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A Brief Genealogy of Theatre and Education in Brazil: theatre for children

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ABSTRACT – A Brief Genealogy of Theatre and Education in Brazil: the theatre for children – This article proposes a historical-political view on the encounter between theatre and education, considering theatre for children as its practical operator. Following an analytical effort inspired by Foucauldian theorization, the study focuses on the discourses on the topic in Brazil from the beginning to the middle of the 20th century, making use of two unusual sources in theatre historiography: the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* and the scientific journal *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*. By pointing out the discursive bond between theatre practices and the ideas of the *Escola Nova* movement, the study assigns to theatre for children and school theatre a prominent role among the pedagogizing strategies of population government.

Keywords: **Theatre for Children. School Theatre. Theatre Pedagogy. Governmentality. Childhood.**

RÉSUMÉ – Une Brève Généalogie du Théâtre et Éducation au Brésil: le théâtre pour les enfants – Le présent article propose une vision historique-politique sur la rencontre entre le théâtre et l'éducation, considérant le théâtre pour les enfants comme son opérateur pratique. En raison d'un effort analytique inspiré pour la théorisation foucauldienne, l'étude analyse le discours sur le thème au Brésil depuis le début jusqu'au milieu du XX siècle, en utilisant deux sources non habituelles de l'historiographie théâtrale: le journal *Correio da Manhã* et la *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*. En mettant en évidence le lien discursif des pratiques théâtrales avec les idées du mouvement *Escola Nova*, l'étude attribue au théâtre pour les enfants et au théâtre scolaire une rôle prépondérante parmi les stratégies pédagogiques de gouvernement de la population.

Mots-clés: **Théâtre pour les Enfants. Théâtre Scolaire. Pédagogie Théâtrale. Gouvernamentalité. Enfance.**

RESUMO – Uma Breve Genealogia do Teatro e Educação no Brasil: o teatro para crianças – O presente artigo propõe uma mirada histórico-política sobre o encontro entre teatro e educação, tendo o teatro para crianças como seu operador prático. A reboque de um esforço analítico inspirado na teorização foucaultiana, o estudo versa sobre o discurso em torno da temática no Brasil desde o início até meados do século XX, valendo-se de duas fontes não usuais na historiografia teatral: o jornal *Correio da Manhã* e a *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*. Ao evidenciar o atrelamento discursivo das práticas teatrais ao ideário da *Escola Nova*, o estudo atribui aos teatros infantil e escolar um lugar de destaque entre as estratégias pedagogizantes de governo populacional.

Palavras-chave: **Teatro Infantil. Teatro Escolar. Pedagogia do Teatro. Governamentalidade. Infância.**



Introduction

The present study is aimed to conduct a historical-political examination of theatrical practices dedicated to children concerning its association with education, be it formal or non-formal. The research is theoretically and methodologically inspired by Foucauldian theory, in particular, the notion of governmentality. Following this view, we organize the examination around the hypothesis that the relationship between theatre and education, articulated mainly by the advent of theatre for children, would have gradually aligned itself to the initiatives of the artistic-pedagogical population government, especially those connected to the ideals of the *Escola Nova* movement.

More specifically, the study makes use of the discursive material offered by the Rio de Janeiro's newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, published in the beginning of the century, as well as texts from the scientific journal *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, founded in 1944. The first source consists of a collection of records of the daily life in the country's capital at the time, which was the heart of initial practices of the theatre-education dyad. The second source is a broad compendium of debates about educational practices that took place throughout the period of interest of the present study, including those devoted to theatre and education in the argumentative orientation of *Escola Nova*.

In light of such discursive materiality, the historical view proposed is organized from unconventional documents in relation to theatrical historiography *stricto sensu*. They are composed by uncommon characters and outsiders in relation to the development of historical facts recognized as founding components of the study field.

Similarly, the selection of such sources responds to the interest of framing the issue in terms of two distinct time periods. *Correio da Manhã* contributed predominantly to the analysis of the period previous to the landmark of theatre for children. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* inventoried discussions on the period following this landmark, including the repercussions of the such event within the educational scope and, in particular, its accordance to the ideas of *Escola Nova*.



In order to support the plausibility of the hypothesis that, from the historical point of view, an intimate implication was established between theatrical and educational practices, it became imperative to apply a genealogical perspective to interpret the documents.

The Foucaultian genealogy, tributary from the Nietzschean thought, proposes to construct a writing of history attentive to the external and the accidental, refraining from searching for an essential origin of certain objects (Castro, 2016). Instead, it is about making an inventory of the multifaceted origins of certain socially shared problems around a specific practice, taking into account the changing predictive-subjection games in that context. Thus, it is about “showing that any conception that is judged as eternal has a history, a series of transformations, and that its origins have nothing sublime” (Veyne, 2008, p. 116).

By means of the genealogical option, it is possible to look in a more inquiring and less reverent way about the discursive contests of the past, whose echoes do not cease to intercept us in the present, either in the form of apparent consensuses, or in the form of obstinate controversies. Hence the theoretical premise of discourse should be taken as

[...] as a series of events, of establishing and describing the relations that these events, which we can call *discursive events* maintain with other events that belong to the economic system or the political field or to institutions (Foucault, 2006, p. 256).

