

RESEARCH REPORT

Artist in pedagogical situation: teaching in the practice of Lia Rodrigues

Artista em situação pedagógica:
o ensinar na prática de Lia Rodrigues

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ABSTRACT

This article approaches choreographer Lia Rodrigues' teaching practice, introducing the concept of "artist in pedagogical situation". Using Tardif's "teaching knowledges" category as a theoretical background and taking as observation the territory a student and artist exchange between *La Manufacture* and the *Escola Livre da Dança da Maré*, we seek to understand how this artist articulates artistic and pedagogical knowledges. We conclude that for her there is a communication process between teaching and creating. Keywords: Lia Rodrigues. Teaching knowledges. Dance teaching.

RESUMO

Este artigo aborda a atuação de Lia Rodrigues quando dá aulas, introduzindo a noção de "artista em situação pedagógica". Utilizando-se a categoria "saber docente" na perspectiva de Tardif como referencial teórico, busca-se compreender o modo como a artista articula saberes artísticos e saberes pedagógicos, tomando-se como território de observação o intercâmbio entre alunos e artistas da La Manufacture e da Escola Livre de Dança da Maré. Constata-se que, para a artista, ensinar e criar se comunicam.

Palavras-chave: Lia Rodrigues. Saberes docentes. Ensino de dança.

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Introduction

In the current global context, particularly in Europe, we can observe a tendency to invite artists to intervene in arts programs in universities, workshops and schools³. In these situations, guest artists take on the role of a teacher, albeit temporarily, and directly participate in the education of young people, with whom they share their particular knowledge. Even though, for some artists, this ‘pedagogical situation’ is already a part of their regular practices and perceived as natural, for others, it’s seen as problematic due to their awareness that their artistic knowledge differs in nature from the pedagogical knowledge required for teaching. Since they haven’t necessarily undergone pedagogical training programs, artists in pedagogical situation look, therefore, for their own ways of articulating artistic and pedagogical knowledges.

We understand the “artist in pedagogical situation”⁴ as a person whose main identity is the artistic one – in this context, a dance artist –, a person who works as choreographer and/or performer most of the time, but who also takes the role of a teacher, even if he/she hasn’t necessarily gone through dance teaching training. The artist in pedagogical situation doesn’t have dance teaching as the main focus of his/her professional activity⁵.

In this paper we will analyze how this articulation between different types of knowledges and the way they are shared happen when it comes to dance. To do so, we will use as an example the choreographer Lia Rodrigues⁶, the relationship between her artistic and pedagogical knowledges, and the way in which she shares them with her students; in short, how this dance artist acts when placed in a pedagogical situation. How were/are edified the knowledges she mobilizes while teaching? What is the nature of these knowledges? At a first moment, we will identify the relationship between creating and teaching through several interviews conducted with the choreographer and her students, as well as through observing her workshops; further on, we will point out possible teaching strategies present in Lia Rodrigues’ actions. In this paper, we chose to give voice to the various participants of this exchange, using polyphony as a way of highlighting the relationships created during this process.

Context

From December 2016 to July 2017, an exchange program between students from *La Manufacture*, *Haute École des arts de la*

3. Dance education schools such as P.A.R.T.S./Brussels, *Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance* SEAD/Salzburg, *Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz* (HZT), in Berlin, and the Bachelors program at *La Manufacture*, *Haute École des arts de la scène*, in Lausanne, are examples of institutions that regularly rely on the intervention of artists as an important part of their program.

4. The category “artist in pedagogical situation” is proposed in a research led by this paper’s authors in collaboration with *La Manufacture*, *Haute École des arts de la scène*, in Lausanne, in the occasion of the exchange program between *La Manufacture* and *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré* (ELDM) students.

5. This is a different focus than the one used by Marques (2014), reviewing the artist/teacher term coined in her doctorate thesis, where she defines it as: “[...] one who, without abandoning his/her possibility to create, perform and direct, also has education in its broader sense as a function and explicit goal. That is to say, it opens the possibility for artistic creation processes to be reviewed and reconsidered as also explicitly educational processes” (MARQUES, 1999). Our focus also differs from Mundim’s (2014), when talking about an artist with a consolidated teaching practice in universities.

6. Lia Rodrigues, choreographer, director of *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré* (ELDM): born in São Paulo, where she studies classical ballet, and History at *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP). She participates in the city’s contemporary dance scene in the 1970s. She works for Maguy Marin’s company from 1980 to 1982 as a dancer. After coming back to Brazil, she creates the *Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças*, in 1990, in Rio de Janeiro, with continuous activities: research, creation, classes and rehearsals. In 1992, she creates and directs for 14 years the *Panorama Festival*, the country’s most important contemporary dance festival. Since 2004, her company develops pedagogical and artistic actions at *Complexo da Maré*, in Rio de Janeiro, in partnership with NGO *Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré*. From this collaboration, *the Centro de Artes da Maré* (CAM) is born in 2009 and the *Escola Livre de Danças da Maré* (ELDM) opens in October 2011. During her 40 years of professional and artistic life, Lia Rodrigues dedicates herself not only to formation and artistic creation, but also to pedagogy in the form of workshops and seminars. Connecting activism and utopias, she believes in the synergy between art and social processes. She has received the following awards: the *Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* medal from the French government, the *Prince Claus Award* from the Netherlands. In France, in 2005 she creates one of La Fontaine’s fables and, in 2007, *Hymnen* for the Ballet de Lorraine National Choreography Center. Among her recent creations, we highlight *Aquilo de que somos feitos* (2000), *Formas Breves* (2002) *Incarnat* (2005), *Chantiers poétiques* (2008), *Pororoca* (2009), *Piracema* (2011), *Pindorama* (2013) and *Para Que O Céu Não Caia* (2016).

