

AUDIENCE-Foyer: DIALOGUE AND PUBLIC FORMATION WITH DRAMATIC READING IN PERFORMING ARTS

Yuji Gushiken

Departamento de Comunicação, Faculdade de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso, Cuiabá, Brazil

ABSTRACT

The object of this article, whose research adopts a qualitative approach, takes an interdisciplinary path and has an applied nature, is the potential formation of theatre audiences seeking to turn them into virtually lasting public through artistic and communication practices in the field of performing arts called “audience-foyer” and “dramatic reading”. At the theoretical and methodological levels, with descriptive and interpretative purposes, it draws from the model of studies of communication as dialogue, typical of the Latin American thinking in communication, from a public relations perspective, in which the practice of conversation and commentary, between the logic of organisational communication and the affection of art, emerges for the production of the social bond between artists and audience/public. This case study is about Teatro Mosaico (Brazil), in the staging of two dramatic texts: *o Prólogo* (Prologue), by director Sandro Lucose (2005), and *A Caravana da Ilusão* (The Illusion's Caravan), by director Alcione Araújo (2000), where comedy and drama, in the same play, made the paths of a theatre company bifurcate.

KEYWORDS

communication, theatre, *audience-foyer*, dramatic reading, public formation

PLATEIA-Foyer: DIÁLOGO E FORMAÇÃO DE PÚBLICO NA LEITURA DRAMATIZADA EM ARTES CÊNICAS

RESUMO

O objeto deste artigo, em pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa, trajeto interdisciplinar e de natureza aplicada, é a formação de plateia de teatro, em sua eventualidade, e a busca pela sua transformação em público, virtualmente duradouro, através de práticas artísticas e comunicacionais designadas no campo das artes cênicas de “plateia-foyer” e “leitura dramatizada”. No plano teórico-metodológico, com objetivo descritivo e interpretativo, parte do modelo de estudos da comunicação como diálogo, característica do pensamento latinoamericano em comunicação, numa perspectiva de relações públicas, em que a prática da conversação e do comentário, entre a racionalidade da comunicação organizacional e o afeto da arte, emerge para a produção da vinculação social entre artistas e plateia/público. Opta-se por um estudo de caso sobre o Teatro Mosaico (Brasil), na montagem de dois textos dramatúrgicos: *o Prólogo*, do diretor Sandro Lucose (2005), e *A Caravana da Ilusão*, do diretor Alcione Araújo (2000), em que comédia e drama, no mesmo espetáculo, fazem bifurcar os caminhos de uma companhia teatral.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

comunicação, teatro, plateia-foyer, leitura dramatizada, formação de público

1. INTRODUCTION: THE AUDIENCE, BETWEEN TALK AND COMMENTARY

The use and dissemination of the neologism “audience-foyer” was recurrent in the Brazilian contemporary dance scene in the 1990s. The term was used in the performing arts during the 1990s at events such as “Dança Brasil” and “Panorama RioArte de Dança Contemporânea”, both held in Rio de Janeiro. In line with the model developed at the two events in Rio de Janeiro, though used at other artistic and cultural events and under different names, the *audience-foyer* activity aimed to promote the dialogue between dance spectators and creators. In the emerging dance community (artists and public), the researcher and producer Roberto Pereira (2000) credits the creation of the neologism to the researcher and professor Helena Katz, then dance critic for the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* and professor/researcher at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo.

In the most common and recurrent practice in *audience-foyer* sessions, the dialogue takes place right after the presentation of a play, with the directors and actors/dancers on stage, mediated by people directly or indirectly connected to the field of performing arts. Usually, to begin the dialogue between artists and the audience, the mediator briefly comments about the play on stage or briefly introduces the director. Then, the floor is given to the theatre company director, who makes general comments about the play on stage. During the talk, actors and/or dancers also take the floor and comment on the work from the standpoint of those who actualise the artistic work in their bodies.

The *audience-foyer* practice updates a communication context which reflects, through dialogue, another discursive operator, the artistic, which is primarily expressive, poetic and aesthetic. Communication, in this case, “translates”, or at least tries to translate art, mainly to meet the audience’s expectations, who insist on the search for a “sense” and even a “common sense” by presupposing affinities between art and communication. After the director and the actors or dancers’ intervention, following some basic protocol but with no major formalities, the public can ask the artists questions and comment on the scenic work.

The *audience-foyer*, a dialogical and epistemic practice in the artistic field, an idea in progress, emerged in the decade of the studied context as a kind of rehearsal or creative communication lab. The neologism emerges and circulates as a native category, a communication and artistic practice developed by the researched artistic community rather than a consolidated concept in the communication sciences and the arts. However, the experiences of the performing arts events are enough to see in this cultural activity a way to promote bonds with the audience so that occasional and intermittent audiences may become an established public of performing arts.

The procedures of this communication circuit in the field of performing arts introduce propositions of public relations, especially from authors with a psychosocial perspective, according to which one of the basic functions of this discipline, as applied social sciences, is to “form a public”. Moreover, this public formation is based on the exchange of information, deliberately and autonomously, by the participants of a given community in its circuits of cultural practices and dynamics of information exchange.

The public, in the modern tradition of public relations, is defined as a social category formed in the dialogical game of consciences that stand for the proposition of not necessarily converging ideas and perhaps is comparable to the ideal of the modernising process where dialogue is seen as one of the best images of educational practice and citizen formation.