That said, the present study focuses on describing and analyzing the rationality that goes side by side with the discursive games regarding the association between theatre and education in Brazil from the early to the mid-1900s. This time period covers the historical period between the systematization of theatrical practices directed at children and the interplay between them and the *Escola Nova* movement, which was responsible, as it will be described next, for the reinvention of theatrical making within school walls and far beyond them.

The Unstable Emergency of Theatre for Children

It is necessary to call the attention of authorities, schools, and the general public to the fact that theatre advances language competency, the most important means of communication. It also has immense social power



through its most critical characteristic of cooperation. And the person who engages in it is constantly cultivating their critical appreciation, their perceptions of color and sound, they will learn how to achieve a better balance between their body and their soul, breaking down all forms of inhibition and fear in the face of society (Magno, 1944, p. 10).

On the November 14, 1944, the Brazilian ambassador and actor Paschoal Carlos Magno appealed to the public through the newspaper *O Globo*, stating that Brazilians should unite in favor of the creation of theatrical performances for children performed by adults. His rationale was based on the unavoidable need for educating children, fostering their interest in art, awakening their appreciation for studying, evoking courage and patriotism, practicing chivalry, and finally, contributing to everything that could develop the physical, moral, and spiritual being of the Brazilian of tomorrow. As a great enthusiast of causes promoting the national education and culture, Magno spared no effort to give way to his educational and artistic ideals from his circle of friends and political influences.

The ambassador's article publicized *Globo Comunicações* support for his newest project, *Teatro do Gibi*. The project proposed various activities, such as circus, cinema, orchestra, puppetry, student plays, etc., to be brought to distant neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. Ultimately, under the responsibility of Iolanda Fagundes, it became a traveling puppet theatre that performed in squares, hospitals, orphanages, and schools.

Aside from the theatrical practices developed by the Jesuits in Colonial Brazil to convert indigenous peoples, liable to debate among historians when defined as theatre, the first theatrical appearances linked to educating children came about during the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries. They took the form of short plays performed by and for children, initiatives that took place in schools to celebrate civic dates, and in households to celebrate birthdays. The authors of these plays assigned to them a didactic-pedagogical feature and, for this reason, they were categorized as school theatre (Sandroni, 1995).

Among the prominent authors of this movement, it can be included: Coelho Netto and his nationalist writing; Olavo Bilac and his didactic work; Carlos Góis and his critique to illiteracy in Brazil; Joracy Camargo

and Henry Pongetti, who introduce instructions on how to create a theatre performance; and Eustóquio Vanderley with his alternative writings in magazines and supplements.

In *Aspectos do teatro infantil* [Features of theatre for children] (1969), a major reference for the history of Brazilian theatre for children, Lúcia Benedetti, also author of *O Casaco Encantado* [The Enchanted Coat] – a play of 1948 considered as a landmark of the theatre specific for children in Brazil – amassed the background of such a practice, recovering predominantly from the late 19th to the early 20th century.

An enthusiast of the idea of theatre as a tool for education, Benedetti (1969, p. 22), urged: “no school should neglect this wonderful method of education”. The author indicates some reasons for that: theatre would have the magical power of cultivating social harmony of groups, refining speaking skills, fostering self-critique through studying and embodying different characters, and developing care for actual matters and their features (such as colors and light) through the creation of sets and costumes, etc.

More than half a century before, the June 12, 1905 issue of Rio de Janeiro’s newspaper, *Correio da Manhã*, featured on page 3 a review of a book aimed to the children: *Theatro Infantil*, [Theatre for children] by Olavo Bilac and Coelho Netto (1905). The reviewer affirmed that the book had the virtue of enabling children to have fun in an intelligent way; through monologues and comedies, the author bestowed practical advice about life. He also pointed out that the work would powerfully influence Brazilian children to take a break from the mainstream French comedies at the time.

Games played at home by children, withholding certain theatrical aspects, were the focus of Figueiredo Pimentel, who published *Theatrinho Infantil* [Little Theatre for Children] in 1899. The volume is presented as a collection of monologues, dialogues, comic sketches, dramas, comedies, and operettas (in prose and verse), which, without sceneries, costumes and makeup, were appropriate to be performed by children of both sexes.

Carlos Góis, a Law graduate who worked as an attorney and later as a Portuguese teacher, produced works on the value of literacy and children’s autonomy. In his vast work, there are two references focused on the

relationship between theatre and school: *Teatro Cívico Escolar* [Civic School Theatre] (1915) and *Teatro das Crianças* [Children's Theatre] (1950).

According to Benedetti, in *Teatro Cívico Escolar* [Civic School Theatre], Carlos Góis brought to the scene the propaganda against illiteracy, including the women's position and the appreciation of their studies. In this work, however, the author points out that even though the plays were intended for school presentations, the texts did not necessarily consist of theatre made specifically for children.

Henry Pongetti and Joracy Camargo's book, *Teatro da Criança* [Child's Theatre], was released in 1938. Besides gathering 18 stories that, according to their authors, consisted of short youth comedies for use in schools, clubs, associations, and households, the work is also accompanied by an instruction manual on how to prepare a performance. One of its initial consideration points out that any performance could occur anywhere by simply adapting to the ideal measurements, aiming at a suitable scenic space, etc.