scène⁷ and *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré* (ELDM)⁸ took place, involving a collaboration between their directors – respectively, Thomas Hauert⁹ and Lia Rodrigues. The exchange program was organized in two phases: at first, in December 2016, ten ELDM students went to *La Manufacture*, in Lausanne; then, in April 2017, the Swiss school's 3rd year class travelled to Brazil for a residency in *Centro de Artes da Maré* (CAM). Thus, it was possible to share, in both countries, territories for research and creation. The artistic workshops were taught by each institution's director/choreographer. The exchange between the two artists and the two schools was a fertile field for the development of a research conducted by the authors, from December 2016 to December 2017, responding to an invitation of the Research Department of *La Manufacture, Haute École des arts de la scène*. The research's main objective was to understand the articulation between artistic and pedagogical knowledges in the work of these two choreographers – two artists put in a pedagogical situation during the exchange between the two institutions. We sought to understand the process of edification of each artist's artistic and pedagogical knowledges, deepening the reflection on this binomial, and attempting to comprehend their conception while idealizing and creating educational programs for dance artists, in the contexts of Switzerland and Brazil. This article focuses on a part of this research: Lia Rodrigues' knowledges, their edification, and the relationship between creating and teaching in her professional practice.

Lia Rodrigues has been working for several years in the intersection of artistic creation and pedagogical practice. She divides her professional life between artistic creation - her main focus - and the education of young artists in various fronts, such as: workshops, regular classes in schools and directing a training school for dance artists. In the last few years, she has been a guest teacher in various programs of initial and continuing education of artists in Europe, such as: *Programa Gulbenkian de Criatividade e Criação Artística* and *Fórum Dança*, in Lisbon, Portugal (2005); *Education Acts!* at *Tanzquartier* in Vienna, Austria (2006); the *Gulbenkian Foundation's* residency project, in Lisbon (2007); the *ESSAIS* graduate school program at the *École Supérieure du Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers*, in Angers, France (2009); the *P.A.R.T.S.* program, created by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, in Brussels, Belgium (2011); the regular program at *École Supérieure du Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers*, in France (2012); the advanced classes for PEPCC students at *Fórum Dança* in Lisbon, Portugal (2014); the *Masters (Exerce)* program at *Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier*, in Montpellier, France

7. Uniting in a same space theater and dance training, *La Manufacture* offers a unique context for Performing Arts superior education in French-speaking Europe. In Lausanne, Switzerland, *La Manufacture*, a true "laboratory-school", offers to young artists a space for creation and experimentation, allowing them to acquire and develop the basis of their trade, exploring theoretical and practical questions about artistic creation. The institution also supports and develops researches in direct relation to the issues of contemporary creation in the field of performative arts.

8. *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré* inscribes itself in a broader project, the *Centro de Artes da Maré*. Conceived as a space for art creation, education and diffusion, with a focus on contemporary dance, the center has become a true reference of cultural equipment open to all audiences, overcoming the segmentation of different territories in the city of Rio de Janeiro regarding the access to the arts. CAM is the result of a partnership between *Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças* and *Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré*.

9. Thomas Hauert, choreographer, responsible for *La Manufacture's* Bachelor in Dance. Swiss performer and choreographer, he developed an improvisation-based composition tool. After working with Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Gonnie Heggen, David Zambrano and Pierre Droulers, he founded his own company, *ZOO*, in 1988. Concurrently to his work with *ZOO*, Hauert is invited to create pieces for *P.A.R.T.S.*, the *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance*, the *Zurich Ballet*, the *Toronto Dance Theatre* and *Candoco*. Since 2012, he's participated in the *Motion Bank* project, directed by the *Forsythe Company* and *Ohio State University*. In 2013, he was named the academic responsible for the Bachelor in Contemporary Dance, at *La Manufacture, Haute école des arts de la scène*, in Lausanne. This new program was launched in September 2014.

(2017); the *Valeska Gert Guest Professorship* at *Akademie der Künste*, in Berlin, Germany (2017); as well as the previously mentioned *Bachelor Danse* at *La Manufacture* (2016).¹⁰

In Rio de Janeiro, Lia Rodrigues created in 2011, and directs to the present date, the *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré*, a school with an intensive dance education center for young Maré residents, a *favela* (impoverished community) with a population of 135,000. Lia Rodrigues has often stated that, beyond the school, her work with her dance company – the *Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças* – has an important educational aspect, since it accepts young and inexperienced performers, who develop their technical and artistic skills inside the company, through successive creation processes, rehearsals and performances¹¹.