2. METHODOLOGY: COMMUNICATION AS DIALOGUE

This article, with a qualitative approach (Minayo, 2009), pursues a theoretical-methodological construction in the hermeneutic process (Demo, 2014), focusing on the modes of social representation in the conversational practice of the *audience-foyer*, focusing on the collective search of the involved subjects (artists and audience), through dialogue, in the process of societal bond (Sodré, 2001), actualised in the public formation in theatre. In the theoretical sphere, by considering theatre and communication as “fields” (Bourdieu, 2004), we adopt the model of communication studies as a dialogue from the Latin American thinking in communication (Alfaro, 1998; Gushiken, 2006), the native concepts (developed in the researched environment itself) of *audience-foyer* (Pereira, 2000) and dramatic reading (Vieira, 2014), both in performing arts, and the psychosocial concept of “public”, as a social formation stemming from audience formation and public debates in public relations (Andrade, 1989; Blumer, 1946/1978; França, 2004).

In this interdisciplinary and applied research, based on a case study on the Teatro Mosaico (Brazil), we draw from the model of communication studies as dialogue in the methodological proposition of the Brazilian epistemologist Venício Artur de Lima (2001). In this model, communication is defined as “dialogue, insofar as it is not a transfer of knowledge, but an encounter of interlocutors who seek the signification of meanings” (Lima, 2001, p. 36).

Dialogism was a hallmark of communication thought in Latin America (Gushiken, 2006) in the second half of the 20th century, a historical moment when the power relations in the communication field were related to social class contradictions and the difference between developed and developing countries, especially in the context of adult education and rural extension projects (Bordenave & Carvalho, 1987).

In the Brazilian context, it was about thinking of communication from another approach, not in the communication paradigm as the diffusion of information, but in a dialogical conception, where the centralised and unidirectional nature of the communication process is altered. Dialogical communication bears the ethical responsibility to consider the figure of the receiver not as a repository of messages but as an active subject and co-participant, able to reproduce and recreate the responsibility for producing meaning in the communication process.

A political issue emerges in the dialogical perspective of communication: the processes of subjectifying and emancipating a receiver, now considering his ability to think and act, in becoming aware of his participation as a subject in the social process. Thus, in communication as dialogue, it is worth considering the developing dialectical

relationship, in which each subject has conditions (physical, intellectual, emotional) to give signification to the meanings already given in the structure of symbolic systems.

The conception of communication as dialogue, notably Latin American, as we see it, also shaped communication thinking in the emergence of public relations as a discipline in the communication field (Gushiken, 2008). Unlike propaganda, a diffusionist practice still based on notions of persuasion and function, public relations chose to conceptually present a conception of communication where the category “public” was formed in dialogical and self-critical practices (Gushiken, 2006).

Symbolically, this relationship levelling suggested a more conscious approach of the organisations to the interests of their current and potential publics at a time when a question, then neglected in the communication thinking of the 20th century, was brought to the agenda: at the general level, the broad cultural field, and, at the concrete level, the cultural difference, as a diffusionist disruptor of linear communication processes.

As this article seeks to demonstrate, the arts field is also pressured by the attraction or indifference that artistic processes can cause in their audiences. However, at the same time, given the different modern experiences of production, circulation and fruition of arts in a country of unequal access to education and cultural products like Brazil, considering the expectations that are actualised or frustrated in the strenuous search for the formation of theatre audience that, possibly, can be transformed into public.

We consider the category “public” in the psychosocial conception of public relations (Andrade, 1989; Blumer, 1946/1978; França, 2004) as that social segment that ponders a given question or problem, seeking to reach a collective conclusion, although not necessarily by majority or consensus. Thus, we circumscribe the methodological instances and methodical processes of this article.

As a general goal:

- to understand the practice of *audience-foyer* as mediating dramatic reading between theatre and communication.

As specific goals:

- to identify in the practice of dialogue the transformation of the category “audience” into the category “public”;
- theoretically characterise dialogical communication as a condition of public formation in theatre;
- to analyse public formation as a social bond and as a communication matter in the field of theatre in Teatro Mosaico.

In the methodical procedures, as an instance directly linked to the theoretical and epistemological levels (Lopes, 2003), we adopted the following tools: (a) use of document-based sources (particularly the script of the *Prólogo* (*Prologue*), written by the director Sandro Lucose) and (b) field observation of three sessions of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer*. Initially, we adopted only simple observation. However, after the first session, the company director invited us to join the dramatic reading as interlocutors and take part in the *audience-foyer* activity in the second session. Thus, the initial simple observation procedure was changed with the intervention of the researched theatre group itself, which was not exactly anticipated in the field research’s plan, but demonstrates

the communication and cultural context of the cultural practices. In the unexpected situation, although the researcher has been activated as an interlocutor by the researched company in one of the dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* sessions, leading to a participant observation context, we kept the option for simple observation in the succession of activities both of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* primarily. In unexpected situations, when considering the interference of the research in the studied field, it is important to contemplate the influence the studied field, in this case, an artistic field, has in the research process itself.

Experiencing this situation intensified our relations with the company. In a context changed by considering the communication model as dialogue, it was possible to experience a stronger pressure induced by the theatre company by inviting someone from the audience for a conversation and exchange of views. The dialogical participation highlighted: the transformation of the researcher from an element of the audience into a participant of a public, the dialogue urged by the company as a condition for this category transformation and, subsequently, the societal bond as an educating process of the audience and the theatre public.

3. THEATRE: BETWEEN ART AND COMMUNICATION

These brief excerpts from studies in communication as applied social studies are meant to address the observation of three sessions of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* activities as artistic and communication practices in the production of a theatre play. Specially to approach the audience formation and transformation, in the long run, of the audience into public for the performing arts, an activity that involves establishing a relationship, not rarely confrontational, between the arts environment and its social surroundings. It is worth noting that the *audience-foyer* activity, in this case as a supplement to dramatic reading sessions, enables contact between social segments for whom the theatre may have different interests and meanings, and even disinterests and non-meanings.

The object of this research is the formation of a public in the activities of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* in the staging of the text *A Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*) by the Brazilian playwright Alcione Araújo (2000) and the text *Prólogo* (*Prologue*) by the also Brazilian playwright Sandro Lucose (2005), by Teatro Mosaico, a company created in Rio de Janeiro and currently based in Cuiabá, capital of the state of Mato Grosso, in the Midwest region of Brazil.

