**PATHWAYS FOR *LACATUMBA* - an authorial trajectory in the dramaturgy for children**

*Interview with Viviane Juguero*

The Brazilian Center of Theater for Children and Youth (CBTIJ / ASSITEJ Brasil) invited the artist Viviane Juguero to respond to an interview about her work on creating dramaturgy for children, because of her new book LACATUMBA, launched by PUCRS Publishing House. To carry out the present interview, CBTIJ had the collaboration of the artist and professor Clóvis Massa who is an academic researcher in the field of dramaturgy and the history of theater, theatricality, poetics and theatrical aesthetics. Clóvis is a professor at the Performing Arts Graduate Program at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (PPGAC/UFRGS), where he also teaches in the Undergraduate Courses in the field of ​History of the Spectacle, Dramaturgy, and Theatre Theory. Associated with CBTIJ / ASSITEJ Brasil, Viviane Juguero is currently in the United States, where she is working on the final part of her Ph.D. about dramaturgy as a visiting scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (U.S.), under the supervision of Manon Van de Water, through a Short-term Program of International Exchange called "Sandwich Doctorate Abroad" sponsored by Higher Level Personnel Improvement Coordination (PSDE/CAPES) of the Brazilian Government. This investigation abroad is part of her doctoral research settled at PPGAC, UFRGS, under the orientation of Professor João Pedro Gil.

**Clóvis Massa:** To start, I would like to know, during your path as artist and researcher, how did you decide to take the direction of being an author of theater for children?

**Viviane Juguero:** I started doing theater professionally in 1994, performing a play for children and a street show in parallel. I have always had a lot of affection, curiosity, and respect for childhood. It is interesting to note that my work with theater for children has a strong link with experiences and discussions present at the street theatre. The pieces were *A ROUPA NOVA DO REI*, with a text by Roberto Oliveira, based on the story "The emperor's new clothes" by Hans Christian Andersen and directed by Jessé Oliveira (staged at the Arena Theater, which I had the honor of directing more than a decade later) and *PANIS ET CIRCENSIS... PARA O POVO* (PANIS ET CIRCENSIS ... FOR THE PEOPLE), scripted and directed by Jessé. In the coming years, I graduated from the UFRGS Department of Dramatic Art, where I've had many scenic experiences. During this period I studied in various technical courses at the College of Music, such as the music composition course taught by Professor Fernando Lewis de Mattos, recently deceased and to whom I pay my sincere homage. The musicality is one of the fundamental elements in the work that I develop for children and, in this sense, I emphasize the formation with Professor Marlene Goidanich, not only in several disciplines in the College of Theatre but also in a long period of private lessons, besides counting on her for the vocal preparation of several works.

In my College years, I participated in several theatre shows inside and outside the University, as I was part of the Bumba Meu Bobo Theater Experiment Troupe. This group, in 1999, set up the piece *A GUARDA CUIDADOSA* (THE WATCHDOG), written by Miguel de Cervantes and directed by Jessé Oliveira, who has always done work linked to Brazilian popular culture. I composed and performed the soundtrack of this work, alongside Roger Kichalowsky. To make the soundtrack, I did a long search about songs of children's games played in a circle (*cirandas)* and collected a considerable number of manifestations of this nature. We did the show, but my interest in folk songs and children's games only increased. We used some songs on the soundtrack and I got a lot of songs on file. In 2003, I resumed the research of this kind of songs and wrote a story called *CANTO DE CRAVO E ROSA* (SONG OF CARNATION AND ROSE), in which I performed all the characters and the narrator. From this seed came the show (2007) and the book of the same name (2009), focused on the doctoral studies of Professor Fabiano Grazioli, also a member of the CBTIJ/ASSITEJ Brasil.

