




TO THOSE WHO WILL COME AFTER US

A QUEM VIRÁ DEPOIS DE NÓS

Ricardo Gomes

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8778-9598>

Priscilla Duarte

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6900-7177>

 doi.org/10.70446/ephemera.v8i14.8004

To Those Who Will Come After Us

Abstract: The text is a form of rendering a final balance on the “Meetings on Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology - a tribute to Eugenio Barba: 85 years of life, 60 years of theater and 34 years of meetings in Brazil”, written by its organizers. It represents a testimony about a generation of Brazilian artists who commenced their artistic journey in theatre during the 1980s, under the influence of the Third Theater movement, an inflection of Group Theatre, stemming from their contact with Odin Teatret and other European theater groups, such as Teatro tascabile di Bergamo, Teatro Potlach and Centro per la Sperimentazione per la Ricerca Teatrale di Pontedera.

Keywords: group theater; third theater; Eugenio Barba.

A quem virá depois de nós

Resumo: O texto é uma espécie de prestação de contas sobre os “Encontros sobre o Terceiro Teatro e a Antropologia Teatral - uma homenagem a Eugenio Barba: 85 anos de vida, 60 anos de teatro e 34 anos de encontros no Brasil”, escrito por seus organizadores. Representa um testemunho sobre uma geração de artistas brasileiros que iniciou-se na arte teatral nos anos 1980, sob influência do movimento do Terceiro Teatro, uma inflexão do Teatro de Grupo, a partir do contato com o Odin Teatret e outros grupos de teatro europeus, como O Teatro tascabile di Bergamo, o Teatro Potlach e o Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale di Pontedera.

Palavras-chave: teatro de grupo; terceiro teatro, Eugenio Barba.



The following text was written at the end of 2021 as a form of rendering a final balance of an event organised that year, virtually, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic: The “Encounters on Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology¹ - a tribute to Eugenio Barba: 85 years of life, 60 years of theatre and 34 years of encounters in Brazil”². The text was published in 2022, along with seven other short texts, in the “News” section of the second issue of the Journal of Theatre Anthropology³, an annual journal conceived as a knowledge-sharing project about acting techniques, which was founded by Eugenio Barba and is published in collaboration with the International School of Theatre Anthropology, the Fondazione Barba Varley, the Odin Teatret Archives and the Center for Theatre Laboratory Studies at the University of Aarhus (Denmark). The present publication is intended as a testimony of the Brazilian developments of the Third Theatre, one of the inflections of the Group Theatre movement, which influenced the history of Brazilian theatre”⁴.

Odin Teatret’s first trip to Venezuela in 1976 in order to participate in the Caracas Festival marked the beginning of the group and Eugenio Barba’s strong and long-lasting relationship with Latin America. Odin’s first contact with Brazil took place in 1978, when group members Roberta Carreri and Francis Pardeilhan came to Salvador (Bahia) to study capoeira and the dances of the Orixás, as part of their creative process for the performance *The Million*.

1 The term “Third Theatre” was first coined by Eugenio Barba in a letter addressed to the participants of the International Workshop of Theatre Research, which he conceived and directed as part of the Theatre of Nations festival under the auspices of UNESCO’s International Theatre Institute (ITI). This event was held in 1976 in partnership with the 10th edition of the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF). The meeting, a minor and peripheral event if compared with the major official UNESCO festival, was attended by just over a hundred participants stemming from young, predominantly lesser-known, groups from Latin America and Europe. On this occasion, Barba referred to the “Third Theatre” as a theatre that was neither “the institutional theatre, protected and subsidised on account of the cultural values it seems to transmit (...) the ‘noble’ version of the entertainment industry” nor “the avant-garde, experimental, research theatre (...) defended in the name of the need to overcome traditions”, but rather, a theater that “dwells in the margins (...) islands with no contact between them, youngsters that gather and form groups that stubbornly resist (...) through the force of a continual work, being able to identify their own space, which is unique to each one, looking for the essential to remain faithful to, and trying to force others to accept this diversity (...). Perhaps, for them, ‘theatre’ is a medium that allows them to find their own way of being present in society (...) seeking deeper human connections between people, with the aim of forming a social cell where the intentions, aspirations and personal needs begin to become facts” (BARBA, 2010, p. 186-188). Theatre Anthropology, a field of study proposed by Barba, “is the study of the behaviour of human beings who use their physical and mental presence in a representational situation which is organised according to principles that are different from those of everyday life. (...) it does not seek universally true principles, but *useful* indications. It doesn’t possess the humility of a science, but it rather has the ambition to identify knowledge useful to the action of the actor-dancer. It doesn’t wish to discover laws, but rather to study rules of behaviour” (Barba; Savarese, 2012, p. 13-14). For further information, see the transcript of the opening lecture of the “Encounters”, given by Barba (2024), entitled “theatre is politics with other means”.

