



**A MOUNTAIN WITH NO SUMMIT:  
memories of a climb in seven steps**

A UMA MONTANHA SEM CUME:  
memórias de uma escalada em sete tempos

Julio Adrião

**A mountain with no summit:  
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**Abstract:** This text is a statement about the trajectory of a theater artist—actor, director, producer—from his first discoveries and choices to artistic maturity. In the account of this journey, divided by the author into seven periods, the reader can follow his encounters, discoveries, learning, perplexities, fears, courage, and finally his human and artistic adventures. From these reflections, a critical view of Group Theater is constructed from a historical perspective based on the life story of a Brazilian artist.

**Keywords:** group theater; theater acting; theatrical learning.

**Uma montanha sem cume:  
memórias de uma escalada em sete tempos**

**Resumo:** Este texto é um depoimento sobre a trajetória de um artista de teatro—ator, diretor, produtor—desde as primeiras descobertas e escolhas até a maturidade artística. No relato dessa jornada, dividida pelo autor em sete tempos, o leitor pode acompanhar seus principais encontros e descobertas, seus aprendizados, perplexidades, medos, coragens, enfim suas peripécias humanas e artísticas. A partir dessas reflexões, constrói-se uma visão crítica sobre o Teatro de Grupo, em uma perspectiva histórica a partir da história de vida de um artista brasileiro.

**Palavras-chave:** teatro de grupo; atuação teatral; aprendizado teatral.



“Each one does the theater they are capable of”  
(Montenegro, 2016)

### **Step zero: When we did not even know we did not know**

In 1986, Ricardo Gomes, Priscilla Duarte, Flavio Kaktus, Dina Kleve, Aglaia Azevedo, Isabella Azevedo Irlandini and myself, among others, were part of a physical training group for actors guided by actress Helena Varvaki, from Rio Grande do Sul. She informed us about the Third Theatre and of Eugenio Barba who, the following year, we met during his first visit to Rio de Janeiro with Odin Teatret.

### **Step one: When we knew we did not know**

The date: Sometime in May 1987. The place: Largo da Carioca, in downtown Rio de Janeiro. The event: A street performance called “*Albatri*,” by the Tascabile di Bergamo Theater. The scene: A trumpet plays from the top of the Santo Antônio Convent. A drum erupts over the marquise of the Caixa Econômica building. A bird’s cry resounds and suddenly one, two, three albatrosses appear at different spots in the square. In reality, they were actors and actresses on stilts, wearing enormous costumes, with masks and musical instruments, giving everyday life a break. In the infinite minutes that followed, Largo da Carioca was transformed into an immense stage from which images and sounds sprouted. A poetic narrative was being created, provoking astonishment, laughter, silence, tears and rushes from the audience trying to follow the acts, making me feel that theater would never be the same. Today, more than 35 years later, I still live the consequences of that day.

For some Brazilian actors, the year 1987 was marked by tours of Danish company Odin Teatret in the country, as well as Italian companies Tascabile di Bergamo, Farfa and Potlach. These, with the support of the National Institute of Performing Arts (Inacen – *Instituto Nacional de Artes Cênicas*) and the Italian Cultural Institute, were in Rio de Janeiro in May, July and October of that year. In October, while participating in a 10-day workshop with Potlach Theater, I learned of Professor Giuseppe D’Angelo’s (director of the Italian Cultural Institute of Rio de Janeiro) intention to promote, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, scholarships for some Brazilian actresses and actors to participate in a Seminar with said company. On the last day of the workshop, I told the director of Potlach, Pino di Buduo, of my interest in going to Italy. After a pause, he looked at me firmly and said it would be great if I went, but the Seminar was to begin on November 25 and tickets were not included. Therefore, after three weeks of scrambling, organizing and looking for alternative ways to travel, actor Flavio Kaktuz and I boarded the Lloyd Atlântico cargo ship on the 5th of that month, heading to the port of Rotterdam, Netherlands. Upon arrival, we took a train to



Italy for an eight-month immersion in the company's rehearsal rooms, based in Fara Sabina, in the province of Rieti.

