



Volume 5 *Fall 2020*

2020

Citizenship on Stage: A Project of the Popular Theatre School in Rio de Janeiro

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Recommended Citation

Staff, ETP (2020) "Citizenship on Stage: A Project of the Popular Theatre School in Rio de Janeiro," *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*: Vol. 5, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ptoj/vol5/iss1/7>

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Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal

Vol. 5, Issue 1 (Fall 2020)

Citizenship on Stage: A Project of the Popular Theatre School in Rio de Janeiro

The Staff of ETP (the School of Popular Theatre)¹

Cidadania em Cena (Citizenship on Stage) was born of an initiative to create permanent Theater of the Oppressed workshops in popular pre-university school units in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Conducted by pairs of monitors formed by the School of Popular Theater, the goal of the year-long project was to create groups that use the theater as an instrument for reflection and intervention in their own reality.

¹ With special acknowledgement of Samantha Su for her leadership. Samantha is a social communicator and journalist who graduated from the Federal Fluminense University, cultural activist, member of the Popular Theater School (ETP RJ), and popular educator for at the Center for Studies and Solidarity Actions of Maré (CEASM). She is also Slam master of the poetry battle Slam Praça Preta in Niterói.



CIDADANIA EM CENA

2019

THEATRE OF THE
OPPRESSED IN PRE-TEST
SCHOOLS RUN BY SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS

ONE YEAR OF ART AND
EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION



A PROJECT OF THE
POPULAR THEATRE
SCHOOL FROM RIO DE
JANEIRO (ETP - RJ)



THE PROJECT

Cidadania em Cena (Citizenship on Stage) was born of an initiative to create permanent theater of the oppressed workshops in popular pre-university schools units in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Conducted by pairs of monitors formed by the School of Popular Theater, the workshops took place over a year in four units. The goal was to create groups that use the theater as an instrument for reflection and intervention in their own reality. This action is in partnership with organizations committed not only to the entrance of young people from the periphery to the university, but also to a critical popular education project. These were the popular pre-university +Nós (+Us) network at Caxias and Centro of Rio units and the Maré Solidarity Studies and Actions Center (CEASM), located in Morro do Timbau.

Published by UNI ScholarWorks, 2020

Through theater, spaces are created for activating citizenship, addressing material reality and the issues that permeate social life. And, in the current scenario, it is clear that the conjuncture – the political correlation of social and political forces at a specific moment – requires reflection, contestation and intervention. The growth of authoritarian discourses in various countries has led us to rethink our forms of social organizations, our tools and methods.

The boldness to articulate art, education, and politics in the face of such a harsh conjuncture and, at the same time, during a period as sensitive as the college entrance exam.₃



THE POPULAR THEATRE SCHOOL

The School of Popular Theater was created in 2017 to create groups of multipliers and organizers in social movements that would use the theater of the oppressed techniques as an instrument of struggle. Today, after almost three years of existence, the School is a militant space that brings together actors and non-actors with the goal of boosting social struggle through culture. Participants of the School include activists from: RUA - Anticapitalist Youth collective, the youth of the Movement of Homeless Workers (MTST), the West Zone Cultural Collective, in addition to students and former students of Martins Penna Theater State Technical School and members of the Vitto Gianotti occupation.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ptoj/vol5/iss1/7>

In this sense, the project **CITIZENSHIP ON STAGE** aims to expand the limits of the performance territory of the School of Popular Theater, inserting theatrical practice and political reflection in the spaces formed by citizens who are on the fringes of these discussions by traditional and institutional methods, such as the population of the slums and of working class neighborhoods.

Understanding that no pursuit of social rights is disconnected from politics is the engine of this project. And theater is the fuel.

CORE GROUPS

Opening up a broad dialogue in an increasingly individualized society submerged in its struggles for survival is a challenge for all the people that understand the need to make political action a constituent and conscious part of social being. Thus, it seems very necessary that the performances are inserted in the territories and dynamics that give meaning to people's lives, creating identification and perceiving the diversity posed by the different realities of social actors.



MARÉ CEASM



CAXIAS



Our mission is to contribute to the construction of subjects, active and participatory, able to reflect on the past, transform reality in the present, and invent the future, using the stages as spaces for dialogue.

