



Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença

ISSN: 2237-2660

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

Cardoso da Silva, Tatiana  
Vindenes Bro: um acontecimento diante do tempo  
Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença, vol. 9, núm. 3, e88172, 2019  
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

DOI: 10.1590/2237-266088172

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## Vindenes Bro: an event faced with time

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**ABSTRACT – Vindenes Bro: an event faced with time** – The article presents part of the work developed by the international theater group Vindenes Bro – Bridge of Winds, in English – coordinated by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, actress of the theater group Odin Teatret, Denmark. Through a testimonial narrative, the author, also a member of the group, puts into relation the concepts of event and physical training. The text is interspersed by the transcription of a day of training experienced in the Vindenes Bro. Iben's legacy forms the grounds for thinking about the potential relevance of group theater in face of contemporary theatrical performance. Authors such as Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Gilles Deleuze and Iben Rasmussen herself are put together to intertwine the times that constitute the life of The Bridge of Winds.

**Keywords:** Theater Group. Vindenes Bro. Iben Nagel Rasmussen. Actor Training. Event.

**RÉSUMÉ – Vindenes Bro: un événement avant l'heure** – L'article présente une partie du travail développé par le groupe international de théâtre Vindenes Bro – en français, Pont des Vents – coordonné par l'actrice du groupe de théâtre Odin Teatret, Iben Nagel Rasmussen, au Danemark. Également membre du groupe, l'auteur, dans un récit de témoignage, met en relation les concepts d'événement et d'entraînement physique. Le texte s'alterne avec la reconstitution d'une journée d'entraînement vécue à Vindenes Bro. L'héritage d'Iben est à la base de la réflexion sur la pertinence potentielle du théâtre en groupe face à la performance théâtrale contemporaine. Des auteurs tels que Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Gilles Deleuze et Iben Rasmussen sont réunis pour imbriquer les époques qui constituent la vie de Vindenes Bro.

**Mots-dés:** Groupe de Théâtre. Vindenes Bro. Iben Nagel Rasmussen. Formation d'Acteur. Événement.

**RESUMO – Vindenes Bro: um acontecimento diante do tempo** – O artigo apresenta parte do trabalho desenvolvido pelo grupo internacional de teatro Vindenes Bro – em português, Ponte dos Ventos –, coordenado por Iben Nagel Rasmussen, atriz do grupo teatral Odin Teatret, da Dinamarca. Através de uma narrativa testemunhal, a autora, também integrante do grupo, coloca em relação os conceitos de acontecimento e de treinamento físico. O texto aparece intermeado pela transcrição de um dia de treinamento vivido no Vindenes Bro. O legado de Iben forma a base para pensar a eventual relevância do teatro feito em grupo, diante do fazer teatral contemporâneo. Autores como Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Gilles Deleuze e a própria Iben são colocados juntos para entrecruzar os tempos que constituem a vida do Vindenes Bro.

**Palavras-chave:** Grupo Teatral. Vindenes Bro. Iben Nagel Rasmussen. Treinamento do Ator. Acontecimento.



## Overture

*Hay el reflejo que arma  
en el alba un sigiloso teatro  
y todo, todo, todo acontece  
y nada, nada, nada se recuerda<sup>1</sup>.*

Silence in the room. The actors enter one by one, most of them choosing the floor to start the work. While everybody, including Iben, make their individual warm-ups, someone from the group breaches the silence and sings a song. It is a song that she likes, from her personal repertoire, not necessarily in her mother tongue, despite these songs being the favorite of the members of the group. The singing takes the space and binds one body to the other, joining those previously separate parts in one single piece; it weaves the large patchwork quilt made of quite distinct cuttings. There is no standard. Pieces that come from different countries and ages, histories and desires. Thus, it is already event. Another day of so many first days of work. It is already one year since we last saw each other, but it seems like it was yesterday. This year, the group celebrates thirty years of existence, but what is event today will not happen again.

Vindenes Bro<sup>2</sup> – Bridge of Winds, in English, – is an international theater group coordinated by Iben Nagel Rasmussen (1945-), actress of the theater group Odin Teatret, Denmark. Linked with the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium<sup>3</sup>, the Vindenes Bro is also an artistic and pedagogical project whose major activities are the practice of physical and vocal training for actors, theatrical staging<sup>4</sup>, workshops and cultural exchanges<sup>5</sup>. The participants of this group are artists<sup>6</sup> coming from different countries, among them: Denmark, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Finland, Poland, China, Spain, Holland and Belgium. The group meets<sup>7</sup> systematically, at least once a year, for about 20 days, to develop its activities.

Just like thinking and remembering are inventions, this writing could not be different. To come close or to move away from the Vindenes Bro, of what I perceive and experience as a member of this group for 23 years, I allow myself to be moved by Walter Benjamin's image of remembrance<sup>8</sup> (1987), I turn over the earth of a past lived together, I look for some remains in the rubbles of what we were or still are, and I try to give another



life to these remains, to unveil them in a new arrangement, in this words-recollection. But remembering is also forgetting. While some facts of our group coexistence seem to me likely to be transcreated in this text, I am forced to leave so many others out of it. For that, I follow Dubatti (2014, p. 257):

It is about thinking not only what I am seeing, but what I could be seeing and what I should be seeing. Thus, it is open a lot of possibilities to the question on coexistences, related with the self-observation of the other and the imaginary instances that allow asking to the event questions that would not be asked for its own subjectivity.

In the suspension of many possibilities, I formulate evident questions: how to think the permanence of a theater group in the current times? What is the relevance of this? Does the fact that a group keeps existing serves to other people, beyond its members? Why to continue? What is Iben's legacy? What is remarkable for me, after so many years working together? I think, then, the Vindenes Bro as an event, understanding it as an event that is actualized in a certain place and with a certain length of time, but also as what allows the encounter: "The event is the product of the bodies encounter. [...] The event é an attribute generated for the power of the bodies" (Ulpiano, 2017). In this rutted and intermittent present of mine, in which my own writing happens as I remember the past and project a future shared with the group, I try to elaborate only a point of view, among so many others. Deleuze (2015, p. 154) says:

With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization, the moment in which the event is embodied in a state of affairs, an individual, or a person, the moment we designate by saying "here, the moment has come." The future and the past of the event are evaluated only with respect to this definitive present, and from the point of view of that which embodies it.

