

I Campinas State University (UNICAMP), Campinas, SP, Brazil  
helopontes@uol.com.br

II Campinas State University (UNICAMP), Campinas, SP, Brazil  
rafaelnascimentocesar1@gmail.com

Heloisa Pontes<sup>I</sup>  
Rafael do Nascimento Cesar<sup>II</sup>

## **CITIES, STAGES AND AUDIENCES: RIO DE JANEIRO AND SÃO PAULO IN TWO ACTS**

### **PROLOGUE**

“In the theatre, there are always three of us.” Unpacked, the phrase of the French writer Alexandre Dumas, fils (1824-1895) reveals the singularity of the show compared to the practice of reading. Virtually silent, the book “speaks in a low voice to a single person.” Theatre, though, addresses “the thousand or 1,500 people assembled and has its roots in the tribune and the public arena” (Dumas, fils cited in Charle, 2012: 215). The size of this estimate tells us much about the popular reach of this art form on the stages of the major European cities of the nineteenth century – Paris, London, Vienna and Berlin. As the historian Christophe Charle demonstrates in *Théâtres en capitales. Naissance de la société du spectacle à Paris, Berlin, Londres et Vienne*, the successful plays of the period spread new social representations far beyond those classes with ready access to literature. Novels with print runs of around 100,000 copies only appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century. But plays performed more than a hundred times to large audiences had been frequent since the 1850s. The growing interest in the theatre was manifested on all sides: from the increasingly diversified public to the writers striving to make a name and some money as playwrights, accompanied by the swelling influx of would-be actors and directors.

Social art, collective art, the art of representation, theatre is inseparable from urban life, multifaceted sociability, new methods of transportation, the movements of crowds, and a general increase in circulation at international

level. Without downplaying the divergence between the real and the performed, Christophe Charle shows that over the nineteenth century one intersected with the other. The multiplying effect of the theatre shows the quickening pace of change in the customs, habits and moral codes of life in society.

The interest, indeed fascination, exerted by the French theatre during the period owed much to the centrality enjoyed by the country's capital. Eloquent in their diffusion of a fully bourgeois society, the plays of the Parisian boulevard offered local and foreign audiences more than the reassertion of outdated moral clichés. Even though most of the plays avoided questioning the legitimacy of the ruling elite, they functioned as "sounding boards for inexpressible discontent." The re-enactment of generational conflicts between parents and children (over marriages, inheritance or chosen careers), between groups and social classes, and above all between men and women, produced a "game of symbolic liberation" for those watching. In the words of Charle (2012: 231), "the people, women, youths, eternally dominated by the dramatic conventions of the past, increasingly prevail and invade the stage with their plethora of demands." Although bounded and limited by the existing conventions of bourgeois society, this new way of representing social relations had significant implications for the imaginary of the spectators – as much by what was made explicit as by what was left unsaid concerning the social and symbolic transformations of urban society.

New ways of conceiving conjugal relations and, by extension, the relations between men and women appeared on stage, provoking "public dialogues" that were generally "repressed in the private sphere or masked by the appearances of social life" (Charle, 2012: 231). These new ways of representing gender relations allowed actresses, armed with the cutting replies provided to them by the dramatists, to assert themselves outside the theatre too. Projecting themselves publicly on a scale previously unknown to women, many turned into celebrities, like the French actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923).<sup>1</sup>

A laboratory, voluntary and involuntary, of modernity, the theatre enacted transgressions that were already in the air and anticipated behaviours that would become commonplace in the following century. The public profile achieved by actresses is the most visible aspect of this transformation at the level of what we would today call gender relations. No coincidence, therefore, that the society performed on the stage resonated with the real society of the public and was able to, if not overthrow, at least suspend particular social conventions. Likewise, it was no coincidence that in other domains of culture as well, this same process of saturating and emptying spent formulas expressed the impasses of the modernity then being gestated in the French capital – and so too, albeit from distinct angles, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as we seek to show in the present article, based on a reconstruction of what was unfolding in the Rio and São Paulo theatre worlds at two significant moments of the cultural and urban history of these cities.

The first of these moments spans from the end of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth in what was then the capital of the Brazilian Republic. Drawing from periodicals dedicated to cultural and artistic criticism, we shall see how the theatre, the main form of entertainment during the period, served to symbolically retranslate the hierarchies that structured the social life of the Carioca *belle époque*. We have chosen the trajectory of composer Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935) in order to highlight how the management of these hierarchies, shaped by the artist's career, was fundamental to the elaboration of a repertoire deemed 'popular.'

The second moment, centred in the 1940s and 1950s, takes us from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo. The catching up of the Paulista theatre scene with international developments – enabled by the creation of the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia, the incorporation of foreign directors, the introduction of new theatrical conventions and the valorisation of dramaturgy – is explored through the career of the actress Cacilda Becker (1921-1969) and the critic who most closely accompanied her work, Decio de Almeida Prado (1917-2000).

Here the comparative framework takes the form of a sociological experiment: we emphasize the central role played by the theatre in the two cities with the aim of reconstructing the not always linear movement of absorption and expansion of this artistic practice in urban environments pushed by the investment in culture as a medium and substrate for the crystallization of diverse elements of the modernity then evolving. One of these elements, relating to the transformations in gender relations, is visualized here through the careers of Chiquinha Gonzaga and Cacilda Becker. Composing and directing musical shows were very clearly marked out as male activities, hence the specific challenges encountered by Chiquinha over the course of her professional trajectory.<sup>2</sup> Very different were those difficulties experienced by Cacilda, the actress who best symbolized the revival of the Paulista theatre scene in the period under analysis.

## FIRST ACT

### The city in revue

"We've an audience, we've an audience, we've an audience!"<sup>3</sup> It was with real enthusiasm that the playwright and theatre critic Arthur Azevedo (1855-1908) welcomed the opening of the play *Casa de bonecas* (A Doll's House) in Rio de Janeiro at the end of May 1899. After a period in Lisbon, completed a month earlier, the company of the Portuguese actress Lucinda Simões travelled to the federal capital, bringing the new play directly from the European stages to the Teatro Sant'Anna, located on Praça Tiradentes, the city's cultural epicentre. The staging of the drama by Ibsen (1828-1906), previously unperformed in Brazil, was an overnight success among those sectors of the elite tuned to whatever was most modern in the arts, as well as being considered "a major artistic happening" by the press (Azevedo, 1899b).

Compared to the other shows staged daily in Rio de Janeiro's theatres at the time, *Casa de bonecas* deserved special attention. Not so much on account of the overseas origin of the text or cast – given that receiving theatre companies from abroad was commonplace in the capital – but because of what the play represented and indeed acted out. The theme of Nora and Torwald's failed marriage caused an upset among the spectators, who saw the young wife's decision to abandon her home, her husband and her children as a direct assault on existing gender norms. From the stage, Nora's resolute farewell, made moments before the end of the play and contrasting with the incredulous impotence of the husband, announced a redefinition of social roles central to the relationship between men and women.

But it was not just the content of Ibsen's drama that caused an impact and, in many cases, discomfort. In his weekly column for the newspaper *A Notícia*, Arthur Azevedo (1899a), this time somewhat less enthusiastically, reflected on the staging of Lucinda Simões's company. Sparing in his praise for the cast, he argued that “a theatre play should be above all clear, and *Casa de bonecas* is not.” In his view, Ibsen's text failed to meet the requirements of the “well-written play,” symbolized by classic French drama: balanced characters who, in a linear plot filled with music, favoured inter-human action rather than subjectivism (Neves & Levin, 2008). The show presented in the Teatro Sant'Anna, with its unexpected and inconclusive ending, leaving the audience's expectations in suspense, diverged from this model. Not unsurprisingly, Arthur Azevedo (1899a) considered it “[un]suitably arranged.” “Frankly,” the critic went on, “what would the audience make of a Brazilian author who made a stranger enter a family home, at an untimely hour, just to ask for a cigar and announce, in Sibylline fashion, that he was going to die? Imagine the poor Brazilian author who did that!”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, they did not. Until the first decades of the twentieth century, Brazilian dramaturgy was some distance from the foreign theatrical avantgarde. The revolution triggered in Europe by the emergence of modern drama – championed by authors such as Chekhov, Strindberg and Ibsen himself – would take decades to reach the Brazilian stages (Szondi, 2001). Hence, what Arthur Azevedo identified as a dimension ‘out of place’ in *Casa de bonecas* alludes to the complex relationship between the theatre, the formation of the public and nationality in Brazil, recurrent topics in the discussions of republican intellectuals concerned to determine the symbolic place of the ‘people’ in the new regime.

