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PRESENTATION OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE:
“Theater Education and world endings”

APRESENTAÇÃO DO DOSSIÊ:
“Educação Teatral e fins de Mundo”

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Presentation of the Special Issue:

“Theater Education and world endings”

The special issue *Educação Teatral e fins de Mundo* aims to understand part of the current political–aesthetic–ideological clashes. Thus, it brings an overview of conceptions and practices in Theater Education. Its developments materialize several formats of cultural action, in the search for a problematizing education that effectively takes place via the debate between different educational process agents.

This dossier aims to shed light on the pedagogical practices of Theater teachers, especially in basic education, in a global scenario full of uncertainties and emerging collapses. With the expression “world endings” we want to encompass the craft of Theater Education with situations of termination, collapse, exhaustion, instability, drastic reconfigurations, deterritorialization - matters that, somehow, symptomatize or configure “ends of the world,” under different aspects. What touches us is how the perception of micro/macro crises permeates, in a staggering way, our current lives, from climate changes to our difficulties in our emotional connections and personal relationships.

Once we face these various world endings, it has become evident how much threats to established social structures and global economic crises, particularly in creating uncertainty, directly impact expectations regarding our power of social transformation. These factors, added to political polarization and the degradation of social relations, inscribe a scenario of toxic disagreement and helplessness.

Aesthetic initiatives addressing these crises are not unusual to us, and the Arts and their pedagogies have reflected them as either symptoms or targets, in a more recognizable manner, since the late 20th century. These approaches became clearer when expression styles explored the boundaries between the supposedly real and fictional, challenging—albeit with diminishing effectiveness—the applied ethical-aesthetic parameters. In this sphere, the scenario of political turmoil and the resurgence of reactionary movements have dangerously compromised the boundaries of what is considered false and true, right and wrong, in a disturbing complexity that perhaps no fictional work has been able to seize or even suggest.

Immersed in audiovisual, remote interactions, metaverse, and augmented reality, we experience a paroxysm of the perceptual changes that marked the 20th century. Such technologies reconfigure both our traditional experience of time and space and the ideas of relationship and presence that have underpinned us for millennia. The widespread use of smartphones—prostheses we all adopt and make us, in a way, cyborgs—is the central nerve of these changes, bringing to daily life an unprecedented intensity of changes in our forms of attention. This situation whirlwinds the very fabric of reality, challenging our parameters of what can and should be a theater class or a cultural action.



In a soothing way, concepts related to performativity emerge as a strategy that neutralizes the impertinence of anachronistic perspectives. Their use, both in the most restricted sense applied to Philosophy and Performing Arts and as a central term in Gender Studies, has been a facilitator of conceptions that welcome and promote a greater diversity of social types and corporeality, complexifying the passable spectrum to behavior, in everyday life and in the media.

In the field of Artificial Intelligence, which since its baptism has raised questions about its ability to mimic humanity and our inevitable replacement, we observe the growing proportion of decisions made by machines in matters we have always had power to act. Although optimistic forecasts minimize the damage we can suffer regarding our autonomy loss and the precariousness of work, by making us obsolete, AI pressures us to review the values that historically govern our lives, especially those of competence and effectiveness, promoted by capital. In the case of Theater Education, which has traditionally proposed to develop ethical values, there is a risk it will be absorbed as mere training for "socio-emotional skills" that, at least for now, are not replaceable by machines.

In the face of this threat, still attached to our professional theater culture when it comes to Theater Education, we are not paying enough attention to the interest that sectors of the economy have been showing. These sectors are trying to occupy, in a predatory way, a space we have not sufficiently valued: that of a broadly aesthetic conception of life, in which art and life are not distinguished. This Dossier's theme calls us to assume as our field of work the frames of perception that shape our relationship with reality—an aesthetic approach that encompasses everyday life and its theatricality. For many years now, with our Brazilian teaching degree system, we have had foundations and resources for an expanded view of our pedagogical role. But if we do not act quickly, our work will inevitably be transformed into another gear so the world moves forward towards its own end.

Our idea was to pay attention to the fact that our emotional structure, perceptual frameworks, beliefs, solutions to deal with the world, and current organizations of social relations have not been able to respond to the demand to be alive, in a minimally viable way. In the field of Theater Education, this reality sets a call to intervention and activism, making the pedagogical role a place of intrinsically social action. Namely, to be able to cope, using Theater Education, with our various collapsing worlds coexisting. Hence, educators face the challenge of dealing with drastic changes that affect cultures and ways of living, highlighting the need to articulate resistance and adaptation in the face of destructive pressures. Thus, this dossier presents limits and possibilities of Theater teaching attempting to transform classroom space and its developments into an arena of invention and support of new perspectives regarding the ways of living and the adjustments that have been occurring in their configurations.

Then, this dossier presents articles that address a wide range of subjects and ways of approaching them. These are experiences and reflections linked to immediate practices to a greater



or lesser extent. Whatever the case, we have a sample of concerns about the present and attempts to deal with challenges that, somehow, overlap to the worlds and their ends, with or without new beginnings.

With a reflective essay that addresses her trajectory as a professor, Tatiana Motta Lima, in *Acting classroom and the Grotowskian notion of contact: connecting with life flows in a neoliberal world*, dialogues with certain traditions of theater craftsmanship that can foster reconfigurations of subjectivity alternatives to those that sicken in the face of neoliberalism, particularly in its power to promote individualism.

In *"Allow me to speak, not my scars": Anti-racist pedagogies and theater education in pandemic times*, Victor Hugo Neves de Oliveira and Ana Paula da Silva Santos address how pedagogical practices faced the challenges of teaching Theater during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Martha Dias da Cruz Leite, in *Old expectations, new challenges: the crisis of teaching authority in the field of theatrical education* raises, in a way contrary to the most current opinions in our field, complexities and contradictions present today concerning the dimension of authority operating in teaching practice.

In *The theater and the plague in algorithm networks* Gustavo Henrique Lima Ferreira and Carminda Mendes André propose, as a response to what they identify, in their reading of Vilém Flusser, as "manipulative effects of internet connectivity," the resumption of elements of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty.

The text *Body response: glimpses in theater education* written by Miguel Levi de Oliveira Lucas and Maria Carolina de Andrade Freitas, brings elaborations on how Theater Education can influence processes of subjectivation, through an analysis of workshops taught at a university, for students from courses other than Theater.

Also analyzing a specific case, Thiago Meira, in *The Endless Stories: reflections on a performative experience with five-year-old children*, reports the "performative methodology" as a strategy for teaching Theater in the virtual environment.

José Luis Felício Carvalho, in *Performance and social drama in improvisational theater: an Analysis of the Anti-racist Spectacle Swag Hat*, analyzes improvisational theater as an action of resistance against racist elements of colonialism.

Murilo Moraes Gaulês and Maria Helena Franco de Araujo Bastos trace, with *"Far beyond Carandiru: indisciplinary processes in theater, imprisonment, and abolition"*, a historical trajectory of pedagogical theatrical interventions carried out in the Carandiru Complex, from 1940 onwards, through the penal abolitionism philosophy lenses.

Finally, with *Western theatre under indigenous influence: reflections on the epistemology and poetic hybridity in the performance Canek by the Vendímia Company, Bogotá*, Stephan Baumgartel brings Amerindian epistemology, in defense of integration between the so-called Western Art and Indigenous Art.



We hope this sample of initiatives, with their perspectives made explicit for sharing with all people, will be a good company on our journey.



Academic biography

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