Among so many aspects that I could recount and think on the Vindenes Bro, I have chosen to select the one that repeated in each encounter, and in which I saw myself the most embodied concerning to the event: the practice of a physical training<sup>9</sup>. Although being the repetition of the different, as a training session is never equal to another, from the creation of the group until today the physical training has always happened. It is in it that we recognize ourselves, we speak the same language, we build



our doing. Our bodies change, we change, but the exercises do not. In the way that they were created, the exercises have an opening that allows us to always explore new possibilities. Besides the specific demands of each encounter, between creation, transmission and artistic presentations, the physical training was, and still is, the grounds to think the theater, or rather, our theaters, in plural, since the work with the Vindenes Bro also extrapolates the way of doing of the group, as each member, in their own way, assumes, transforms and nurtures what will be useful to develop their individual poetics, in the professional context that they occupy in their own country.

Speaking of training in the present times, over all relating it to what masters like Grotowski or Barba supported in the 1960s or the 1970s, can sound as an obsolete and outdated word. However, will it be outdated to study in depth something that is made, always causing new meanings and challenges to oneself, if this *oneself* is not a fixed place? Outdated or not, the fact is that the training, for us, still provides a protected space and an extended time for the work on ourselves, dedicated to the process and learning, regardless of the rehearsals, the staging of some text or of the performance as product. It also functions as a type of resistance to the market's usual requirements or the systems of production in theater. Besides, for many of the Vindenes Bro members, the practice of the actor's training only is possible there, due to so many other functions or contingencies of our professional contexts throughout the year. Thus, we have even more will to preserve this practice, considering the abundance of artistic and human resources promoted by it. Even for many of us, older now, with less physical possibilities in relation to the early years, it is when practicing the exercises at each encounter that we recollect our forgotten or renegade powers, that we relearn on the new bodies that we consistently are, that we come across with other limits, with new ways of flowing and creating. The trainings is used by us to displace these limits, for a certain technical acquisition or maintenance, but particularly as a laboratory for continuing experimentation and formation, regardless the type of theater that we produce. Anyhow, it is a space for us to act towards what we decide to search, or perhaps it is, as Barba would say, our "ghost room" (Barba, 2007, p. 42), a space that only belongs to us as a group.



## Provenance

The group emerged from Iben's desire to elaborate the contents developed from her work as an actress, transmitted by her to young theater students. The will to be able to continue working with some actors, especially those who already had a certain experience – what was not possible in the short workshops offered by the Odin in its tours –, stimulated her to create a permanent group. In her words:

[...] during the tours, what I could teach was always in a very low, elementary level: the student started to give the first steps, next we had a two-day course and we already had to leave. I taught something that I could not develop; thus, for me, this was not important. What was important was the lasting, was to be able to continue what I had sown. I saw those people and it seemed that they were abandoned, without a path to follow (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 284).

Lasting and continuity constitute Iben's formation, who, in a certain moment of her self-taught process of actress, asked herself what could a dramatical action be. In a dialogue with Eugenio Barba<sup>10</sup>, she recounts that one of the most important things during her learning was trying to understand a certain quality that she saw in the body of more experienced actors, that aroused in her the will to be able to do the same. Iben claims:

I was not able to find in the training what I had seen in the Torger<sup>11</sup>, in the Cieslak...<sup>12</sup> [...] I remember that we were in a tour and I kept thinking on all of this, because, for me, the actor training always was quite an important moment, and suddenly I started to reflect: what a dramatical action is? What is it *for me*? Not in general: *for me*. [...] And this is when I began to try all the possible ways to sit, to turn, to go to the floor and to be off balance (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 282).

When investigating in herself what the dramatical action would be, Iben created ways of problematizing the forces and forms of exercises invented by her. She proposes to her own body in movement certain difficulties, a risk, a limit, a knot to be unraveled. Each new dark point of an exercise, which caused a not knowing how to continue, carried, in itself, a new way to develop it. Creating precise and simple questions, she tried to find out some answers by herself. This way, it was necessary to perceive, test and experience what type of solution each position or gesture requested; not stopping the movements, but keeping a plan of continuity. This practice



compelled her to impose a certain transformation of the course or the quality in this plan:

Looking back, thinking again about that now – how to be off balance, return afterwards, how to go to the floor and then stand up again, I see that, for me, it was like finding... yes, a phoenix: I throw myself, I totally lose balance, I do not know what is going to happen. And next I am standing up again as if... I had reborn. The training itself was reborn for me. I had found that flowing that I had searched for years and I had never found, because it was always interrupted by something else: by thought, fatigue, discontinuity of the training (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 282).

We can say that it was through the physical training, a practice developed in the Odin, that Iben developed her knowledge. It was by error and trial by herself that she was able to establish some foundations for her actress technique and ethics. Of course, the physical and vocal training was also extended to the work of the Vindenes Bro, constituted its cause, promoted and still it promotes the primary territory of our way of doing theater.

The first international group created by Iben was the Farfa, that lasted from 1983 to 1987. A few years later, in 1989, the Vindenes Bro is born. The first encounter of the Vindenes Bro happened in Holstebro, Denmark, in the headquarters of the Odin, with Iben and the actors Carlos Simioni, from Brazil; Lina Della Rocca, from Italy; Tippe Molsted and Caroline Beering, from Denmark; and José Yabar Masias, from Peru. Since then, other people from different countries of Europe and Latin America also entered the group and, although being quite different of each other, they were quickly integrated to the original core. In 1999, concomitantly to the work with the Vindenes Bro, Iben founds another group, *The New Winds*, with the same proposal, but this time only with young European actors, what would make the encounter easier due to the physical closeness between the countries of the continent. From 2009 on, the two groups start to work together in the same projects and, little by little, they merge in a single and great Vindenes Bro. Besides Iben (Picture 1), presently the group has 25 members comprising actors, singers, musicians, stage directors, a set and costume designer, and a photographer, besides many collaborators.