On December 9, 1938, *Correio da Manhã* published a review of Pongetti and Camargo's book. It observed that this work did not concern itself with didactics, but was characterized by a smart moral background, teaching in a fun way the most important lessons in life. The article also goes on to praise the two authors for rendering an invaluable service for shaping the character of our children as future theatre spectators and artists. In addition, the reviewer points out that the book would aid school principals and teachers in putting on performances at end-of-year celebrations by having a list of plays and instructions on how to produce them.

When such authors are brought back, a primary question arises for the current study: did such productions contribute to the institutionalization of theatre for children or school theatre? Or did it contribute to both? At that time, the two were undistinguishable, since the separation of theatre for children and school theatre had not yet taken place. They would only be differentiated from 1948 on, when theatre for children was officially created and when one of its contemporary features became cherished: spectacles performed by professional adult artists for children. Thus, it seems that out-



of-school theatre for children and in-school theatre for children are two sides of the same coin, as will be argued ahead.

From *O Casaco Encantado*, in 1948, strategic distinctions were established between theatre for children and school theatre practices, mainly by artists. Among these distinctions was the appreciation of theatre for children as an art form, rather than a mere instrument of didactic-pedagogic transmission. The school theatre, on the other hand, would continue to take over this function.

When I say that the school theatre cannot be without a moral background, I do not mean that the same rules apply to the other theatre for children, the art performance. What happens is that there are more resources in the art theatre, so the lesson can be delivered indirectly, and there is space for imagination and the final conclusion. But in the school theatre, where everything is standardized, the lesson necessarily needs to be presented almost directly (Benedetti, 1969, p. 101-102).

Although Paschoal Carlos Magno's *Teatro do Gibi* had adults manipulating puppets, the direct performance was not of adults performing for children. For Fernando Lomardo (1994), there was no concern for developing dramaturgy specially for children before the second half of the 1940s. *O Casaco Encantado* was written, directed and performed by adults, but its topic, dramatic structure, language, and styles of performance were directed towards a children's audience.

At page 13 of the October 16, 1948 edition of *Correio da Manhã*, it can be read among its headlines: "Tonight, at half past midnight, at the *Ginástico*, the *avant-première* of *O Casaco Encantado* – For the first time in Brazil, theatre of adult actors for children".

In *Aspectos do Teatro Infantil*, a work dedicated to discussing theatre for children of that time, Benedetti (1969, p. 103) tells how the staging of the performance took place:

In the summer of 1948, an Austrian company doing theatre for children came to Rio de Janeiro. The play was 'Juca e Chico' and caused great curiosity. An old businessman from Rio de Janeiro, Francisco Pepe, attended to the performance and was inspired to begin making theatre for children. He called a writer to produce a text for him in thirty days. The writer is the same who is here typing these lines. Her experience in theatre is vast, although as a spectator. In her days at school, way back when, she had

performed Carlos Góis' work. Nothing further. The old and passionate businessman thought it to be more than enough. "Go watch 'Juca e Chico', the play that is in the theatre now, and create something within that genre." I went to watch 'Juca e Chico'.

According to the author, *Juca e Chico* was created by actors who were war refugees. They could not speak a word of Portuguese and tried to solve staging problems using body expressions, sounds, and pantomime. The few words spoken in Portuguese were memorized by heart without the actors knowing the language. According to the actress and critic Luiza Barreto Leite, in her article published on January 9, 1949 in *Correio da Manhã*, this play inaugurated Geysa Boscoli's theatre. Boscoli took advantage of the European company's tour in Rio de Janeiro to achieve artistic success and, above all, financial gains.

Looking back on her time as an elementary school teacher, Benedetti realized that dynamic dialogues and humor were the fundamental elements within the text that she needed to draft.

After about fifteen days, I called the businessman. "Already?" – he asked with surprise. "Already? What's it called?" "*O Casaco Encantado*". 'I like the title. I'll get back to you later'. Time passed, and the businessman never got back to me [...]. But it turns out that my friend Paschoal Carlos Magno was around. I passed him the issue. In less than 24 hours, Paschoal had taken care of everything, including finding a businessman and a director (Benedetti, 1969, p. 104).

It was through the ambassador Paschoal Carlos Magno that the entrepreneurs Hélio Rodrigues and Carlos Brandt agreed to invest in the unknown venture. The group chosen to perform the piece was *Artistas Unidos*, who went on to promote the novelty as *theatre for children*.

Recently, Lúcia Benedetti, the most artful writer we have, called me: "I wrote a play for children, now what do I do with it?" We arranged lunch at A.B.I., and she brought me a transcript with the three acts typed. I opened it on the bus on my way back to Itamaraty. And in the first scenes I was already laughing. The story of the tailors who sew a coat for a King, get stalked by a sorcerer, and get transformed into a fat frog was really wonderful. Tales like those were similar to the ones my caretaker Sá Virgínia told to me in my childhood. That same night I ran to *Ginástico*. Would Henriete Morineau and the *Artistas Unidos* like to perform this play for children? Henriete Morineau was excited by the idea. 'Give me the play'.



The next morning I woke up with her voice: 'I definitely want to work on *O Casaco Encantado*' (Magno, 1948, p. 13).