Lia Rodrigues' artistic work has been the object of various academic research projects, among them Pedalino (2010), developed in Paris 8 University's Dance Department, Steuernagel (2012), developed in New York University's Performance Studies Department, and Pavlova (2015), developed in Federal University of Rio de Janeiro's Performing Arts Graduate Program. Those three projects reflected on important aspects of the artist's work by way of *oeuvres* analysis (*analyse d'oeuvres*) (PEDALINO, 2010) and through her relationship with the setting where she's been regularly working in since 2005, the Maré *favela* (STEUERNAGEL, 2012; PAVLOVA, 2015). Even though some of these research projects mention the pedagogical dimension present in Lia Rodrigues' work, no paper has focused, since now, on the articulation of artistic and pedagogical knowledges in the choreographer's professional practice.

Theoretical framework

The “teacher's knowledges¹²” category, seen through Tardif's perspective (2012), will serve as the main reference to understand the way each artist in a teaching situation articulates artistic and pedagogical knowledges. Even though the artist in question isn't a teacher by trade, we believe that Tardif's ideas on the nature, the origin and the temporality of different knowledges used by teachers bring important elements for the understanding of the relation between artistic and pedagogical knowledges in an artist's teaching practice.

Teachers' knowledges

As addressed by Tardif, Borges and Pimenta (TARDIF, 2012; BORGES, 2002; PIMENTA, 2012), the knowledges mobilized

10.

www.liarodrigues.com
Accessed in October 29, 2017.

11.

For a more thorough discussion on this matter, we suggest SOTER, S., PAVLOVA, A. *Escola Livre de Dança da Maré in Rio de Janeiro: a ground to share*. In: BUTTERWORTH, J., WILDSCUT, L. **Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader**. Londres & Nova Iorque: Routledge, 2017, p. 268-278.

12.

The French term *savoirs enseignants* created by Tardiff is translated to English as both *teaching knowledges* and *teacher's knowledges*. We will prefer the later in this article.

by teachers, independently of their expertise area, go beyond those approached in their university courses. From the 1990s onward, a wide variety of researches on teacher education have attempted to understand the pedagogical practice, considering teachers as mobilisers of varied professional knowledges. Those knowledges are constituted and have transformed throughout one's life, through one's experiences and education, as well as through one's professional trajectory (NUNES, 2001).

The category *teachers' knowledges* emerges in an attempt to “consider the complexity and specificity of knowledge built in (and for) the exercise of teaching activity and of the profession”¹³ (MONTEIRO, 2001, p. 130). According to Tardif (2012), it's impossible to isolate the teachers' knowledges from his/her work context and from its constraints. It's necessary to situate the knowledges mobilized by teachers in their work, to understand them: “The knowledge is always the knowledge of someone who works in something, with the intent of attaining a certain goal”¹⁴ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 11). Therefore, this specific “someone”, who has a singular trajectory, appropriated “something” in order to attain a “certain goal”. Tardif clarifies that a “teachers' knowledge is *his/her* knowledge, and they relate to the person and his/her identity, with his/her life experience and professional history, with his/her relationship with students in classrooms and with other school actors at school, etc.”¹⁵ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 11). He also points out that at the core of his approach are the knowledge's **nature** and **source**, its “social provenance” (TARDIF, 2012, p. 61), as well as the knowledge edification's **temporal dimension**. The knowledge's origin and nature, the moment in which it emerges and how it develops, is connected and interwoven, since it has its roots in the pre-professional trajectory, in the initial and continuing education, and throughout the teacher's singular professional trajectory. Knowledges are also developed in the professional practice.

Therefore, teachers' knowledges are simultaneously singular, plural and temporal. They're singular because they're grounded in a specific teacher's trajectory. They're plural because they're woven by different specific threads. Finally, they're temporal because they're built in different moments of one's personal and professional life and continues to develop throughout one's trajectory.

According to Tardif, in addition to the pre-professional trajectory marks, different kinds of knowledges are interwoven in teaching knowledges: professional or education science and

13.

We translate: “dar conta da complexidade e especificidade do saber constituído no (e para o) exercício da atividade docente e da profissão.”

14.

We translate: “O saber é sempre o saber de alguém que trabalha alguma coisa, no intuito de realizar um objetivo qualquer”.

15.

We translate: “o saber dos professores é o saber *destes*, e está relacionado com a pessoa e a identidade, com a sua experiência de vida e com a sua história profissional, com as suas relações com os alunos em sala de aula e com os outros atores escolares na escola, etc.”

pedagogical ideology knowledges, disciplinary and curricular knowledges, and experience knowledges.

Teacher education institutions are the place where student-teachers come into contact with professional knowledges, i.e., the education sciences, the pedagogical theories and tendencies which guide the teaching practices – classified by Tardif as pedagogical knowledges. Still during the initial education, disciplinary knowledges are added – related to the specific field of work. They “correspond to the various fields of knowledge, the knowledges our society has, as they are currently integrated in universities, in colleges and various courses, in the form of subjects”¹⁶ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 38). The curricular knowledges are materialized in school programs, manifesting themselves through the teaching objectives, the contents and methods, and the planning which teachers learn how to deal with. According to Tardif, they manifest the ways in which the school selects and ranks “the social knowledges it defines, [...] models of the scholarly culture and education for the scholarly culture”¹⁷ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 38). The professional knowledges (those related to education science and pedagogical ideology) and the disciplinary knowledges are incorporated through the teacher’s initial education, when it comes to professional teachers. Conversely, the curricular knowledges are acquired throughout one’s professional career, in the school context.