2 The event was held with General coordination by Ricardo Gomes (Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto and Teatro Diadokai); Coordination and curatorship by Ricardo Gomes, Gilberto Icle (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Universidade Nacional de Brasília and UTA - Usina Trabalho do Ator) and Fernando Mencarelli (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais); Coordination assistance by Priscilla Duarte (Teatro Diadokai).

3 Cf.: <https://jta.ista-online.org/index>

4 For further information, see (Gomes; Duarte, 2024).



However, it was the presence of Eugenio Barba, accompanying the groups Farfa and Canada Project⁵, in 1987, during a trip to São Paulo, Campinas and Rio de Janeiro, which made a profound impact on a young generation of Brazilian theatre practitioners. The performances, lectures, film exhibitions and workshops organised by Barba and the members of Farfa and The Canada Project, alongside the presence of the Italian groups Teatro tascabile di Bergamo and Teatro Potlach (who also visited the country during the same year), introduced Brazilian artists to the field of theatre anthropology and the concept of Third Theatre for the first time.⁶ The impact was such that a number of groups were formed or developed new approaches to their work.⁷ Since then, the reference to theatre anthropology became an integral part of the practices of many Brazilian theatre groups and scholars. Exchanges and barter between Odin Teatret and Brazil have multiplied, highlighting the vocation of Barba and his actors in terms of creating artist networks.

This historical first meeting was marked by the 'political opening' of the military dictatorship that had governed Brazil from 1964 to 1985. This 'slow and gradual' opening was determined by the generals, and was not the 'ample and unrestricted' process of democratisation demanded by civilian society. The opening had been preceded by the harshest period of the military regime, including the violent repression of the student movement of 1968. As is customary under dictatorships, artists had been censored, silenced, persecuted, banished from the country, exiled and even murdered; many theatre groups were destroyed. On this scorched earth, Brazilian theatre was reborn from the ashes. While the groups that had made history in the 1960s no longer existed or were scattered, the new groups that would strike out fresh paths over the following years, many of them severely marked by the experiences of 1987, were taking their first steps.

We were young students on the Performing Arts Undergraduate Programme at UNIRIO, in Rio de Janeiro, and felt immersed in a theatre environment drained of its liveliness. Our contact with the ideas and practices of Odin Teatret and the Italian groups introduced us, and many of our generation, to the tenets of Group Theatre. This had a major impact on the history of Brazilian theatre, introducing new practices and theatrical concepts, such as theatre anthropology, training and the dramaturgy of the actor, and inspired us to look afresh at the embodied techniques of our own culture. Encouraged to follow these paths, some Brazilian artists, including the authors of this

5 The groups Farfa (directed by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Odin Teatret actress) and The Canada Project (directed by Richard Fowler) were part of Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium, alongside Odin Teatret.

