistent spectre plaguing modes of relation, leading at times to cultural appropriation.

The figure of the guru, for example, often imposed itself as a symbol of spiritual and artistic authority, while the pupil was called upon to sacrifice themselves before this hierarchical power structure. Frequently this entailed a western appropriation of traditions deeply rooted in Asian cultures, where the gesture of embodiment, even when motivated by a genuine investigative drive, did not escape the logics of exoticism and subalternity.

Andrea

This is a crucial point. On the one hand, we witnessed the emergence of a transcultural paradigm in which Asian performance forms in particular illuminated laboratory practices within the dynamics of an ‘oceanic experience’. However, these hierarchical structures were often transposed in skewed ways.

In the Theatre Laboratory of that period – even though many artists developed their practices as a critique of dominant culture, in a gesture of subversion or response to patriarchal hegemonies – we can perceive, paradoxically, the internal reproduction of those very power structures. A more incisive critique of such internal contradictions might have contributed even more significantly to a process of renewal and to a revitalised continuity of these practices.

Patrick

This subversion by and within the collective is clearly manifest in the case of LUME Teatro. It is important to note that among the major theatre groups to have emerged in recent decades, it is precisely LUME that remains active and robust. Evidently, one cannot ignore the specific institutional configuration that sustains the group – a research centre affiliated to the State University of Campinas. Luís Otávio Burnier was particularly astute in expanding his laboratory practice by embedding it within a politico-academic locus that provides backing and continuity to research. While LUME, benefiting from this structure, remains active, we observe the cessation of several European groups, especially after the pandemic. It may be



pertinent to consider the extent to which the absence of physical and interpersonal presence contributed to this phenomenon. LUME, in turn, has responded in multiple ways to Brazil's current political moment.

Andrea

Yes, it is profoundly significant to observe that the longevity of certain groups is articulated through becomings that overflow the limits of the studio, engendering poetic-political compositions. This recalls Peter Brook (2008) and his notion of 'interest' as a drive – or even a “vital spark” – that orients the connection between performance processes and audiences.

Analogously, the cultivation of this interest is equally vital to the role these groups play. The central issue, to paraphrase Brook, is that what is interesting cannot be manufactured: interest precedes it. It is by being interested that I become interesting.

In this sense, it is pertinent to ask: what figured on the horizon of desire at the time these groups were founded? And how did this originary impulse find support over time?

The *Presence Studies* collection offers valuable clues here, showing, for example, how these groups were guided above all by an ethical commitment that went hand-in-hand with their creative process and aesthetic propositions – a commitment that appears to have been considerably depleted within the contemporary European context.

Patrick

The context in which we reflect on these questions is, without doubt, profoundly challenging. We must not lose sight of the fact that neoliberalism has contributed to the formation of a wave of global unconsciousness. The inevitable exhaustion of current economic systems, the rise of the Far Right, and the inflation of fascist discourses constitute a *zeitgeist* that leaves very little room for poetic processes of subjectivation.

Precisely for this reason, in my view, Theatre Laboratory practices are more relevant than ever: they promote an encounter with the unconscious and invite us to dwell on the alterity that lies within. This is a pursuit that cannot be realised immediately – and we now live under the tyranny of imme-



diacy. People's attention spans have been reduced to thirty seconds, largely due to the logics of social media.

In this scenario, what these groups achieved—both in Europe and in Latin America—was the development of lifelong ethical processes, which demand time, humility and risk. In the laboratory space the experience is always open to the possibility of failure. Younger generations, however, do not feel entirely at ease with this dimension, for they live under constant surveillance.

Andrea

A surveillance that extends far beyond controlling mobility and appearance. The panoptic perspective is active today on so many levels that we seem to have lost the capacity to cultivate an inward gaze – the one you mentioned at the beginning of the discussion. It seems that this internal gaze has already become interwoven with everything the panoptic axis brings with it.

You are raising an absolutely central issue here, which in itself constitutes a thematic field to be explored and presents points of tension. One such point concerns the current role of artistic work – whether expressed through cinema, theatre or the visual arts – in relation to the field of individual perception. The cultural industries have already understood – and imposed – that its products, whether audiovisual or theatrical, must be short, concise and targeted at a pre-delimited consumer field, with near-binary messages, ready for immediate consumption.

This opens an extremely fertile field of debate. All the works we read in the journal's issues reveal processes, biographies, groups and practices that affirmed precisely the opposite of this industrial paradigm. Yet we also see how difficult the survival of these initiatives has been in our current global context. At the same time, this dominant industrial model is symptomatic of a broader process of imbalance – of the impoverishment of life experience itself.