CENTER OF RIO DE JANEIRO



MARÉ CORE

ETP's core in Maré was a partnership with the Pre-College Entrance Examination Course of the Center for Solidarity Studies and Actions of Maré (CPV-CEASM), located in Morro do Timbau. Entrance exams for universities are extremely important in the life of working class youth. They are a moment in which a possibility of access to higher education for free makes it possible for them to have a better job. Therefore, some organizations do create pre-exam schools as a way to offer solidarity to the population as well as an outreach to try to organize the population. Developing games and theater of the oppressed dynamics, we had the opportunity to explore the themes of students' daily life. The situations of violence, the fears and frustrations of the college entrance examination, and especially the debate about being LGBT in the favela amid conservative family and religious morals. The latter was the chosen theme to be worked on for this year's final presentation. Our Saturday meetings begin with a collective breakfast, followed by games and scenes, most of them from the arsenal of TO, such as Image Theatre, and always ended in political debates. This work is the result of critical action and reflection through art.





The theater group at CEASM is extremely important to everyone involved for a variety of reasons, as it changes our perceptions of life, society, and ourselves. It served me to see things that I didn't realize before, to understand the importance of art in our lives, and to be aware of the immense meaning of having such a project in a college entrance exam school located in the community.

Being able to maintain the group under our circumstances was quite a complicated task, but nonetheless we managed to do a very nice job. It was very gratifying to join this group this year and learn more each day from our amazing monitors, who made this journey so much easier.

Yolanda de Souza member of Maré Core



**Presentation at
CEASM LGBT
Open Mic
07 dec**

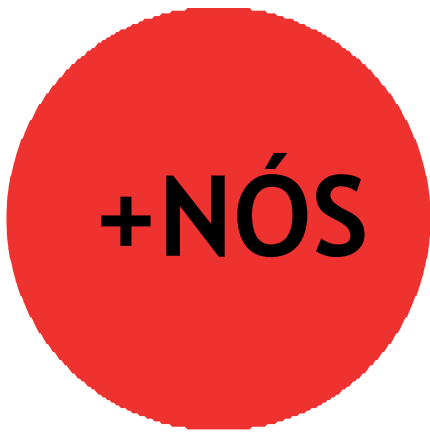
**It helped us to
see things we
didn't realize
before and to
understand the
importance of art
in our lives**

Yolanda de Souza
member of Maré Core



CAXIAS A CORE

Baixada Popular Theater School



ETP's Caxias A core was created earlier this year in partnership with the Pre Vestibular Popular + Us. Most of the group was constituted by pre-test school students, black people, women, and LGBT people. During the year, through the Theater of the Oppressed, we were able to discuss themes of the social realities lived by the people of the group. At the end of the year, scenes were produced and presented on a theme that crossed the reality of everyone: the city of Duque de Caxias: The Baixada Fluminense and its stories, from the constitution of the city to current issues such as local corruption and lack of public health to deal with polluted water. "The history that the history does not tell" was a process of collective construction where everyone participated in some form of writing and staging, also putting a little of their history and perspective on the city. The discussions generated in the workshops throughout the year led the group to build together a critical view of their place in the world.





I think it was enriching, this contact with the art that we, the Baixada, had this year.

Pablo Henrique Saldanha
member of Caxias A Core



ART TO FIGHT!

It is hard to get across in words what such a massive and important project meant. But I think the great significance lies in obtaining knowledge when it comes to Theater of the Oppressed, the synthesis of this method and, especially, in the experiences and interpersonal emotional ties that we obtained. Whether with the monitors (Daniel and Thais S2) or with the companions we have gained.