According to Benedetti, the premiere was very successful; children and adults lined up to watch the play. *O Casaco Encantado* traveled to several Brazilian states, achieving the same success as it did in Rio de Janeiro. It won several awards, namely, the Prize of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and the Arthur Azevedo Award. The text was translated into English, French and Spanish, and was performed in Argentina, Uruguay, and several other countries. Later on, Benedetti said that she understood the reasons for its great success.

The audience needed theatre for children to be created. It was a part of a divine plan: a work that was truly blessed. *O Casaco Encantado* was destined to be a force that would move a world of talents, of great literary and artistic vocations, to work for children (Benedetti 1969, p. 106).

Having theatre for children been *established*, the novel practice spread across the country, finding professional artists and amateurs interested in it. On January 9, 1949 the *Correio da Manhã* published the article *No Reino do Faz-de-conta* [In the Reign of Make-Believe], by Luiza Barreto Leite (actress, critic and theatre director). She analyzed the year of 1948, defining it as a milestone in the history of Brazilian theatre, due to the *discovery* of theatre for children. Leite does not mince words highlighting theatre for children as a groundbreaking performance *Eldorado* for how entrepreneurs tapped the unexplored goldmine of entertainment for children.

Cláudia de Arruda Campos (1998) claims that after *O Casaco Encantado* artists interested in performing plays for children multiplied. In 1949, three theatre companies from Rio de Janeiro – *Teatro da Carochinha*, *Teatro dos Novos* and *Teatro dos Doze* – began to explore this new frontier. Added to this were the notorious works of the creative couple Tatiana Belinky and Júlio Gouveia, and Maria Clara Machado, who introduced and perpetuated this theatrical practice in the whole country.

In 1955, *Correio da Manhã* announced the existence of *Teatro Permanente da Criança* in Curitiba, Paraná state. It was a clear example of how theatre for children was being disseminated in the country as well as used as an educational tool. The article reported:

The theatre for children has a mission, an educational purpose that is governed by a complex pedagogy. Knowing all the risks and difficulties, few have undertaken the challenge of producing theatre for children. Despite this fact, there are people assuming this responsibility (Correio da Manhã, 27 fev. 1955, 1º Caderno, p. 15).

A few years earlier, in 1952, Cecília Meirelles, Luiza Barreto Leite, Júlio Gouveia and Paschoal Carlos Magno met at the Auditorium of the National Theatre Service to discuss the theatre for children agenda (Correio da Manhã, 3 dez. 1952, p. 11). They came to several conclusions:

1. Drama games – drama activities of spontaneous expression, as well as miming and improvisation – are an important element in the education of young people and children;
2. Drama Games can and should be encouraged in their diverse aspects through the recovery of our folklore;
3. Drama Games are very distinct from Drama Art, as the latter consists of the performing of plays or literary texts before an audience;
4. In order to facilitate the outcomes of this Conference, the practice is divided into three areas, by means of actors or puppets: (1) Theatre for children – performed outside the school environment; (2) School Theatre – performed by children or young people in the school environment for didactic, pedagogical and/or artistic purposes; (3) Youth Theatre – performed for youth outside the school environment;
5. The Ministry of Education should recommend the practice of drama games or theatre exercises to States, Territories, and Municipalities Governments. An initiative could be set up for elementary and high schools, recreation centers or similar institutions. It would foster students' psychic and moral intelligence, stimulate a parallel process to the education program and integrate new generations into social life.

Distinctions between drama games and art, as well as theatre for children and school theatre would be topics of study at the time.

This movement caused a significant shift. It replaced a theatre made by children with a type of theatre for children performed by adults for children and adult audiences. Among the reasons for such is the fact that “children, in general, do not like to watch other children performing”

(Magno, 1944, p. 10). Furthermore, the artistic theatre for children would require “a scenic experience larger than children’s interpretation skills and great physical endurance, as plays were too long for the young artists” (Correio da Manhã, 27 out. 1957, 1º Caderno, p. 12). The child, supposedly unskilled to master the scene’s element of truth, would become the object and target of moralizing didactics by the adults, hence these would transform children into an audience – a protected and aseptic place.

Between Theatre and Education: the advent of *Escola Nova*

In the late 1920s *Correio da Manhã* posted the actions of the *Cruzada em Prol da Escola Nova* [Crusade in the Interests of *Escola Nova*], an association of teachers interested in transforming national education. The meetings aimed to discuss the following questions:

How should schools and classrooms be organized? Which actions to take to reflect progressive thinking? Should the principal grant considerable autonomy to teachers or limit them through rules? If rules are required, what should they be? How should each teacher organize her class? (Correio da Manhã, 12 mar. 1929, p. 11).

Following the beginning of the debate, in 1932 it was released the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova* [Manifest of the *Escola Nova* Pioneers] was released. The document expressed the view of a group of Brazilian intellectuals who believed in transforming society through changes inherent to specific ideas about education. In addition to understanding the inefficient and disorganized nature of the Brazilian education, the document offered solutions for drafting a definitive plan that would solve “the problem of national education” (Correio da Manhã, 1 abr. 1932, p. 7). The proposal consisted of an ideal that school should be public, unified, secular, compulsory and free of cost.