In the years following the proclamation of the Republic, the theatre-going audience was accompanied by the idea that certain sectors of the intelligentsia held of it. Far from expressing ‘cultural unity,’ something impossible for a nation lacking any prior identificatory ‘sentiment,’ it was imagined as an audience that, being endowed with a “public meaning,” should give flesh, blood and voice to city dwellers. Of all the types of symbolic production available in fin de siècle Rio de Janeiro, the theatre was the cultural arena that best knew

how to identify the contours of this new sensibility and catalyse them in the elaboration of a new social imaginary.<sup>5</sup> While literature, backed by the nascent publishing market or the press, was limited to the literate minority (17.4% of the population in 1890<sup>6</sup>), theatre shows, especially those associated with so-called revue theatre, attracted audiences with a wide variety socioeconomic and cultural profiles. For the same show, Tiago de Melo Gomes (2004: 35) writes, “an internally highly diverse audience would pay for tickets at a wide range of prices,” thereby maintaining the group positions within the social hierarchy.

Playwright, columnist, poet and songwriter, Arthur Azevedo arrived in Rio de Janeiro from the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão in 1873 and, within a short time, had successfully built a prolific and prestigious literary career. His relations with other intellectuals, developed in the politically turbulent everyday world of the end of Empire, shaped a common social experience that would be reflected in both the artistic production and the lifestyle of the group. Possessing a cultural capital uncommon for the period, but unable to make a living from their trade, these young literary types found in public service an ideal comfort zone between financial stability and a relatively flexible routine, allowing them to socialize intensely in the city’s cafés and bars.

Arthur Azevedo was no stranger to the vicissitudes of this kind of life: he spent half of his working day in the doldrums of the office buildings and spent the rest of the time in Bohemian conviviality with his colleagues from the profession. “They were almost always friends, sometimes opponents, but all sharing the consciousness and determination to fulfil their respective ‘missions.’ Arthur Azevedo’s mission was to *dedicate body and soul to the theatre*” (Mencarelli, 1999: 47, our italics). His adherence to the nationalist ideology gave him the taste for Brazilian literature and the fight for the “regeneration of the national theatre” (Azevedo, 1895), while the circulation through the elite spaces of a Francophile Rio de Janeiro – like the *Alcazar Lyrique* and the Teatro São Pedro – made him keenly aware of the fascination that shows like comic operas, operetta and revues of the year exerted over the hearts and minds of the population.<sup>7</sup>

The establishment of revue theatre as a profitable genre dates from the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Co-opting a variety of artistic languages, including poetry, music and dance, the narrative constant to the shows was a comic and parodical recapitulation of the events that had marked the year in the capital.<sup>8</sup> The 1880s and 1890s saw the apogee of the genre, precisely when the development of mass communication and transport was changing the city’s physiognomy. The channels provided by the press – which, as well as newspapers, included weekly magazines such as *Fon-Fon* and *Kosmos* – enabled an outpouring of the polyvalent talents of young writers eager to make a living from articles, stories, advertising slogans, verses and caricatures. Undoubtedly the risk inherent to this activity impelled them to venture onto the stages too, especially since, taking the French classic style as an influential

model, the theatre produced in Rio de Janeiro frequently turned to a wide variety of dramatic source texts.

The high turnover of jobs indicated, on one hand, the difficulties encountered in the specialization and autonomization of the literary craft, leading writers to assume “the roles of the press caricaturist, publicist, revue author and, not infrequently, actor” (Saliba, 2002: 43). On the other hand, the presence of poly-graphic artists like Bastos Tigre, Raul Pederneiras and Oduvaldo Vianna was central to the configuration of a transversal theatre style. The constant recourse to humour and parody dialogued directly with a social experience still taking shape and conferred revue theatre “an ambiguous place in comic production, probably on that threshold always difficult to discern between the cult and the popular” (94).

The fact that Arthur Azevedo translated French operettas into Portuguese while also authoring revues of the year created an uncomfortable situation for exponents of nationalist purism. As a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters since its foundation in 1897, he joined in the chorus of accusations that Brazil’s dramatic arts were in decline; as a playwright and revue writer (*revistógrafo*), he was at the forefront of shows that were huge box office successes. Struck by this apparent inconsistency, the novelist Coelho Neto (1864-1934) was especially forthright about his indignation with his Maranhense colleague. In a polemic that unfolded in the newspaper *A Notícia*, in August 1897, he launched an attack on the “lowly author *ad usum* of a wild band of illiterates,” a blatant allusion to Arthur Azevedo and the works written by him to entertain a supposedly ignorant and unruly public. For Coelho Neto, the talent and “comic élan” of the colleague, rather than being wasted on the “riotous and disconnected scenes of the revues” (Coelho Neto, cited in Mencarelli, 1999: 84), would have been better employed in genres like comedy, deemed ‘superior’ in terms of literary and artistic value.

Harsh opinions like those of the novelist were echoed by some sections of the press. In the two years during which it was published, *Revista Theatral* (1895: 1) deliberated the quality of what was performed on the city’s stages with some frequency:

Given that the Theatre is the strongest and almost only popular distraction, there is absolutely no reason for playwrights to write and impresarios to produce works without literary merit, gross and idiotic, since the affluence of spectators would be all the greater were the works shown to present some degree of refined artistic form.

The opinion of *Revista Theatral*’s editors was echoed by Arthur Azevedo (1894) himself:

If the *fluminense* [Rio inhabitant] prefers to watch the representation of a magic show, an operetta or a revue of the year rather than a drama or comedy, this is because in these inferior genres the performance of the respective roles fully satisfies, while in drama or comedy, our artists generally have no idea of the characters or the feelings that they are playing. What drives away the spectator is not the play itself, but the way in which it is stage and acted.

According to Arthur Azevedo, “inferior genres” in terms of “artistic form,” like magic shows, operettas and revues of the year, were not “gross and idiotic,” just more palatable and realistic to the sensibilities of the audience. In his view, if the comedies and dramas were well staged and performed, they would not ‘drive away’ the spectator.<sup>9</sup> Hence he transferred the question of the supposed intrinsic quality of the genre to the contingencies of its execution on stage.

Responding to Coelho Neto’s provocation, he argued that, though he wished to reverse “the terrible state of the dramatic arts in Rio de Janeiro” (Azevedo, 1894) his work was based on market interests. Enjoying renown among the theatre producers of Rio de Janeiro, he claimed that there was no “company that [would reject] an original work from me... as long as that work made money” (Azevedo, cited in Mencarelli, 1999: 85). Azevedo’s pragmatic and disenchanting tone stemmed from his understanding that the separation between ‘public’ and ‘society’ provided a narrow range of possibilities and, consequently, demanded adopting the right attitudes. In his view, “any art wishing to survive the marketplace had to match the ‘public,’ since ‘society,’ while it had its literary and dramatic preferences, would not assure the survival of the artistic production” (139-140).

Dedicating his career to dramaturgy required, therefore, a double adaptation: on one hand, to the structural limits of the literary craft which, unable to evade economic laws, obliged him to ‘make money’; and, on the other hand, the idea, shared with other intellectuals, of constructing a new sense of nationhood through the invention of a modern and republican social imaginary. Wavering between rejecting and welcoming these theatre genres in which the borders of notions like ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture became blurred by “flows of languages, ideas, expressive models, works and authors” (Miceli & Pontes, 2014: 9), Arthur Azevedo embodied the dilemmas and specificities of a porous cultural output.