The staging of *A Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*) and *Prólogo* (*Prologue*) by Teatro Mosaico, which premiered by the end of the first semester of 2005, began its season one semester earlier when rehearsals were opened to the public. Sandro Lucose, the company's director, chose to prepare the actors in closed rehearsals and through dramatic reading, an activity open to the public and, in the early 2000s, still an emerging practice in the Brazilian theatre circuit.

The *audience-foyer* and dramatic reading sessions emerged in that period as supplementary activities in the field of theatre. However, they demonstrated the communication

need to promote theatre as an artistic field in a state capital that, at the beginning of the 21st century, the case of Cuiabá, had few active theatre companies and scarcely any with a professional structure or regular artistic activities.

The creation of theatre groups and their movement around class entities showed an incipient political organisation of the subjects involved. The professionalisation of Teatro Mosaico, the company's invented name in activity since 1995, with formal registration in the Cadastro Nacional de Pessoas Jurídicas (National Register of Legal Entities) since that year, was more an exception to the rule than a recurrent and consolidated practice in the theatre field in the capital of Mato Grosso. In this context, forming the audience and public around performing arts became challenging in developing the theatre field.

In the studied context, we use the notions of *audience-foyer* and dramatic reading both as artistic-communication phenomena and analytical categories. Based on Melvina Araújo's (2011) epistemology about syncretic cultural processes, we consider their ability to move from one context to the other in the fluidity of the categories. That is, from empirical data to a potential concept, which suggests, in the studied interface between the theatre and communication fields, the emergence of the so-called "native categories" to the extent that a particular field is now thought by the subjects involved in its production themselves.

The production of the dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* sessions, which included the work of organisational communication due to the need for forming the audience and the public in 2005, was the responsibility of the actor Celso Francisco Gayoso, then a journalism student at the Federal University of Mato Grosso, who played the character Roto, in *A Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*). Having an actor and communicator, roles that are unfolded in the local theatre scene, given the lack of specific training in scenic arts in Mato Grosso, contributed to establishing, in an interdisciplinary and laboratory fashion, a communication thinking in Teatro Mosaico, which included the practice of press office and the development of institutional relations of the company with its publics, then, developing. The sessions of open rehearsals as dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* were intended to develop institutional relations. They were used to prepare the tour in the second half of that year under the coordination of the Fundação Nacional de Arte, an agency of the Ministry of Culture.

The *Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*), a one-act play, is the ninth work by Alcione Araújo (2000), completed in 1981. Based on the contemplation of Pablo Picasso's paintings from the Rose Period, the play is about the paradoxical optimistic sadness of the members of the Medrano Circus, in Paris, given the material precariousness of the members of its troupe and the melancholy of the scenes backstage. Alcione Araújo's play features Bufo, Lorde, Bela, Roto and Ziga. All of them are members of a small circus troupe that, in the middle of a desert landscape, needs to decide what direction to take when, after the leader's death, "the road bifurcates".

Prólogo (*Prologue*), written by Sandro Lucose (2005), director of Teatro Mosaico, is a metalinguistic text, an explicit reference to the theatre itself, by recreating characters from renowned texts of comic theatre, among them *O Mambembe*, by Artur Azevedo,

and *The Imaginary Invalid*, by Molière. In *Prólogo (Prologue)*, the director tries to scenically combine classical national and international theatre repertoires with elements of popular Brazilian culture. That approach has produced a comedy in which the traces of theatre are deconstructed in the popular discourse, moving closer to the imagination that can produce laughter when confronted with the solemnity of the theatrical environment as high art.

Comedic resources are evident in the dramatic reading of *Prólogo (Prologue)*, which includes excerpts and suggestions of mannerisms recurrent in the comedy genre. It is no coincidence that one of the direct references recreated by the director Sandro Lucose is *O Mambembe*, described as burlesque, a reference to joking and mocking, with mischievous enunciations and spicy puns, a parody of the solemnity of the dramatic theatre and satire that makes social criticism (Celestino & Martins, 2018). Thus, *Prólogo (Prologue)*, early in the show's staging, sets a fast and hallucinatory pace in causing laughter, which would later impact, through contrast, the rhythmic deceleration in the excerpt from *A Caravana da Ilusão (The Illusion's Caravan)*.

In the staging of *A Caravana da Ilusão (The Illusion's Caravan)*, the characters face the following doubt: to head towards the sea or the mountain? In *Prólogo (Prologue)*, the director has another doubt during the play's staging: to head towards comedy or drama? While staging the two works, one after the other, in the same show, Teatro Mosaico asks its different publics about the intersection between art and communication: occasional audience or participating public? The dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* become a circuit of production, circulation and consumption of information in which the doubts about the course of the show do not fade away. However, the context eventually structures the conditions for creating another narrative through which it seeks to form an audience and transform the (invariably occasional) audience into a (possibly permanent) public.

Dramatic reading, an educational resource in arts and education, and more recently in performing arts, has become a halfway between reading and theatre, thus optimising two fundamental educational tools: reading and dramatic expression (Vieira, 2014, p. 233). A rehearsal includes work with actors and may be interrupted by the director for corrections of pace, voice intonation, and marking of the scenic space, among other aspects of the theatre production. In the dramatic reading, with miscues or not, the rehearsal usually proceeds before a possible audience that might attend the venue. The possibility of an audience assumes there is a reduced and occasional public in the performing arts. They are generally members of other theatre groups, art students or friends who spontaneously come to the rehearsal venue. Regarding societal bond production, the possibility of the audience determines the investment of theatre companies in organisational communication and the formation of the audience and the permanent public.