In 2003, I made presentations at some Schools for Early Childhood and I was invited to teach at one of them, called Curumim. Firstly, I did not accept the invitation because I did not have a degree for teaching, but a Bachelor's Degree in Theater Interpretation and a Graduate Specialization in Theater Theory. The school's pedagogic coordinator, Cristiane Abelha, and the principal, Lorena do Nascimento, insisted very much. Eventually, I accepted their invitation, under the condition that I would present all the lesson plans in detail before each meeting with children from zero to six years. I had a carefully designed plan, but the basis of the work was listening and sharing experiences. This listening was especially directed to children but also intended to respect, welcome and dialogue with the thoughts of the school community. I learned a lot from this job. I had to give up many ideas of "art for children for adults’ appreciation" and understand the complexity of starting from the simplicity that fosters aesthetic dialogue in plural meaningful contexts. In this trajectory, I also highlight the partnership of Simone Bittencourt, the director of the Mothers of Commerce Institution of Infant Education, whose complicity was fundamental in the development of this work. At this time I also had access to the theoretical works of Vera Lúcia Bertoni dos Santos and Tânia Ramos Fortuna, who played a very important role in the reflections and practices that I have developed since then.

I learned a lot in this trajectory and I fell in love with the incredible and challenging universe that is the creation of art for childhood. The opportunity to work with Dilmar Messias in several shows, but especially in the play *LILI INVENTA O MUNDO* (LILI INVENTS THE WORLD), based on poems written by Mario Quintana, was of great relevance in this journey. Since then, I have had very diverse experiences, always with the responsibility to study a lot, the joy of learning always and the attitude of perceiving the world from the context and not from the concept, one of the fundamental premises that I develop as "radical dramaturgy".

I commented in more detail about this initial trajectory of my work dedicated to childhood in my master's thesis and this report is published in Portuguese on the website of CBTIJ / ASSITEJ Brasil in the articles "Genesis", available at http://cbtij.org.br/ a-way-dialectic-theater-for-children-chapter-1 / and "Bando de Brincantes", available at http://cbtij.org.br/bando-de-bricantes-um- path-dialect-theater-for-children-1 /

**Clóvis Massa:** In a context of diversity of collective and collaborative writing practices such as the present, what is the importance and degree of the relationship with the group of artists with whom you work during the process of creating the texts? Or do you consider yourself an office playwright?

**Viviane Juguero:** Based on the thoughts of several authors from different areas, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, Henry Giroux, among others, I understand that all authorship is originated from the collective processes of life. Thus, our artistic texts echo our perceptions of the world, our cultural, family and socioeconomic environments, other artistic works, etc., evidently containing discourses, reflections, and values ​that we absorb from different people in numerous situations of the social environment in which we are inserted. In this sense, even those who write in the office reflect echoes of collectivity in her or his work. Nowadays, I understand authorship based on the configuration of the different dialogical propositions made through aesthetic and axiological choices (Bakhtin), materialized in vectorizations of meanings (Patrice Pavis) that indicate possible paths of readings that will dialogue with the references of other artists involved in the performance and of the target audience, in heterogeneous creation situations.

I have already created through innumerable distinct processes, and in all of them, there is the office moment, that is, that step when reflections and choices will be made, the composition of language, indications of action, etc. However, I do not recall any of my texts where there has not been, in one way or another, a collaborative process. In my works under the direction of Jessé Oliveira, for example, we usually discuss the texts virtually and in person, according to each process and according to the ideas of the project’s creator. This is a very important and not very commented issue, in my opinion. The authorship of the projects defines a lot about the paths chosen for the creation of each dramaturgy.