Porosity is the metaphor used by the historian Bruno Carvalho (2013) to describe the sociocultural dynamic of Rio de Janeiro from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth. Marked by rapid demographic growth, the federal capital witnessed the configuration of new social classes distributed unevenly across urban space. From this process emerged forms of inhabiting and representing the city shaped by the constant “breaching of cultural screens” (Wisnik, 1983: 162, original italics), in which the absence of rigid boundaries between groups promoted the diffusion of cultural products beyond their contexts of production. Porous, these products symbolically retranslated the divisions and contradictions of a place in which modernization affected city dwellers unequally. Animated by the “interplay between tradition and invention, innovation and the past” (Carvalho, 2016: 23), the tropical version of the *belle époque* fomented the creation of new languages while the processes of social inequality intensified. But while the differentia-

tion of theatre genres did not imply spatially segregated audiences, since different social classes would watch the same shows, the mechanisms of distinction operated through the porosity of culture, not in spite of it, disputing and defining understandings of the notion of 'public.'

### **Chiquinha Gonzaga and the republican taste**

Determining whether the revue *O bilontra*, by Arthur Azevedo, staged in 1886, mattered more to the Rio public than *Casa de bonecas*, performed thirteen years later, is less important to us than exploring the meanings associated with their repercussion. The ranking of cultural and artistic products is a discursive device whose logic elucidates the ways through which power relations take on symbolic counterparts in the social world. At an unparalleled moment of new political forces irrupting in Brazil – whose condition as a dominated nation was persistently interposed with the republican project – the criteria of appreciating and evaluating artistic manifestations and works denoted the hegemony of outmoded aesthetic criteria. But while national dramaturgy, finding itself forced to elaborate a native repertoire based on established genres of serious French theatre, was seeking local contents for the same foreign form, other theatrical modalities flourished in the city. Despite the flaw of cultural 'decadence,' they found a ready public and elaborated witty depictions of life in the capital.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro had become the cultural and artistic epicentre of Brazil, irradiating to the rest of the country, and beyond, the image of a civilized nation that had supplanted the colonial past under the banner of progress. However, the turning point signalled by the Republic, while altering little the political and economic frameworks of the Empire, was crucial to the construction of the expectations of what could be achieved with the theatre shows.<sup>10</sup> Amid a full-blown "battle of symbols and allegories" (Carvalho, 1998: 10) in which different sectors of the republican intelligentsia clashed with each other (liberals and positivists, to cite two), the aim was to constitute a popular *imaginary* that spoke the language of the new regime.

A leading figure in this process was the instrumentalist, composer and conductor Chiquinha Gonzaga. A woman of music and theatre, she participated actively in Rio's cultural production for more than 50 years, constructing a substantial career highly regarded by her peers. Her debut as a conductor in 1885, with the operetta *A corte na roça*, though poorly received by critics, opened the doors to a profession that she would pursue without interruption until her death at the age of 87. During this long period, she not only accompanied the different conceptions of *popular taste*, supposedly shared by all citizens, she also put these ideas into action, becoming renowned for her capacity to infuse compositions with the best of a shifting, transversal and porous urban culture.

Daughter of the Carioca elite, Chiquinha Gonzaga had a privileged childhood. Access to education and the arts, though limited to the home, provided



her with the foundations of a social destiny in which music was a sign of class and gender distinction simultaneously (Cesar, 2015a, 2015b). Her experience on the piano and in musical theory – begun under the tutelage of her family and honed over her youth – and the influence on urban musical genres like polka, modinha and maxixe were considered valuable skills in the artistic world and ended up directing her towards the humorous universe of operettas and revues of the year. However, her entry into this profession also depended on the circumstances of an erratic trajectory full of setbacks.

Like Ibsen's Nora, Chiquinha also stretched the gender conventions of the period. By the time that she began to play and compose professionally at the end of the 1870s, she had already abandoned her home, husband and children on two different occasions.<sup>11</sup> Materially destitute and considered dead by her family, the only viable alternative was “to transform the piano, a mere ornament, into a means of work and an instrument of liberation” (Diniz, 2009: 103). But while this was only possible thanks to a class and gender experience that had given her the cultural credentials needed to do in public what other women did at home, it also depended on the acoustic landscape that milled through the city. A figure esteemed by musicians and artists, accustomed to moving around in public space, Chiquinha Gonzaga consolidated her career by mediating in an appealing and entertaining form between “social classes and musical genres” (Carvalho, 2013: 92).

At the time of her debut as a conductor, Chiquinha Gonzaga was already familiar with the possibilities of theatrical work in Rio de Janeiro. After *Festa de São João* – a comedy of manners for which she herself wrote the music and libretto – remained unperformed and *Viagem ao Parnaso*, a revue whose author, Arthur Azevedo, denied her the opportunity to present, Chiquinha Gonzaga finally made her debut with *A corte na roça*, authored by Palhares Ribeiro, thereby launching her career among Rio de Janeiro's cultural producers.

With the difficulty inherent to all beginnings, Chiquinha appeared on the pages of the main newspapers of the time.

We sincerely rue the kind of score written by Mrs. Francisca Gonzaga for the farce that, raised to the heights of operetta, was performed at the Príncipe Imperial theatre the day before yesterday under the title of *Corte na Roça*.

We rue it, because the music – good, well-written, original, a true gift, denoting something of real merit to its author – is yoked to an impossible libretto, implausible, and performed in an indecent and repugnant manner.

Mrs. Francisca was deservedly applauded (*Gazeta de Notícias*, 1885).

Motivated by the discrepancy between the ‘impossible’ libretto, the ‘repugnant’ performance and the ‘well-written’ music, the review of the show sought to suggest that the conductor's fledgling talent exceeded that of the theatre company employing her. A similar evaluation would be published the next day by the periodical *O Mequetrefe* (1885):

*Corte na Roça...* It's best we don't talk about such pitiable things. It's a shame really that Mrs. Chiquinha Gonzaga has wasted so much wax on such a bad corpse. The music is good – good in all senses of the word. The distinctive composer must work, and work hard.

Excusing the “bad corpse” on the dramaturgy and staging, the positive impact of Chiquinha Gonzaga's debut earned her further opportunities among the capital's light theatre companies.<sup>12</sup> The fact of being a composer (rather than an actress) certainly made her an exception among people working behind the scenes of culture, like playwrights, directors, actors and producers. However, the initial difficulties were gradually supplanted by the composer's talent and dedication – and by the social capital of her origins.

The clash between production and critique, signalling the search for relative autonomy of the cultural field, primarily expresses the latter's attempt to create and implement its own laws in a challenge to the monopolizing of cultural legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1992). Although it was impossible for cultural producers to proclaim any material and symbolic independence from economic and political laws, signs of the dispute for legitimate cultural forms can be seen in the dialogue between subjects who occupy distinct and frequently antagonistic positions.

The common ground where the symbolic battle for the destiny of Rio's theatre unfolded, therefore, was popular taste and the different meanings surrounding it. For it to figure as an object of a civilizing pedagogy idealized by the cultural elite and, at the same time, serve as ballast for the new theatrical enterprises, the public needed to be constantly monitored. With the gradual development of the urban middle classes, more people began to spend their free time out in the city. Between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, the options for entertainment were concentrated in the central region, but as the decades unfolded, not only did other spaces proliferate but also other kinds of attractions.<sup>13</sup> The certainty that “the public, in the theatre [...], only loves those who entertain or move them”<sup>14</sup> stimulated the producers and impresarios to develop new strategies to diversify the range of entertainment available to Cariocas.

One of them was the combination of light theatre with cinema sessions, still a novelty in the first decades of the twentieth century. Running production and maintenance costs lower than those of the theatre, cinema became an alternative form of entertainment whose accessibility to the general population forced theatre impresarios to reassess their own operations. Despite the vocal rejection of the creators of the “art of silence”<sup>15</sup> by more conservative minds, cinema also played a conciliatory role insofar as screen and stage could entertain the same audience rather than dispute for it. For Rui Barbosa (1920), for example, cinema was “condensed and speeded up theatre,” taking as “a background reality, nature and universe in all their infinite variety of scenes.” The

point of contact between these two forms of cultural output arose from a shared social experience that, though limited to the urban middle classes and the elite, closely accompanied the ‘pace’ with which culture and the city were transforming.

Theatre, therefore, was not a term with a univocal meaning. Occupying the epicentre of Carioca symbolic life, its polysemy was both cultural and political. Business for some and project for others, it led to private ventures designed to entertain and generate profit, while also mobilizing sectors of the intelligentsia eager to construct a meaning for Brazilian nationality and see it represented on stage. Theatre companies thus had to vie for an audience with those proposing the nationalization of the dramatic arts.