Picture 1 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen. Photo: Francesco Galli.

### **Iben's Legacy**

The bonds that allow the continuity of the Vindenes Bro are consistently strengthened by what Iben represents to us: a master, an actress who was responsible for the elaboration of her own doing, together with her partners from the Odin. Iben's legacy, that is, her way of acting as actress and teacher of other actors, forms the grounds of Vindenes Bro's work.

Although not considering herself a stage director, this is the function that she develops in the group, in the conduction of the physical and vocal work of research and experimentation, in the selection and proposal of the materials for the staging creation, in the elaboration of the workshops content, in the coordination and format of the cultural exchanges (Picture





8), in the coordination of the production of each encounter and also in our way of coexistence. Her professional ethics illuminates our *ethos*, understood not only as a way of acting, of making choices, but also a particular way of thinking the theater, collaborating so that so many different people are kept together along the time.

The importance and the need felt by Iben to transmit her knowledge engenders, in turn, the same responsibility in each member of the Vindenes Bro. The work developed by her and the group expands its sense when we wish and commit with our discoveries also serving other people. Thus, the heritage of the actress, what Iben already knew, becomes a new knowledge when confronted with other people, other contexts, other creators. The Vindenes Bro does not repeat the aesthetics of the Odin and not even Iben's; it is another constellation with its own orbit. For sure, we have our sun, our master, but the way we perform, the empty space and the transitory time through which we give consistency to our existence as a group forms another universe, with its own laws and forces. If there is a common plan between the Vindenes Bro and the Odin, perhaps it is the certainty: that the theater is made of collective and that it would be nice if this collective lasted.

The Vindenes Bro's practice, faced with time, happens and *unhappens*. It is precisely the short length of a few per year, almost always in different countries, that allows us to live the separation, the gap, the empty space where we are not together. The distancing of time and space, as well as our own absence makes it a constant possibility of seeing ourselves as different at each encounter, with other ways of performing and thinking, critically, how to continue and work. This practice, which not always finishes and begins again, keeps, in its uniqueness, the renewed chance to wonder us and the world, creating other questions and new changes. However, these two times, of meeting and separation, or the presence and the absence, are not excluding nor separate; on the contrary, they coexist and constitute the group in its complexity.

It is in this discontinuous time that we nurture the desire of collective: that, in its length, has a life of its own to be developed, *complexified* and fertilized, as, ultimately, is the life of all live organisms. That can create a language, singularity or thought of its own, even though exchangeable. That looks for finding, in itself, a certain sense of possibility or freedom in

its acting in the world. If something remains in this coming and going, perhaps is this infinite will to keep us together, the certainty that there is always something to discover, and this love for the *métier*, in spite of everything. But what provides a permanence? What makes this length? In our case, of blocks of instants, of crossings, of fluctuations and of contradictions. In the contradiction itself, a possibility. Not a harmonic and constant length, but full of gaps, conflicts, finite in each of its small expressions, and intense as it happens. Confused, but also well-aimed. Forged under some laws, but constantly permeable to new arrangements or rules. A multiplicity and diversity of subjects, realities and perspectives willing to, in some way, foresee that old order to subvert it: when the daily life, the difficulties, the lack of time or money say no, to prove saying yes or *why not?*



Picture 2 – A training session. Encounter in Paraty, Brazil, 2017. Photo: Francesco Galli.

### The Vindenés Bro's Training

Along the years, from a proposal of Iben's, we established a script of exercises, or *qualities of energy*, as she likes to call it, that serve as grounds for each session of training, functioning as a means or path that leads to various possibilities of unfoldings (Picture 2). She proposes rather a territory, made



of some precise procedures to be explored, than a certain end or preset form. It is about exercises that were partially changed in their form of manifesting or articulating, but not in their principles. What would these foundations be? They are many. Perhaps each one of the group members could choose one or another that is basic for her/him, but I can mention some, especially remembering a good part of the indications from Iben to the actors after the training: the search for a consistent but changeable flow; the precision of the movements; the attention to the direction of the body energy in space; the constant instauration of forces opposition; the total engagement of the body, even when only part of it moves; the conscious articulation of weight; the force of the movements from the center of the body, over all abdomen and pelvis; the action of consistently causing imbalance; the practice of starting and finishing each exercise in a distinct way; the search for variation of dynamics, like direction, speed, levels or size of the movement; the search for a permanent active relation with the surroundings, that is, with colleagues and space; and many other foundations.

Among several exercises tried in many years of practice, those that compose our training script presently are *dance of the winds*; *green* or *resistance*; *off balance*; *slow motion*; *samurai*; and *geisha*, all described next. It is impossible to think the group's work without dedicating the initial period of the day to the training, currently practiced for approximately one hour and a half, in the mobilization of the maximum of our energies, exploring nuances of our corporeity. Our task is to practice these exercises being always attentive to two levels, individual and collective. In these two interconnected scopes, the same search: that they are done trying to develop the distinct modulations of energy and actions evoked by each exercise, however trying to liven them up by one single flow, a type of wave whose forms of expression are constantly transformed, but that, in the depth, come from the same sea. For me, this notion of the physical work accomplished in one single flow of energy that is transformed is, so to speak, the background of Iben's look to the actors and, consequently, my bigger search.

Iben also lists the different qualities of energy produced in the training exercises done by the group, defining them as distinct types of presence:



Observing the Vindenes Bro's several training exercises, the diverse qualities of energy can be clearly distinguished in the *green*, in the *out-of-balance* exercises, in the *dance of the winds* and in the *samurai*: it is nothing more than different types of presence, of various ways for the actor to be present. A strong and hard presence, a sweeter presence... (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 10).

Presence and energy mix up in Iben's vocabulary when she refers to certain modulation accessed by the body during the exercises, that, in turn, must function as a springboard for something else. They are a way to find an intensive way to articulate the forms and forces of the physical work, to search what Iben tried to name when observing her partners, as it was already mentioned:

It was not an 'skill' [...] Neither was it an aesthetics, something that came from the outside. It was something *inside*... This is what decided, that made the body to become another thing: not a pretty or ugly body. But that body was, like... yes, it was transparent [...] (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 281).