**Clóvis Massa:** In these proposals, what kind of sources and methodologies of creation do you usually choose?

**Viviane Juguero:** I had the opportunity to participate in projects created through the most diverse processes, from improvisations of the group that is putting up the play or, on the contrary, the creation of a text that will serve as the base for the spectacle, but that will be freely adapted by the group. In adult theater, I often worked with reference works. Concerning to theater for children, I work with references of popular folklore and the universe of children. In my creations for children, there are citations of popular narratives, either explicitly or subliminally, but they have never determined the plot either in conventional or performative dramaturgies (which do not present a linear narrative of a story). Another very important point concerns the conditions of production because they determine a lot of aspects. In the concrete world, creativity must dialogue with possibility. Managing scarcity is a skill that needs to be developed by those who create dramaturgies, especially for theater. In this regard, the time available for creation is a crucial factor and closely related to the socio-economic reality of the project and of the one who creates the dramaturgy. Particularly, I am a worker who makes a living in arts, with many concrete responsibilities of practical life, such as sustaining my home, food, school, etc. So, I must always have my foot firmly rooted in the earth together with the fairy vagaries of my creativity. The dialectical relation of the materiality of my conditions of production and my responsibility as a social being that dialogues with society through aesthetic objects constitute the structural complexity that underlies the creation of my dramaturgies. In the case of my text published by PUCRS Publishing House, LACATUMBA, I experienced something very special and distinct from all previous work. This is the first time I write a play for a dramaturgy publication without being involved with the production of its staging. This gave me a great freedom to play with the possibilities of the scene since there is not yet a project to realize the spectacle. Anyway, my experience as a producer is always there, dialoguing with the possibilities that I think are practically feasible.

In general, my texts for children, so far, are the result of many years of process, with collages of different activities, experiences, songs, which were sometimes created in different contexts. I cannot comment on my creative process in relation to artistic groups "in general" because they are all very different. Each context results in a process in which possibilities and limitations are directly linked to the artistic creation and to the sociocultural and economic reality of each work. It would be possible to explain the processes in the context of each play, but it seems that it would be a lot for the purpose of this interview.

**Clóvis Massa:** In your opinion, nowadays, what is the situation of the theater for children and youth?

**Viviane Juguero:** The theater for children has some different ways of approach. Trying to simplify something that is quite complex, there are at least a few extremes, among which there are distinct possibilities of gradation and combination. Concerning production, the situation is highly paradoxical. On the one hand, in Brazil, there are very few incentive projects targeting the specificity of the theatre for children productions. The plays for children generally compete with works for adults in public selections, most of which have a strong inequality comparing the two fields, with prejudice to the works for children. In the audiovisual field, this has been different in recent years, with several categories aimed at children, in fairly elaborate ways of selections. On the other hand, returning to the theater, spontaneous social demand is greater for theater for children especially with regard to activities carried out in schools, whether by taking the school to the theater or the theater to school. Due to this reality, what Maria Clara Machado has already denounced since the 1980s still remains, due to the work she had been doing in Rio de Janeiro since the 1950s at the O TABLADO theater. This author and theater director denounced the enormous amount of pieces made for children driven only by economic interest and not by the motivation of aesthetic construction. In this field, even today, we find most of the artistic works produced for children, often performed by unskilled people who reproduce clichés and images from the mainstream media, or even by professionals, who, although with an artistic background, do not seek to deepen the specific knowledge of the universe of children, as required in all other areas of knowledge. For example, could a pediatrician or psychologist not have specific knowledge about childhood?

At the other extreme are the artistic and pedagogical discourses based on ready truths about what would be good for children. Numerous pre-established absolute truths have gained ground in certain intellectual environments, creating works and speeches that are beautiful for adults, but often do not start from a search for dialogue with infantile thinking.

On the other hand, groups that are really committed with children and try to dialogue with them, have performed beautiful and serious work in Porto Alegre. I give some examples in the article "Genesis" that I've cited above.

Obviously, all matters related to the theater for children interest me very much and I try to follow productions as much as possible. However, it should be noted that my work as a researcher is aimed at the aesthetic creation of theater for children and not the analysis of other people's plays. I highlight this aspect because there is little academic research on the specificity of the aesthetic creation of theater for children and this sometimes causes a certain difficulty in understanding the nature of my research. In my experience, many times, in commenting on my research on theater for children, many people link it compulsorily to the study of how to teach theater to children (the most frequent), or to the sociocultural study of all other plays for children, which would require specific research and which has never been the focus of my studies. In fact, my academic research comes from many years of my artistic practice and the authors who accompanied me during this period of more than 15 years of art for children and almost 25 years of theater. What I seek now is, through praxis, to understand and deepen the relations between theory and practice in this process, based on João Pedro Gil's proposition of a dialectical investigation in the field of theater. My intention is to contribute with the reflections on this field of action and, at the same time, to improve and challenge my own work. Another aspect that I consider fundamental, in the specific context of my research, is that I always work with theater for adults simultaneously. As I am interested in understanding the specificities of language, I try to think how various themes are addressed in art for adults and children, including taboo subjects such as death, gender identity, and racial diversity.