The idea of creating a national company that would provide financial backing to shows by Brazilian authors, allowing them to dispense with the need to “make money” in the cultural market, was supported by various intellectuals at the turn of the century. To transform the city’s theatres, “where slang and the coarse jokes corrupt popular taste definitively,”<sup>16</sup> into spaces of dramaturgical quality, criteria needed to be established concerning the form and content of the plays and their application ensured.

Today, with the exception of one theatre, São Pedro, which has transformed into a vast hall of immoral dances, all the theatres are functioning, but none of them contain a company that we could point to as *national* – marking a stage of our civilization and where we could find the characteristic sign of our nationality. The municipal theatre [...] is positively fated to be the temporary writing desk for the geniuses who visit us. It does not serve the purposes of the national company, which, as a *school for educating popular taste*, scares away the simple and imposes the tremendous expenses of the ‘toilette’ (*A Noite*, 1913b, our italics).

The creation of a ‘national company’ had clear objectives. As a ‘school of education,’ it would be opposed to the free supply and demand for entertainment, setting out the pedagogical bases for the constitution of ‘popular taste.’ Inaugurated in 1909 with a capacity for 1,739 spectators, the *Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro* symbolized the aspirations of the *belle époque* elite to imitate the cosmopolitan style typical of the French *toilette*. Not coincidentally, then, its biggest attractions included shows by Parisian companies. But it was also chosen as a base for endeavours to nationalize the theatre – an idea whose original version could be traced back to a wish of Arthur Azevedo (1894) who, himself taking inspiration from the state-run Comédie-Française, argued in favour of urgent measures from the public authorities.

Imbued with diverse meanings and a theme of much controversy, the notion of the theatre runs in parallel to that of the public. The consulted documents show that during the first years of the Republic, the pendular movement between ‘art’ and ‘entertainment,’ ‘foreign’ and ‘national,’ ‘public’ and ‘society,’ signalled the joint efforts of various subjects to define Brazilian nationality

and, in the process, the nature of popular taste. Working at the intersection between the political imaginary – one of the foundations for which was the idea of a civilization by stages – and the set of cultural representations and discourses concerning the proposed destiny of the national theatre, whose centrality in the symbolic life of Rio arose from its intimate relation with urban space, they reflected the eagerness of the intelligentsia to legitimize their political decisions and substantiate their cultural judgments. In this sense, the public, in acquiring the clear contours of a moral subject, became pivotal to the “forming of [Republican] souls.”

### INTERVAL

Though originating in France, revue theatre was “until the mid-twentieth century, the most characteristic genre of Brazilian theatre, the one that most excited the public, with its irreverent humour, sometimes in bad taste, its teasing tone, its critique of manners and its allegories concerning national life and politics” (Mattos, 2002: 108). As the decades passed, though, while it still excited the public, it became less and less popular with Rio and São Paulo’s amateur groups, who were striving to transform dramatic values and instil new ways of conceiving the work of actors, actresses, directors and set designers.

The Brazilian theatre scene’s capacity to catch up with what was happening internationally depended on the work of amateurs, the localized attempts to renew local dramaturgy and the emergence of new theatrical conventions. An important figure in this process of renewal in Brazil was Louis Jovet (1887-1951). In the view of this French actor and director, dramaturgy reigned supreme, since everything “derives from it” (Jovet, 1958: 168). Hence all the components of the show had to be subordinate to the text, given that it only “acquires meaning when spoken, pronounced on stage or elsewhere [or] when addressed to someone: partner or public” (Jovet, 1954: 67). This explained the *raison d’être* of stagecraft and the importance of the director, whose function of breathing life into the text was, until then, little appreciated by the public or the majority of people directly involved with professional theatre in Brazil.

The work of the amateurs combined with the presence of Jovet and his company in Rio and São Paulo, in 1941, enabled the subversion of the hierarchy of values enshrined in the country’s theatrical landscape, where shows “were organized, so to speak, from the parts to the whole” (Prado, 1993: 95). After the works staged by Jovet, in the view of Decio de Almeida Prado – the critic who became the “privileged conscience” (Magaldi, 2002: ix) of the São Paulo drama scene – “there was no longer any place for comedies of manners or ‘fantasies’ in festive form” (Prado, 1993: 159).

The protagonists and devices of this movement of theatrical renewal registered the presence of Jovet in the country in distinct ways. Decio de Almeida Prado, directly, through his work as a theatre critic for the magazine *Clima*;

Nelson Rodrigues, indirectly, through the mediation of the Rio group Os Comediantes [The Comedians], responsible for staging *Vestido de noiva* in 1943. In the recollection of Gustavo Dória (1975: 16-17), one of the group's members, the presence of the French director forced them to "reflect more carefully" on what "they should present as a repertoire," by calling attention to the fact that "any initiative that aims to establish in Brazil a theatre of quality, a theatre that truly reaches [...] an audience, would not be achieving anything were it to fail to celebrate national literature! [...] The point of departure was the Brazilian author."

The advice bestowed by Jouvet quickly became a fixed idea for the group. They needed to find a Brazilian dramatist who matched the pretensions of the group and its Polish director, Zbigniew Ziembinski (1908-1978). Fleeing the war, the latter had arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1941 and two years later would direct *Vestido de noiva*, by Nelson Rodrigues, considered a watershed in the history of Brazilian theatre.

## SECOND ACT

### **Cacilda Becker: from the aisle to the proscenium**

The meeting between Brazilian amateurs and foreign professionals sketched the initial framework for the renewal of Brazilian theatre. However, this movement did not unfold in linear fashion. On her debut as an actress in 1941, Cacilda Becker had never met Jouvet and was not even aware that he had been there during the year in question. The first thing that stood out about her stage presence was her extreme thinness for the standards of beauty of the period (her weight oscillated between 40 and 47 kilos) and the absence of ease with the gestures and codes of sociability of everyday life. Neither conventionally beautiful, nor elegant for her era, Cacilda drew the attention of the critic and amateur director Alfredo Mesquita (1907-1980) due to the almost complete absence of these attributes. Having seen Cacilda act for the first time in 1941, in the play *Coração* (staged by the Raul Roulien Company), Alfredo Mesquita recalls the timid image of the young actress at the reception held by the painter Di Cavalcanti and his wife, Noêmia, for the company's cast at the couple's "adorable duplex" in the downtown São Paulo.

With the brilliant arrival of the actors and various rounds of whisky, the encounter became livelier and louder. In one corner, huddled alone, a glass of Coca-Cola trembling in her shaking hands, her large eyes open wide, she observed with a startled expression the carousel all around her [...]. How she must be feeling abandoned, how she must be suffering, the poor thing! It was painful to see. So much so that I couldn't resist: I went over. I complemented her on her performance that night, trying to get her chatting, cheer her up. In vain. She tried to force a smile, which didn't come. Just her mouth twitched, almost into a grimace, while her eyes stared at me in terror. To avoid prolonging the suffering, I thought it better to abandon the 'mission.' Which is what I did without hearing her voice, not a single word. (Mesquita, 1995: 82-83)

The testimony of Alfredo Mesquita is notable for what he says out loud and for what he suggests between the lines. A member of the powerful Mesquita family, owners of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, Alfredo had been socialized in the universe of the Paulista elite and had been able, due to the social, cultural and economic capital accumulated by the family, to support areas of his own predilection: culture in a broad sense and the theatre in particular. In this domain, he shared the company of actors and actresses, encouraging their careers and contributing to the professionalization of a number of them. The social distance between him and Cacilda, however, despite the proximity and affinity that they might have shared at a cultural level, was, at the moment of the encounter, insurmountable.