Fara Sabina is a small walled medieval town, located on a hill about 50 km from Rome and, at the time, populated by less than a thousand inhabitants. In total, 10 young actors attended the Seminar: three actresses and three actors from Brazil, and two actresses and two actors from Argentina. We shared a three-story house, the Pacèri house, rented by the company and consisting of six bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen with a pantry and a rehearsal room. It was a five-minute walk from the company's headquarters.

The theme was actors' physical training and, from Monday to Saturday, our routine began with a half-hour run around the city at half past six in the morning. Then, we trained various techniques for another four hours, including the basics of solo acrobatics and martial arts, as well as physical research with objects and vocal technique, divided into one-hour sessions and a half-hour break for breakfast. The afternoon was reserved for collective or individual studies, which could be readings, videos, playing some musical instrument, training with stilts, watching the company's rehearsals, helping with organization or production, cleaning, painting walls, among others.

Scenic creation only became part of the Seminar some months later, when the Brazilian actors were instructed to put together a collective street theater scene, as well as stage scenes, individually or in pairs, to be presented at the end of the immersion in July 1988. The four Argentinians arrived at Fara Sabina already as new members of the company and, at that time, rehearsed replacements in current performances.

This tough routine deeply impacted the actors and actresses' life, and it was evident how our bodies and souls were transformed. The methods and conditions for acting in a rehearsal room that were instilled in us are, to this day, the subject of reflections on the path followed by each. The main learning I carry with me from this period is that daily training requires discipline and can be very difficult, but it can and should still be good, and never constrain the actor.

### **Step two: When I knew the end was a new beginning**

Time flew by and, at the end of the eight months of the Seminar, I decided not to return to Brazil and negotiated to stay for a few more months at Potlach Theater, being mentored by actress Daniela Regnoli, aiming to develop a solo street performance. In the following months, my work proved to be less productive than desired. When she returned from a tour with the company and saw my rehearsal process, Daniela made me understand that I had lost myself in time and space and was far from a concrete goal because, although I worked hard, I was not working well.

During this period, Potlach received a visit from a friend one day: Tuscan actor Sergio Bustric Bini, with long and recognized experience with solo street acting. He did magic numbers,



illusionism and sleight of hand in very poetic performances, based on authorial texts and a lot of humor. Daniela told him about me and called him to watch our rehearsals. At the end, when, among other techniques I was developing, he saw me struggling to do poor sequences with juggling and elementary actions with stilts and fire, he said “People who perform these techniques do so at a level that, no matter how simple the number is, should infect the audience with the dexterity, poetics and uniqueness of what they see. The audience has to feel enraptured or, at least, have a lot of fun.” Afterward, he asked what I intended to do in the next few days. Upon hearing I would continue training, he looked at me and asked “Can you go to Florence with me today, so we can work for about three days?”

He understood it was urgent for me to create conditions for an encounter with the public, protected by something that worked, so that I could get in touch with my fears and possibilities. With Daniela’s consent, we left on the same day and, by the end of that afternoon, in Florence, we started working. In the following days, the process gained a perspective that, until then, I had not imagined.

Still on that first day, very carefully and objectively, he suggested some classic routines, such as the strongman, the diving into a cup, among others. Then, after understanding my capabilities and technical limitations, he idealized a 40 cm high stilts, so that I could simultaneously stand out from the crowd upon arrival and not distance myself too much from it if I wore taller ones, for example. The stilts would have to fit inside a suitcase so that, when I left carrying everything in it, I could disappear among the crowd without losing the poetic dimension of the communication established during the performance.

Although research into clowns was one of my interests, Bustric sensed that the way to find the right stage costume for me might be different. Being smaller than me, he offered one of his old suits and a turquoise blue bow tie, which matched the pointed-toe shoes I had bought at a thrift store. Thus, the image of the poetic wanderer, with a smaller outfit than his body demanded, was being defined. With a pair of socks in the same color as the tie, I saw the character that, in the years that followed, would become the basis of the solo “The cash and carry international show,” and later, in Brazil, of the establishment of Companhia do Público, a Rio de Janeiro comic trio.