**Clóvis Massa:** How did your most recent work fit into this field?

**Viviane Juguero:** The insertion of my work in the sociocultural field is something complex to explain because economic reality is always an original complicator. As can be seen in awards and numerous public deference, the work that I develop with the Bando de Brincantes have a lot of recognition. I would love to perform a play from my text that was released by PUCRS Publishing House, for example, a musical full of circus skills and choreography, with musicians on the scene and tricks of illusion. However, I can’t be sure if it will be possible to have structure for that. The knot that I have not yet been able to untie is that, in the theater, I am always the producer of the works and this requires huge temporal and structural investment. Sometimes these issues determine the size of productions and many other aspects, without ever influencing my ethical position against what I produce. I have always done works in which I believe, with the utmost seriousness, research and a lot of emotional investment as well, a subject that has been neglected in the daily discussions in the field of the arts and which I consider deserve more attention. At the same time, when joining the audiovisual field, the partnership with Bactéria Filmes has allowed me to carry out my work in the areas that relate to the professional performance that interests me, that is, everything which is related to the artistic creation and to the political-pedagogic conception. It is worth mentioning that the animated cartoon mini-series *JOGOS DE INVENTAR* (MAKE UP GAMES), in which I take charge of the original project, scripts, songs and I am part of the voice creation team. Directed by Pedro Marques and produced by Bactéria Filmes, under the coordination of Dani Israel, it has premiered internationally in the United States on December 1st, 2018,at the Overture Center for the Arts and on 5th at the Children's Museum, both in Madison city.

**Clóvis Massa:** What is your role with the Caixa Preta (Black Box), a theatre group that since 2002 has been performing African-themed scenic productions and cultural actions with the presence of black members?

**Viviane Juguero:** The Caixa Preta group is led by Jessé Oliveira who conceives the projects that are carried out. I was a collaborator from the beginning. Jessé has been a great professional partner for many years and all the work we have developed has always had socially committed proposals. Caixa Preta is a black theater group that tackles racial issues through an aesthetic approach that is critical, but not dogmatic. Caixa Preta began a pioneering and revolutionary work in Porto Alegre that paved the way for the multiple manifestations of black theater that the city houses today. In my position, as a mestizo, Afro-Latin Brazilian woman, born a very low middle-class social group, I always tried to face the racial discussion with the complexity that I find in my own mixed construction, in the certainty that I am not white and in the feeling of pertinence and identification with the theme. With Caixa Preta, I worked as a collaborator in the production and publicity team of the works "*Transegun*" and "*Hamlet Sincrético*", in addition to writing the dramaturgy of the works "*Antígona BR*" and "*Ori Oresteia*", created from Jessé's original idea, based on different reference texts. On this subject, still under the direction of Jessé and based on the original idea elaborated by him, I wrote the dramaturgy of the play *CAVALO DE SANTO* (SAINT’S HORSE), staged in Germany in 2016 and 2017, under the name DAS PFERD DES HEILIGEN. This text will be published by the National Arts Foundation soon, along with other works of black dramaturgy.

**Clóvis Massa:** How does this aspect of your work relate to your production directed towards children?

**Viviane Juguero:** In the Caixa Preta group, Jessé developed and deepened principles that already existed in the work we did in the Bumba Meu Bobo Troupe of Theatrical Experiments in the 1990s. These experiences echo very powerfully in all my works for children, in many aspects, from the topics addressed to the professionals involved. In the Bando de Brincantes teams, it has always been possible to see the diversity on the scene, from ethnic-racial, age and socioeconomic plurality to differences in the kinds of professional training.

