

1978-2018: LIMS Impact on the Brazilian Performing Arts

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Panel: Laban's Global Influence in the Performing Arts

Abstract

This paper intends to present an overview on the Brazilian Laban community and to show how it has been growing over the past forty years causing an impact on the performing arts. The number of CMAs has been increasing and most of them work in performing arts field, teaching in universities and colleges from North to South in Brazil. Since 2010 the Specialization Program in Laban/Bartenieff System in Rio de Janeiro has also been contributing to enlarge this number.

Rudolf Laban's ideas reached Brazil in the 40's decade, with the arrival of many foreign artists. This first migratory cycle brought Maria Duschenes (Budapest, 1922 – São Paulo, 2014), René Gumiel (Saint-Claude, 1913 – São Paulo, 2006), Yanka Rudska (Warsaw, Poland, 1916 – Graz, Austria, 2008) and Rolf Gelewski (Berlin, 1930 – Feira de Santana BA, 1988), all of them having studied, one way or another, with masters of German expressionist dance.

However, it was only with Regina Miranda's return to Brazil, in the 1970's, coming from USA, that Irmgard Bartenieff's work and her singular vision of Laban's legacy became known in Brazil. Therefore, Regina has been the one who introduced Bartenieff Fundamentals in Brazil, having studied with Bartenieff herself and been her assistant.

We can detect a second migratory cycle of Laban's ideas, this time, opposite to the first one, bringing back to Brazil Brazilians who went to study and deepen their

knowledge of Laban System in foreign land – especially London and New York. We would like to observe here the contribution that LIMS has been bringing to performing arts in Brazil, since the great majority of Brazilian professionals who graduate in this institution, work in the performing arts field, not only acting but, also teaching in educational programs at universities throughout the country.

When the foreign precursors arrived in Brazil, dance and theatre performed in this country followed the classical traditions. There was a modernist movement more linked to literature and already influencing the theatre, but the dance, in special, continued to be more classic, as well as its public.

Maria Duschenes, born in Hungary, studied at Jooss-Leeder School in Dartington Hall, in the 1930's, where she got to know Rudolf Laban. She went to Brazil in the 40's, marrying a German architect and establishing her home in São Paulo. Duschenes had a diploma by Laban Art Movement Centre, in London and another one by Dance Notation Bureau, NY. She was the person who introduced Rudolf Laban's studies in Brazil, offering practical and theoretical training to educators, psychologists, dancers, choreographers and actors. Her work was based on experimentation, on movement's free expression and self-knowledge. She acted mainly on dance education, despite having created many spectacles and choral dances.

Yanka Rudzka, born in Poland, studied dance in her natal land, in the 1930's, with Ruth Dorel and Georg Groke, both Mary Wigman's pupils. After the World War, she went to Switzerland where she specialized with Harald Kreutzberg. Yanka lived in England, Italy and Argentina. At the beginning of 1950's, she went to Brazil where she remained for 13 years. Living initially in São Paulo, she created two courses – one of modern dance and another one of body expression for actors. Later on, Yanka moved to Salvador, in Bahia, invited by the musician Hans Joachim Koellreutter, to direct the recently created Dance School of Bahia's Federal University – the first under graduation course of dance in Brazil. Rudzka remained in Salvador for 3 years, establishing the fundamentals for the Dance School. During this period, she influenced not only the academic field, but also the artistic one, being deeply moved by the local Afro-Brazilian culture.

Rolf Gelewski, was born in Berlin, studied with Gret Palucca, Mary Wigman and Marianne Vogelsang and was a soloist at Berlin Ballet. Gelewski succeeded Yanka Rudzka at the direction of the Dance School of Bahia's Federal University (UFBA). He was responsible for the course regulation in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). Between 1960 and 1975, he directed the Dance School and for 10 years, Gelewski also held the function of choreographer and director of the School's Dance Group, renamed Contemporary Dance Group (GDC), gathering students, teachers and hired dancers. In addition to teaching and academic management activities, he always acted as dancer in soloist performances, in Brazil and abroad. Away from the stage, he was also a dance theorist. Not only did Rolf publish teaching articles and essays, but he also founded the pioneer discipline of Dance Philosophy at the University.