The three dramatic readings of *Prólogo (Prologue)* and *A Caravana da Ilusão (The Illusion's Caravan)* produced two artistic experiences, which we seek to analyse from the perspective of communication: (a) dramatic readings open to the general public, occasions in which the company specifically invites speakers, experts or not on theatre, to

exchange views and comments, advertising these sessions through the press, mainly in the culture sections; and (b) the *audience-foyer* exercise conducted, after the readings, with the invited speakers and with the general audience, which, through advertising and invitations, attended the readings.

The season had three series of dramatic readings, followed by debates in the *audience-foyer* practice. In the first session at the Centro Cultural Casa Cuiabana, two philosophy teachers were invited: Professor Maurilia Valderez do Amaral (MA) and Professor José Carlos Leite (PhD), they were both then linked to the Institute of Human and Social Sciences of Federal University of Mato Grosso). In the second session, the guest was from the area of communication: Professor Yuji Gushiken (PhD), whom that year was linked to the Institute of Languages of Federal University of Mato Grosso and participated as a guest and commentator (on this occasion, there was also a dramatic reading of *A Menina e o Vento* [*The Girl and the Wind*], by the Brazilian playwright Maria Clara Machado). At the third dramatic reading, followed by the *audience-foyer*, two renowned theatre artists joined the debates: João Brites, Portuguese, director of the theatre group O Bando, from Portugal, and Amauri Tangará, Brazilian, director of the Company D'Artes do Brasil.

The first two sessions, held with non-experts in theatre, had, each one, around 20 people in the audience, with a heterogeneous profile, suggesting a repressed and still diffuse demand but a potential demand for consumption of plays and debates about performing arts. The third session, probably because it was directed to theatre experts, especially as they were two relevant names in the Portuguese and Brazilian theatre, had a more limited attendance, which is not a problem, as the expert public, as a legitimating element of a field, has a strong influence among artistic groups in the exchange of views and experiences.

The discussions between artists and the various segments of the public followed one after the other, questions were asked, doubts were addressed to the director, songs were hummed, questions were formulated among peers, and even suggestions were given for staging the scenic work at issue. In the first session, contemporary philosophy professors promoted reflections on the distinction between aesthetics and poetics, producing their perceptions of the dramatised text based on their own academic studies. In the second session, the relations between space and time, given the experience produced in the backyard of an old historical mansion, had as its main interest the production of the scenic space directly related to the places of memory in the city. In the third session, given the significance of the two invited theatre directors in the artistic field in Portugal and Brazil, the emphasis of the talk on expert observation fell on the pace that the company was imprinting between the comedy and drama sections.

The dialogical character of the process was established, and it made a difference in the conception of the show, which, in an interactive and participatory process, started right there in the dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* debates. The show's production began virtually in the exchange of information, which at the very least, confuses the idea of the beginning and end of artistic work and the very notion of the premiere. While the

aesthetic object is the impact of the artefact (dramatic text, in this case) on the reader (Kothe, 1981), the dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* highlight the short-circuit that the work promotes between author and receiver, insofar as the author, director and actors start a dialogue with different audience profiles, in the process of becoming a company's public.

Although the classical texts were known by the specific public (actors and theatre directors), they were still novelties for other professional profiles that started to become "public" in the dialogue about the arts. In the circuit of exchange of views, philosophy professors produced comments and gave interpretations to the dramatic texts, opening new lines of research and possibilities in the staging in progress. The communication researcher expanded his own repertory on arts as he outlined impressions on the rehearsed play and, in that context, participated more as mediator than a qualified interlocutor in the theatrical field. Experts in theatre made comments that sounded like a very specific code proper to the theatrical scene. Overall, theatre experts and laypeople became familiar with the text of the *Prólogo (Prologue)*, by the director Sandro Lucose, and the text of *A Caravana da Ilusão (The Illusion's Caravan)*, by Alcione Araújo.

The *Prólogo (Porlogue)* sets the tone of the comedy, in an exercise of reading and dramatic expression to the actors, with the text spoken at a fast pace, a technique that the theatre community regards as questionable assimilation for the actor's exercise but of easy access for non-expert audiences. The script, distributed to the guests for preliminary reading, informs them that the *Prólogo (Prologue)* will be staged outside the theatre building. At the end of this part, the troupe, like a caravan, invites the audience to enter the venue with an Italian stage. End of the *Prólogo (Prologue)*, end of the comedy. Beginning, for the company, of the drama, in a broader sense. In this second part of the work, the staging continues with *A Caravana da Ilusão (The Illusion's Caravan)*, a one-act play by Alcione Araújo. The dramatic density of the text abruptly slows down the frenetic pace of the *Prólogo (Prologue)*. From comedy to drama, the image of possible reactions from the audience circulates, still in the virtual potential.

The lay public's overall preference, at least in the universe of mass culture, for comedy is well known, as well as the difficult attraction that dramas exert on them, meaning that there would be an estrangement of the public by the variety of genres in the composition of the same work.

In this tension between comedy and drama, the dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* are outlined as demands of cultural consumption, as audience mediating instruments in the construction and directions of the work. These two activities are certainly not conducted as "opinion research" or "market research", as if art would necessarily invest in this kind of technology for predicting preferences and the company's need to turn the play into a commodity of the entertainment industry. However, these activities provide the play and the company's director with insights into the countless interpretations actualised in the dialogue with the audience because of the diversity that forms it.

In the three reading and *audience-foyer* sessions, one of the aspects that apparently most affected the audience, especially the expert public of actors and directors,

was exactly the pace deceleration from the *Prólogo's* (*Prologue's*) comedy genre to the *A Caravana da Ilusão's* (*The Illusion's Caravan's*) dramatic. The theatre provokes the audience, which, in the wake of becoming public, questions the theatre company, forming an ethos around a certain artistic and cultural field in these dialogues. In this case, the exchange of information takes place no longer in a linear fashion but rather in a multi-directional way, in its bivalence and vagueness, as analysed from the Latin American communication thinking perspective and its re-readings in the area of public relations and organisational communication. In this process, not always perceptible, the modes of societal bond between the theatre company and its various publics are updated.