Nunes Mendonça, based on the ideas of Clarapède, Dewey, Durkheim, Decroly, Piaget, and others, compiles an inventory of *Escola Nova*’s precepts. He published it in the newspaper *Correio de Aracaju*, which was later reprinted by *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*. Namely:

Escola Nova is a consequence of new concepts of life assimilated by pedagogy and the progress in biological sciences that have established the

revision of education means. Therefore, it implies new purposes and new means, new goals and new methods, revision of the purposes and renewal of the means. New paths and new purposes, as Fernando Azevedo said (Mendonça, 1956, p. 227).

Children began to be seen under a new perspective, based on biological and psychological precepts, demanding from educators a behavior different from the traditional school's conduct.

Educators should not guide their work from an adult point of view, following their psychology as a mature person. They should educate according to the maturity level of the students, taking into account their current personal experience, abilities, and opportunities. They should adapt to children, to their ways of seeing and feeling, keeping in mind that they 'perform, in their current state, the state of 'action' and that the learner is potentially 'in posse,' (Mendonça, 1956, p. 227-228).

Besides these precepts, Mendonça lists other fundamental features of *Escola Nova*: the effort of educating for the present, assigning to the current conditions the utmost educational effect; the teacher's role would be to provide situations to stimulate thinking and making learning possible; educational activities should incorporate elements of play, which is vital to the child; the true educational value of an activity needs to be connected to critical thinking and foresight of outcomes that are meaningful to the learner; interest would be the springboard of education, a kind of respect to self-discipline that replaces submission to exterior discipline through punishments, deeply condemned by *Escola Nova*'s philosophy.

Through the lens of *Escola Nova*, socializing children would be one of the great goals of education. Mendonça recalls that social orders among children – a process of school life and practice of self-government undertaken by students themselves – would constitute a true socialization training. The school would be organized as a microcosm of society itself.

Self-governance – a vital discipline – would replace the unrestricted authority of the educator, which would only be enacted in extreme circumstances. Through this approach, the *Escola Nova* education liberates the student through inner emancipation. This does not mean that the students would be able to do everything they want, but "[...] the absence of imposed discipline, of artificial programs and strict time schedules; it is equivalent to the autonomy to design, observe, research, debate, compare,

experiment and apply; it is equivalent to the inner acceptance of educational activities” (Mendonça, 1956, p. 232).

Specific to the teaching of theatre, the seventh edition of the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* (v. III, Jan. 1945, p. 127-128) features an article by Bandeira Duarte, *Teatro, colaborador da educação* [Theatre, collaborator of education], published in the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Diário da Noite*. Duarte begins the article by citing Aguayo’s thesis on teaching methods of *Escola Nova*, who argued that one of the most important methods for teaching literature was through drama. In other words, the theatre is an indispensable pedagogical method for teaching language. Duarte highlights that Brazil seemed to be the only country in the world where theatre was marginal to the school curriculum, demonstrating, through this reality, the pedagogical backwardness and the lack of concern with creating an audience.

Antônio Benedito de Carvalho’s article, *Dramatizações escolares* [School dramas], adds to the thesis by contemplating what should matter to schools apart from conveying information: “[...] to awaken the consciousness of duty, the spirit of individual initiative, the pleasure of cooperation, the sense of responsibility, and so many other values essential to the human being as an individual and as a member of a collective” (Carvalho, 1946, p. 315). In other words, for a school whose mission of instruction is to incite initiative, collaboration, and judgment, in addition to a general education, drama is a practical way to reach these objectives.

The preparation of plays, for instance, would foster the training of judgment. From a selection of topics, children would analyze, compare, and establish logic relations through their own experience.

Dramas would develop initiative, “[...] this quality is demanded at every moment and it is necessary for the students when looking for facts, when choosing information sources, when using their own skills, when replacing certain things, when overcoming difficulties” (Carvalho, 1946, p. 316); cooperation, “[...] because everyone wishes to carry out the plan that it is theirs, all work towards the convergence to a common objective” (Carvalho, 1946, p. 317); the sense of responsibility, “[...] as a character of the drama, the student is integrated into it, and what is accomplished,

belonging to everyone, is the individual student's too" (Carvalho, 1946, p. 317).

For Carvalho, all the qualities above (not to mention others associated with them) are essential, as individual situations are related to collective ones. Such activities, if pedagogically guided, would prepare one for life.

Carvalho points out that, rather than forced memorized role-plays, imposed by the adult, students in training should be treated as the protagonists of the creative process.

When it is said that the work belongs to the student and not to the teacher, it is not intended to imply that the work should be absolutely oblivious to the children's effort. What is required is discretion in view of the following: a) limiting oneself to the guidance of the work; b) consequently, not doing what children can do for themselves; c) to provide the resources that the children cannot acquire on their own; d) remove any elements that may lead to ridicule; e) indicate informative sources; f) create favorable situations for the educational work (Carvalho, 1946, p. 321).

With respect to the drama on civic topics in schools, Lourenço Filho (1961, p. 207) reveals his favorable point of view, pondering:

Bringing to life ideas, attitudes, and feelings, drama represents an active process that enhances the understanding of human relationships. The reader or listener of a story takes the place of each of the characters. It is an educational resource of social integration, development of critical thinking, and self-analysis. Elementary school education is a general process of perfecting human communication.