Gradually the actors finish the warm-up, and, without Iben's interference, they organize themselves together and in silence to start the training session of the day. We form a circle (Picture 3). We look at each other once again, for the first time this year, and, as we have made in the other occasions in the last years, we sing the song that opens the training sequence:

*Campanas del sol  
Que rompen cantando el silencio  
Amor puente de vos  
Que me transporta al misterio  
En tu resplendor  
Estoy protegido del viento  
Del olvido que borró  
Todos los pasos ajenos  
Presencia que reposa intacta  
Amor para ti no se hicieran  
Tiempo, lejanía y murallas<sup>13</sup>*

This song functions as an overture or a call for the beginning of the work, but also as a *sats*<sup>14</sup>, a collective impulse for the encounter.



Picture 3 – Preparation for the training. Encounter in Gent, Belgium, 2018. Photo: Francesco Galli.

Likewise the voice exercises transmitted by Iben, working with the songs opens access to another type of body behavior and promotes different types of sonority and possibilities in the vocal work of the group. Physicality of the voice, body-voice, the resonators, from Grotowski, the vocal images and actions, some musical rhythms launched by the voice and the body in action, the different types of sonority of so many songs, languages and texts that we have already experienced, are notions that support the exercise of the voice in various scopes. It is a constant practice to search for the force of certain songs in the body and the space, over all those carrying a specific meaning linked with the history of the group or its members, or also with the tradition of some countries or peoples. These songs, brought by us along the time, reach a particular register in the group's voice.

During our training sessions, Elena<sup>15</sup> plays her violin and dialogues with the movements of the actors by playing songs or musical excerpts of her personal repertoire, especially eclectic, emerged, often, from some of her improvisations, that create, according to her, *sonorous columns*. The sound of Elena's violin, for me, leads to the experience of training at extremely

powerful dimensions, that overflow those that I experience, for instance, without music.

Among other perceptions, the melodies, noises, moans, shouts and breaths of her violin interpenetrate play, duel, fool around, come close or far of the actors' physical work, always causing in us new images, atmospheres, associations or impulses.



Picture 4 – Emilie leading the Vindenes Bro students' group in a workshop developed in Paraty, Brazil, 2017. Photo: Francesco Galli.

From the multiplicity of so many voices, with *Campanas del sol* the Vindenes Bro's voice echoes and is made one, confirming the reencounter. Time starts to function differently. While we sing, the time covered since the last time we saw each other disappears. Past, present and future mix in the time of the song. Anachronistic time. I remember the past covered together so many times, at the same time that I advance towards the future, promise of other encounters. Singing wakes up, in its length, so many meanings in the shared present, or rather, in these three presents, remembering Saint Augustine<sup>16</sup> (Saint Augustine apud Ricoeur, 1994): the present of the past, in the recollection; the present of the present, in the attention to singing itself; and the present of the future, in the wait. I almost do not believe: Emilie (Picture 4) and Frida<sup>17</sup>, whom I knew when

they were children, are already taller than me. I remember Tippe making the *dance of the winds* with the Frida in her back. In 1996, in Scilla, Italy, she was nine months old. The small face-ball shaking happily, with wide-open eyes, in that type of Danish knapsack to carry babies. When all of us are gone, they probably will still sing this song. Now there is no way back, *Campanas del sol* is an irreversible signal to launch ourselves again in the flow of a known river, but whose waters are always new. Commotion and delight; floating calmly and drowning in a disastrous way; virtuous maneuvers and claudication; skillful slips and exhaustion; fresh and rarefied air; images thoroughly precise the sight darkened by a blur. The training is a continuous game in this river of unexpected waves, bordered by dams always ready to collapse. Mystery. Am I here again? I see these faces; I see myself in this circle and I almost do not believe. *Estoy protegido del viento, del olvido que borro, todos los pasos ajenos*. The song is interrupted and, instead of the last line, the voice transforms into a blow, with the step towards the earth. The *dance of the winds* begins (Picture 5). The circle is undoing itself and the winds take the room in all directions.



Picture 5 – The dance of the winds. Gent, Belgium, 2018. Photo: Francesco Galli.



Iben remembers:

During the first Vindenes Bro, in 1989, in Denmark, I asked all members to present part of their training, a dance or song. Caroline Beering, a young woman who is not in the group anymore, showed us a type of dance that was like a blow, that she had learned in Poland with the Gardjenize group. We used that exercise as grounds for a part of the physical training, keeping the step harmonized with the breath. Thus, from the first day of work with the Vindenes Bro, there was a dance within which all the actors could continue experiencing the organic and continuous flowing of energy. This was the originary core from which the Dance of the Winds started to acquire form (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 2).

From this ground, Iben and the actors inserted some stimuli and modified the initial form of the dance. They established a continuous repetition of the step and added some actions that should be accomplished within the flow, by means of a displacement through the space. The *dance of the winds* is an exercise that provides a quality of free and light energy, like the movements of the wind, being a way of producing and directing the energy through the space. Just like the wind, we can also vary, but without losing the grounds and the rhythm of the group. The dance grounds are three steps made in a ternary time, like the waltz: one step towards the earth, where the emphasis is, through exhalation; the next step towards the sky, produced by a type of leverage with the foot, that pushes the floor and raises the body; and a third one, of resumption, that makes the linking between the two previous ones. The actions in the dance can be many: opening and closing the body in several ways, catching and launching the energy, exploring oppositions in the gestures, making active stops, games and exchanges between the actors, actions of work and so many others. It is an exercise quite known currently between actors of the entire world, given its consistent transmission made by Iben and her actors along the time.