4. COMMUNICATION: INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE AS GIFTS

By incorporating the general public's perspective into the work, which comes back to the public as a show, the open dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* actualise a kind of contemporary communication and cultural system of *gift* and *counter-gift*. Social science studies describe such a phenomenon in non-Western cultures as a kind of total prestations system, through which Marcel Mauss (2003) tried to understand better the nature of human transactions in societies around us. The *audience-foyer*, complementing the dramatic reading, is actualised as a system of informational gifts and counter-gifts. Rather than flowing from one point to another unidirectionally, information circulates, modulating societal bonds and the production of knowledge about theatre. The information sent out returns, forming a proper communication and epistemic circuit. The communication process modulates, in this case, the formation of the theatre audience and public.

From the occasional public to the artificially induced and historically produced public, controversial theme in organisational communication, there is at least one feature to be noticed in the *audience-foyer* activities: this activity becomes an effort not only for the simple audience formation. Attracting an audience to a play's presentation is equivalent to simply "setting a relationship" between an organisation — in this case, a theatre company — and its social environment without producing permanent relationships.

The special feature of the *audience-foyer* is that, in the communication dimension of this cultural activity, it goes beyond simply attracting the audience as a promotion of social relations because the effort of public formation happens at a higher level, that is, in the production of societal bonds as socially established structures, therefore, more lasting. In other words, more than just attending performances in the scenic space, the debate with the audience makes it shift from being a sporadic and occasional group of people to becoming one public, which, at least hypothetically, produces more consistent, intellectual and emotional bonds with the organisation, in this case, the theatre company.

The company offers the art of theatre as a *gift*. The audience offers the gaze through which the work is actualised as a *counter-gift*. The public — the audience that discusses the work and gives artistic and historical consistency to the trajectory of the company — actualises that "spirit of the given thing" which, circulating in the audience that is

formed, will, at least hypothetically, lay the foundations for the formation of a theatre public. It is when the knowledge and secrets exchanged between the theatre company and the public take on the guise of horizontal, participatory communication practices, in which the theatre company (organisation) gets entangled in the social environment of its surroundings and reinvents an idea of cultural practice, beyond the artistic practice.

However, there is a certain dubiousness in such an event. Initially, there is the need to make the artistic environment accessible, especially the theatre, as a place sacralised by the rituals of the so-called “high culture” to a larger segment of society, the non-experts and even the theatre non-public, to disseminate the secrets of the arts and form new audiences and publics, until then only in the virtual potential. Then, or simultaneously, it becomes evident the company needs to turn to the peers of the artistic environment, that is, other artists, considered as “public of interest” (Giacomo, 1993), to have a specialised reading in the debates about the work and to produce a symbolic safety margin to the staging process and the result of the work then staged.

This dubiousness is explained by the fact that, from the organisational point of view, the company considers and invests in the demand of the expert public, which would be the *public of interest*, showing interest in developing the processes and artistic thinking. Concurrently, more than engaging with expert peers, the company diagnoses the need to expand the audience and, consequently, to form a public. The development of relationships with its various publics are challenges that define the trajectory of the theatre company, which activates, from an artistic field, communication as dialogue, a communication model as a tool for managing the demands, and virtual crises, that arise with the interpellation (intellectual, sensitive, marketing) of its different publics.

In other words, these dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* activities highlight the expansion of the audience, the creation of an audience that simultaneously becomes one public, with the participation of experts, but creating a social bond as a communication affair and, specifically, an emotional bond between the theatre company and the social environment of the hosting city and other places where it takes its scenic repertoire. Therefore, it is not only about meeting the demand of the so-called “public of interest”, which in the case of the theatre would be composed of the expert critics and the expert audience but also, and not less importantly, the demand of a wider audience and public, which would actualise the image of social critique in the processes of artistic fruition and consumption.

The *audience-foyer* activity actualises giving visibility to precepts of public relations studies and Latin American thinking in communication in its dialogical aspect. It challenges the idea that communication techniques would be “secrets” and knowledge restricted to academic and professional circles. However, popular wisdom, a public domain, makes such knowledge an already applied common good, a kind of critical fortune, which, in our view, designates the paradigmatic power of communication in shaping contemporary culture.

These aspects of the theatrical scene are relevant to the field of communication insofar as they show the deliberate practice of a dialogue between artists and audience,

in which the work at issue already has a virtually powerful existence. This case study outlines a process: the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso borrows the images of his well-known Rose Period from the barnstormer life of a circus in France; the Brazilian playwright Alcione Araújo reacts to a certain optimistic sadness of Pablo Picasso's paintings by writing *A Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*); the Brazilian playwright Sandro Lucose produces a staging of Alcione Araújo's text and writes *Prólogo* (*Prologue*), directing scenically both in dramatic readings and *audience-foyer*.

In this inter-semiotic translation process (from visual arts to literature and theatre and from arts to communication issues), the theatrical work is not restricted to the script's text or the staging experience. In the dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* exercises, the director, in starting a dialogue with the audience, makes the staging process more than the staging of a text. The theatre company, through the director and the actors, goes beyond: in that work, the group highlights the condition of a hypertext, open, susceptible to the eyes of the audience that, through a specialised or non-specialised social critique, to a certain extent, interferes in the work that will be seen on the stage months later. Before you knew it, the work was already in progress, before the eyes and with the public's participation, well before the so-called official premiere.

5. INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE: BETWEEN COMEDY AND DRAMA

The Mosaico Theatre defined itself, in that period, as a "repertoire company" that included in its professional history, until the studied period, the staging of *A Menina e o Vento* (*The Girl and the Wind*; Maria Clara Machado), *Auto da Estrela Guia* (Sandro Lucose), *Muito Barulho por Nada* (*Much Ado About Nothing*; William Shakespeare) and *Sambalelê* (an adaptation of Brazilian folklore into a musical). According to the management's diagnosis, the company's institutional image suggests that, with such a repertoire, Teatro Mosaico has established itself before its publics as a comedy company¹.