However, for the thinker, there is a basic difference between performing and dramatization, though both serve a purpose in school. Historical episodes could be reenacted in school, but also they could be spontaneously performed inspired by activities within the classroom – like dramatizing reading practice, for instance. Performing would be close to the idea of acting for an audience; in this sense, from the perspective of Lourenço Filho, Benedetti's texts were exemplary. On the other hand, dramatization would be more of a spontaneous activity. According to the educator, the dramatization would offer students the opportunity to better comprehend a situation through their emotional participation.

According to Maria Luiza Cavalcanti, columnist of *Correio da Manhã*, concepts such as freedom and autonomy were introduced, at the time, by



cutting-edge pedagogical works. They would guide children to understand the harmonious development of the spirit as the primary purpose of education. Therefore, the students' free intellectual interest in teamwork and integration with their community should be awakened spontaneously. In elementary school, for instance, physical education and glee clubs had already been included in the curriculum for these purposes. The question raised by the columnist is: "Why not do the same with theatre?"

When theatre penetrates schools, there will be no more problems for actors and producers because they will have a demanding and educated audience. It has been a long time since theatre was considered mere entertainment or a hobby. Theatre – good theatre – is educational and produces extraordinary advantages. We can say that theatre is an association of all the arts; its complex and plural structure is a vast field of unlimited research. Education prepares humans to live in society; and school life, a complex society in itself, supports individuals to delve into the meaning of life in community through multiple facets – the classroom, field trips, festivals, libraries, and school theatre. (Cavalcanti, 1962, 2º Caderno, p. 15).

The columnist continues suggesting methods and topics to approach theatre in school.

The dramatization of legends, ballads, songs, poems, spoken corals; the performing of puppets, books, adventures and short stories, stories of Indians and the catechism, settlers and pioneers, and episodes of homeland history are all interesting topics to be approached through school theatre. From the early games of imagination to the performing of short plays, in groups, in classrooms or festivals, theatre in school always offers opportunities for teaching the correct use of language, expanding human relationships, appreciating the use of colors and shape, and developing artistic sense that, in other ways, might never be discovered. It also improves the power of focusing, skills to memorize, observation spirit and develops a sense of rhythm. These aesthetic results are priceless (Cavalcanti, 1962, 2º Caderno, p. 15).

Still on the topic of theatre as an auxiliary of education, Luiza Barreto Leite (1946) refers to the thesis of Nóbrega Cunha, director of the National Theatre Service at the time, to reinforce the need for a theatre group in every high school. This would be important not only to make raise true dramatic talents but, above all, to immediately elevate the cultural

competence of youth, to educate audiences, and to give proper value to individual interests and potentials.

School theatre can and should also offer opportunities for exposing new writers, visual artists, directors, and technicians of all kinds. This could also occur through a vocational school of theatre that should be created. However, when it comes to the teenager's psychological education, only theatre is able to exercise it independently. Theatre in schools should not be reserved for the fittest and the smartest, as is the case when it is made for public authorities and in private schools. Theatre for normal children should be applied in the same way that Pestalozzi Institute intends to apply to the education of abnormal children. Is a teenager shy and does he have difficulties learning general subjects? Try putting him on a stage to recite passages that interest him. [...] Is there a group of troublemakers who systematically disobey? What could be more pleasing to them than giving voice to their lack-of-freedom by putting them on stage to act out passages chosen according to their temperaments? [...] That would calm them down in life and study. [...] If someone doesn't like history or has issues understanding literature: having them perform heroic episodes or getting in touch with the beauty of dramatic passages on historical topics will effectively facilitate the teachers' tasks. This way, they can study everything and be interested in everything, including the most difficult subjects (Leite, 1946, p. 29).

Leite also states that the problem of the rebellious underage – called *abnormal* by her – was a concern inherent to the period and that theatrical practices could help children overcome. In addition, according to the doctor Martha Silva Gomes, the *Escola Nova* would support children in situations of moral and/or psychological dysfunction. Gomes (1931, p. 3) defines the abnormal underage as an “idiot, cretin, imbecile or mentally retarded, retarded, or only predisposed.” Early on in their rule-breaking behavior, such social characters would trespass the rules due to a degeneration of the “libido” and the awakening of the “primitive animal”, resulting from the cross of “genotypes”. The doctor also stresses *Escola Nova*'s relationship with psychoanalysis: “[...] the active school itself has a major power to influence children, thus also working as rational therapy that must have already healed and re-adapted a large number of underage people, whose psychic conditions would allow” (Gomes, 1931, p. 3).

According to Maurício de Medeiros (1947), a dissident personality would involve physical and sexual symptoms, delinquency, inadaptability, special deficiencies, negative attitudes, conduct disorders and sexual symptoms. Moreover, the major contributing factors of dissident behavior would be intelligence (low or high), childhood diseases, discipline at home (severe, inconsistent, or poor), parents' attitudes, kinship, parental illness, parental alcohol abuse, parental adultery, illegal behavior and economic situation of parents. Thereby, the school would play a fundamental role in these cases, since, according to Medeiros, "[...] the school's ideal is not only to instruct. It is to educate. To educate is to correct inappropriate reactions, replacing them with more suitable behavior in each circumstance. In short, it to adjust" (Medeiros, 1947, p. 409).