Today, my knees hurt at the beginning of the dance, and, after the first five minutes, I cannot believe how tired I am. However, Elena, sitting by Iben, plays, in her violin, the Shostakovich's waltz. My body lights on, becomes incoherent. My feet, from the tip of the toes to the heel, become mobile roots that enter and get out of the earth, crazy and cheerful, but the rest of the body still moves with difficulty. I need to feel the dance in my whole body; then, I make the rest follow the legs. I move the joints, I *open* the bones, the veins, the muscles, the lungs, as if I were liberating my





internal channels to the earth and the sky. After a few minutes dancing, the entire body pulses freely, all of it and fatigueless. Like a power plant, I launch to the space and to my partners jets of something that shines, lighthouse and impetus. The room becomes small, I become small until I disappear. I am not me anymore, but another thing. The piece of the cutting that I was is unwoven and makes my body to disappear. We are wind. The time becomes encounter, dance and music. The displacement through the space, mine and of my partners, forms wind flows that take us to different and unusual directions. It is fun to allow oneself to be carried, not thinking, not establishing what to do. Encounters happen little by little, launchings and ravishments of force that influence each other, that transform the attitudes, actions, looks, expressions and create new positions of the body in the room. In the exchange between the partners, fleeting active stops, that, in the immobility of the body, remind of the image of an immense frozen waterfall, in the winter of a cold country<sup>18</sup>. The dance lasts and the wind flows draw different formations of the group in the space: two circles, with a game of energy launching, or two lines of actors in the two most distant sides of the room, whose space is, thus, all offered to a duo of winds. With more air and floor, the pair dances even freer, livened up here and there by songs *awaken* by the rest of the group. For about twenty minutes, following a chain of preset actions, we keep the dance of the winds until we take it to its peak, when the actors bypass the gravity and launch themselves in the air, between jumps and turns. A few minutes before the end of the dance, another song, *girando, girando, não paro de girar, trabalho, cantando, na roca de fiar*<sup>19</sup>. Gradually, we decrease the *dance of the winds* out of us, but not inside us. A heat, a sensation of irradiation and unfolding of the body is established and binds one actor to the other. The profusion of molecules, agitated by the heat, compacts and becomes an immense ice mountain (Picture 6). Now, the whole group is joined in the center of the room. The voice of the ice mountain issues its acute moan, seeming to claim for its survival, in some last place of the world. The ice must be melting. A drop of Guille's sweat <sup>20</sup> drips in my knee, joins to my drop of sweat, that seemed to be already there, to the wait of the other. The two drops, mixed, roll down faster, leaving, in my skin, the mark of that tributary that emptied in the floor of the room.



Picture 6 – Configuration of one of the mountains, during the training, in Gent, Belgium, 2018.

Photo: Francesco Galli.

The energy is transformed and, gradually, the actors separate. Slowly, the mountain comes apart, and we enter the exercise of resistance:

A slow and continuing walk, with the spine upright, knees lightly bent, arms along the body. A neutral, serene expression. From the waist down, the axis is directed towards the earth; from the waist up, towards the sky. The hip advances without oscillating, always keeping the same level in relation to the floor. A walk that overcomes a resistance. Like a mountain, that moves. If I walk forward, I cause, before, a force that pushes me backwards. If I walk backwards, I must overcome a force that pushes me forward. Resistance to an opposing force. For each direction that I establish my movement, I must, previously, to establish, with the imagination, the muscle memory, the relation of the weight of the body with the floor and with my intention, a force that takes me in the opposite direction (Silva, 2009, p. 106).

This is the description of the basic walk of the exercise called *green* or *resistance*. Iben comments how the exercise is integrated to the work:



With the Vindenes Bro, we also work on the principle of resistance. I wanted to look for a slow energy, a way of moving slowly in the space, but with much resistance. It came to my mind a book of a Noh theater Japanese actor, in which he speaks of an exercise that he used to do with his master, in which the master held him with force with a belt while he walked, and later, suddenly, released him. The student should not fall, but keep that same resistance in the body, that same force. We copied that idea (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 3).

The *resistance* causes a dense and continuous sensation of energy of the body. It exerts a consistent control of the movement through the space. During the exercise, we are encouraged to move as if we felt that the air becomes denser, as if we walked amongst substances like clay or polenta, what demands a great effort of displacement. The “body-memory” (Grotowski, 1992, p. 34) reminds of the green strip that, years ago, pulled by a colleague, held back so many times the hip, the chest, the forehead and the shins. And we walk, go to the floor, get up, push and pull imaginary objects. The control of the muscle tonus intensity, a continuous adjustment of tensions inside and outside of the body, sets the quality of the movement.

Slowly, another mountain is formed in another point of the room, with the closeness approximation of the bodies. The mountain of lava also has a voice, a sound of the dense substance that boils, small explosions, our entrails, hot land that growls; but before the eruption happens, the volcano silences. I can already listen to the light sound of the fall of someone who stayed a little away from the formation. The supports of the body, that served to the tension of the body-mountain, search for another type of impulse, not for the continuous walk of *resistance* anymore, but for a displacing moved by falls, out of the body axis. The *off balance*, another exercise that makes the mountain to make apart, moving away the bodies in multiple directions, starts.

I study the exercise in practice. I stand and I cause an imbalance. I displace my axis in some direction and, this time, I start by the hip. My struggle is to cause a real intention of falling, a true risk. But I extend the moment of falling, resisting the gravity, that pulls me. I try to expand that instant of the fall, to make it last. That the time of falling is infinite. At the same time that I launch myself, the whole body works to keep standing up.



I am falling, when I am closer to the floor the speed increases, what makes my action more dangerous. Then, in the last moment, when I am almost crashing, I save myself with that leg that supported me the less, with the knee bent. A stop. This is the moment that demands greater effort because, when saving me, the tendency is to relax and to empty. However, it is precisely there, when everything seems quiet and resolved, that I need to activate the attention even more, to engage my forces even more, not allowing that energy caused by the imbalance to escape, but rather to transform it, launching it towards an opposing direction of where I fell. Holding back the force of that real fall in the hip and the legs, and to launch this same force to the space with the whole body. *Follow the bird*, search for another support, another resumption of balance to, again, cause another imbalance and launch me again to the abyss. Iben's indications:

You must allow the energy to carry you, follow it so that it takes you in various directions in the space. You must place much more air in your movements, trying to forget the weight, and not allow yourself to be blocked by it. It is at the moment of the crossing to a new imbalance that you need to allow yourselves to be guided by the energy. Try, in the crossing between one fall and another, to allow yourselves to be guided by the image of a bird that flies, but without trying to spoil this image, allowing it to be only a suggestion and an incentive for your work. Do not project your movements only downwards, go in all directions, and, especially after the fall, upwards, as if you wanted to follow something above you (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 25).