From ecological, political and existential perspectives – including reflections on the global mental-health crisis – we are dealing with a crisis that no longer fits into dichotomies such as West and East, privilege or scarcity, Brazil or the UK. We know that in the fields of education, research and the arts, mental health is compromised. The individual's relationship with their



own life experience is diminished and suppressed, limiting their most basic potential.

It is precisely for this reason that, in the current scenario, the legacy of the Theatre Laboratory becomes even more indispensable. All the archives and documentation generated by these processes—such as those analysed in the *Presence Studies* issues—take on an extraordinary relevance. Perhaps revisiting them today can serve as an index, a compass for new research and for researchers seeking creative strategies of confrontation in the face of a reality that imposes such urgent challenges.

Walter Benjamin (1969) already suggested that experience was emptied out after the shock of World War II, a trauma we could not assimilate. Today we live in a permanent state of shock: we moved from the Pandemic to the war in Ukraine, to Gaza, to the cost-of-living crisis that is strangling entire populations. All this occurs in a world suffocated by the exhaustion of the neoliberal model, anchored in a financialised system operating without restraint, without a social security net, sustained by a rhetoric of austerity that favours a bankrupt, self-referential system. We already know that contemporary capitalism offers no prospect of future sustainability. To speak of sustainability within capitalism has become, in itself, an anachronism.

In a certain sense, this is precisely what Theatre Laboratory practitioners postulated and dared to face: what to do when confronted by an industry that summons us to reproduce a pervasive poverty of thought? Poverty may sound like a radical term here, but it refers to the poverty of experience.

Patrick

This impasse also manifests in the way the language of performance has come to prevail on social media. It is as if we were witnessing a series of archives and *dispositifs* mobilised by artists in the 1970s now captured and absorbed in thirty seconds by TikTok and Instagram feeds.

Meanwhile, the lifelong and deeply internalised processes of the Theatre Laboratory are not – and never will be – susceptible to capture by these logics. In this sense, the political power of the Theatre Laboratory acquires renewed potency today, precisely because it stands in opposition to the bankrupt logic of mediatized capitalism.

Andrea

Perhaps this is one of the most striking traces of the Theatre Laboratory's remaining insubordination: an insistence on the un-capturable. We may speak of translations, yes – but not of captured processes reduced to hurried content. The founding condition of the Theatre Laboratory is lived experience; without it there is no possible laboratory.

This imposes a particular challenge for those of us who work to cultivate, foster and disseminate these practices – through lectures, academic courses, performances or residencies. How can one express, in a twenty-minute talk – even for initiates – the “it” of the Theatre Laboratory? Perhaps this compels us to rethink radically the formats through which we communicate.

How can we speak of that which is inherent to experience? How might we allow that which escapes accelerated forms of capture to overflow through the rhetoric of the text?

It was precisely this challenge that moved us to co-write our article for *Global Performance Studies* (2021): a four-handed, laboratory-style writing, driven by the effort to challenge and translate aspects of these un-capturable elements. Adriana La Selva's *Sweating the Archive* (2025) also allies itself with this attempt – to translate an experience condensed in time and refracted through so many creative processes.

Earlier you noted how performance has today been captured by capitalism. That observation places us on an important alert, a front on which research and artistic tactics might respond through an attentive gaze towards archives that still retain their transformative force.

Shifting register and returning to the question of “living sparks” and processes of continuity, it is relevant to highlight the internal movements within these groups that contributed to their renewal. In LUME's case, for example, the performance *Café com Queijo* (2002) is emblematic. It channelled a need for review and revitalisation, placing the group before a vital energy that catapulted them into creating other versions of themselves.

In this sense, LUME's anchoring within a context of artistic research is a factor that favours long processes. Public policies under progressive governments that prioritised sustained arts funding were essential to this trajec-



tory. The role of arts organisations such as SESC (Social Service of Commerce), for instance, has been fundamental in Brazil for this kind of development – without such support, LUME would hardly have achieved its current standing. It seems to me, however, that the moment in which LUME allowed itself to pose questions and dwell upon an internal unease within a social context was of profound importance.

Patrick

In Belém Buendía's article on LUME (2021), there is a revealing passage reported by Jesser de Souza regarding the period when he joined the group alongside newcomers Ana Cristina Colla, Raquel Scotti Hirson and Renato Ferracini. At the time, the collective desire was to create a performance about the Brazilian people. This was the starting point of the process that would later culminate in *Café com Queijo*.