At the end of the second day, he told me that the most important thing would be for me to find the right way to verbally communicate with the audience. Right there, in his living room, he asked me to improvise a gathering call, which is when the show has not yet started and the actor needs to assemble an audience. For that, he must announce what he will do, instigate curiosity and empathy, and delay the beginning until enough people form a circle, without losing the ones who arrived earlier. In short, the actor needs to speak and do things that make passers-by decide it is worth stopping, waiting, and giving him a chance. After about four minutes of improvisation, he said “Alright, I know now this will not be a problem for you; let’s begin the numbers” and started to guide me, more technically than artistically, because he knew the latter would have to be the result of a work done in front of the public, based on very concrete scenic actions.



On the third day, I returned to Fara Sabina with a suitcase he bought for me, a pair of stilts adorned with flowers, as if they were plants in a vase, a costume, ropes and other objects that would help me develop the dramaturgy of the comic numbers he had taught me. The mission now was to head to the rehearsal room and train to recreate the classic numbers in my own way, saying what I wanted, trying to delay each number as much as possible, discovering and exploring narratives and comic timing to combine the performances in a head-on communication with the audience. I spent the next four days immersed in the rehearsal room, alone, developing the script: summon the gathering; announce and present the strongman number with a comic ending; thank the audience, pass the hat a first time to collect the money offered; announce the diving into a cup number; change clothes in a fun choreography with a corny song; perform the second number; pass the hat again; prepare the conclusion by speaking some lines while collecting the materials; put everything in the suitcase; thank the audience and leave.

I scheduled the first performance for that same week, in a square in Fiano Romano, a small town near Fara Sabina. So, on the afternoon of December 26, 1988, Saint Stephen's Day, speaking fluent Italian but with numbers still uncertain and being tested for the first time with an audience mostly made up of young people eager to take down a foreigner trying to be funny, I finished about 20 minutes of performance. Almost nothing worked, and it was very clumsy. I earned the equivalent of about 10 euros in the hat and had the certainty that if I really wanted to do this, I would still have to endure a lot. In a phone call, I told Bustric how the performance went, and he was adamant: "Calm down, it can never be worse. When will the next one be?"

In the following years, I performed countless times, and it became my livelihood for a while. But Bustric never attended "The cash and carry international show" and, since I returned to Brazil, we have not spoken again. However, in those three days I spent in Florence, I learned that the importance of attention in observing a creative process, a foundation Bustric does not even know he taught me, can make all the difference. Today, that is one of the main aspects I try to convey when leading a rehearsal room.

### **Step three: When I knew it was not enough to know**

At the beginning of 1989, I finished my time in Fara Sabina and moved to Rome where, for a year, I worked with the Abraxa Theater Company, based in Villa Flora, in the Portuense neighborhood. Abraxa was formed in the late 1970s from Seminars with companies of the Third Theatre, including the Potlach Theater. Actor Paolo Grippa, one of its founders, became my artistic reference during this period for his versatility and, above all, his open, generous and critical listening, which was all I needed at that moment. I participated in trainings with other actors who were selected to create a new street performance and tour Southern Italy in the summer. The show "Bolero Parade" was not exactly breathtaking but had its merits, especially regarding the quality



of the actors' delivery. Touring Calabria and Sicily that summer was a pivotal experience for me to truly understand what it means to be a Company. In addition to the tour, I working with Abraxa teatro at Villa Flora's headquarters, where everyone participated in cleaning, maintenance, repairs, took turns in leading trainings and collaborated in scene creation, made me realize the importance of horizontality in work relationships, in which respect and responsibility must be offered and demanded.