While over time he would help swell the actress's legion of admirers, becoming her friend and godfather to her son, it is also clear that he knew how to identify – without mincing his words and with the condescension typical to the socially highly confident – Cacilda's initial 'weaknesses,' before she became celebrated as the 'first actress' of the TBC (Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia) in the 1950s, and turned into the 'elegant woman' of the 1960s. Namely: her lack of 'beauty' and social 'aptitude.' Each on its own may not have caught Alfredo's attention. Since although actresses like Laura Suarez (one of the vedettes of the era) and Bibi Ferreira were able to shift easily from Portuguese to French and then to English, the same could not be said of the majority of the professional actresses, who, unlike the amateurs, came from humble or lower middle class families, many of them linked to revue theatre or drama troupes with little formal education. But while their origin was 'low,' the 'biggest' were able to compensate for this 'lack' with some particular physical trump card, such as beauty in the case of Tônia Carrero and Maria Della Costa.

When Cacilda was born in 1921, her parents were living in Pirassununga in a wattle-and-daub house without piped water (Prado, 2002: 35). At the age of six, she and her two younger sisters, Cleyde (who would also achieve renown as an actress) and Dirce, moved to São Paulo with their mother, Alzira Becker (daughter of Protestant German immigrants who had come to Brazil in 1860) and their father, Edmundo Radamés Yacónis (descendent of Greeks and Calabrese Italians who emigrated to Brazil in 1880). Their father spent most of his time far from his daughters and wife, who practically had to provide for them alone. During this period, they went through one of the most difficult periods of their lives. In the words of the actress, "we even went hungry. One day I was forced to steal a bunch of vegetables for lunch. [...] Stealing I don't think was important: the hunger is what pains me still today" (Becker, 1995).

In 1929, Cacilda's parents separated and they moved to the house of their maternal grandparents in Pirassununga. Afterwards, they went to a farm where their mother had obtained work as a primary teacher at a rural school. Finally, they moved to Santos, where they lived in a favela. While the poverty was con-

siderable and comfort almost non-existent, Cacilda, Cleyde and Dirce enjoyed a freedom of movement much greater than usual for single young women at the time. Cacilda, who loved to dance, experimented as a modern dancer and made some interesting friends, among them the fine artist Flávio de Carvalho and the critic Miroel Silveira. As well as enabling her to meet the artists and intellectuals of Santos who frequented his parents' home, Miroel was responsible for Cacilda's entry into the world of theatre. Realizing that her wish to become a professional dancer would be difficult to achieve and aware of the transformations taking place in the Rio theatre scene, c mentioned his friend to the director Maria Jacintha. Cacilda debuted in Rio de Janeiro, in 1941, in the role of Zizi in the play *3.200 metros de altura*.

### **The actress and the critic**

Also in 1941, Decio de Almeida Prado made his debut in São Paulo as a theatre critic in the magazine *Clima* (Pontes, 1998). While the year of entry was the same, their conceptions of the dramatic arts were, at that moment, completely different. Linked to what was happening in French theatre, especially, and committed to building the conditions needed to implant Brazilian modern theatre, Decio was light years away from Cacilda in this domain. Lacking almost any kind of capital (social, economic or cultural), when she took to the stage it was to continue a work routine that had been hindering the adjustment of Brazilian theatre to the transformations occurring on the international scene. She, who in her best moments as an actress would become "a pure flame burning before us" (Prado, 1969), had begun her career in the opposite direction to Decio's vision of the theatre.

In 1943, their paths crossed for the first time. Temporarily installed in São Paulo, she was directed by him in the play *Auto da barca do inferno*, written by Gil Vicente and staged by the Grupo Universitário de Teatro. Playing the role of the go-between Brígida Vaz, who raised the girls for the canons of the See, Cacilda created the character virtually alone. In this production, Decio received two lessons from Cacilda:

First, that the vanity of the artist, the legitimate vanity of the artist, which was already considerable in Cacilda and would increase with age, has nothing to do with personal narcissism, with the desire to appear beautiful and attractive. The beauty that she pursued was of another kind. Second, that the art of acting demands just as much creative imagination as the art of writing. The dramatist provides the words. The rest, which at the time of the performance is nearly everything, falls to the actor. (Prado, 1993: 141)

This passionate assessment clearly reveals the size of the impact that the actress had on the critic. Despite preferring up to then 'tasty little' plays to those of indisputable literary quality, Cacilda found in Decio her most qualified interpreter, at once generous and demanding. The contact between them was pos-

sible thanks to the work of the amateur groups and, especially, the creation of the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia (TBC) in 1948.<sup>17</sup> Headed by Franco Zampari and backed by the support received from the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, the actors, directors, critics, impresarios, drama teachers and set designers linked to the TBC formed, according to Prado (1993: 95), “a close-knit and combative squad which in a few years had subverted the entire framework of Brazilian theatre, impressing on it new practices and new principles.”<sup>18</sup>

Decio was the house critic of this successful entrepreneurial and artistic initiative. And Cacilda, the first actress. Surpassing herself with each new role, her rise, truly dizzying, mirrored the growing prestige of the TBC among the Paulista public. As she matured as an actress, Decio was also becoming renowned as a critic. With each new play and each new character interpreted by Cacilda, the eulogies that he lavished on her were multiplied in his unsigned column in the form of editorial notes (as was customary at the time) in *O Estado de São Paulo*. Coming from someone like himself – university trained, in tune with the international drama scene and dedicated to producing an exhaustive and comprehensive critical review of each show seen – these enthusiastic evaluations were a long way from the ‘candied’ praise typical of impressionist critics.

In her first years of acting, Cacilda had assembled a highly varied portfolio of work that simultaneously contained the best and the worst of the theatre routine of the period: old methods of making and conceiving the theatrical arts were mixed with more modern methods that had emerged in the 1940s. When she joined the TBC at the age of 27, she therefore brought the “before and after” that divided the history of Brazilian theatre. But as her cultural education was still very sparse, it was only at the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia that her career really took off, the result of a set of very precise circumstances, including a mixture of conditioning factors of a social, institutional, artistic and biographical kind.

Playing the part of Queen Mary Stuart in Schiller’s drama, directed by Ziembinski, Cacilda proved, Decio argued, how they had been mistaken “to accept any limits for her”; in the role of Pega-Fogo, a child prematurely aged through suffering, she showed that “her immense possibilities (were) even vaster and deeper than we had imagined.” Reaching a period of full artistic maturity, she took “our theatre to heights seldom attained even by the best theatre of other countries.” On stage, the actress was like “a vibrant bundle of nerves” dispensing with “everything that did not constitute material for her art, everything that [was] not nervous sensibility” (Prado, 1993: 262). Thrilled by Cacilda’s rise, the result of a carefully dosed mixture of discipline, talent, hard work and love for the profession, Decio provides a visually vivid picture of the actress’s strength.

The idea that her strength resided in a “vibrant bundle of nerves” would become one of the aphorisms used to describe her by directors and theatre critics alike, the latter, in the wake left by Decio’s thought, making his words about her their own. For the Italian Ruggero Jaccobi (1995: 137), who arrived in



Brazil in 1946 and directed her three times, as soon as Cacilda “began to pronounce the words, they ceased to be words: they were threads, the bundles of threads of this nervous system. There was, so to speak, a kind of electricity in Cacilda’s words and gestures. She moved across the stage releasing a series of electric shocks. In the words of Ziembinski (1995), the director with whom she most frequently worked over her career, one of Cacilda’s mottos whenever he proposed a new show to her was: “Let’s work! It’s going to be hellish work!” For her, Ziembinski continued, “hellish work was a source of joy, the need for extreme effort. In the heat of work, the fight to achieve new values, she felt herself reborn, at the same time that her fragile body was transformed into the body of giant, a shining body” (142).

This body allowed her to move between playing very different types. Not only by virtue of the external devices that she used to imbue the performed characters with verisimilitude – the majestic garments that she wore when portraying a queen or the bandages with which she wrapped her breasts beneath her shirt to make her depiction of a boy all the more credible – but above all by her capacity to convert the experience of humiliation and deprivation experienced in her own childhood and adolescence into a powerful interpretative key. This was something the people closest to her knew how to recognize by being themselves completely immersed, like the actress, in the world of theatre, as actors, directors or critics.