6 These tours across Brazil, undertaken by Eugenio Barba and the groups Farfa and The Canada Project, in June 1987, and Teatro tascabile di Bergamo and Teatro Potlach, in May 1987, were an initiative of Luis Otávio Burnier, founder and first director of Lume Teatro, based in Campinas (SP), who had convinced the Italian Culture Institutes of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to sponsor the events. In 1988 and 1989, Tascabile, Potlach, and also Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale di Pontedera, another Italian group connected to the Third Theatre, performed throughout Brazil, not only in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, but also in cities like Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul), Salvador (Bahia), Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais) and Belém (Pará).

7 Another significant moment was the 8th session of ISTA - International School of Theatre Anthropology, in Londrina (Paraná), in 1994 - until today the only of the 16 sessions of ISTA to be held outside of Europe. On this occasion, Eugenio Barba began his collaboration with Brazilian dancer Augusto Omolu (1963-2013), who remained a member of the artistic staff of ISTA and, in 2002, became an actor of Odin Teatret.



text, went to visit the teachers in their home countries. Some of us stayed for brief periods, others for many years, and a select few moved permanently abroad.⁸ The groups and artists that developed their professional careers back home continued to encounter Odin Teatret and other European Third Theatre groups thanks to the many Brazilian tours these groups undertook over the years.

In 2021, stemming from the professional network established over many years by Odin Teatret and Brazilian groups, artists and scholars, we organised a series of online meetings. During a dramatic year, in which Brazil suffered from the disastrous handling of the COVID-19 pandemic by the government, compiled by a chaotic political, economic and social situation leading to severe shortages in terms of healthcare, culture, education, environmental practices, citizenship, human rights, food insecurity, a theatrical event appeared on the horizon like dry land (or perhaps a floating island), somewhere theatrical travellers could shore up and recharge their energies, before launching back onto a sea of uncertainty. The event's title summed up its objective: "Encounters in Third Theatre and Theatre Anthropology - a tribute to Eugenio Barba: 85 years of life, 60 years of theatre and 34 years of encounters in Brazil". Stemming from a wish to pay tribute to Barba as a living master, celebrating his birth and his artistic path, the "Encounters" gained such momentum that they veritably came to life. As soon as the first guests were invited, the 'good news' spread, and the Encounters were embraced by a number of other enthusiastic artists, groups, teachers and scholars, expanding on the event's initial schedule of activities.

As was de rigueur during the pandemic, the Encounters took place online, through a video conference platform, with simultaneous broadcasting via live streaming. This way, we could count on the remote participation of the public (both live and through later viewings) while still trying to recuperate some of the heat of a proximal event, allowing guests to participate in the live video-conference and interact with the presenters. If, on one hand, these new means of communication diverged from the potency of in-person events (which, lately, seem like a vague memory), on the other hand, they enabled the Encounters to take on unprecedented dimensions. It would have been impossible to gather such a large and diverse array of participants at the same event, without

8 Some few examples of these travels back and forth of Brazilians in direct contact with European groups, strictly connected to our experiences, with no pretension of painting a complete picture of this reality (that would demand historical research which isn't within the objectives of this account). In 1989, the authors of this article left Rio de Janeiro for Bergamo (Italy) for an informal internship at the Teatro tascabile di Bergamo. It was the beginning of a relationship in which the teachers, over the period in which we worked with the TTB (1989-1994; 2003-2007), became friends and colleagues. This relationship has been maintained by our group, Teatro Diadokai, founded in 1996, in Rio de Janeiro, whose debut performance *Pedro e o Lobo*, drew on the Indian theatre-dance techniques learned at Tascabile and in India. Teatro Potlach organised an eight-month long workshop at their headquarters in Fara Sabina (Italy), between 1987 and 1988, for ten young actors, four of them Argentinean and six from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Marcus Acuña, Gilda Cuzzi, Júlio Adrião, Aglaia Azevedo, Flávio Kactus and Dinah Kleve. Júlio stayed in Italy for many years and collaborated with the group Abraxa Teatro. Gilda and Marcos settled in Italy and were, for some time, part of Teatro Potlach. After years with his own company, Garagipau, Marcus Acauã has recently reignited his collaboration with Teatro Potlach. Luiz Carlos Vasconcelos, born in Umbuzeiro (Paraíba), participated, in 1988 and 1989, in two workshops, one lasting one month and another lasting three, with Roberta Carreri, at Odin Teatret, in Denmark; later, in 1992, he directed, with his Grupo Piolin, from João Pessoa (Paraíba), the play *Vau da Sarapalha*, based on the short story *Sarapalha*, by Guimarães Rosa, bringing theatre anthropology into dialogue with Brazilian cultural references.