In 1990, a reunion with Isabella Azevedo Irlandini from Rio de Janeiro, a fellow student at the Laranjeiras House of Arts (CAL – *Casa das Artes de Laranjeiras*) and in the physical training group for actors, who had recently arrived in Rome after a period with the Tascabile di Bergamo Theater, was the spark for the development of the Qabaloquá Company, which we founded that year along with Cuban actress and dancer Virginia Boroto. Based on each of our experiences, we structured a plan to achieve, within a year, the necessary autonomy to fully dedicate ourselves to theatrical production. During this period, we rented a room in the Testaccio neighborhood, where we created two children's shows and began a successful experience with Latin American dance classes, such as salsa, merengue, samba and forró, which were trending in Italy at the time. With the financial stability provided by these activities and Virginia's unexpected departure, we decided to offer a free four-month seminar to select actors who would participate in the production of a street show for the summer. "*Alegorias do caos*" ("Allegories of chaos") was created based on the reading of a poem by William Blake and had all the ingredients that fueled us in the pursuit of that scenic language. The itinerant show had a poetic and aggressive structure, permeated by music composed by Italian Brazilian Luigi Irlandini, which was played live by the actors. With a lot of impact and great plastic beauty, percussion, dances, songs, fire stunts, and fabrics that formed an immense dragon composed of six actors and actresses on stilts, the scenes moved through the streets to a previously chosen square, where a final combat left the audience very mobilized.

At the end of 1991, it was decided that a Kathakali Master, Indian Nanda Kumaran, would spend three months in Rome, where he would make presentations, teach classes in the Company and help us prepare a new work based on this research. Regarding the decision to dedicate ourselves to the training of Indian classical dance, I was a dissenting voice in the Company which, in addition to Isabella and me, was already composed of six other actors. Our disagreements about the focus of the scenic research were widely discussed and, after many arguments, I ended up accepting the general consensus and postponing my desire to create a stage performance based on improvisations. The Indian Master's stay resulted in everything that was expected: Work, visibility, content and the deepening identity crisis of the young company, which ended in 1992 with some members leaving, and the new show never being performed.

During this period, I came to Brazil for the second time in five years since I moved to Italy. In the three weeks I spent in Rio, watching shows, attending the recently opened Banco do Brasil Cultural Center (CCBB), and meeting friends for long conversations, I realized I was at a crossroads. At 32 years of age and having to redirect my work and life, I would have to decide between staying





in Italy with the Company, or starting my journey back to Brazil. I returned to Rome where, moved by intuition, I realized it would be my last year in what had become my adopted home. So, I spent 1993 preparing for my return to Brazil, which happened in February 1994, with the Qabalóquá Company ending its activities shortly after my departure.

Those eight months initially planned in 1987 had become six years, and today, looking back and revisiting so many stories, I can see the coherence of my steps, albeit often insecure, painful and misunderstood at the time they were taken. The greatest learning of this last period was the realization that, to lead a theater company, good relationships, mutual admiration, language research and incredible shows are not enough if there is no planning that also considers the desires, needs and individual pacing of each group member.

#### **Step four: When teaching reveals itself to be an eternal learning**

Rio de Janeiro, May 1987: In the first seminar that Italian companies Tascabile di Bergamo and Potlach offered in Rio de Janeiro, the group of actors and actresses guided by Helena Varvaki split up to participate in all workshops, aiming to learn from them and exchange experiences with each other. Flávio Kactuz, Dinah Kleve and I were directed to the workshop that actor Antonio Mercadante, from Potlach, would conduct at the Martins Pena Theater School, in downtown Rio. On the first day, I left home before 7 a.m. to teach English my job at the time. From there, I went straight to the workshop, scheduled at 8:30 a.m. In the midst of the Rio de Janeiro chaos on a Monday morning, I managed to arrive at 8:35 a.m. and entered the room asking for permission, apologizing for the delay. I was about to start changing clothes when I saw Antonio standing there, looking at me, with the students around him. The silence was broken by him saying something in Spanish along the lines of “*la clase ya ha comenzado*,” followed by another pause and another apology from me. Then, he made it clear that I could not participate, as I was five minutes late. True to my Rio de Janeiro ways, I insisted and tried to explain my reasons, asking if I could stay as a listener. However, I was interrupted by his clear instruction for me to leave the room. A mixture of incredulity and disappointment led me to walk to my home in Santa Teresa, trying, unsuccessfully, to absorb the meaning of that experience.