Sábato Magaldi, disconcerted by the fact that the two roles that he most liked from the actress’s career were male (Pega-Fogo and Estragon, in *Esperando Godot* [Waiting for Godot]), sheds some light on the significance of this coincidence. In his view, it derived not from the fact that Cacilda “appeared masculine on stage.” On the contrary, “she was very feminine in so many creations.” Her personal fragility, Sábato postulates, “is what lent Pega-Fogo and Estragon a profoundly human quality. Helplessness, sadness, perplexity in the face of life, suffering, humiliation – these were the raw material that came from the roots of her childhood and stuck to her characters, making them so authentic” (Magaldi, 1995: 19). Male, these two roles are the striking expression of how, in the case of the great actresses, much of their notoriety is associated with the embodiment of the mechanisms of deception produced by theatrical conventions. Making the body the most important substrate, theatre allows these actresses to circumvent the implacable imperatives of beauty and the constraints imposed by ageing. Something difficult to achieve in other domains, like cinema, classical ballet and fashion, where the body is also central.

Neither beautiful or shapely, “marked” forever, in her own words, “by poverty” (Becker, 1995), Cacilda triumphed because she maximized her skill as an actress in a very particular context of renewal in Brazilian theatre. Backed by the accumulated experience of foreign directors, Cacilda was able to make up for the deficiencies in her training, working round her less favourable phys-

ical attributes, becoming familiar with and eventually mastering the drama techniques and conventions that made the TBC the model par excellence of Brazilian theatre until the mid-1950s.

### **The city on stage**

“The women were the bosses in the theatre” (Della Costa, 1984). Contradicting the obvious, the words of the actress Maria Della Costa (1926-2015) express the mix of objective and subjective conditions that enabled actresses to assume leading roles on and off the stage. In the division of labour that governed the diverse modalities of drama performed during the period, the marks of gender were present in all, but with distinct inflections in each. While the work of acting was available to both sexes, the work of dramaturgy was a privilege or attribute afforded to men.<sup>19</sup> Between these two poles were the directors and those women responsible for rehearsals, with the former clearly differentiated. The prestige attained by actresses, beyond the talent and acting skill of each individually, was due to their participation in the movement of implanting and sedimenting the aesthetic principles and work routines of the modern theatre, and to the transfer of social and cultural authority to the audience watching them – especially the bourgeois audience who frequented the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia, the symbol of Paulista theatre at the turn of the 1940s and an obligatory reference point in the 1950s.

The close relationship between the theatre and the city, the basis for drama activity in any capital, acquired specific contours in São Paulo as a result of the influence of the University of São Paulo (USP) on the local cultural dynamic.<sup>20</sup> The higher social profile that the university gave to those involved in intellectual activity, the presence of foreigners (professors and directors), the new spaces of sociability and professionalization, the alterations being produced at a rapid pace in the city’s social structure and demographics, all this, combined, proved decisive in the creation of new modalities of intellectual work and in the consolidation of the modern theatre.

“Exploding in its number of inhabitants, [São Paulo] broke its 400-year-old shell and became internationalized” (Prado, 1998: 7). From 1920 to 1950, the population rose from 579,000 to 2,198,000. The result was a shared belief in the future, “the symmetrical substitution of lifestyles rather than the slow disappearance of a world whose death throes could be accompanied with lucidity” (Mello e Souza, 1980: 110). This was demonstrated by the most inventive Brazilian dramaturgy of the time and by the creation of various companies, where the presence of the first actress continued to be central to the production and to the success of the modern theatrical ventures.

In the context of transformation through which Brazilian culture was then passing, signalled by the emergent Cinema Novo and by the intricate interweaving of theatre, radio and the beginning of television, the professional-

zation of the modern drama scene was made possible thanks to the decisive contribution of companies formed by actresses, combined with the presence of foreign directors. Coming from very area of Brazil's lower social classes, these actresses infused modes, dictions, corporeality, expressivity, humour and signals with a social energy that scintillated and reverberated on stage with the geographic and social mobility characteristic of the transformations then taking place in the country's metropolises (Pontes, 2010).

In this manifestation of new viewpoints onto Brazilian society, there was a place for the poor or modest social origin of various actresses to be converted into an expressive substrate to their theatrical activity, as we saw in the career of Cacilda Becker. The renown, the delayed cultural education, the access to social circles otherwise unthinkable to someone from their social background, the acquisition of a series of material and symbolic goods and, above all, the rubberstamping of the biggest actress of the period were essential to balancing the public image of the actress with her own self-image. But not to the obliteration of the most painful and tumultuous feelings deriving from the deep experience of poverty, which contained buried within a distinct form of bodily hexis exhibited by the socially excluded.

## EPILOGUE

Situated in distinct contexts, the trajectories of Chiquinha Gonzaga and Cacilda Becker interwove with the history of the cities in which they lived and performed. Rio de Janeiro at the end of the nineteenth century, at once the political and cultural centre of the young Republic, discovered in theatre the symbolic form most able to represent the delights and contradictions of Brazil's modernization. A kind of good-humoured chronicle of everyday Rio de Janeiro, the revues of the year shuffled the hierarchies existing in the theatrical arts, transversally affecting the population's sensibility and imagination. Dramatic, farcical, comic and invariably musical, the theatre was as porous as the city that it sought to present to the public every night.

Chiquinha Gonzaga made this theatre her profession. Always dressed soberly to avoid a pronounced femininity, she coordinated the aspects of her personal presentation with the male expectations of her social circle as though she wished to become indistinct from her colleagues. The erasure of the marks of gender took as their substrate a body whose generational distance separated her from most of her peers. It was also anchored in the effects of the fame achieved by Chiquinha over her career. Knowing the piano "inside and out" (Pinto, 2009: 42), she occupied a place in the division of musical labour associated with the image of someone whose technical mastery of her art is sufficient to conduct an orchestra alone.

Sustained by the text, grounded in the disciplined work of the cast and the overview of the director, the modern theatre in São Paulo translated into a

theatrical form the institutional apparatus that enabled, in the same transformative urban fabric, the creation and interpenetration of the new languages blossoming in the arts, sociology and dramaturgy (Arruda, 2001).

At the intersection of these injunctions, Cacilda Becker was raised to the position of the actress who most clearly personified the challenges of the modern theatre produced in the city. With the help of the mechanism of deception and the theatrical devices blended by the actor's flexibility, she embodied, in the words of Gilda de Mello e Souza (2014: 80), "the *comédiennne*, as described by Jouvett, that is, the artist who instead of imposing her real kind on a supposed character, divested herself of her own personality every day in order to transform into the character that she embodied." Fully mastering the conventions of the modern theatre show learnt from the foreign directors, she infused her characters with renewed verisimilitude and truth, with that electrifying voltage – those "bundles of nerves" – which the public knew how to recognize when enraptured by her performance on the stage, although only some, like Decio de Almeida Prado, were capable of translating this image into words with such precision.

Symmetrical and inverse, the trajectories of Chiquinha and Cacilda were inscribed in the cities in which they made their names and won over their audiences. While the rich and well-born girl embarked on her professional life from desire and need, the poor uneducated girl became established in the theatre through a dramaturgy of recognized literary value. An experienced pianist and tireless composer, Chiquinha crowned the popular musical repertoire on the stages of Praça Tiradentes and occupied the 'male' pole in the symbolic hierarchy, establishing herself as the first Brazilian female conductor. An actress with many resources, Cacilda lent her "shining body" to the work of reconvertng alien experiences and gained renowned as the actress with the greatest power of persuasion in a city in a process of rapid metropolitization.

Received on 31/10/2016 | Revised on 16/04/2017 | Approved on 25/08/2017

**Heloisa Pontes** is full professor of the Department of Anthropology of UNICAMP and a CNPq research productivity award holder. She is the author of *Intérpretes da metrópole* (2010, ANPOCS prize for best scientific work awarded in 2011), *Destinos mistos* (1998, ANPOCS/CNPq prize for best scientific work awarded in 2000), *Cultura e sociedade: Brasil e Argentina* (co-edited with Sergio Miceli, 2014), *Intérpretes de la metrópoli. Historia social y relaciones de género en el teatro y en el campo intelectual en San Pablo, 1940-1968* (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2016) and diverse articles published in books and scientific journals.