Tardif also identifies a fourth category of knowledge, which interests us particularly in the context of this article: the experience-based knowledges – practical knowledges, born from experience and built during the teacher’s working practice. They go beyond the knowledges developed in educational institutions and curriculums. Fundamentally, they are practical knowledges, not knowledges about the practice, constituting themselves as the “foundation of their skills”¹⁸ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 48) and as “the teaching culture in action”¹⁹ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 49). They emerge from teachers’ difficulties and, often, from the impossibility to rely exclusively on disciplinary, curricular and professional knowledges, once they are in a concrete work situation. When starting their careers, teachers suffer a “reality shock”, facing the limits of their knowledges and the gaps they need to fill to handle the teaching practice. Therefore, they are led to develop their own knowledges, based on their daily practices, and which will anchor their work.

The knowledges acquired during the pre-professional trajectory, those built before initial education, including the knowledges of being a student, are seen by Tardif (2012) and

16.

We translate: “correspondem aos diversos campos de conhecimento, aos saberes que dispõe a nossa sociedade, tais como se encontram hoje integrados nas universidades, sob a forma de disciplinas, no interior de faculdades e cursos distintos”

17.

We translate: “os saberes sociais por ela definidos, [...] modelos da cultura erudita e de formação para a cultura erudita”

18.

We translate: “fundamentos de suas competências”

19.

We translate: “a cultura docente em ação”

Pimenta (2012) as bearing great weight in the constitution of teachers' knowledges. Tardif states that

[...] there's much more continuity than rupture between a teacher's professional knowledge and his/her pre-professional experiences, particularly those that mark primary socialization (family and life-style), as well as school socialization as a student.²⁰ (TARDIF, 2012, p. 72)

The weight of the knowledge that comes from the experience in primary education will follow the teacher throughout his/her life and, frequently, will not be undermined by university-level education (TARDIF, 2012, p. 20).

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned points, we will proceed, connecting them to Lia Rodrigues's discourse regarding her professional practice, as a creative artist and as an artist in pedagogical situation.

Knowledge edification and pre-professional trajectory – the conception of dance teaching

With a background in classical dance, and having participated in the contemporary dance scene, Lia Rodrigues began teaching in the 1970s in São Paulo, where she was born. According to her, teaching was constantly part of her professional life since the beginning. She began teaching classical ballet and, later, moved on to teaching contemporary dance, understanding "contemporary dance [as] a technique"²¹, as she puts it.

The issue of transformation in the understanding of what is a dance class is important in this context. Lia states that she learned dance techniques and that, at first, that's what she taught in her classes. Her initial understanding of what was taught in a dance class was technique, a technique²². In the beginning of her professional life, the classes she taught were heavily marked by her experience as a student, as predicted by Tardif. However, that underwent transformation, as we can see in this excerpt of an interview given by the choreographer to Silvia Soter:

At the time, many years ago, I imagined that classes were connected to teaching a specific technique to attain a [better] physical performance. [...] I didn't understand that it was an apprenticeship, or that I was learning how to be an artist, [...] we created some things among ourselves, but I never connected it to the learning process... Now I understand the learning process as something much broader than apprehending a technique. It's learning how to be an artist, how to be in the world, learning many things that began to be part of my understanding of what it means to teach technique²³.

20.

We translate: "[...] há muito mais continuidade do que ruptura entre o conhecimento profissional do professor e as experiências pré-profissionais, especialmente as que marcam a socialização primária (família e ambiente de vida), assim como a socialização escolar enquanto aluno."

21.

Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

22.

It's worth mentioning that, during Lia Rodrigues' formative period, the possibilities for formal studies in dance were restricted, there weren't many options. Until 1984, there were only two higher education majors in dance in Brazil, one in Bahia and the other in Paraná. Throughout this paper, we will see that the artist's pedagogical knowledge was developed through other kinds of knowledges and mainly based on experience, which is reflected in some of her choices, particularly in the relation between creation and teaching methodology.

23.

Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

In this first excerpt, we can already see how her pre-professional experiences as a dance student and, later, as a performer, determined her understanding of what teaching a dance class would be. We understand the technical skills of classical, modern and contemporary dance acquired by her as a dance student as disciplinary knowledges, incorporated during a pre-professional trajectory and related to the reference subjects. The disciplinary knowledges correspond to the various fields of knowledge – specifically, in this case, to Western dance knowledge – integrated in Lia’s experience as a dance student, not in university, but in the dance schools she attended. These are the knowledges she invokes at first, when starting to teach. Her understanding of a dance class is based on what she lived in her pre-professional journey, in non-formal dance education spaces in São Paulo, and that’s the foundation Lia-the-beginner-teacher uses to prepare her classes. Having no intention to be a teacher, but being invited to teach in various places, the questions Lia Rodrigues asked herself were often the same: “what should I teach, at this point in my life? Classical ballet? Contemporary dance? What **is** teaching contemporary dance?”²⁴.