Fara Sabina, May 1988: Six months after the beginning of the Seminar at Potlach, the days were divided between physical training in the morning and scene rehearsals in the afternoon. Swiss actress Nathalie Mentha, our reference in acrobatics training at the Seminar, proposed to conduct an extra activity for four days, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., with Brazilian and Argentinian actors and actresses. On the first day, the work began intensely, with contagious songs from the album “Streets of Gold,” by The Klezmerim, giving rhythm to the training of the 10 participants who took turns in the actions she proposed. After about an hour, I began to feel twinges in my gut, announcing an





urgent call from nature. I stopped the sequence and, for a few minutes, tried unsuccessfully to make eye contact with Nathalie. Seeing me standing still, but without interrupting her conduction of the training, she responded to my request to leave the room by saying something like “If you leave, you are out.” Trying to manage my physical urgencies and understand the meaning of what she said, I remained there for a few minutes and realized that, even if I decided to leave, it was already too late. The training stopped so that I could be helped by some colleagues to leave the room, while others cleaned the floor. Nathalie was baffled, and I was devastated. Taken to an outdoor area at the back of the theater, I had my clothes taken off and was washed; my body with water, and my soul with the silent affection of my companions. This episode helped me understand the difference between respect and fear, between leadership and authoritarianism, as well as understand the kind of relationship I did not seek in life and work. The day ended with Nathalie torn between apologizing and blaming me for what happened. I decided to keep attending the seminary, since the possible learning of that experience was not something that could be understood with the urgency that moral frailty demanded. The training continued the next day without this being commented on, and this moment was recorded in my work notebook and in my soul.

Rome, 1991: In an afternoon of rehearsals for “*Alegorias do caos*,” with our Company Qabaloquá, one of the young student actors, very dedicated and humorous, did not show up. When he arrived the next day, his expression showed something important had happened. Throughout the conversation, he made it clear he did not intend to continue in the show, claiming, among other reasons, he was no longer having fun. In the minutes that followed, I found myself being overwhelmed by the heat of the argument. Then, with my finger raised, I snapped at him in a way that exceeded all acceptable limits in an argument, and yet he remained impassive. When I finally gave up shouting my arguments about his irresponsibility, he took a breath and said “I’m not going to punch you because I respect you” and left the room. Over a year later, we met again. He had created a group with his girlfriend; they were working and happy. He smiled at me, we hugged and I never heard from Pasquale again.

Rio de Janeiro, September 2021: As part of the program of online meetings to celebrate Eugenio Barba’s 80th birthday, planned and conducted by Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte, I was invited to mediate, along with Ricardo, the conversation between Tiziana Barbiero and Caterina Scotti, from Tascabile di Bergamo, and Nathalie Mentha, from Potlach. After their long and emotional testimonies, Tatiana, in a burst of sincerity and remembering her sensations at the 1987 workshops in Rio de Janeiro, spoke about how insecure she was regarding the huge responsibility she assumed when she knew so little of the knowledge they were sharing with those young actors. Her comment was received with sympathy, both by her companion Caterina and by Nathalie. We were all very touched by the testimonies and, having been given the floor, I could not resist the moment of sincere openness. I smiled and said I was very grateful and happy to hear about how much they did not know, because they were fundamental to our journey since, at that time, we knew much less. The immediate reaction of the three actresses, trying to explain what they had said,



as if surprised with an improper confession, made me go back in time and remember the passages I described above.

There are many stories. Remembering each one is an opportunity to humanize those involved. Recognizing and laughing at our failures, mistakes, anxieties or precipitations helps us understand and forgive the arrogance that, due to insecurity, often makes us act unfairly and haughtily. I always try to be very attentive to the responsibility of leading a rehearsal room, because, today, someone might look at me with the same eyes I had about 35 years ago.

### **Step five: When knowledge flourishes**

Rio de Janeiro, year 2000: At the beginning of that year, director Alessandra Vannucci invited me to translate the text that Italian playwright and actor Dario Fo wrote in 1992, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the continent that would later be known as America. The text, originally improvised based on drawings he had made for the scenes of his script/*canovaccio*, was published in a two-column format on each page. In the left column was the transcription of the text, in a mixture of Italian, Spanish, onomatopoeia and other forms Fo mastered. In the right column was the translation of this first text into literary Italian, among the drawings that had inspired him in the telling of the story.