**Rafael Nascimento** is a doctoral student in social anthropology at UNICAMP, where he also completed his master's degree with the dissertation *A composição de uma pioneira. De Francisca a Chiquinha*. He is currently developing research on Brazilian and American popular music, funded by the São Paulo State Research Support Foundation (FAPESP). He is a researcher linked to the Atelier of Symbolic Production and Anthropology (APSA) and the Pagu Gender Studies Nucleus (both at UNICAMP) and a member of the Editorial Committee of *Proa – Revista de Antropologia e Arte*. He has recently published "Catete em ré menor: tensões da música na Primeira República" (2017).

## NOTES

- 1 Without losing sight of the distinction between the ‘first’ actresses, in general bosses of their companies, and the other performers, the historian Anne Martin-Fugier (2001) shows that, in France, over the course of the nineteenth century, an important change occurred to the social status and work conditions of these women. An eloquent example in this respect is given by the diverse treatment that they received on being buried. While in 1730, the Church refused to grant a Christian burial to the tragic actress Adrienne Lecouvreur, in 1923 Sarah Bernhardt was buried in the Panthéon, almost like a Head of State, such was the volume of people who went to bid farewell to her (more than 30,000 people according to the newspapers of the time) and the personalities present at the funeral ceremony.
- 2 For an analysis of the social construction of female musical vocations, see the excellent work of Dalila Vasconcellos de Carvalho (2012).
- 3 Azevedo, 1899a.
- 4 The excerpt from the play in question refers to the moment when Dr. Rank, a friend of the Helmers, announced, with an easy air, that he would die in a question of weeks from spinal tuberculosis.
- 5 According to the overview made in the editorial of *Revisita Theatral*, in 1895, the city of Rio de Janeiro possessed nine theatres: “S. Pedro and Lyrico, vast and well-suited to grand opera,” as well as the PhenixDramatica, Eden-Theatro, Teatro Sant’Anna, Teatro Lucinda, Teatro Apollo, Teatro de Variedades and Recreio Dramático.
- 6 Data from the second census conducted in Brazil. Available at <<http://seculoxx.ibge.gov.br/populacionais-sociais-politicas-e-culturais/busca-por-temas/educacao>>.
- 7 For a more in-depth analysis of Arthur Azevedo’s career in relation to the city of Rio de Janeiro, see Siciliano (2014).
- 8 Written as a commission, *O Rio de Janeiro de 1877* was the first review by Arthur Azevedo. In it we can perceive the structure that would consecrate the genre over the 1880s and 1890s. The abundance of characters with suggestive names – like ‘Politics,’ ‘Rumour,’ ‘City Improvements’ – combined with a fragmented comic narrative alluding to everyday life in the city.

- 9 In his view, “in drama or comedy, our artists generally have no idea of the characters or the feelings that they are playing. What drives away the spectator is not the play itself, but the way in which it is stage and acted” (Azevedo, 1894).
- 10 The transition from a social structure based on the ‘precapitalist’ mechanisms of the old regime for a properly capitalist structure, generating the psychocultural developments of the ‘bourgeois era’ in Brazil, dates from the 1930s with the breaking of the oligarchical pact and the alliance between an incipient bourgeoisie and the State (Fernandes, 2005: 241).
- 11 The first of them was Jacinto Ribeiro do Amaral, with whom she married in 1863, at the age of 16, and had three children: João Gualberto, Hilário and Maria. In 1870, already living with João Batista de Carvalho, she decided to move to the interior of the state. After the birth of Alice, Chiquinha returned to the capital, leaving behind her new partner and their recently-born daughter.
- 12 In an article published on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1897 for the newspaper *A Notícia*, the playwright Arthur Azevedo counted 1,896 shows in the city of Rio de Janeiro, 59.13% of them corresponding to the presentation of revues of the year, operettas, magic shows and zarzuelas.
- 13 Although regions like Avenida Rio Branco and Praça Tiradentes maintained “a central position in the panorama of mass entertainment in the federal capital in the 1920s, [they] were far from monopolizing it” (Gomes, 2004: 58). Indeed, the 1920s saw the multiplication of spaces dedicated to offering the public a wide variety of entertainment at different prices, dominated by the city centre but also extending to the districts of São Cristóvão, Botafogo, Méier, Jardim Botânico and Tijuca.
- 14 *Revista da Semana*, 1902.
- 15 *A arte do silêncio*, 1920.
- 16 *A Noite*, 1913a.
- 17 For a more comprehensive view of the transformations produced in São Paulo theatre during the period, see Guzik (1986), Mattos (2002), Arruda (2001) and Pontes (2010).

- 18 Decio de Almeida Prado's striking assertion should be read with a degree of caution. On one hand, because the traditional companies and genres, though challenged by the presence of the amateurs and the TBC, "remained active and successful at the box office" – in the words of the anonymous reviewers of our article, whom we thank for the careful reading and precise observations. On the other hand, because of the revision of this evaluation made by the recent literature on the history of Brazilian theatre. On this point, see Iná Camargo Costa (1998) and Tânia Brandão (2014).
- 19 Women would only begin to venture in this domain at the end of the 1960s (Vincenzo, 1992; Pontes, 2016).
- 20 Apprehension of the relations between the city, intellectual life, the university and theatre, through the lens of the social history of culture, presumes special attention to the marks of social experience and their re-translation into specific symbolic forms, as demonstrated by Schorske (1998) and Auerbach (2007).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A arte do silêncio. (1920). *Careta*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 604. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/083712/22702>>. Accessed on 16/08/2017.
- A Noite. (1913a). Da Platea. Façam o Theatro Nacional. Segunda-feira, 6 de outubro, p. 4. Rio de Janeiro. Available at <[http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/348970\\_01/3267](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/348970_01/3267)>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- A Noite. (1913b). Da Platea. Por que não se faz o Theatro Nacional. Segunda-feira, 26 de maio, p. 4. Rio de Janeiro. Available at <[http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/348970\\_01/2635](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/348970_01/2635)>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- Arruda, Maria Arminda do Nascimento. (2001). *Metrópole e cultura: São Paulo meio de século*. Bauru: Edusc.
- Auerbach, Erich. (2007). *Ensaio de literatura ocidental*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades/Ed. 34.
- Azevedo, Arthur. (1899a). O Theatro. A *Notícia*, Rio de Janeiro, 8-9 de junho, p. 2. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/830380/5445>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.



- Azevedo, Arthur. (1899b). Palcos e salas. *A Notícia*, Rio de Janeiro, 29-30 de maio, p. 3. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/830380/5410>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- Azevedo, Arthur. (1897). O Theatro. *A Notícia*, Rio de Janeiro, 19-20 de agosto, p. 2. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/830380/3111>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- Azevedo, Arthur. (1895). O Theatro. *A Notícia*, Rio de Janeiro.
- Azevedo, Arthur. (1894). O Theatro. *A Notícia*, Rio de Janeiro, 6-7 de dezembro, p. 1. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/830380/301>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- Barbosa, Rui. (1920). Rui Barbosa e o cinema. *Careta*. Rio de Janeiro, n. 616.
- Becker, Cacilda. Cacilda por ela mesma. (1995). In: Vargas, Maria Tereza e Fernandes, Nanci (eds.). *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1992). *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil.
- Brandão, Tânia. (2014). As companhias teatrais modernas. In: Faria, João Roberto & Guinsburg, Jacob (eds.). *História do teatro brasileiro*. São Paulo: Edições Sesc/Perspectiva, p. 80-96 (v. 2).
- Carvalho, Bruno. (2013). *Porous city. A cultural history of Rio de Janeiro*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Carvalho, Dalila Vasconcellos. (2012). *O gênero da música: a construção social da vocação*. São Paulo: Alameda.
- Carvalho, José Murilo. (1998). *A formação das almas: o imaginário da República no Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Carvalho, Maria Alice Rezende. (2016). Rio de Janeiro. Crepúsculo de Ouvidor. In: Gorelik, Adrián & Peixoto, Fernanda Arêas (eds.). *Ciudades sudamericanas como arenas culturales*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, p. 366-383.
- Cesar, Rafael Nascimento. (2015a). *A composição de uma pioneira. De Francisca a Chiquinha*. Master's Dissertation. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social/ Unicamp.
- Cesar, Rafael Nascimento. (2015b). O amante adotado: Chiquinha e Joãozinho, composição além da música. *Cadernos Pagu*, 45, p. 341-365.