Renée Gumiel, French, belonged to the first group of students at Dartington Hall School, having studied with Kurt Jooss and having made contact with Laban. In Europe, she danced with Harald Kreutzberg. She went to Brazil in 1957 and initiated a school in São Paulo, the Renée Gumiel Ballet that continued for 20 years. Many important names of Brazilian dance and theatre passed through her school; she collaborated intensely with various groups, always thinking in the interconnection among the arts, valuing the experimentalism and improvisation. She acted until the age of 92, a few years before she died, at the Teatro Oficina (Theatre Workshop Group), directed by José Celso Martinez Correa, a highly revolutionary group within the national scenery.

These pioneers opened the way to a dance transformation in Brazil, bringing in new ideas to an art that was still trying to establish itself as classical and national. They arrived, affirming a dance that emphasised the body's free expression, the abandonment of pre-conceived forms, of virtuosity and standardized bodies. A dance as a form of self-knowledge and knowledge of the space, establishing expressive tensions between the inner and outer body.

Laban's ideas were very well introduced by these pioneers – especially in São Paulo and Bahia. They instigated an interest and labanian curiosity in their students. The Brazilians who studied and acted with them sought to deepen their studies and get to know new perspectives of Laban's work, either as self-taught or through specialized courses abroad. Dartington Hall and the London school were the main references.

However, it was only with Regina Miranda's return from New York in 1977, that Irmgard Bartenieff and her school started to get known and sought as a place of reference for Laban's studies.

Regina had gone to USA initially to the Joffrey Ballet. In New York, she attended various classes, searched new languages and vocabularies, but she wished for something more that could feed her research on dance and helped her to develop her own style. It was through a Laban based dance class with the choreographer Linda Goldman that Miranda made contact with Laban and found out about a specialization course at the Dance Notation Bureau. She was accepted into the course by Bartenieff herself and after concluding her studies, still remained for one year as Irmgard's assistant. Regina returned to Brazil, initially to Brasilia, the country's capital and after two years, she went to Rio de Janeiro where she founded the Companhia AtoresBailarinos of Rio de Janeiro (ActorsDancers Co.) and was invited to teach at Angel Vianna's School. Angel had been her ballet teacher and was at the time, establishing her own practice on body awareness and expression attuned to the contemporary dance which was also starting to be gestated there. As soon as she arrived, Regina published *O Movimento Expressivo* (The Expressive Movement), her first book to introduce the Laban System, a name she started using in place of Laban Movement Analysis, thus emphasizing the systemic character of this study.

It would take more than one decade until the next Brazilian CMA returned to Brazil with a LIMS's diploma. Marta Soares and Ciane Fernandes went back to Brazil in mid-1990's, the first one to São Paulo, the latter to Brasilia initially, moving to Salvador, Bahia later on.

During this decade, Regina consolidated the language of her ActorsDancers Co. as a contemporary work of dance theatre, totally informed by the Laban System – which brought a qualitative differential to the panorama of Rio de Janeiro's performing arts. The group of dancers/actors engaged themselves in a complete immersion in the universe of the company's spectacles, attended many classes with Regina and studied Laban's and Bartenieff's theories, in order to incorporate their concepts. This way, an "informal" qualification began – "informal" as it was not academic or institutionalized, which allowed for a strong cohesion of the company's language, also enabling these artists to become disseminators of Laban/Bartenieff's work. This way,

many professionals formed at the ActorsDancers Co. went on to continue working with Laban/Bartenieff's System, some even seeking to formalize their studies at one of the Laban institutions abroad (as in my own case).