renumeration, counting only on our own scarce monetary resources⁹. There were 97 participants in all, amongst artists and scholars, including: 29 Brazilian theatre groups, 4 foreign theatre groups, 1 local and 3 international artistic networks, 12 Brazilian universities, 8 foreign universities, 17 cities from 4 different Brazilian States, 13 cities across Italy, Denmark, Peru, Argentina, Belgium and Scotland. The Encounters were held in three blocks, each lasting for five days, over the last weeks of September, October and November, with two to three activities per day, divided into the following categories: conferences, panels, work demonstrations and commented film screenings¹⁰. Each block of activities was inspired by a different theme: Third Theatre (9/27 to 10/1), Theatre Anthropology and Identity (10/25 to 29) and Cultural Action and Artist Networks (11/22 to 26). The ability to ensure that the activities were available online immediately after taking place both created a historical archive and broadened our audience-base emphatically¹¹.

Each day of the Programme was incredibly rich and frequently surprising: meetings took place between artists who often had not seen one another for a very long time, artists that had not previously met struck up connections, and the memory of shared experiences would often elicit a strong emotional response. During the Encounters, the complex and diverse realities of different participants were revealed, yet despite these differences, it was possible to observe common traits in terms of ethical and political positions, poetic languages, aesthetic choices, pedagogical approaches and survival strategies. It was possible to bring together young and veteran groups, local collectivities and international networks, permanent headquarters and nomadic occupations, the construction of identity and the necessity for alterity. We were invited to think of Group Theatre as a form of *aquilombamento*¹² and to articulate the cultural action with the singularity of the territory in which one acts as an agent of transformation, and going beyond it.

Through the prism of realities represented, it was possible to gain a greater understanding of counter hegemonic theatrical movements, particularly in a country where support and access to culture are so unequal. We brought together groups from small towns such as Alta Floresta (located in the State of Mato Grosso, in the Mato Grosso Amazon, in Central-Western Brazil) and Petrolina (located in the State of Pernambuco, on the margins of the São Francisco River, in the

9 UFOP's Performing Arts Post-graduate Program contributed with R\$ 1800,00 (around U\$ 300). It was the only financial aid we received.

10 See (PROGRAMAÇÃO [...], 2021).

11 At the time of writing, the event's YouTube channel had 792 subscribers and 10,960 views.

12 The term "*aquilombamento*" refers to the quilombos (communities formed in colonial Brazil, stemming from situations of territorial, social and cultural resistance of black enslaved peoples that fled for freedom and organised in autonomous communities) and is a variant of the notion of "*quilombism*", formulated by Abdias do Nascimento: "The Quilombo doesn't mean escaped slaves. The Quilombo means fraternal and free reunion, solidarity, coexistence, existential communion. We repeat that the quilombola society represents a step in human and social-political progress, in terms of economical egalitarianism. The known historical precedents confirm this statement. As an economic system, quilombism has been the Brazilian adaptation of communitarianism and/or the African tradition of *ujamaa*ism. In such a system, the production relationships differ basically from those prevalent in the spoliative work economy we call capitalism, founded on the reason of profit to all cost, especially the profit obtained from black African enslaved blood." (Nascimento, Abdias. *Quilombismo: um conceito científico histórico-social*. In: Nascimento, Abdias. *O quilombismo: documentos de uma militância pan-africanista*. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1980, p. 263).



Brazilian North East), with others from large urban centres such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Thus, though many artists were not included in this first edition of the event, as is inevitable in any curatorship, it was possible to bring together a very significant sample of theatre practitioners who identify in some way with the tenets of theatre anthropology and the Third Theatre.