Charle, Christophe. (2012). *A gênese da sociedade do espetáculo: teatro em Paris, Berlim, Londres e Viena*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Costa, Iná Camargo. (1998). *Sinta o drama*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Della Costa, Maria. (1984). Entrevista concedida ao jornal *A Tribuna de Santos*.

Diniz, Edinha. (2009). *Chiquinha Gonzaga: uma história de vida*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar/IMS.

Dória, Gustavo. (1975). Depoimento. *Dionysos*, Rio de Janeiro, 22 (issue dedicated to Os Comediantes).

Fernandes, Florestan. (2005) [1975]. *A revolução burguesa no Brasil: ensaio de interpretação sociológica*. São Paulo: Globo.

Gazeta de Notícias. (1885). Theatros e... Rio de Janeiro, 18 de janeiro, p. 2. Available at <[http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/103730\\_02/8118](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/103730_02/8118)>. Accessed 16/08/2017.

Gomes, Tiago de Melo. (2004). *Um espelho no palco: identidades sociais e massificação da cultura no teatro de revista dos anos 1920*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp.

Guzik, Alberto. (1986). *TBC: crônica de um sonho*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Jacobi, Ruggero. (1995). Entrevista. In: Vargas, Maria Thereza & Fernandes, Nanci. *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, p. 133-142.

Jouvet, Louis. (1958). *Réflexions du comédien*. Paris: Librairie Théâtrale.

Jouvet, Louis. (1954). *Le comédien désincarné*. Paris: Flammarion.

Magaldi, Sábato. (2002). Consciência privilegiada do teatro. In: Prado, Decio de Almeida. *Apresentação do teatro moderno brasileiro: crítica teatral de 1947-1955*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, p. ix-xv.

Magaldi, Sábato. (1995). À maneira de prefácio e depoimento. In: Vargas, Maria Thereza & Fernandes, Nanci (eds.). *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, p. 1-20.

Martin-Fugier Anne. (2001). *Comédienne: de Mlle Mars à Sarah Bernhardt*. Paris: Seuil.

- Mattos, David José Lessa. (2002). *O espetáculo da cultura paulista: teatro e TV em São Paulo, 1940-1950*. São Paulo: Códex.
- Mello e Souza, Gilda. (2014). *A palavra afiada*. In: Galvão, Walnice Nogueira (ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Ouro sobre Azul.
- Mello e Souza, Gilda. (1980). *Teatro ao sul*. In: *Exercícios de leitura*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades, p. 109-116.
- Mencarelli, Fernando. (1999). *Cena aberta: a absolvição de um bilontra e o teatro de revista de Arthur Azevedo*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp.
- Miceli, Sergio & Pontes, Heloisa (2014). Prólogo. In: Miceli, Sergio e Pontes, Heloísa (eds.). *Cultura e sociedade: Brasil e Argentina*. São Paulo: Edusp.
- Mesquita, Alfredo. (1995). *De como vim a conhecer Cacilda Becker e o que se seguiu*. In: Vargas, Maria Thereza & Fernandes, Nanci (eds.). *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, p. 81-87.
- Neves, Larissa & Levin, Orna. (2008). *O Teatro: crônicas de Arthur Azevedo*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp.
- O Mequetrefe*. (1885). Os theatros. Rio de Janeiro, 20 de janeiro, p. 7. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/709670/2316>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.
- Pinto, Alexandre Gonçalves. (2009) [1936]. *O choro: reminiscências dos chorões antigos*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte.
- Pontes, Heloisa. (2016). San Pablo. La ciudad em escena: teatro y culturas urbanas disidentes. In: Gorelik, Adrián & Peixoto, Fernanda Arêas (eds.). *Ciudades sudamericanas como arenas culturales*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, p. 366-383.
- Pontes, Heloisa. (2010). *Intérpretes da metrópole. História social e relações de gênero no teatro e no campo intelectual, 1940-68*. São Paulo: Edusp/Fapesp.
- Pontes, Heloisa. (1998). *Destinos mistos: os críticos do Grupo Clima em São Paulo, 1940-68*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Prado, Decio de Almeida. (1998). *Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia revê os seus 50 anos. O Estado de S. Paulo*.
- Prado, Decio de Almeida. (1993). *Peças, pessoas, personagens*.

gens: o teatro brasileiro de Procópio Ferreira a Cacilda Becker. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Prado, Decio de Almeida. (1969). *Adeus a Cacilda*. O Estado de S. Paulo.

Prado, Luis André. (2002). *Cacilda Becker: fúria santa*. São Paulo: Geração Editorial.

*Revista da Semana*. (1902). Os theatros. Rio de Janeiro, n. 120, 31 de agosto, p. 286. Available at <[http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/025909\\_01/1291](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/025909_01/1291)>. Accessed 16/08/2017.

*Revista Theatral*. (1895). Capital Federal, anno II, n. 42, 4 de maio, p. 1. Available at <<http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/758086/272>>. Accessed 16/08/2017.

Saliba, Elias Tomé. (2002). *Raízes do riso*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Schorske, Carl. (1998). Grace and the word: Austria's two cultures and their modern fate. In: *Thinking with history: explorations in the passage to modernism*". Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Siciliano, Tatiana Oliveira. (2014). *O Rio de Janeiro de Artur Azevedo: cenas de um teatro urbano*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X/Faperj.

Szondi, Peter. (2001). *Teoria do drama moderno (1880-1950)*. São Paulo: Cosac & Naify.

Vargas, Maria Thereza & Fernandes, Nanci (eds.). (1995). *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Vicenzo, Elza Cunha. (1992). *Um teatro da mulher: dramaturgia feminina no palco brasileiro contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Wisnik, José Miguel. (1983). Getúlio da Paixão Cearense (Villa-Lobos e o Estado Novo). In: Squeff, Enio & Wisnik, José Miguel (eds.). *Música. O nacional e o popular*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Ziembinski, Zbignew. (1995). Depoimento. In: Vargas, Maria Thereza & Fernandes, Nanci (eds.). *Uma atriz: Cacilda Becker*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

### **CIDADES, PALCOS E PÚBLICOS: RIO DE JANEIRO E SÃO PAULO EM DOIS ATOS**

#### **Palavras-chave**

Cena teatral;  
cena teatral no Rio de Janeiro;  
cena teatral em São Paulo;  
palcos e público;  
relações de gênero.

#### **Resumo**

O artigo analisa a cena teatral carioca e paulista em dois momentos significativos da história cultural e urbana dessas cidades. O primeiro remonta ao final do século XIX e às décadas iniciais do XX, quando o teatro serviu à reatradução simbólica das hierarquias que estruturaram a vida social da *belle époque* carioca. O segundo momento, centrado nos anos 1940 e 1950, acompanha o acerto dos ponteiros da cena teatral paulista com o relógio internacional. A armação comparativa tem aqui caráter de experimento sociológico. De um lado, recuperar o movimento nem sempre linear de absorção e expansão desse fazer artístico em ambientes urbanos tensionados pela aposta na cultura como meio e suporte para a cristalização de conteúdos diversos da modernidade em curso. De outro lado, desvelar as transformações das relações de gênero no teatro, a partir das carreiras de Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935) e Cacilda Becker (1921-1969).

### **CITIES, STAGES AND AUDIENCES: RIO DE JANEIRO AND SAO PAULO IN TWO ACTS**

#### **Keywords**

Theatrical scene;  
theatrical scene in Rio de Janeiro;  
theatrical scene in São Paulo;  
stages and audiences;  
gender relations.

#### **Abstract**

The article analyses the theatrical scene in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo at two significant moments of the cultural and urban history of the two cities. The first traces back to the end of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, when theatre enabled the symbolic translation of the hierarchies structuring social life in Rio de Janeiro's *belle époque*. The second moment, spanning the 1940s and 1950s, follows the process of synchronization between São Paulo's drama scene and the European stages. This comparative approach comprises a sociological experiment. On one hand, it attempts to observe the not always linear movement of absorption and expansion of this art (acting) in urban environments pushed by the investment in culture as a means and substrate for the crystallization of diverse elements of the modernity then evolving. On the other, it attempts to show the transformations of gender relations in the acting milieu by comparing two trajectories: Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935) and Cacilda Becker (1921-1969).