After a few weeks of work and about five edits, we finally arrived at a text in Portuguese, good to read, but too literary to perform. Provocative as always, Alessandra said “this text needs to return to its original form, be spoken by an actor, and the actor here is you, so tell this story.” When she heard me say I did not know the text, she cemented a truth that would change my life: “You don’t know the text, but you know the story.” Right there, between the kitchen and the living room of her old house on Triunfo Street, in Santa Teresa, I began to do what she had asked me to. I used sounds and onomatopoeia to fill in moments when memory did not flow and, as if telling a story to a child, I physically stretched some passages. After a few attempts, I stopped and said I could not continue, that it was a mess, that it was not theater. She replied: “but it works; keep going,” and did not allow me give up.

After about 10 days of rehearsals, we decided to show our piece to some friends at the Laurinda Santos Lobo Cultural Center, in Santa Teresa, and the receptivity assured us we had a work in progress: a children’s theater show for adults, in which storytelling and animation cinema were the raw material of the actor’s frontal performance. Playing at materializing the missing parts of the narrative with his body, sounds and voices, he gives the audience the opportunity to forget about time and see beyond the scene, completing it in their heads with their own imagination.

Between 2000 and 2001, we even presented this piece a few times, but due to my many commitments with Companhia do Público and the little receptivity of this work by the other



members of the trio, who did not see the possibility of it becoming a group production, the project ended up being shelved.

After a deep crisis that culminated in my departure from Companhia do Público in 2003, I started thinking about doing a solo work again. At Alessandra's insistence and with the support of my production partner at the time, the director and playwright from Minas Gerais, Sidnei Cruz, with whom I did several productions under the Leões de Circo Pequenos Empreendimentos label, I ended up resuming rehearsals in 2004. A year later, after about 40 presentations, from open rehearsals to performances in Sesc Rio and Sesc Ceará, we officially premiered on September 14, 2005, at Casa Mercado 45, downtown Rio de Janeiro. This would change my life once again. "*A descoberta das Américas*" ("The discovery of the Americas") is a separate story and today, 19 years after its premiere, I see myself as the guardian of this work, which still asks to be kept alive because, although watched by thousands of people, there seems to be many more who still want to watch it. In respect for the public, keeping the story alive means never repeating, but always redoing and, when necessary, returning to the rehearsal room for updates, with the complicity of Alessandra, an eternal "privileged spectator" of this process.

By a quirk of fate, in December 2010, Aderbal Freire Filho and Eugenio Barba conducted a course for directors at the Poeira theater, in Rio de Janeiro, in which Alessandra participated. At the end of that week, after Eugenio expressed interest in watching the shows by some of the participating directors, Alessandra called me asking if there was a way for me to present "*A descoberta das Américas*." Faced with my enthusiastic statement, the Poeira team went out of their way to publicize, via social networks, that there would be a function open to the public the next day. At the end of the crowded presentation, when I was undressing to get into the shower, Eugenio and Julia Varley effusively entered the dressing room to greet me. Throughout the conversation, when I spoke, in Italian, about my trajectory in Italy in the 1980s/1990s, with an air of sudden understanding, he stared at me and exclaimed "*allora, sei della famiglia!*", to which we laughed a lot, making me feel like a member of a mafia family.

From this work, at the request of several people who, after watching the show, asked if I taught "it," I developed a methodological workshop, which has been maturing over the last few years, with workload and number of participants varying according to demand. Throughout these years, the workshop "*O ator no solo narrativo*" ("The actor on the narrative solo") helped generate numerous scenes and solo shows, gaining, as of 2020, with the pandemic, an individual and virtual format called "*Consultório cênico*" ("Scenic practice") and, more recently, a "*aula demonstração*" ("demonstration class") for larger audiences, lasting about two and a half hours. I know all this was only possible to happen the way it did because of everything I experienced over more than 35 years, since the moment I saw myself doing theater professionally, and my fortuitous meeting with Helena Varvaki.