In the wake of the Encounters, the energetic quality produced by the exchanges that took place continues to reverberate, creating successive ripples, like a stone thrown into water. A movement was produced: a desire for continuity and shared experience.

As artists, we are used to this sensation at the end of a (proximal) theatre festival, where groups meet and share both knowledge and affection. But, we have also all seen, on certain occasions, that a sudden enthusiasm can be akin to a bonfire, that consumes itself and extinguishes. It is necessary today, more than ever, to join forces in an exhausted world in which many seem to conspire against our existence as human beings and as artists, to ensure that the lit flame does not die out. The development of events is promising: after the Encounters, participant artists and scholars met remotely and gave the emerging movement a name - Terceiro Teatro Brasil (Third Theatre Brazil). Many pathways to concrete actions were discussed, and an ample network of artists, groups, scholars and universities emerged.

The Third Theatre Brazil movement has come to life, thanks to the teachings, rebellion and non-conformism of a bunch of young misfits - an immigrant director and his aspiring actors, who had all been rejected by the local theatre conservatory. This group, Odin Teatret, emerged in Oslo, in Norway, and established itself in Holstebro, Denmark, in the 1960s. Today, the reasons for non-conformism and restlessness may be driven by different factors, but the fundamental questions remain the same. When? Where? How? What for? Why do we make theatre? It is our responsibility to search for our own answers, in resonance with the values of this strange art that has resisted so many adversities, uniting those of us present today with the ones who will come after us.



References

BARBA, Eugenio. Terceiro Teatro. *In*: BARBA, Eugenio. *Teatro: solidão, ofício, revolta*. Tradução de Patrícia Furtado de Mendonça. Brasília: Teatro Caleidoscópio, 2010.

BARBA, Eugenio. O teatro é política com outros meios: os da beleza. Tradução de Ricardo Gomes e Priscilla Duarte. *Moringa - Artes do Espetáculo*, [S. l.], v. 15, n. 1, 2024. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/moringa/article/view/70461>. Acesso em: 1 maio 2025.

BARBA, Eugenio; SAVARESE, Nicola. A arte secreta do ator: um dicionário de Antropologia Teatral. Tradução de Patrícia Furtado de Mendonça. São Paulo: É Realizações, 2012.

GOMES, Ricardo; DUARTE, Priscilla. Considerações sobre a Antropologia Teatral no Brasil. *Moringa - Artes do Espetáculo*, [S. l.], v. 15, n. 1, 2024. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/moringa/article/view/70577>. Acesso em: 1 maio 2025.

NASCIMENTO, Abdias. Quilombismo: um conceito científico histórico-social. *In*: NASCIMENTO, Abdias. *O quilombismo: documentos de uma militância pan-africanista*. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1980.

PROGRAMAÇÃO Semana. [S. l.]: Terceiro Teatro Brasil, 2021. 1 vídeo (2:13min). Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fh4xXmiofH8>. Acesso em: 06 maio 2025.



Academic Biography

Ricardo Gomes - Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP)

Professor at the Programa de Pós-graduação em Artes Cênicas at Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

E-mail: diadokai@gmail.com

Priscilla Duarte - Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)

PhD in Arts at the Programa de Pós-graduação em Artes, at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Escola de Belas Artes, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

E-mail: priduarte66@gmail.com

Funding

Not applicable

Ethics Committee Approval

Not applicable

Competing interests

No declared conflict of interest

Research Context

Not declared

Copyright

Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte

Copyright of the translation

Translated by Maria Duarte, reviewed by Patrick Campbell

Contribution of authorship (CRediT)

Conceptualization and Writing: Ricardo Gomes and Priscilla Duarte

License

This is a paper distributed in Open Access under the terms of the Creative Commons 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.pt-br>

**Evaluation Method**

Not applicable

Editors

Ricardo Gomes

Priscilla Duarte

Lídia Olinto

Peer Review History

Not applicable