Such repertoire has brought invitations to participate in scenic arts festivals throughout Brazil: "Londrina International Festival" (Paraná State), "São José do Rio Preto Theatre Festival" (São Paulo State), "Curitiba Theatre Festival" (Paraná State) and "Goiânia em Cena" (Goiás State), as well as tours through cities in several other states of the country. With the recognition of such a repertoire by the peers of the national artistic community, the simultaneous staging in the same work of a comedy, *Prólogo* (*Prologue*), and a drama, *A Caravana da Ilusão* (*The Illusion's Caravan*), emerges, therefore, as a challenge for demanding new exercises in direction, staging and production. Between comedy and drama, paraphrasing an excerpt from the script of Alcione Araújo's text, in the company's trajectory, "the path bifurcates".

Based on this challenge, dramatised reading and *audience-foyer* practice is understood as an "invention" of a cultural activity that produces differences regarding the play's staging. The reading and the debate are inscribed as another moment of cultural

¹ Later on, the company would make stagings of dramatic plays with characters from the popular imaginary, such as *Anjo Negro* (Black Angel; Nélson Rodrigues) and *Peer Gynt* (Henrik Ibsen), among others.

goods' production, circulation and consumption. It is certainly not up to art to "communicate" a work's virtual "sense" to the public. However, it is up to the company to exercise, in the dialogue experience, the ability of the slightest prediction to inform the new activities and proper cultural cartographies, which also change the institutional image of the company.

In other words, it is not only the transition from comedy to the drama that modulates the institutional image of Teatro Mosaico. The readings and the *audience-foyer* activities entail a modulation of the concept of the company sought to be built. Initially, the dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* would be devices that would capture the audience's sensations for the staging of the work. However, these two activities tend to win the statute of cultural events themselves, as they are invented as other ways of affecting an audience that, arduously and slowly, is transformed into a public.

Theatre production in Cuiabá, in the first half of the first decade of the 21st century, was revitalised amid a simultaneous profusion of musical, literary, audiovisual and plastic arts production, among other arts, including theatre. The condition of the so-called "cultural"² consumption in the city, not different in other regions of the country, encompasses the doubt as to whether there would be an audience for theatre shows other than those of commercial productions, with media appeal of famous television actors and a strong campaign of massive advertising. This facet of the cultural backdrop emerges as the basis for thinking about the performing arts to the extent that it also becomes part of the condition of production and consumption of other artistic genres and formats.

In Cuiabá, a city located in a multi-ethnic urban agglomeration of close to a million inhabitants in the geodesic centre of South America, theatre companies work as amateurs or professionals, with the support of small and medium-sized companies, cultural marketing sponsorship from large companies within the framework of a State Law of Cultural Incentive (transformed into a State Fund of Cultural Incentive in 2006), of a Municipal Law of Cultural Incentive and events organised³ by the Ministry of Culture to meet so-called regional demands. When there is stimulus, it comes from public policies that are not always consistent and corporate marketing that is not always constant. When they exist, long-term sponsorships become support for short- and medium-term projects.

In these social-economic and political conditions, the *audience-foyer* stands out as an instrument of audience and public formation. This way, it is possible to see the dynamics this activity brings to the theatrical circuit and its sociocultural environment more broadly. Firstly, the activity forms an audience that goes to the theatre to enjoy a show. Simultaneously, it forms a public that, more than enjoying a show, hypothetically has the theatre as a mediating instance of new sociability. Theatre becomes more than a text, a staging or a staging venue. It becomes a kind of open work in which the public-audience

² Along with Teatro Mosaico, some companies have been producing steadily in Mato Grosso, such as Teatro Fúria, Pessoal do Ânima, Companhia Khatarsis, Grupo Téspis and Cena Onze.

³ Such is the case of the Caravana Funarte, a project through which theatre groups and companies circulate through their geographical regions.

participation gives the dimension of the virtuality of the scenic work and its implications in the sociocultural environment. Opening to the participation of the public-audience in Teatro Mosaico's staging of texts by Alcione Araújo and Sandro Lucose evokes the dialogue as a modulating principle, a cultural reinvention in itself immersing the imaginary already given and transforming it into a new map of reality.

6. LATIN AMERICAN THINKING IN COMMUNICATION: BETWEEN ONE USE AND ANOTHER

In the dialogical perspective of Latin American thinking in communication, the *audience-foyer* activity, when complementing the dramatic reading, does not mean that the figure of the theatre director and the company promote only an extension of knowledge, as in a trans-cultural diffusion as a transmission of specialised theatre information to a lay public.

The *audience-foyer* provides a setting for interactivity between the company and its public, a virtual public until then, in formation-actualisation in the audience watching the play. In these conditions, through the information exchange and the reflection on the themes the play proposes, the audience produces differences towards itself as a subject of knowledge and the work being composed in this mutual interventions system (the work in the audience and the audience in work).

The practice of *audience-foyer* ultimately provides, with the theatre and the debate about the theatre itself, a certain awareness of being in the world, reacting sensorially and intellectually to art and with the theatrical art. This might be called a game between citizenship, as the demand for the consumption of cultural goods and subjectivity and the production of an existential and sensitive territory. In the case of theatre, the dynamics of cultural consumption may be directly related to the plane of desire, therefore, to an unconscious dynamic. However, it is not about the unconscious as absence but about a productive dynamic, which presupposes, in the practice of dialogue, the rational bond of what the Italian-Venezuelan communication scholar Antonio Pasquali (1973) calls "with-knowledge".