Luís Otávio Burnier then posed an incisive provocation, asking whether they had ever gone hungry, or eaten cassava-soup made with water. Burnier was indicating here the challenges involved in speaking about the diversity of the Brazilian people without first seeking, experientially, contact with communities that had in fact lived through such experiences. And that is exactly what they did.

This posture reveals the political impulse at the origin of *Corporeal Mimesis*, one of the embodied training pathways developed by LUME out of Burnier's studies with Decroux. Corporeal Mimesis – predicated on the mimetic embodiment of the other affords an encounter with alterity, despite all the difficulties such a process entails. It is an ethical and aesthetic gesture of radical proximity, founded on a recognition of difference and on a refusal of superficial appropriation.

Even before the development of Corporeal Mimesis and work on Clown, the group's focus was directed towards so-called *Personal Dance*—an energetic training that already prefigured, in embryonic form, this encounter with internal alterity, which can never be fully captured using analogue or digital technologies given its subtle, tacit nature.



Andrea

This striking gesture in LUME's trajectory touches precisely upon a politico-poetic tactic intrinsic to the Theatre Laboratory: the radical impulse to move towards the very matter and territory of creation. The mimesis exercised in the group's processual context is political exactly because it is not anchored in representation, but rather takes the form of a deep-dive into the real whilst holding onto difference – the notion of difference I draw on here is taken from Deleuze's reading of Derrida (Deleuze, 2001).

All the training that underpins the craft of Corporeal Mimesis at LUME informs this gesture. But it is important to remember that this encounter with the Other also materialises in performance – the place where the everyday enters into friction with a gaze that re-signifies it through a creative act.

By moving in this border zone between social dynamics and aesthetic propositions, performance operates by transgressing the spectacularisations of reality and incorporating unconscious impulses within a hybrid territory of actions. Difference is also inscribed in this field. Performance calls us to step outside the instituted status of art and to move towards life in its most diverse forms. The Theatre Laboratory likewise enacts this impulse, albeit via a distinct route and through other folds of perception—above all along the axis of looking at oneself with an other.

The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics meetings, for example, curated and organised by Diana Taylor in partnership with Marlene Ramírez-Cancio, have always included Theatre Laboratory representatives. Although Odin Teatret never participated directly in these encounters, the Institute has historically welcomed representatives of the Grotowskian legacy—including Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani, one of the most active members of the network. At no time was there a categorical distinction between these modes of creation.

I do believe that the work of Jesusa Rodríguez and Guillermo Gómez-Peña enables a profound encounter with the Other through performance. These are practices that operate through the friction between art and life, keeping alive a desire to create out of zones of instability, alterity and radical listening.



Patrick

But does this not also touch upon a macro-political question that affects both performance and the Theatre Laboratory? There is a response to this macro-political panorama expressed clearly in the way standpoint and positionality now permeate performative creations. This response demands that the artist delve deeply into the issues that affect and oppress them, with an intensified urgency.

The pandemic exacerbated this movement and brought to the fore mobilisations such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too – movements that, in fact, exposed various inequalities and binarisms. The intercultural debates of the 1990s and 2000s, grounded in critiques of encounters between European or North American theatre artists and Asia and/or Latin America, cannot, however, reduce the emancipatory potential and lines of flight inherent to the Theatre Laboratory. Models based on binarily positioned subjects cannot account for the complexity of the agency activated by scenic practices founded on an energetic body.

There has been a recent process of re-balancing that is beginning to take shape and transform the face of theatre and performance. In the Grotowski dossier (2013), several articles show how artists within this tradition are open to breaking with old paradigms, not following pre-established models but operating in a zone of fluidity between art and life. The need for continual reinvention – both in Thomas Richards' and Mario Biagini's writing here – is a common thread.

I think that, especially in Latin America, however, these issues have impacted how Theatre Laboratory practices have come to be perceived: they ended up, to some extent, associated with early moments of encounter marked by the shadow of colonialism – and that has left a mark.

Andrea

It is particularly relevant to underline this point, because the mark we refer to seems to have emerged precisely from a gesture that runs counter to the initial impulse. That impulse was, as you well describe, the need for displacement and for a processual experience of scenic presence. More than ever, the question of presence constitutes the central axis of laboratory pro-

cesses: an expanded, dilated and problematised presence made possible through technique. Techniques do not exist to reach something external, but to expand presence to its maximum potential – a presence capable of articulating itself with itself and with the Other.