As she advanced in her career, other experiences come to add new reflection elements to her practice. Her work, still as a performer, alongside French choreographer Maguy Marin, in the creation of *May B* (1981) is a watershed moment. Even if she wasn’t conscious of it at the time, Lia states the importance of having participated in that work:

[...] when I went to France, my experiences were still of that [technical] nature. I didn’t understand, as I do now, that I was learning something very precious, such as working in a company. I didn’t understand that this was learning. Or that I was learning how to be an artist. [...] I think that when I did *May B*, I didn’t understand, but now, looking back, I see it was a real school for me²⁵.

We clearly see in this excerpt that the experience of dancing in a professional company had an educational dimension, was “a real school”, a way of being trained as an artist. Even if she wasn’t aware at the time, that moment changed her understanding, and Lia as an artist was transformed by this experience.

According to Tardif, experience-based knowledge emerges in the moment when teachers come into contact with reality and face the impossibility of handling it if only anchored in previously developed knowledges. Faced with the gaps in their education, and to be able to deal with the practice of teaching, they develop their own knowledges, based on their classroom experience, on exchanges with their peers, on the accumulation of trial and

24.
Interview given to
Silvia Soter. Lausanne,
December 9, 2016.

25.
Interview given to
Silvia Soter. Lausanne,
December 9, 2016.

error, and all those knowledges, born from experience, become the basis for their teaching practice.

Later in her journey, after creating her company and working in it, Lia Rodrigues started to be frequently invited to host workshops. That's the moment in which understanding what constitutes a dance class became an actual issue for her: how to prepare something connected to her choreographic work that was being performed at the time? She gives an example of how she conceptualized one of her first workshops:

For example, there was a workshop that I gave during a long period of time, in various trips, connected to *Catar*²⁶. So, I created something where I took *parlendas*²⁷, divided them into rhythms, created around them. I started to connect it a little... I tried to do a warm-up, which I also thought was [necessary]. Then, I started to divide them into groups and people started to create and I started to combine one thing with the other²⁸.

In Lia Rodrigues' statement, we see how the workshop was connected to the work that was happening at the time, the creation determining the workshop's conception, the same thoughts permeated artistic and teaching activities. She even explicitly declares that the company's activities and the development of workshops walked, and still walk, side by side.

Some projects were fundamental so that the artist and her company could consolidate teaching strategies that could be adapted to different publics. Among them, is a project directed to public-school teachers in various areas of Brazil, developed in the late 1990s, and another focused on students of Rio de Janeiro public-school system. Regarding the latter, the artist remembers that preparing this specific workshop demanded her and her team to create "a methodology that made sense for the company's work and that also made sense for the people we were working with"²⁹. As she describes it:

They were people who had no contact with dance, who had no contact with physical practices, who were from cities very far from centers where, you know, there's more contact with art. And they were also from places without actual physical venues for that. It was a total adaptation. [...] We had a series of creative exercises to do. Afterwards, we created a short choreography to perform at the end. Each group that went to a different city had the same way to provoke movement in those bodies, something they felt creating, that was the idea. And then there was a choreography, something we made up so that they'd feel as if they were participating. It was a very remarkable experience for me³⁰.

26. Work created by Lia Rodrigues, in partnership with João Saldanha, in 1988.

27. *Catar* was developed based on improvisations on the act of picking things up, having as references "a *parlenda*, which is a childhood rhyme used for fun, memorization or for choosing who will participate in each game" (Source: RODRIGUES, Lia. *Catar*. In: **Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças**. Available at: <www.liarodrigues.com/page2/styled-8/styled-27/index.html>. Accessed in: Nov. 7, 2017).

28. Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

29. Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

30. Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

We can see in this account how the artist begins, starting with a particular demand, to develop something she hadn't considered before, something that's unprecedented for her. Adapted for this particular occasion, the workshop had an experimental aspect and became part of the elements of the artistic creation on which the company was working at the time.

When they taught workshops to students of various public-schools in Rio de Janeiro, Lia and the members of her company created a set of activities capable of handling different age groups simultaneously, because, much to the artist's surprise, the groups were mixed and crowded, gathering children and teenagers. That experience forced them to develop different approaches from the ones they had used before. She emphasizes that, for each group, a different methodology is created, according to the workshop's goals and the group's characteristics. In her words:

There we learned immensely about how to build a different methodology. For me, it seems that the methodologies are very different for each group, right? Imagine you prepare yourself to teach a certain age group and, suddenly, in a school where there is no space for dance, they open a door and in come a hundred students, from various age groups! So, we divided them into smaller groups, they met, we did a same sequence of exercises, and afterwards we gathered everyone³¹.

31.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

We can identify here the "reality shock" mentioned by Tardif. Faced with a reality she didn't expect, and for which she wasn't actually prepared, Lia sees herself driven to find and develop particular knowledges, based on her previous practices, to anchor her work. A dynamic work, always in renovation.

The artist declares that she imagined that, one day, she'd get to the point of writing something she could use in all her workshops, some sort of manual or guidebook. Her idea was to create a methodology, a script in which, throughout the years, she could use for various teaching situations. However, as the years passed, she realized it wasn't possible:

I realized that no single [methodology] worked for another [class]. That I had to make something up every time. We do have a collection of the thousand procedures we've used in thousands of workshops. Which is really great. [...] And I always had this dream... [laughs] that I could have a [book] [...]. Imagine if we could do that, right? I wanted to have these printouts [...], but I must accept the fact that I need to [start over] every time [...]. I feel very dispossessed, very unprepared, each time, when I teach, as if I had to start from the beginning again³².