The justification was that *Escola Nova* should prevent young people from recurrent dissenting behavior later in life (Jean, 1949). In this same sense, *Escola Nova* would use theatre as a tool to adjust the behavior of children. According to Carmen Pereira Alonso's article (1947), *A dramatização como processo psicológico de ajustamento da criança* [Dramatization as psychological process of children's adjustment], dramatization could be considered a valuable educational tool. Once teachers and students would spend little time in daily contact, the task of solving children's problems, such as excessive aggression, negative attitudes, conduct disorders, etc., would become almost impossible for the teacher to deal with.

In fact, dramatization is not, nor should it be, a mere auxiliary process to language classes, a means of giving it an expression or simply a subject. This is only one facet of the problem and should arise as an inevitable consequence of the use of dramatization in its true sense and as its pure purpose – that is, the social adjustment of children, by connecting with their innermost emotional conflicts (Alonso, 1947, p. 293).

The children's performances, according to Alonso, would allow the therapeutic influence of the teacher. Role plays would bring to light the intimate emotional disturbances of the children intervening in their correct conduct. Alonso points out that all the structuring elements of role play should come from the child. It would place the professor as an attentive observer, mindful of the verbal clues provided by the student in order to diagnose their problems.

To this end, theatre in school would serve the following functions: as a working tool, lure the interests of the student to the contents of different disciplines; as a tool for improving communication and cultural development of the individual, as well as their personal and social skills; adjust the child in social, moral, and/or psychological imbalances, given its ability to encourage the individual to externalize their emotional disturbances.

The insight of attentive readers of their time extended beyond the school theatre, the relations between *Escola Nova*, and theatre for children. Regarding the expectation that the *Associação Brasileira de Críticos Teatrais* [Brazilian Association of Theatrical Critics] would award Lúcia Benedetti as best author of 1948 for *O Casaco Encantado*, Benedito José Alves, a student of the Performing Arts Seminary, wrote to *Correio da Manhã*:

I believe that the children's play *O Casaco Encantado*, staged by *Artistas Unidos*, should be done by the National Department of Children. Of course, I do not have the slightest intention of doing this with the apology of directed theatre or official propaganda. What I mean is just the opposite: introducing *O Casaco Encantado* to the National Department of Children would provide their most Freudian-like paediatricians with the most comprehensive child psychology compendiums, of which they had never known. To its education technicians, lacking philosophy of education, was the most powerful guiding methodology of *Escola Nova*. Even its nurses, unmatched in the sinister art of administering vitamins, however incapable of taking time to tell a story to the little sick patients, a practice that is a real cure for confined imaginations (Alves, 1949, p. 27).

Likewise, the thought of Júlio Gouveia, psychiatrist, author, actor, theatre director, and husband of writer Tatiana Belinky, would contribute decisively to the convergences of theatre for children and *Escola Nova* projected by Alves, including common concerns between theatre, education, and medicine. Gouveia, who wrote the dissertation-essay *O Teatro para crianças e adolescentes: bases psicológicas, pedagógicas, técnicas e estéticas para a sua realização* [Theatre for children and adolescents: psychological, pedagogical, technical and aesthetic bases], presented at the First Brazilian Congress of Theatre in July 1951, in Rio de Janeiro. For him, it was

[...] not necessary to stress that, among the various functions of the theatre for children, one of the most important – perhaps the most important of all – is its educational function. It is obvious that this should not be interpreted merely in the strict and rigorous sense of leading, taming, or domesticating. To educate is to provide the intellectual, moral, and ethical instruments necessary for the child (and human being in general) to become conscious and responsible through individual training and familial and social integration (Gouveia, 2012, p. 67).

Gouveia establishes a comparison between medicine and theatre: alongside healing measures, the retraining of adults imbued with prejudices, the theatre also should avail itself of prophylactic methods, that is, preventing the creation of false conceptions in the child, developing her interest in theatre, and raising the intellectual and artistic competency of the new generations. Such an initiative should be within reach, in the long and medium term, of a large conscientious public holding a high cultural standard.

Thus, it is clear that, while the theatre for adults should be appreciated for its cultural virtues, theatre for children and adolescents can only be regarded as educational –obliging us to immediately put it within the scope of (applied) pedagogy, always remembering that ‘the theatre is for the child, not the child for the theatre.’ Moreover, the main purpose of the theatre for children is not only to cultivate a high-quality audience of the future, but it primarily implies certain psychological influences of a much greater scope than it is usually considered. And this is because all the events on the stage will become part of the child’s subconscious, constituting of ‘engrams’ and contributing to the creation of a fabulous, more or less unconscious, depository of ideas and emotions that will later have a tremendous impact on intelligence, sensitivity, and behavior of the adult person (Gouveia, 2012, p. 69).

Bluntly, Gouveia took the motto of a school tailored for the child, adopting the legacy of *Escola Nova* to theatre for children. According to the psychiatrist, integrate the child’s personality with society would be part of their education. The school is responsible for laying the foundations of ideal mental health, by creating harmony between intellect and emotions. As a result, the more authentic the aesthetic experience, the more profound the result.

It is clear that the *Escola Nova* movement seems to have provided more than favorable conditions for the associations between theatrical



practices and education, allowing theatre for children to definitively influence new methods of educating children. Moreover, the *Escola Nova* ideals would intrinsically structure theatrical practices, whether or not they were school works. The scenario was set for a wide and irreversible pedagogical take of theatre for children.