Between the fruition of art and the dialogue about art, there is a transition in public formation from the merely informational to the communicational level, where language operates on the sensory and intellectual levels. As the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1977) said, in dialogue, knowledge is not only conveyed; knowledge is created through dialogue. It is when art becomes — it may be minor and not necessarily massive — a constituent element of the public interest.

From the communication perspective, more specifically from the communication thinking developed in Latin America, the creation of audience and public in the scope of the dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* does not require the theatre to impose itself to society as a cultural model to be followed or copied, as a late modernising process in a country still little accustomed to the consumption of scenic productions and to attending theatres. It is not a process of cultural coercion but a relationship of exchange, in which there is certainly mutual distrust, some vacillation in the game of invention of

the societal bond, and some uneasiness in consuming a cultural product that may seem meaningless and superfluous in daily life. Hence the evident apprehension for those outside the theatrical environment in making an emotional investment in art because it binds people by causing discomfort or it bothers them by producing bonds. Here, the art of theatre is the strange element that, in a barnstormer fashion, like a nomad in the desert, wanders through a territory and questions people with the laughter of comedy and the conflicts of other dramas.

In these intercultural contacts, there may be an initial estrangement in which the language presented, in this case, theatre, is the cause of discomfort. The relationship created, however, is bivalent. The theatre company acts as a giver of art and a producer of information. However, it plays a game in which the audience becomes a dynamic element in the artistic process. In this case, there is no donation of information as a premise for a certain cultural, specifically artistic, development, where the prevalence of an instance endowed with knowledge establishes it to those not endowed with it.

Rather, the concept of cultural production is developed to consider, through the dialogical process, the cultural environment of the company and the bivalent relationship itself, whereby the subjects involved are both producers and consumers of information. This proves that the theme treated here has parallels with what is called Latin American thinking in communication and its applications in the theoretical field of public relations and organisational communication.

Initially, one could think of theatrical production and diffusion as a way to leverage a certain society to higher levels from a cultural point of view. This issue, already worn out, has translated into cultural and communicational diffusion models with a supposedly modernising character. As old as it may be, this diffusionist modulation often re-emerges as a panacea of socioeconomic and cultural development. The field of communication in Latin America has historically presented enough studies and case reports to show the sociocultural complications of the diffusionist model. When the issue is cultural, it is important — simultaneously as a communication issue — to understand how the field of performing arts is formed in a Latin American country like Brazil. To the same extent that so many other areas wonder, for example, how an artistic field is produced, not only by production but also by public policies, educational activities and business marketing processes that currently condition the circulation and consumption of cultural goods.

The case of the theatre shows these gaps between the production and consumption of cultural goods against a backdrop of socioeconomic inequalities and cultural differences. Any diagnosis based on the cultural programming published in cultural sections of the printed media indicates, in Brazil, a strong concentration of production and consequent theatrical consumption in two cities: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the two largest and most important Brazilian metropolises. Forming theatre audiences in places where the performing arts are not a regular and consistent practice is also a matter of regional inequality.

The artistic field, whatever it may be, is certainly made with the intervention of other social instances. In the case of the scenic arts, these include training courses for actors

and theatrical direction, availability of scenic spaces, qualified producers, technical services for lighting and sound, training of specialised press and marketing professionals, educational policies directed to the artistic field and, not less important, formulation of public policies at all levels — municipal, state and federal — directed to the cultural field. This reality is not easily found outside the Rio-São Paulo axis, which means that theatre in Brazil is equivalent to modernism without modernisation. Far from being tradition, it presents itself as the element of the cult universe in search of social legitimacy in the mediation with other cultural production and consumption instances.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In Brazil, cultural traditions, like literature and memories, are more thoroughly developed than the performing arts. Theatre, despite its tradition in European and Asian countries, in the Brazilian cultural circuit is more of a young tradition, which would have, nowadays, the dramatic reading and the *audience-foyer* as mediating and legitimising devices amidst the historical formation and consolidation of national traditions. These activities are thus cultural innovations from a dramaturgical and communication point of view. More appropriately, it was up to the local conditions of production and consumption of cultural goods to reinvent their own operating mode. Innovations are cartographies produced, inventors of new maps, which change and produce an ever-fluid cultural imaginary. They are traditions of the future.

Therefore, this tradition of the theatre that reinvents itself involves the literary mediation of the dramatic reading and the communication mediation of the *audience-foyer*. This demonstrates that, nowadays, the cultivation of art involves the field of communication. This mediation is essential, while institutions of the educational and cultural field do not earn the condition of inducers of this cultivation. Communication is a field of knowledge in which theoretical uses invent language modes of operation. More specifically, the *uses* of Latin American thinking in communication invented dialogical processes of societal bonds construction.

Thus, due to its heterogeneous, even diversified activities, one can think of communication as a field that claims its hegemony through which other forms of expression, such as the performing arts, tend to connect in this contemporary world. A mode of connection is not necessarily its massive diffusion as a cultural imperative. Rather, it is about mediations invented amid the theatrical circuit, itself mediator and manager of communication processes, markedly dialogic, as once thought in Latin American geographies.

Throughout the decades, Teatro Mosaico has embarked on new experiences and with different scenic languages, staging texts of various authors, such as the English William Shakespeare, the Brazilian Nelson Rodrigues and the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, and the most recent production of artistic intervention developed by the director Sandro Lucose in his doctoral studies in the Federal University of Mato Grosso and the University of Porto, in Portugal. From memories that actualise themselves, in a thick present that does not elapse and a future yet to come, the dialogical and participatory character of the

dramatic readings and *audience-foyer* sessions is conceived as a mix of artistic-communication phenomena and analytical categories established in the many fields that seek to study the performing arts and their most productive interfaces.

So, it is possible to identify, observing the sessions of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer*, with Teatro Mosaico as a cutout, the dialogism as a horizontal communication model that allows the participation of the audience and its virtual and arduous transformation into public. Then, dialogical communication, and not the mere mechanical diffusion of information, is presented as a condition for forming the public as that segment that emotionally and rationally debates a certain question of public interest. Finally, the production of the societal bond between different publics and the theatre company indicates the strength of an interface between communication and arts always in a reinvention process.