32.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

As she has admitted numerous times, teaching gives Lia Rodrigues anxiety; the feeling of being unprepared is constantly present in these occasions. In order to deal with the anxiety, every time she must teach classes and workshops, she needs preparation.

Planning

In order to plan her classes, fighting against the feeling of being “dispossessed”, the choreographer says she repeatedly rereads the records of classes she taught before, since she has the habit of taking notes and making a written record of what she does in class. When asked about the reason for revisiting previous class records, the artists said: “[...] I write quite a lot. For the last few years, I’ve kept a record of every class/activity I gave to the students, because it helps me to organize my thoughts for the following class/activity. But afterwards I don’t remember anything I did, or wrote, or created”³³. So, coming back to these records has helped her to recover some experiences that, many times, are proposed to other groups. In addition to reading her own records, she says she prepares herself by reading various texts, as well as rereading authors who inspire her, as explained:

I read things that come to mind. I read a text, a poem... [I ask myself] why am I reading that poem? It’s because I’m inspiring myself, I’m nurturing myself to feel inspired, creatively instigated. When [I read] a poem, it instigates me in every level: technical, poetical, creative. How did the author write this? How did she have this idea, how did she divide the poem in this way, two by two, and three? I seem to be floating around among all these things.

Immersed or, better, as she said, “floating” in these readings that combine records of previous classes and various inspirations, Lia Rodrigues prepares her classes, she tries to find a “state” for teaching. She doesn’t necessarily prepare the class, but she prepares *herself* to be in the position of an artist/teacher. On the day of the class, she mentions she wakes up very early and writes in loose sheets of paper, by hand, the ideas and concepts she intends to develop. This practice is the same when she’s in the process of developing a new work. The way she prepares herself for teaching is very similar to the way she organizes herself before rehearsing with her company, as she explains:

33. Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

For me, teaching is creating. I prepare myself in a similar [way] that I do for a creation, in the same way that I plan to go to Maré when I must create a work. I wake up very early, write a lot. [I must] put myself in a certain state [...] and I also need to look at everyone to understand who I'm working with. I need to establish empathy³⁴.

34.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

Throughout the interview conducted with the artist, we see the emergence of terms such as “floating”, “bathing”, “state” or “empathy” – terms that refer to a particular state of being, sought out both when creating and when teaching. To attain this state, she prepares herself, concentrates, creating a way of being-in-work. Little by little, Lia-as-a-teacher created a way of entering, along with her students, this “class-state”.

Goals and challenges

When questioned about her goals while teaching, the choreographer states that she prefers not to have any, because she believes that by establishing a precise goal she loses creativity. She states the need to “be inventing the whole time”. And also: “If I say I want to get there, that’s it, it’s over”³⁵. For this reason, classes work as a laboratory. The choreographer proposes some experiences that work as a starting point and, as the propositions are developed by the group, she intervenes and transforms them. Even without a defined plan, as the propositions evolve, “a path is opened”, says the choreographer.

35.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

According to Lia, her laboratory-classes are more interesting when students, stimulated by her, can actually collaborate as a group. As in her creations in her company, the group is a central element in her teaching work, as she says:

When everyone starts working together, that’s when things work best. I always think this: the group is where my creativity comes from, you know? I think the group’s a cool thing. That exchange... different people proposing things I never imagined, [...] I work with younger and younger people every time, right? So, that’s really good for me, it opens my mind, and, at the same time, I bring experience to add to their youth, right?³⁶

36.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

However, that isn’t always possible. Lia Rodrigues points out that her greatest challenge is teaching artists who already have their own work, who are in a more advanced stage in their artistic practices, because, in general, they’re less opened to new forms of collaboration. As she sees it:

I think that working, making the group work together, is a lot easier when you work with a group that doesn't have their own work yet. When I work with people who are already on their paths, it's much harder. Because it's hard to yield and work on a common project. And that's always what I propose³⁷.

37.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

As we've seen, in order to deal with the many challenges faced while teaching a class or a workshop, the artist resorts to prepare herself, putting herself in a particular state and attempting to nourish herself for the occasion. Furthermore, certain strategies help her to get into direct contact with the students, preparing the grounds for her proposals and interventions. Let's see how this works.