The energy of the group becomes light and mild. Similar to what happens in the other exercises, each actor has a personal way to develop the *off balance*, some forms of doing are repeated, others are discovered by the emergence of the saving oneself from one or other fall in particular. This exercise illustrates quite well Iben's process of discovery in relation to the performing action, previously mentioned. Each one develops their personal narratives of fall and resumption, constantly risky and unexpected, with quite different forms and dynamics. However, the imbalance of an actor also affects the imbalance of the other; thus, games, displacements, some small actions develop in the relation of exchange in the group, in a constant flow. Elena, with her violin, quickly creates games between excerpts of Bach sonatas and the actors' movement. It is difficult to say what causes the atmosphere that is established at this moment, if it is the music or the falls.



I feel that I would like to be better with both, I would like to be able to do more, to be more dignified of what happens to me. But my body does not reach, it only suspects of the dimension that would be almost scratching my soul. But I want it so much, I desire it so much, and I know. And I experience again and again. More risk, more resistance to the fall, less distance from the floor, more fear, more doubt. Anger. I do not have enough resources to save myself, says the head. But it is the body that replies. I modify a little the intensity of the force, I experience another distance between the legs, I share the retention of the weight, previously all with the hip, with the floor. I allow it to also support me, of course, and, when I perceive, there it is. I feel the transformation of the energy. I did not need to think where my arms, my hands, my head would go. I did not need the bird nor anything. I was taken by something invisible, fresh, mild, sharp note that went up and down in tonal juggle, teasing, *haughtiness*, entanglement of small serpents with wet and slippery bodies, the hand of the most skillful prestidigitator. I could not grasp it, but it was there. It is not a lie; I would really tell the truth if... Instant.

Deleuze says that the event is not made of the present of the actualization or of what embodies it, there is another aspect:

But on the other hand, there is the future and the past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present, being free of the limitations of a state of affairs, impersonal and pre-individual, neutral, neither general nor particular, *eventum tantum*... [...] On one side, there is the part of the event which is realized and accomplished; on the other, there is that 'part of the event which cannot realize its accomplishments' (Deleuze, 2015, p. 154).

There is another side of the event, of the counter-actualization, a time that is not of *Cronos*, but of *Aion*, time of the mobile instant, without thickness nor extension, that subdivides each present in past and future:

[...] it is the present without thickness, the present of the actor, dancer, or mime – the pure perverse 'moment'. It is the present of the pure operation, not of the incorporation. It is not the present of subversion or actualization, but that of counter-actualization (Deleuze, 2015, p. 169).

It is not me the one who acts, something acts beyond me and versifies, unravels, fragments and unfolds me. What is there, what I see, this presence in my present, did not come from this moment, nor from this place. It was

a faraway that formed it. It creates a vision, in which I need to spend time, my look must be helpful, because it is not easy to see the invisible, to say the unspeakable.

For me, currently, the *off balance* of all the exercises is my best master. Because it is what I know less how to execute. This is why I have so much to learn with it. It needs more effort, greater clarity, more from myself. Will it show to me, one day, what I have not yet seen in me?



Picture 7 – UR-NAT performance in Paraty, Brazil, 2017. Photo: Francesco Galli.

This time, without me being aware of it, it is a mountain of rocks, formed by the bodies of my partners, that emerges in another point of the room. I direct my imbalance to the group that gathers, and I save myself of the last fall, joining them. The rock mountain is outlined for a few moments, also with its own voice. The density of the rock takes us to another transformation of the energy in the body, distension, we enter the next exercise, *slow motion*. In it, we work a fluid energy, as if we were inside the water or in the moon, we must move like there was no gravity. We search for the absence of weight, free and light joints, each vertebrae of the spine is mobile and active, and the movements of the arms, legs and head must be always in opposition. Elena, this time improvising with the violin, plays with harmonics and some excerpts of films and series sound tracks.



During this exercise, either through the activation of the body in the training until now, or for its soft and slow character, I find space for many images and sensations of my inner world. It is here that I perceive many connections with old memories. Through impulses, the body remembers images and sensations. Remnants of a past that I did not even know that I had lived take me. A deep sense of connection with something much bigger than me moves me. I feel my tears also run down in slow motion.

We stay in this quality of energy for some time, until somebody proposes the change of exercise, from their own actions. The rest of the group accepts, and it becomes evident when all set their samurais. The exercise of the *samurai*, inspired in the Japanese warrior, was created by Iben and the Odin actors in the beginning of the 1970s. It consists in moving in the space from three basic steps and their variations. The grounds of the *samurai* are open legs, bent knees, steady hip – or force in the *koshi*, in the language of the group – and keeping, most of the time, the same distance in relation to the floor. It exerts an assertive and powerful energy, with the attention expanded to the whole, sharp perceptions, ready to attack or to defend, to jump, to turn or to go to the floor, coming back quickly to the basis. Iben recounts some modifications made to the exercise:

With the Vindenes Bro, once again we have taken the three basic steps developed in the Odin with the solid trunk, with the spine still and curveless; later I asked to each actor to find different ways of turning, jumping and sitting. To be more precise with the movements of the arms, we have used a baton. The actors left to look for their own baton. They used it in a very simple way, to indicate the several directions in the space and as an instrument that helped the actors to find various positions with the arms (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 3).