I think it was enriching, this contact with the art that we, the Baixada, had this year. The experiences, the classes, the exercises, the exchange of information and, especially, our play. All of this contributed greatly within a difficult year, a year in which art suffered greatly. Nevertheless, I am sure it will be marked in me as a time when I could come into contact with something so essential: **the theater.**

Pablo Henrique Saldanha

member of Caxias A Core





CAXIAS B CORE

Baixada Popular Theater School

The municipality of Duque de Caxias has been a very receptive territory to our workshops: in the second semester, a second class was created and, immediately, was already proving itself a potent addition to the proposed theatrical experience. One feature, however, highlights this collective: a group made up mostly of women, except for – we must not forget – Zaki, son of Rebeca, one of the students of the class, having been immediately welcomed by ETP Caxias. As it is a women's class, the debates and scenic material presented at the end of the process focused on gender issues. It was, therefore, a space of welcome, reflection, growth, and collective construction of women willing to say and denounce daily violence through the theater. In the scene, seven women of different ages and realities staged a combination of dramaturgical snippets of each woman's experiences, through a collaborative process in partnership with the monitor, who guided the material, titled: "Didn't like it! Suck it up 'cause I am who I am! Futuristic thoughts in the fight against machismo and the oppression."



MAKE THE MAGIC HAPPEN!

And maybe one Saturday morning,
instead of living the things of life
as it has to be, I stop to see
and make the magic happen!
The magic of being another being me
and being another being many and,
dividing me being whole and,
being whole, to be big
how magicians need to be ...
Maybe this magic is magic to say no to
everything that hurts
but yes to what rebuild ...



Maybe it's magic to
change the world,
or to change me!
I just know it's real magic!
And I can scream around,
that on a Saturday
morning,
in this reinventing,
art invaded me hard
and I could see and do
the magic happens!

Daniela Lopes
Caxias B Core Member



CENTER CORE



Our project also experienced some meetings with students from different regions of Rio in the center of Rio de Janeiro. Theatre of the Oppressed workshops were also done in partnership with Pre-College Popular + Us, located at the UFRJ Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences.

We brought together youth and adults to discuss some concrete challenges such as work and university entry, urban mobility, and city divisions. This class, unfortunately, failed to make it to the end of the year.



The challenge of discussing the territory in an often transitory environment like the City Center. Where participants came from different places in Rio de Janeiro and therefore also had different difficulties in accessing the city.



The inability to complete popular college entrance exams is a consequence of social inequalities. These inequalities are also reproduced in the educational system and, therefore, we believe that, in addition to thinking about the theater, we must rehearse the construction of mechanisms for youth to be studying and making art, whether it be in universities, sports, or a good job.



Our project faces this pedagogical challenge with the certainty that it is not enough to rehearse social transformation: it is necessary to struggle during the educational process to constantly realize that transformation.

VISITS

Citizenship on Stage is not only intended to democratize theatrical techniques, but also to work to build the democratization of theater access. Therefore, throughout the year, we joined the Popular Theater School to watch three plays together with the project members.



Black Drop of Water

The original text by Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes (1975) fell at the same time as the UERJ (University of Rio) entrance exam of 2019. We had the opportunity to take the entrance exam students to the play.

October 26, 2019

During July and August our monitors worked the text during the workshops in each core.



The work that is (not) a dream

During the Duque de Caxias National Theater Festival, we took the core to see the play by the group Pé de Cabra Coletivo that talks, among other things, about the work of the actor himself.

October 4, 2019

Feminist Cabaret

During the passage of the São Paulo group in Rio de Janeiro, we held a workshop offered by the actresses about the history and theatrical technique of Cabaret and we went together to watch the presentation.

October 5, 2019

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ptoj/vol5/iss1/7>



INTERDISCIPLINARY

Citizenship on Stage, as a project that combines art with education, cannot shy away from being present in the activities and dynamics proposed by the college entrance exam schools. We went to meetings, seminars, and activities which were designed to accompany the pedagogical development of the pre-test school, or to think of interdisciplinary perspectives that combine theater with entrance exam preparation.



We participate in activities such as the historical circuit by Maré, an activity developed by CEASM to tell the story of the formation of the favelas in Maré in articulation with the school subjects. We gave a workshop with teachers and students to investigate the places of affection and disaffection in the slum complex and a workshop on choir.



We were also present at the “Aulão” (“Big class”) of the Pre-UERJ, offering workshops for all + Us students along with the students who were already part of Citizenship on Stage



We also think together in thematic classes with other subjects, such as literature, thus building a bridge between interpretation and representation of literary texts.