The classes

Conversation circles: introduction and empathy

Lia Rodrigues' classes and workshops start with a conversation, instead of a more common dance class approach, such as a physical warm-up activity, which she says she doesn't value: "that's not how I work, I don't know how to work like that, with a warm-up. I think we need to warm-up our minds to do stuff, warm up our creativity"³⁸. Students, seated in a circle, must introduce themselves, talk about their journeys until that point and their expectations regarding the course and, in the case of the workshop held during the exchange program with *La Manufacture*, also mentioned artists whose work they admire. Starting the workshops with a conversation circle also serves the purpose of deploying another state of mind in the students, preparing the ground for Lia Rodrigues' proposals to develop. However, that isn't always easy, as she explains:

38.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

We must be patient because, when there are a lot of students, it takes a long time for everyone to introduce themselves! Everyone gets restless, it's boring, because dancers like to move. Particularly the young ones... they love it, because they have energy to burn! And I don't work with that energy, I work with a different energy. In my case, it's the same way I work while creating. It's arid, very arid, it's dry. This initial aridity allows us to go crazy later. It's as if I have a bunch of fiery horses – these students – and I hold the reins. I hold the reins because I think we need to turn off that idea of producing, producing, producing, producing, producing movement, dancing nonstop, raising our legs, like that. This stuns me. I slow it down so that people can go to another place inside themselves, think in a different way, because moving can come from somewhere

else, so that we can play a lot more. I don't think it's arid, that's not a good word. For me, it's that part of planting, when you prepare the earth. And preparing the earth is a lot of work. You must plow, to make grooves... it's not just throwing a bunch of seeds around³⁹.

39.

Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

Getting to know the students, their journeys, their interests and expectations is fundamental for Lia Rodrigues. These conversations help the artist to make a kind of “group diagnosis”. It's only after that first introductory moment that she confirms her final decision about what will be developed during the workshop. Frustrating the students, preventing them from moving so that they find another “energy”, is strategic for the artist, so that the students find new creative possibilities. The students' introductions are a first step to that different state and also for building what she calls “empathy”. The next step is the moment when she presents her own professional journey, interwoven with biographical aspects. As well as containing the students' impulse to move in order to establish a different state for working, the conversation circles hold other interests for the artist. She presents some of the reasons for spending so many class hours in that circle:

When people speak, I can see, beyond what they're saying, their desires, contradictions, mistrusts, availabilities. That's very clear for me. It's just experience. We see who talks more, who talks less. After that I tell my story. As I tell my story, I try to attract them to me. I talk, show images of what I do, of my work, because people don't know each other well. I start by getting to know each other. I need to create this moment of empathy between people and around my work as well, so that we know the grounds we walk on. I can gauge it a little, talk a bit about politics, a bit about differences. In these conversations, I try to mention these points⁴⁰.

40.

Interview given to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

When the groups are large, these conversations can occupy two to three workshop days, since the artist also dedicates a few hours to presenting her professional journey, interwoven with her personal life, and to showing excerpts of her works. In the *La Manufacture* workshop, the initial conversation occupied two and a half days. The practice of beginning a workshop with a choreographer by having a conversation seems to be unusual for students.

Student perspectives

One of the *La Manufacture* students, who we will be called Student 4, when asked about what he would highlight in the first week of work with Lia Rodrigues, reported:

What I really kept from this first week [...] [was] the relation to language, because we talked a lot, which doesn't happen frequently in dance workshops. [...] I saw that we can really sit around a table and talk, and that this can truly be used in the creative process [...]. And also, the fact that she showed us her work, following her career is interesting to give us ideas [...] and a very intimate relation was created between us as well⁴¹.

For this student, the conversation, albeit unusual, was inspiring for the investigative and creative projects that followed, and also worked to create a more intimate relationship between students and choreographer, maybe close to what the artist calls creating “empathy” to begin her work. This proximity to students is also perceived as positive and important by Student 9. She highlighted “human connection” as a strong suit of the workshop and a characteristic of Lia Rodrigues:

The highlight for me was the human connection, the life she gives to the elements, to what's, in fact, already in the classroom. I mean, us, our personality, our imagination, the objects in the room, the space, the connections between us, our knowledge. She was able to take her time, she used an entire morning for us to talk about ourselves. [...] So, we take our time to really know who inspires us, we realize that everyone has inspirations, that everyone has different inspirations. And that it's all an experience, a collective experience we can use. It's as if it refreshes each person, and it gives us new life, it allows us to use the particularities of the situation. That's what I kept from this internship, as an absolute rule, that each situation is unique, is a specific case. And that there's character in each of these situations⁴².

According to Student 5, her impression is that Lia Rodrigues “moved with the tide”, which she enjoyed. She explains her reasoning:

I really liked it, because she was doing what was needed, in a way, and I also think she was very, very open. So, I didn't feel she was imposing on us a way of doing things, even though she shared her way of working and what she did. But it was always in a very open way. It was encouraging, that she trusted our spontaneity, our interests, our ideas⁴³.

Affirming the students' capacity of creating autonomously and supporting them in their creative paths are remembered by students as characteristics of Lia Rodrigues' work, as we can see in Student 6's comments: “I think a big part of the work was supposed to be done by us, and the question was how to open the

41. Student 4. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

42. Student 9. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

43. Student 5. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

doors a little and, then, see how we interpreted and used what she gave us and how that made us think”⁴⁴.

An example of this way of working could be seen in the workshop held at *La Manufacture*. The first proposed activity to the group was to divide themselves into pairs and then choose five objects that were available in the room (varying from furniture to personal objects). Then, one by one, they should place these objects in a small composition. As a laboratory, this first activity unfolded in many ways, until the entire group collaborated to create a single composition with various objects. Student 12 considers this the most striking exercise in the two weeks of work with the choreographer, and highlights the relation he perceived between this activity and some of Lia Rodrigues’ previous works, seen by the class in video in the first days of the workshop:

How we turned simple things into precious ones, things that we don’t usually see as important, such as a pen or something else! How we created something out of nothing, how cool the result was! There’s imagination at work, and creativity. Again, we can create stories from nearly nothing. And it also reminds me of what I saw in Lia’s work, how she uses plastic, simple things, accessories, often so elementary. And, again, beautiful things emerge... humane. This exercise truly impacted me, because it was a composition with nearly nothing, and that could take us far⁴⁵.