The path of the actor who experiences the *samurai* is initially solitary, in the domain of the form, the force, the position, the impulse, the rhythm, the look. Later, in the improvisations through the space, the relation with another samurai is opened, which can be of fight and confrontation, or only of reaction to the movements of the partner. The samurais fight, meet and dialogue in movement. The actor is called to engage his corporal fullness for fast and efficient answers, in a mobile and flexible stability. Thus, he constructs his position of warrior, supported by the idea of *enrooting* of his feet on the floor; it is like the energy of the earth crossed his body until



stimulating the action. The thigh joint must be set free for the movements of the legs. The arms follow the position of holding a baton – in the first years, the real object and, today, imaginary –, that can be the samurai's weapon. The position of the arms and the trunk changes the steps or their actions. This basic position coincides, in part, with the positions of the Eastern martial arts:

The *samurai* allows to constantly inquire the force center of the body, in the region of the abdomen and hip. It is in this region that the 'propelling engine' of the movement is. Several corporeal techniques, both from the east and the west, evidence the pelvic region, the union point of the spine and the legs, as a major point of stability and force. The *samurai* is quite useful to the actor, as he works with precision and the essentialness, in the sense that each movement happens from a well delimited form, with a particular quality of energy and a well-defined position. When the movement starts from this center, it allows a command of the trunk to the peripheral movements of arms, legs and head (Silva, 2009, p. 100).

In some encounters with the group, Iben proposed improvisations of the figure of the warrior walking in the bush. The images and narratives that I created many years ago of that improvisation and others, after some fixed actions, remind me, each time that I resume this energy, a state of open, flexible and light game, which serves as counterpoint to the rigidity and physical requirement of the exercise, allowing to also discover pleasure amidst so many challenges. We perform our samurais trying to show precisely to ourselves that we still can, that our bodies can. Elena plays notes quickly repeated in a 4/4 bar, very rhythmic. After a couple of minutes of extreme physical effort, we forget the muscle pains and have fun with the dialogues of movement and relations among the group. Slowly, one or another actor transforms that male, strong and assertive energy in an opposing, female, soft energy, sometimes winding, worked from the fragmentation of the actions. It is the energy of the *geisha*, another exercise that one and other actor accesses until, finally, it takes the whole group by contagion. My geisha also walks softly in the bush, in the end of an afternoon. She relates with the surroundings, tries to touch a butterfly, enters in the house, not without taking off her shoes previously. She meets other geishas and interacts with them. She serves the tea, opens the window and contemplates the moon. It is a comforting energy that announces the end of the training of the day. In the group, the actors alternate between





the *geisha* and the *samurai*. Gradually, they finish the training, sitting on the heels, legs together, upright spine, arms on the thighs; an introspective and quiet atmosphere takes the space. Sensation of fullness. Relaxed attentive presence. The patchwork quilt is ready to serve to those who need it. The training of the day finishes. Silence in the room.



Picture 8 – Register of a cultural exchange in an aboriginal village in Paraty, Brazil, 2017.  
Photo: Francesco Galli.

## Hereafter

While the Vindenes Bro still happens, some considerations can be visible and sayable in this extended present. If an event is always a product from the encounter of multiplicities of powers, perhaps we should think which type of procedures make possible, expand and make coming to the surface these powers, both in individual and in group work, both in the formation of knowledges and their transmission. Testing, experiencing and inventing modes of differentiation, allowing the opening of fissures and new agencies, the occurrence of transformations in a practice apparently already well known. In the affective encounter of the bodies, what could be put in evidence, in a group work, other than precisely the powers of these bodies? When each body also is, by itself, a multiple event, in the encounter with other bodies, the diverse one and the contradictory are part of the



game, what is beyond our desire or will. Ultimately, it is the confrontation of these powers that always wins, in us or in the collective. In a group, we could learn to generate a mean that is fertile in the intercrossing of always different and unexpected forces, that can be developed or not. For such, it is necessary to undertake a work, to accept a search, to recognize an implicit agreement, beyond the individual desires and requirements. A work that demands a length, a *continuum* that allows the consolidation of shared bases, but in constant transformation. Working to create, if not a common language, perhaps one same flowing, recognizing it also as mutant from the requirements of the practice itself. Barba (2012, p. 202) wrote:

However, if I ask myself in which paradoxical premises of time and space is it possible to make sprouting the obscure forces that govern History and the interiority of the individual, if I ask myself how to make them perceivable in their physicality without producing violence, destruction and self-destruction, the reply seems evident to me: it is a premise called theater.

An event is always a conflict of powers; gaps, intermittent spaces, absences and contingencies emerge, and they can form and deform what we have previously imagined, but this deformation may not be something bad, on the contrary, we could compose something with it. Allowing new limbs, eyes and mouths to emerge in this being that claims for an existence of its own. Iben said, on her observation of the training of her actors: “Inside them, either in individual or group level, of a single organism, as well as inside us, who are seeing them, something is event, something is changing” (Rasmussen apud Rietti, 2001, p. 8). Something is really event. The next encounter of *Vindenes Bro*, in 2019, will be in Ringkøbing, Denmark. The group will participate of the UR-NAT International Festival, which promotes artistic encounters amidst the nature and in open urban spaces (Picture 7). In this festival, the audience becomes part of the works of Danish and international artists. *Tomorrow we have been there*<sup>21</sup>, in Ringkøbing, that small town surrounded by a fjord, where the moon was born in the sky, drawing itself the other way around. *It is there that, yesterday, we will celebrate thirty years.*

This is how I finish this attempt to pursue and to outline again the remaining portions of what we were, are or will be, a patchwork quilt spread in this text-fiction. Not everything that I said here really happened this way. In this particle of view, only another one, *poiesis* of an infinite

ballast of possibilities. Uma evanescence, a blur, a resound of what can seem to have been the practice of the group. However, if what happened was not exactly like I told, this does not mean that there was not an attempt of being faithful to the past. What I did was only to use it freely to think our present more as an end than as a start. Moment of the operation. How to speak of this moment? Perhaps the best words are those that I left out of this article, those facts that I do not perform anymore, wishing that my narrative is constituted between presence and absence, in this now expanded beyond what I live and think. Origins lost forever. The past has come closer to me, but it does not exist anymore, it is already gone. But it left marks. On this marked present, we will be able to continue. On what was printed in the body and the soul is that, perhaps, we will invent another story.