Theatre, Education and Government of the Populations

In 1958, the first course of theatre for children was offered to teacher trainers, and theatre notions became part of teacher training courses. In order to guide and encourage the practice of school theatre, the initiative undertaken by the Out-Of-School Division, was organized by Celeste Dutra, a teacher specialized in various initiatives in the field.

The course program offers 30 illustrated lessons that will be mimeographed and sent every two weeks by post. The goal is to establish a greater and more effective contact with teachers in their schools, so that theatre for children can become an additional educational path to learning and discovering vocations. Each lesson will come with a questionnaire that, filled in with the necessary clarifications and sent back, will facilitate the acknowledgement of problems and the useful solutions to develop the work (Correio da Manhã, 27 abr. 1958, 2º Caderno, p. 6).

It seems that the school was the key location for children to express themselves through theatre acting. By banishing children from the scene, and making them the audience, children's art theatre "carried out by adult actors" (Pupo, 2013, p. 416) would nurture a diffuse imagery of children's freedom, autonomy, and emancipation, that is, skills that can be developed by the child as spectator. However, they would be allowed to act only within "school contexts related to cultural action" (Pupo, 2013, p. 416).

Through the movements described so far, one realizes that due to the formative potential – and not merely didactic pedagogy – of theatre practices, their implementation with children will be carried out both inside and outside school. By means of the constant evocation of an emancipating ideal of training viewers that are interested and culturally developed, children's art theatre would be the greatest beneficiary of the articulation between theatre and education, taking into account the problem of the lack of audience and, consequently, the shortage of funding.



Therefore, the foundation for a broad exchange of reciprocal legitimacy between the fields of theatre and education would be set. The theatre for children, in this way, starts to emerge as the motto and practical operator of this dyad when associated with the ideology of the *Escola Nova* movement. Settled in the matter of freedom, autonomy, critical and aesthetic sense, cooperation, cultivation of individuality and attention to psychological aspects – in short, in a world designed for children – the encounter between theatre and education creates complementary – or juxtaposed – speech, especially through artistic (out of school) theatre for children.

If, on the one hand, the effects of *Escola Nova* stand out as the argumentative basis for the need and justification for fostering theatre for children, on the other one it is proof of the voluntary subscription of the latter to pedagogical interests and their many factual developments. In this way, the relations between theatre and education, made possible by the attribution of a formative intentionality to an artistic making, would be configured as an integral part of the machinery of social government that, when applied to the child, would target a type of adult entangled in certain pedagogical modalities of self-building on himself.

Inspired by the general notion of governmentality proposed by Foucault (2004, p. 324) as the point of intersection “between technologies of domination of others and those of the self”, we are sure that the theatre that deals with children is a privileged opportunity to direct conducts concerning not only the sphere of a (self) governed childhood, but also the promotion of certain pedagogical modes of subjectivation on a large scale. This is an investment directed at the population as a whole, through the widely adhering appeal to artistic-pedagogical claims favoring the alleged formation of an emancipated subject: creative, empowered, ultimately free as the master of their own choices.

Hence, it seems to us that the conventional distinction between school theatre and theatre for children would only describe a managerial difference in population terms. That is, the shift from a didactic-pedagogic theatre to a theatre for the sake of art seems to be, after all, as one more strategy – most of the times successful – for effective government of the population niches for which it is intended.



A significant historical intersection between theatrical and educational discourses is that the child-oriented theatre would operate aiming to the constitution of predictive-subjection processes that trigger specific ways of occupying the world, thus transcending its specific target audience. This means that, as a qualifying instance of a specific modality of childishness, theatre for the child would act not only as a predictive-subjectivist machine dedicated to the children's stratum of society but would also, to some extent, produce the conditions for a type of forge that is formative of one's own adult experience.

A passage from the investigated file is clear on this direction. It is a question of carving out the existence of "[...] another soldier, another father, another Brazilian to contribute to the progress of the country" (Correio da Manhã, 20 set. 1922, p. 2-3).

Considering the historical immersion operated in this study, the inflated and unwary claim that subjects comprised by theatrical practices would become capable of achieving some kind of freedom, emancipation and the like, would be *sub judice*. If any kind of effect would be left to these social protagonists, it most closely resembles something like a regulated order of freedom, since it is operated *freely* by the subject themselves (Rose, 2001).

In the same sense, autonomy, a double of this freedom without contours, would be a byproduct of "[...] increasingly diffuse strategies of (self) control, of conduct, in its most recondite dimensions, through the dissemination of a plethora of self-managed commands" (Aquino, 2011, p. 202).

In conclusion, it is necessary to underline once again that the theatre for children of the early 20th century included a mix of diffuse and discontinuous practices. The *novelty* emerged in 1948, through the defense of specialized theatre for children performed by adult artists and professional adult artists, would spread far beyond the school environment. It arose also to include the adult as a focus of interest, either as an artist or as an audience accompanying the child, or, ultimately, as an ideal linked to the further development of the child spectator.

Indeed, the apogee of a theatre for children project would, presumably, be achieved when children later became creative and sensitive



beings, capable of living productively in society as adults, interested in and prepared for the enjoyment of the cultural world, and of course is, appreciative of adult theatre. However, it is undeniable the reluctance of having a similar anthropological dream as the one cherished by *Escola Nova* scholars. It is an indelible heritage, so to speak, that influences us even though we do not recognize ourselves in it.

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