### **Step six: When learning is the greatest knowledge**

The rehearsal room that interests me today is structured by a horizontal hierarchy, in which specific functions do not prevent the participants' interference at any point in the process. In the workshops I teach, the respectful, interested and humorous provocation when creating a scene is the basis to exercise the role of a "privileged spectator." More than directing, the privileged spectator observes who is on stage and helps the actor/actress feel free to experiment/investigate what they do not yet know without giving up the pursuit, because when nothing is yet, everything can still be.

When observing a scene creation, the privileged spectator should not worry about having previous ideas, since any idea should arise from what the actor/actress is proposing. The viewer should only point out what they are seeing the other person find, without discarding anything at first, accumulating notes and pointing out options for paths, suggesting what has not yet been tried, provoking challenges, helping to direct, regardless of their personal taste, since each person's taste has little importance compared to the actor/actress' effort to remain active and whole in the pursuit. A rehearsal room needs to be lively, intense, respectful, patient and fun, where the creating actor/actress can have the first and, possibly, the last word. Making mistakes in theater is fundamental. A theatrical error cannot be compared to a medical, engineering or economic error, as no one dies on account of a mistake in theater. At most, one might never go to the theater again. To make a mistake in theater is to realize what does not work, and this needs to happen in the rehearsal room.

The theater company I envisioned would be one where its members would understand that the growth and continuity of the group would depend directly on the growth continuity of its members. Theoretically obvious, this premise would be technically complex to apply, because the balance between the desires and needs of each member and those of the company would be unlikely, since the repertoire, programming and planning could prevent individuals from tracing their own flights. If, as part of this process, this is done in a healthy way, it would certainly bring immense growth to the group as well. Priorities, vanities, power, career, security, dedication, autonomy, commitment and pleasure would be some of the countless factors that must be considered for the inevitable moments of crisis in this journey to be seen as opportunities and challenges to be dealt with responsibly and respectfully. Thus, the transparency of agreements would make the difference.

Today, I am no longer part of any company, although I keep working in very good company.



### **Step seven: There will always be a lot to learn**

In a recent chance meeting with Helena Varvaki, I took the opportunity to thank her for her influence on my training as an actor. We laughed a lot when she commented that she always remembered a mistake I made during that period: While commenting about that day's training, I had referred to our individual warm-up as individual relaxation. At the time, that generated a whole discussion about my understanding of our work, culminating in my subsequent departure from that group. But, in this reunion, our gentle and sincere laughter when we remembered this passage denounced our capacity for self-critical reflection over the years.

Discipline is, in fact, self-discipline, with which we should always dialogue to try to understand and decide not only what and how to do, but also what to avoid doing, whether in the rehearsal room, before or after functions, or in daily life. The most difficult thing always ends up being to modify some pattern that, for comfort, laziness or pleasure, can prove harmful or unproductive.

Individual training should be a process as serious and disciplined as it is pleasurable and critical, and can and should be modified according to new goals or periods of life. Today, at the age of 64, a practitioner of *Iyengar yoga* for eight years, of Hawaiian canoeing for five, and of urban cycling since always, I continue to dedicate my morning schedules to these practices. They have become a kind of training outside the rehearsal room, as the posture is the same, only much more connected with my needs in everyday life, at work, and with my pleasure.

The Master also helps us learn what not to do, such as not to become slaves to anxiety and fears, since we cannot live without these feelings. They know that not everyone learns, or at least not at the time something is taught, because lessons can often take years to be really understood. In reality, a Master is someone who never stops learning.

I recognize and thank all these Masters who, even without knowing, taught me so much and did not let me give up. The actor I am today is a reflection of the man I have become and the result of experiences with these companies, cornerstones of the theater I try to practice, with seriousness, responsibility, curiosity and sense of humor.

There are many stories, but they are all part of the same never-ending story.

“Culture is a self-defense weapon”  
(Wolff, 1996, p. 561)



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