Picture 9 – Vindenes Bro in Paraty, Brazil, 2017. Photo: Francesco Galli.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Words of the song that is part of the last performance of the group, *Freaks*. Song created by Sandra Pasini, one of the actresses of the Vindenes Bro, from a fragment of the poem *The mirrors*, of Jorge Luís Borges.



- <sup>2</sup> Site of the group: <<https://www.bridgeofwinds.com/>>. Accessed: 14 November 2018.
- <sup>3</sup> Name given to the actions that extrapolate the work of the Odin in multiple projects dedicated to research and training: artistic residences, ISTA (International School of Theater Anthropology), UET (University of Eurasian Theater), CTLS (Center of Laboratory Studies of Theater), OTA (Archives of the Odin Teatret) and many other activities that happen regularly, having as a basis the headquarters of the group in Holstebro, Denmark. Source: <<https://odinteatret.dk/ntl-nordisk-teaterlaboratorium/>>. Accessed: 10 November 2018.
- <sup>4</sup> The performances of the group are: *The white, The black, Ur Nat, Freaks and Voices in the wind*.
- <sup>5</sup> Practice inherited from the Odin, based on the encounter of the group with some community or specific organization, when exchanges of songs, dances, stories and different cultural manifestations happen.
- <sup>6</sup> The following artists are part of the group presently: Tippe Molsted (Denmark), Annemarie Waagepetersen (Denmark), Signe Gravlund Thomsen (Denmark), Emilie Molsted (Denmark), Frida Molsted (Denmark), Carlos Simioni (Brazil), Tatiana Cardoso (Brazil), Rafael Magalhães (Brazil), Marcos Rangel Koslowski (Brazil), Rodrigo Carinhana (Brazil), Lina Della Roca (Italy), Elena Floris (Italy), Francesco Galli (Italy), Sofia Monsalve Fiori (Colombia), Guillermo Angelelli (Argentina), Mika Juusela (Finland), Miguel Jerez (Spain), Yteng Ding (China), Iza Vuorio (Poland/Finland), Luis Alonso (Cuba/Brazil), Jori Snell (Holland/Denmark), Antonella Diana (Italy/Denmark), Sandra Pasini (Italy/Denmark), Adriana La Selva (Brazil/Belgium) and Katarzyna Kazimierczuk (Poland).
- <sup>7</sup> Among the countries where the group has already met are Denmark, Brazil, Italy, Colombia and Belgium.
- <sup>8</sup> “He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil” (Benjamin, 1987, p. 239).
- <sup>9</sup> Practice of physical exercises carried through by the actor, that aim not only to a bigger technical acquisition, but to a way of working on himself, displacing his limits and nurturing other ways of creation.



- <sup>10</sup> Director of the Odin Teatret and major artist and thinker of the contemporary theater.
- <sup>11</sup> Torgeir Wethal (1947-2010). He was an actor and one of the founders of the Odin Teatret.
- <sup>12</sup> Ryszard Cieslak (1937-1990). He was one of the actors of the Jerzy Grotowski's Theater Laboratory.
- <sup>13</sup> Song in honor to Grotowski, sung in December 1988, in an encounter of group theater in Lima and Huampani, Peru. Lyrics of Luis Ramirez, actor of the Cuatrotablas group (Peru), and music of Denise Garcia.
- <sup>14</sup> In the language of the Odin and the Vindenes Bro, it refers to impulse.
- <sup>15</sup> Elena Floris is a violinist, member of the group. Currently, also responsible, with Emilie Molsted, for the musical and vocal direction of the performance-concert *Voices in the Wind*. Before Elena, from 1997 to 2001, the Danish flautist Nikolaj de Fine Licht, who played different types of baroque recorders, followed the work of the group. Just like Elena, he was responsible for the musical direction of the songs concert. Nikolaj remembers his process of creation, when playing, in the accompaniment of the training: 'To improvise together with the actors, I can react to what they are doing and elaborate something, or I can play an already existing piece. I can also improvise something free, not inspired in the action of the actor. I always used to alternate between both: by observing the actors' actions, I could allow myself to feel their movements and construct music in tune with what I saw; but I could also improvise something that came to my mind at the moment and observe what would happen as a consequence. In practice, it was always a combination of both' (Testimony of Nikolaj de Fine Licht, in an informal conversation on November 13, 2018, during the preparation of this article).
- <sup>16</sup> "There are three times: a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future. For these three times do somehow exist in the soul. Otherwise I would not see them [...]" (Saint Augustine apud Ricoeur, 1994, p. 28).
- <sup>17</sup> When I joined the group in 1996, Emilie was two years old and Frida was nine months old. Both are children of Tippe Molsted and are all members of the Vindenes Bro.
- <sup>18</sup> "The stop does not have to be mechanic, but it must be like a frozen waterfall" (Grotowski apud Rietti, 2001, p. 20).



- <sup>19</sup> A song that I heard as a child, of in a small blue LP that counted the story of Cinderella. This was the song that the witch, disguised, sang while working in her spinning wheel, preparing the trap for the princess to sting her finger in the poisoned needle, that will make her to sleep for many years. In one of the encounters, in 1998, in Iben's room in Ryde, Denmark, while I felt my forces wasting away due to fatigue for the long time executing the dance of the winds, this song came to my mind. After singing it mentally, I found forces that transformed the fatigue into joy, and I sang it aloud for the whole group, wishing that they also would feel reinvigorated. To my surprise, all started to sing the chorus with me out loud. This brought new encouragement to continue the dance with pleasure that day. Since then, the song is part of the repertoire of the training.
- <sup>20</sup> Guillermo Angelelli, member of the group.
- <sup>21</sup> Game with verb tenses, as Valter Hugo Mãe did: "The Sigridur, when very small, used to mix up yesterday, today and tomorrow. She used to say tomorrow was very pretty. My father thought that it was a way of having visions" (Hugo Mãe, 2014, p. 102).

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This unpublished text, translated by Ananyr Porto Fajardo, is also published in Portuguese in this issue.

*Received on November 15, 2018*

*Accepted on March 26, 2019*

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