“BIG MEETINGS” (ENCONTRÕES)

We held two major meetings of Citizenship on Stage. Our School received the students from the cores for an exchange of experiences we had in each permanent workshop. In this way militants, social movements, college students, actors and non-actors shared an expanded, pedagogical, and artistic experience about political theater and the educational process.



First Date Citizenship On Stage. Workshops and research on themes + going to the theater
October 26, 2019



Citizenship On Stage Encounter. Rehearsal and performance of scenes for open audiences
December 08, 2019



PERSPECTIVES: The Centrality of Culture in Social Transformation

Augusto Boal, in 2009, in his speech at Unesco, when being named ambassador, stated that:

Actors are all of us, and citizens are not those who live in society, but those who transform it.

From this perspective, CITIZENSHIP ON STAGE hopes, through continued work with the theater, to train citizens to act in society, constantly transforming it, being protagonists in their spaces and constituting humanitarian and essentially democratic relations.



PERSPECTIVES: It's time for us to be together!

This is just the beginning of this work. During 2020, the year of even tougher battles for citizenship and democracy, we want to grow even more. Reach more places, train more monitors, be able to continue the groups formed in 2019 so that today's students can become future monitors in their own territories. To build a path for a pedagogical policy between art and education increasingly articulated with popular social and pre - college entrance movements.

We have been dreaming a lot!

Support from many donors has made several dreams possible and encouraged us to start building a long road of social transformation through art and education.

To resist, it is not enough to say no: desire is necessary!

(Augusto Boal)

ETP comes into my life at a very unexpected time, if I may say so. In a sensitive moment, where there are many choices and attitudes to be taken. However, since the first class, I found myself facing a great conflict. Being afraid of living from art, even more as a mother, in a culturally contradictory society. But over time, I allowed myself to rekindle the hope that had been erased during high school, and through the theater I could be absolutely sure that anything is possible. Running after our dreams is no waste of time!

Brenda Aguiar
member of Maré Core

Photos

Ynara Noronha
Pam Nogueira
Marx Mascarenhas

Texts

Thaís Paiva
Samantha Su
Juan Leal
Fabrício Sigales
Marx Mascarenhas

Testimonials

Yolanda Souza
Pablo Henrique Saldanha
Brenda Aguiar

Poetry

Daniela Lopes

Layout

Samantha Su

Executive Committee of the School of

Popular Theater

Thaís Paiva
Samantha Su Marx
Mascarenhas Juan
Leal
Daniel Nadai
Geo Britto
Julian Boal

Actors in the scenes (12/08)

♦ Maré Core

Yolanda Souza
Lucas Souza
Brenda Aguiar

Monitors: Samantha Su e Ramires Rodrigues

♦ Caxias A Core

Aryane Ferreira
Nanda Naddon
Elaine Prazeres
Pablo Henrique Saldanha
Lucas Santana
Vinicius Oliveira
Ludmilla Mendes
Ludmila Alves
Raquel Oliveira
Vinicios Martins
Vagno Andrade

Monitors: Thaís Paiva e Daniel Nadai

♦ Caxias B Core

Daniela Lopes
Aline Martins
Camila Fernandes
Anna Clara Tostes
Fernanda Oliveira
Evellyn Cristiny dos Santos
Julia Pardo

Monitors: Fabrício Sigales e Maria Luísa Miranda

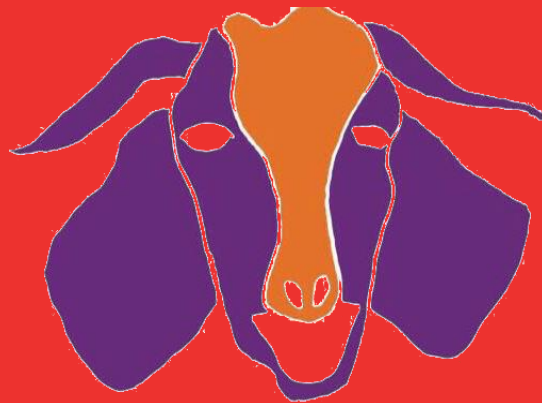
♦ Center Core

Monitors and Presenters:

Marx Mascarenhas e Natália Brambila

Our thanks to all those who participated in Citizenship on Stage even without being able to be in our final presentation. We were many and will continue to be!





*Popular
Theatre
School*