We are not speaking only of the subject's presence with themselves in the studio, nor exclusively of the body's presence before the spectator. Evidently, that aspect is also present and has left an undeniable legacy in theatre schools that share this epistemology and understand the actor's presence in the Theatre Laboratory as a foundational element of our practice. What this specific legacy has brought to the understanding of the actor's presence on stage is vast and incontestable. Yet it is not only the body's energetic presence before the Other in the theatrical space, but also before the Other in the world.

The pressing question is: how am I, today, in the world – as an individual and in terms of my presence? If I cannot be present in the world in an active way – if my presence cannot establish a relation with the place, with space and with what stands before me (and this is the challenge we face today) – then perhaps theatre is precisely the means to respond to this incapacity. Perhaps it is necessary to return to the studio, to the ethos of collectivity and creation, and, together with my peers, ask: what is required to be in the world actively, engaged, connected with the place I inhabit?

This enquiry traverses us in all spheres: as teachers, researchers and creative companions. It must remain a constant question – like those that motivate the articles we are discussing here.

Patrick

Historically, European groups and emblematic figures such as Grotowski and Barba established numerous exchanges and intertwining through artistic and anthropological encounters with Asian artists, opening themselves so that practices and thought might emerge from these interactions, pointing towards possible paths for the amplification of presence – a presence interlaced with the dimensions of “being-in-the-world”. For them, this movement constituted a form of fabulation – rich, without doubt – invested in often long-lasting encounters that spanned entire lifetimes. Nevertheless, the shadows of colonial processes and colonising impulses persisted.



It is important to recognise that artists must sustain themselves and generate fabulations at multiple levels, and that through these practices the figure of the guru took on a central role – promoting and even functioning as a marketing strategy for the construction of a certain mystique around their work. The hierarchy between guru and disciple still exerts a powerful attraction. Today, however, the shadows of these processes have become evident and increasingly unsustainable.

There is another historically relevant aspect: the 1960s saw the emergence of collective creation and devising, marked by the latency of more horizontal processes. This is an extremely significant legacy that remains fully valid in the contemporary context. An example is the special issue *Laboratories in Flux* (2021), which presents, among others, the work of the Cross Pollination group, committed to constituting a collaborative and horizontal environment. There are also examples of laboratories oriented to music and other experimental configurations. Renato Ferracini, together with Chavanes Procópio Péclat and Elias Lopes (2021), discusses training in Odin Teatret and LUME, highlighting an ethic centred on *labour* – the actor's work – as fundamental. These are legacies of great importance, especially in the current political climate.

Andrea

Yes, there is something important to be observed in this decline of the guru figure. It would be pertinent to reflect on what is implicated in this fall. Certainly, there is a kind of mourning across different layers of communities structured around this hierarchical axis; at the same time, a fertile space opens for a philosophical and spiritual apprehension that turns, first of all, to questioning the reasons for the existence of these dynamics: what were they for, what functions did they fulfil – and now, what does their fall mean? What signs, clues and needs arise from this new reality?

A more sceptical approach to these figures of authority has ended up giving greater visibility precisely to what you mention: a process initiated within the Theatre Laboratory that inaugurated, as never before, the valorisation of collaboration, horizontality and shared space with the other. It is a relational space in which poetic work on the self coexists with an awareness of collective sustenance.



This autopoiesis supported by the collective – by the group – emerges today as a necessary way of world-making in the face of systemic collapse and the structural crisis of contemporary capitalism. One of the most significant voices today in terms of critiques regarding the “end of the world” is Ailton Krenak (2019), who proposes listening to the end as a fertile territory for the emergence of new possibilities. Rather than seeking external solutions, the exhaustion of the end perhaps summons us to reconnect with essential territories and with ourselves – which seems a key principle in the movements we are attempting to apprehend here.

Patrick

To survive, the Theatre Laboratory developed expanded practices—and this expansion is undoubtedly key here. I recall you saying during a rehearsal of your work demonstration that your training consists of being present all the time: in daily life, in relation to the other, on stage, in the very process of training. This expanded notion of practice and training is deeply valuable.

Just as over the last decade we have witnessed the fall of various grand social narratives, it is necessary to rethink the Theatre Laboratory from new perspectives. In the dossier dedicated to Odin Teatret, there is a beautiful interview between the French scholar Raphaëlle Doyon and the late Torgeir Wethal, one of the group’s founders (Wethal; Doyon, 2019). In an unassuming way, Wethal dismantles several myths surrounding the Odin’s history. We hear from a man of the theatre who had ceased training decades earlier, reflecting on pragmatic aspects of the craft and his relationship with his first teacher, before he had even met Eugenio Barba. This interview facilitates a clearer understanding of the complexity of these personal trajectories.