From the communication perspective, notably communication as dialogue, Teatro Mosaico has been developing in the last decades, through the director Sandro Lucose, an organisational approach of collaboration with other artists from the fields of contemporary dance, visual arts, concert music, and partners from the theatrical field itself, in Brazil and abroad. The development of these relationships between peers, which at times are also inter-institutional relationships, demonstrates that the communication and artistic experience of dramatic reading and *audience-foyer* allowed the company, created in Rio de Janeiro and based in Cuiabá, to create a path in the theatrical field of Mato Grosso and Brazil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the director Sandro Lucose and the actor Celso Francisco Gayoso (Teatro Mosaico) for the opportunity to participate as a listener and mediator in audience-foyer and dramatic reading sessions and for the follow-up information that allowed the production of this article.

REFERENCES

- Alfaro, R. M. (1988). Participación... Para qué? Un enfoque político de la participación en la comunicación popular. *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, (22), 1–52.
- Andrade, T. de. A. (1989). *Psicossociologia das relações públicas*. Edições Loyola.
- Araújo, A. (2000). *A caravana da ilusão: Delírio em um ato*. Civilização Brasileira.
- Araújo, M. (2011). O vai e vem dos conceitos, de categoría analítica a categoría nativa ou vice-versa: O caso do sincretismo. *Debates do NER*, (19), 121–140. <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8136.19025>
- Blumer, H. (1978). A massa, o público e a opinião pública (M. Sergio, Trad.). In G. Cohn (Ed.), *Comunicação e Indústria Cultural* (pp. 177-186). Companhia Editora Nacional (Trabalho original publicado em 1946)
- Bordenave, J. D., & Carvalho, H. M. de (1987). *Comunicação e planejamento*. Paz e Terra.

- Bourdieu, P. (2004). *A economia das trocas simbólicas* (S. Miceli, S. de A. Prado, S. Miceli, & W. C. Vieira, Trads). Perspectiva.
- Celestino, P., & Martins, F. (2018). Uma quimera quase real: A burleta *O Mambembe* de Arthur Azevedo e José Piza. *Pós, 8(15)*, 8–36. <https://periodicos.ufmg.br/index.php/revistapos/article/view/15602>
- Demo, P. (2014). *Metodologia científica em ciências sociais*. Atlas.
- França, F. (2004). *Públicos: Como identificá-los em uma visão estratégica*. Difusão Editora.
- Freire, P. (1977). *Extensão ou comunicação?* Paz e Terra.
- Giácomo, C. (1993). *Tudo acaba em festa: Evento, líder de opinião, motivação e público*. Scritta Editorial.
- Gushiken, Y. (2006). Dialogismo: Emergência do pensamento latino-americano em comunicação. *Comunicação, Mídia e Consumo, 3(8)*, 73–91. <https://doi.org/10.18568/cmc.v3i8.81>
- Gushiken, Y. (2008). Estudos em relações públicas e o pensamento latino-americano em comunicação. In Moura, C. P. de (Ed.), *História das relações públicas: Fragmentos da história de uma área*. EdiPUCRS. Retrieved from: <https://ebooks.pucrs.edipucrs/acessolivre/livros/historiarespdf>
- Kothe, F. R. (1981). *Literatura e sistemas intersemióticos*. Cortez Editora/Autores Associados.
- Lima, V. A. de (2001). *Mídia: Teoria e política*. Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo.
- Lopes, M. I. V. de. (2003). *Pesquisa em comunicação*. Edições Loyola.
- Lucose, S. (2005). *Prólogo à caravana da ilusão*. Civilização Brasileira.
- Mauss, M. (2003). *Sociologia e antropologia* (P. Neves, Trad.). Cosac Naif.
- Minayo, M. C. S. (2009). Ciência, técnica e arte: O desafio da pesquisa social. In M. C. de S. Minayo (Ed.), *Pesquisa social: Teoria, método e criatividade* (pp. 9–29). Vozes.
- Pasquali, A. (1973). *Sociologia e comunicação*. Vozes.
- Pereira, R. (2000). Texto de apresentação. In *Programa do 9º Panorama RioArte de Dança 2000* (p. 12). Secretaria Municipal de Cultura do Rio de Janeiro; RioArte.
- Sodré, M. (2001). O objeto da comunicação é a vinculação social. *PCLA, 3(1)*, 1–6. Retrieved from: <http://www2.metodista.br/unesco/PCLA/revista9/entrevista%209-1.htm>
- Vieira, C. (2014). A leitura dramatizada como atividade pedagógica e teatral. In J. D. Pereira, M. F. Vieites, & M. de S. Lopes (Eds.), *As artes na educação* (pp. 233–238). Intervenção.

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Yuji Gushiken is a lecturer at the Department of Social Communication (Journalism course) and the Postgraduate Programme (Interdisciplinary) in Contemporary Culture Studies at the School of Communication and Arts of the Federal University of Mato Grosso. He graduated in Social Communication: Journalism from the State University of Londrina and Public Relations from the Rio de Janeiro State University. He holds a doctorate and a master's in Communication and Culture from the Federal University of Rio de

Janeiro. He did post-doctoral training in the Graduate Program in Communication at the Federal University of Ceará. He is the leader of the Grupo de Pesquisa em Comunicação e Cidade (Research Group on Communication and the City).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6620-3375>

Email: yuji.gushiken@ufmt.br

Address: Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT), Avenida Fernando Correa da Costa, 2367, Campus Universitário, Faculdade de Comunicação e Artes (FCA), 2º piso, sala 38. CEP 78060-900. Cuiabá, Estado de Mato Grosso, Brasil

Submitted: 25/11/2022 | Accepted: 13/03/2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.