

## What is Anthropophagic University

Anthropophagic<sup>1</sup> University is the transmission of knowledge practiced by Oficina Theatre, a company that dates back to 1958, based in the neighborhood of Bixiga, in the central outskirts of São Paulo. Directed by an anthropophagous himself – Zé Celso Martinez Correa –, its headquarters are the “thea(c)tre”, and its shows, in many arts and languages, are power plants of staging, acting together to create plays that through their actions, situations and characters work as interpretation channels of the present.

Inspired by a former neighbor from Bixiga – the great modernist, post-modernist and anthropophagous poet, Oswald de Andrade –, the University aims at its highest purpose: not just the shaping of actors for theater, cinema or TV, but also of actors in society, in conflict areas, hazardous zones, educated by the experience of research and approach of taboos, which hinder our democratic evolution towards freedom. The process incorporates teaching children and adults through artistic, philosophical and scientific experiences, exploring taboos that are avoided by the awful education, which prevails today.

The rediscovery of Anthropophagy, with the play “O Rei da Vela”, in 1957, spilled over into an artistic movement, in music as well as in literature, visual arts and filmmaking: the *tropicália* – a decolonizing movement by means of devouring.

Stable in their repertoire, companies of either theatre or dance already carry in their genes educational features *vis-à-vis* the culture that they generate, for in existing for decades, it becomes vital to refresh their artistic bodies and personnel. The transmission of knowledge is, therefore, a fundamental condition to an existence that stays constantly renewed.

A theatre that transforms itself as it is self discovered requires constant investigating and training of another theatrical mentality, freed from bondage of the bourgeois taste – or even of the smaller bourgeoisie – or the people; in short, freed of any sort of social stratification and theatrical genre. The theatre should be of interest to all, beyond social, ethnic, age group, religious masks. It should interest the indians, the unemployed, the employees, children, elders, adults, the educated, the uneducated, scholars, the pop and the tacky...

The theatre is precisely the point of convergence of the hand-in-hand of humanity, paradoxically stripped of its costumes in The Society of the Spectacle, plugged-in by an Eros of “in me” in the crowd, by the hunger and desire of being together, beyond the barriers of the good old Theatre (with capital T) of social differences. Being together is the ambition of a collective force whose remote origins lie in the Orgy. In the Mysteries of Eleusis, in Greece.

A theatre – which aims not at being a mirror of society, but rather a creative free-agent, alongside that same society, in the creation of another

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<sup>1</sup> Anthropophagy is a Brazilian artistic movement based on the concept created by some artists like Oswald de Andrade in the modernism period. They believed Brazilians had a sense of inferiority in culture, basically because everything produced in the country was a reproduction of Europe's references of culture. The idea of anthropophagy is related to a metaphorical cannibalism through which a new man would arise devouring the ideas of the world to return with new ones, mixing conceptions.

civilization – must investigate and, at the same time, be a source of multiple studies.

The traditional acting schools were influenced by the theatre of “genre”, and believed solely in the theatre of the Northern Hemisphere. We’ve been told that Brazilian theatre began with the catechizing of the Indians by Father Anchieta. It’s the opposite. The Indians devoured the priests and created another culture. The Indians, the Africans, they already had a theatre connected to life, to witchcraft, to hunting, to fishing, to harvesting; Anchieta brought in the “brainwashing” theatre, the educator, settler theatre, which was very strong in Europe. But here it had to be eaten or we would die as a civilization.

And those schools reproduced, satirized, de-popularized the actor’s body, which became cerebral, stiff, square. In the 20th century, the Russian theatre began to meddle in the portraying, depicting, declaimed theatre, and attached itself to the animism of Slavic culture. It was the discovery of the unconscious actor, the overthrow of the fourth wall by the energy that filled the entire room, much like Cacilda Becker did by not restricting herself to the stage.

If theatre is poetics, then the investigation – the experience of art work of human power, beyond the human, before the coagulated, dead structure, and its covered, masked characters – must face the task of creating a civilization that makes way to all of human energy, created and creative.

All that is wasted by the exclusion of systems invented by denying the power of present life – the taboo –, becomes the main topic of investigation of the theatre.

The theatrical education must be universal in the Renaissance meaning of the word, not in the mercantile and career-oriented one. A University as a living and free nucleus that unites multiple understandings, so as to allow the theatre to be, in itself, a university of life.

We must seize all popular arts – their secrets, religions, gestures, *sambas*, *maracatus*, swagger, magic, struggles –, everything that makes way, in our bodies, to energies that lead us towards a theatre increasingly “dancing”, more rhythmic, musical, interfering in the energy around us and that is able to transmute the crowds.

We must also learn to work with every tactile technology, for theatre is tactile and we live in a society driven by touch, by dactyls. The virtual culture is digital, finger-based, of energy transmitting fire from our fingertips, fire which comes from our bodies, and we must learn what no school teaches us – unless that of a life lived in art, of life’s own teachings, of the delicate de-flouring, in the common work of assembling, of living a human experience, of a great collective work aimed at the expression of a metaphor that is full of life and which transport us from one vital stage to another, from a society to another, from a civilization to another. That is achieved by combining all ages, all technologies, all religions, all witchcraft and no CHURCH.

A school of percussion, music, body arts, meditation, all turned towards a theatre that succeeds at being the reverse of The Society of the Spectacle. Its double and its reverse. There must be a place where university and scientific thought may freely cross paths with body thought, with emotional, cardiac, erotic, intuitive reason and its forms. The education brought on by the perversion of the arts is much faster: it travels at the speed of sound and love.