The dimension of “personal necessity” has always been present at the heart of the Theatre Laboratory, and perhaps this is one of its most valuable legacies: a pathway to revitalising this theatrical form. By moving away from grand narratives and returning to individual needs, we may find significant answers. A lifetime devoted to training makes sense if we understand training as something expanded, fluid, in constant becoming. Avoiding this becoming, by contrast, may lead us into practices that are inadvertently masochistic or moulded by hegemonic and normative forces.



Andrea

Re-examining the idea of training is central, for it expands the legacy they left. It goes beyond the archive and calls for tactics that vitalise the archive-in-movement – a dimension amalgamated with all the human needs we face at this moment in the world. If it is a living archive, it can be reactivated by being remembered and cultivated.

What Torgeir evokes about other needs that life in Laboratory Theatre elicits leaves echoes to be heard from various perspectives. What does it mean to think training from other paradigms? For if training enabled us to be present, to respond, to have integrity and resilience, to access *enchantment* – as you so well develop in your book (Turner; Campbell, 2021) – then without these pillars (enchantment, and the capacity to exercise unconditional hospitality), would it have been possible to create and implement this culture? Are these elements not still active in our living bodies now, as teachers and practitioners?

How is it for you? How do you perceive training as a living archive in your body today?

Patrick

What becomes increasingly clear to me is Eugenio Barba's notion that this is a legacy from us to ourselves (Barba, 1992): a legacy constructed with companions, in the midst of companionship, and welcomed by teachers and masters – thus creating a network of affects.

It is, at once, a genealogy and an ongoing process of re-actualising the Theatre Laboratory. We both began as children, practically: I was eleven, you were fourteen. For me, the Theatre Laboratory gifted me a language; it gave me the possibility of being a teacher, of having a profession – it gave me a life, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

Perhaps most significantly, especially for me as a European, as someone British, is that this path offered me a space for enchantment: a place where I could praise my ancestors, connect with and celebrate the energies that inhabit within me and my companions, emerging from a context that is at once solitary and collective.



The encounter with these energies is, for me, of utmost importance. It relates to what you mentioned regarding Ailton Krenak and the cosmovision of Indigenous peoples who still maintain, with absolute clarity, the perception of our holistic presence in the world – as an extension of nature. In a certain way, I was fortunate to find this in the Theatre Laboratory. This space is essential for me – and to be frank, it matters to me that it is not religious in character nor necessarily derived from one of my own cultural roots. It offers me the possibility of updating this experience in the here-and-now through the empty ritual that theatre makes possible.

Andrea

For me, honouring the legacy and experience of the Theatre Laboratory means keeping my connection with mystery alive. My contact with this practice began at fourteen, when Odin Teatret visited Rio de Janeiro in 1986. On that occasion, I watched the work demonstrations of César Brie and Iben Nagel Rasmussen. There was something in that way of being – in that vitality, in that dilated, extensive presence – that summoned me and touched me deeply as a human being.

From that moment, I embarked on an immersive path dedicated to studio work, developing training as craft – always impelled by a poetics that extended beyond the training itself. For me, the enduring legacy is *being present*. There is an intrinsic value here, in the sense of sustaining oneself through something that belongs to the field of the invisible: what LUME names and what Luís Otávio Burnier evoked – where do we find the strength of our *inner lion* (Ferracini, 2023)? Where is our invisible energy, without which nothing visible could exist?

I perceived this philosophical and epistemological dimension with great clarity in the groups with which I engaged. And I can say that, since then, this almost unsayable “thing” that became present at that moment is still updated today every time I practise – every time I place myself before people who share this perspective on life. I carry it with me, even in environments where I know this dimension is not present; yet it lives in me.

It is about being present when teaching, being present before atrocities, being alive in life itself. And this echoes directly with what Ailton Krenak (2019) proposes as a new cosmovision necessary to postpone the end of the world.



Patrick

I believe training offers us the possibility of returning to a childlike condition – of returning to not-knowing. You mentioned Krenak, who says that every adult should spend at least three hours a day learning from children (Penzani, 2019) – and perhaps there is something essential in not-knowing. Especially in our time, when epistemologies are capitalised, it becomes fundamental to affirm: I do not know; I shall learn from life.

Andrea

Of course. From life.

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