In 1983 Angel Vianna opened the technical high school level course on dance in her space and invited Regina Miranda to teach classes on Laban. This was an important choice, first for making evident the affinity between Angel's thoughts and Laban's philosophy. Second, because Regina called her dancers to teach classes together with her, preparing them to be in her place when she left Angel's school later on. In 2001, in addition to the technical course, the undergraduate school (Angel Vianna's College) was created and Angel called Regina back to format the discipline based on Laban/Bartenieff. The affinity between Angel's work and Laban/Bartenieff principles is very strong within this school and the contemporary dance language that has been developed in this space is very informed by LMA lenses. Since the College has been forming many artists acting on dance/theatre national scenario, we can say that LIMS has been impacting our performing arts, specially in Rio de Janeiro. Later on, in 2010, Regina once more called upon Angel, when conceiving the Specialization Program on Laban/Bartenieff System, wishing to have this course taught at Angel Vianna's College. Since then, this post-graduation course has been offering a consistent specialization on LMA, having among its teachers, Brazilian CMAs as well as some foreign ones, whenever possible. This course has an equivalence program, in partnership with LIMS, allowing the student who completes the 4 course modules to attend another 2 modules in New York, in addition to the final assessments, thus obtaining the CMA title.

The 90's decade consolidated an intense flow of Brazilians achieving the Certificate Program, becoming CMAs and returning to Brazil. First, Marta Soares (1989) and Ciane Fernandes (1993/1994), then Angela Loureiro (1994/1995) – who in that time already lived in Paris and did not return to Brazil, next Marisa Lambert (1994/1996) – who attended a program directed by LIMS at Université du Quebec à Montreal and Henrique Schuller – who did not become a CMA, but completed the program. Soon after, Marisa Napolini (1996/1997), Flavia Valle (1996/1997) and Cibele Sastre (1998/1999).

In the 2000's, we had initially Marilia Bezerra (2000), later Adriana Bonfatti, myself and Marina Martins attending the modular program in New York, next Bruna Fiúza (2009) and Juliana Vicari (2011?) and more recently, Julia Franca (2013), Letícia Nabuco (2018), Ligia Tourinho (2018) and Marcus Vinicius Machado (2018), all of them completing the equivalence program between the Rio de Janeiro Program and LIMS's Modular Program; plus Maria Mommensohn (2018), who was Duschenes's pupil, completed a specialization course at Laban Centre London and this year has just finished the Modular Certificate Program at LIMS.

The great majority of these professionals returned to Brazil and went on to teach in federal universities, in dance and/or theatre courses throughout the country. Many of them are performing arts creators with their own work or collaborative work and in both cases – in teaching and performance – these professionals state the impact that their studies at LIMS had in their professional lives.

Through a questionnaire applied to these CMAs, we verified that the option for LIMS brings a transdisciplinary perspective to movement studies, this perspective being a strong characteristic of contemporaneity. Despite the majority of CMAs acting directly on the field of performing arts, the interfaces with other knowledge fields such as Psychology, therapeutic practices, Anthropology, non-verbal Communication, represent an acquisition to the system, opening many possibilities to the practical application of Laban material and widening the personal worldview. The integration of many levels of acting in the world made by Laban lenses is also recurrent in these professionals' statements – either in arts, education, research or daily life, everything is connected through movement and Laban System is embodied in the personal and professional practice of these CMAs.

Finally, an increasing number of CMAs has been contributing, in the last decades, to the consolidation and recognition of a labanian field in Brazil – a field which has been growing even more with the Specialization Program on Laban/Bartenieff System in Rio and the addition of many professionals who studied at the English school (Laban Centre London), who are equally active and integrated in this field. The labanian field in Brazil – initially concentrated in São Paulo and Bahia, brought by the pioneers and later in Rio de Janeiro, brought by Miranda – has today spread to all regions in Brazil, a huge country, growing rhizomatically into a network of researchers, educators,

artists and creators who reaffirm and update the labanian knowledge in its multiple processes and applications.

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