44.
Student 6. Interview given by students of La Manufacture’s bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

45.
Student 12. Interview given by students of La Manufacture’s bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

The structure is to escape from the structure

Beauty and simplicity, wealth and lack of resources, spontaneity and organization, precision and chaos, strength and fragility, notions that are seemingly opposing, often incompatible, are highlighted in students’ statements as characteristics of Lia Rodrigues’ art and classes, as we can see in the following comments:

The first thing that comes to mind is spontaneity... I really saw a way of teaching that was super spontaneous. And, at the same time, it was organized, because we could see she was prepared, she knew what she was doing. But it’s as if she had a lot of experience, a huge suitcase she brought with her, and that she made it all available, that she’s confident in what is available. So, she measures the temperature of what is happening in the classroom, and she takes this and that out of the suitcase, like, today we’ll talk about shirts, then she takes out a shirt, now about pants, she takes out the pants. [...] it’s really... super spontaneous! What’s cool is that, at the same time, we can go very deep into each theme and each thing she brings, and it can lead us to something entirely different. I really liked this freedom we had because we weren’t

afraid of escaping structure, because the structure, in itself, was to escape from the structure⁴⁶.

Student 3 emphasizes the artist's concern with the exercises' purpose clarity and precision:

Lia was always precise and always said we had to be careful about things. Even though she created chaotic situations, even though sometimes it looked like a mess, it was very important to take care of things. [...] But we could always feel that she wanted everything to be clear and also precise⁴⁷.

Finally, we see in the following comment the impact that Lia Rodrigues, described here as humble, fragile, yet full of strength, had in Student 9:

We have the impression that she knows everything, and, at the same time, she had been so tremendously humble! [...] We have the impression that she has never-ending strength and, at the same time, a certain fragility. And she also shows us that fragility, if we dare to put it against the wall, becomes a parameter of the situation, it becomes a creative restriction, it becomes strength⁴⁸.

Final considerations

Even though she doesn't acknowledge having developed a teaching methodology always based in a same varied set of teaching strategies, that could be "applied" to every context in which she teaches and materialized in the "print-outs" she once dreamed of having, from our point of view, Lia Rodrigues has been building her own teaching methodology based on her experience-based knowledge. Here we understand methodology as a path to reach an objective.

Representative of her experience as a student of classical ballet in technical schools and workshops, and based on knowledges built in her pre-professional journey, according to Tardif's perspective, Lia Rodrigues' initial teaching practices transformed themselves, little by little, in a singular way of approaching dance and the dance teaching, supported by her experience-based knowledges. Her conception of a dance class was transformed, abandoning the perspective that teaching dance is synonymous with teaching a specific technique, and became closer to approaches that allow the education of dance artists in a more integral manner.

As someone who started early on as a performer in a professional contemporary dance company, the Maguy Marin Company,

46.

Student 1. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

47.

Student 3. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

48.

Student 9. Interview given by students of La Manufacture's bachelor program to Silvia Soter. Lausanne, December 16, 2016.

who since 1985 has become a choreographer, and starting a few years later her own dance company, Lia Rodrigues interweaves her knowledges as a creator/artist to her practice when in a pedagogical situation. Since she hasn't gone through dance teaching education programs during her professional journey, she experimented with ways of teaching dance, in which the creation questions and methods mobilized in the making of own her works became central elements. The knowledges of her pre-professional trajectory started giving space to practical knowledges (TARDIF, 2012), particularly experience-based knowledge.

The value given to the group as the basis of creative collaboration, beginning the work with simple games to develop a laboratory for exploring creativity, and the centrality of conversation circles are some elements which are present both in creation processes with the *Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças* and in the artist's work in a pedagogical situation. Common to teaching and creating, the way she prepares herself for rehearsals and classes, the necessity to read and reread her notes, the trust in the group's autonomy and that the activities will bring material forth for her to intervene are constants in Lia Rodrigues' practice. For the artist, creating and teaching are in communication. She believes that putting herself in a pedagogical situation having young people as students has a positive impact in what she does:

It's great because I must put myself back there, with them [the students]. I often put myself in a situation where I reconsider what I think and who I am. And I think that my creations, after I work with these groups, are very influenced by my work as a teacher, let's put this way: it feeds my creation and my creation feeds my teaching. It's, like, a constant exchange⁴⁹.

49.
Interview given to Silvia Soter.
Lausanne, December 9, 2016.

Always open for reformulation, to reconsider what she thinks and who she is, Lia Rodrigues creates a two-way street between her practice in artistic creation and her teaching practice. In this interlacing, we see Tardif's statements take shape in a clear example of mobilization of knowledges originated in a long trajectory, joined for creation and teaching. We can also see the way in which the practice reverberates in students through the many statements printed here. The creation nurturing the teaching, the teaching nurturing the creation, "like, a constant exchange"!

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