The proposal to enhance the perception of human diversity has always been present in the dramaturgies that I developed in the Bando de Brincantes (that means approximately bunch of players), either in the strict sense (as a text for written theater) or in the broad sense (as a discourse of staging). For example, *CANTO DE CRAVO E ROSA* (SONG OF CARNATION AND ROSE) directly focuses the theme of diversity and was set up with a predominantly Afro-Brazilian team. *JOGOS DE INVENTAR, CANTAR E DANÇAR* (MAKING UP, SINGING AND DANCING GAMES) encompasses diversity whether in the unusual encounter of a squid and a spider, or in the illustrations of the book, created by Mônica Papescu, or in the cast and puppets of the play, or, more presently, in the ethnic diversity of mestizo characters of the audiovisual animated cartoon *JOGOS DE INVENTAR* (MAKE UP GAMES). The play *QUAQUARELA* was created based on popular jokes, in a performative dramaturgy that brings the theme of the race in the eloquence of our presence on stage, as it happens in *PETECA, PIÃO E PIQUE-PESSOA*, (written with the co-authorship of Jorge Rein), which also covers taboo subjects in a subliminal way, such as issues of gender and affective abandonment, linked to symbolic death. In *LACATUMBA*, the theme of the diversity of people is central, in addition to being amplified by the plurality of artistic expressions and of seeking to bring modernity and technology closer to manifestations of popular folklore.

**Clóvis Massa:** Do you identify common principles and elements in these experiences?

**Viviane Juguero:** All of my work for children, in one way or another, comes from relationships that I establish between children's universe and popular culture. Often, some people, praising my work (and I am very grateful for it), consider it counterpoint or reaction to the harms of contemporary technology, which was never my intention. I find many criticisms to be pertinent to the abusive and inappropriate use of technological equipment, but I do not agree with generalizations.That is why, in *LACATUMBA*, I try to play with creative possibilities involving popular culture and technology.

**Clóvis Massa:** Finally, in your view as the author, what is *LACATUMBA* about? What cultural matrices were present in its creation and how was it possible to link elements so far apart?

**Viviane Juguero:** The central theme of *LACATUMBA* is, again, human diversity, contemplating the diversity of perceptions in different sociocultural contexts. I cite, for example, the scenes in which the inhabitants of the Lacatumba settlement wonder at the habits of the alien androgynous being, and at the same time take advantage of its naiveness by inventing cultural customs to justify some of their attitudes.

The unit of *LACATUMBA* arises from the same roots of my previous works for children: children's universe and popular culture. The title, by the way, is a reference to the popular game "*Tumbalacatumba*", present in the scene that presents the climax of the play. *LACATUMBA* brings a mix of fantastic beings from the popular imagination present in Brazil and in various countries of the world: werewolves, witches, mummies, aliens, bogeymen, zombies, etc.

In *LACATUMBA* I intend to, through fun and engaging language, to legitimize the popular culture of the contemporary moment, dialoguing with traditional elements. One very obvious reference is Michael Jackson's "Thriller," a work that tackles a traditional legend in an incredibly pop way. In the field of the arts for children, I am concerned about the polarization that prevails between what would be "pure and natural", such as wooden toys, handmade games, etc., as opposed to what would be artificial, that is, everything that is made of plastic or related to the present technology. I do not believe in this polarization in any way, and I find in it an elitist and excluding posture. Most contemporary children have strong references from television, video games, video clips, and industrialized toys. In fact, wooden toys and educational games today are much more accessible to the socially and intellectually privileged.

The act of pre-condemning certain experiences disqualifies many important sensory and emotional experiences of children nowadays, creating a polarization that condemns and stigmatizes, based on the concept and not on the context. I insist on this point because it is essential for the radicality of the work I propose. I highlight that I understand radicalism based on Paulo Freire's idea of "radical education", which is based on dialogue, and is therefore completely different from the common notion of "radicalism" that indicates intransigent attitudes and dogmatic thoughts.

I think it's essential that children have access to traditional plays, songs, comics, and folk scenic manifestations. All my work testifies to my efforts in this regard. However, this does not mean detracting the strong cultural references present in the daily lives of people. Critical thinking can’t be dissociated from affection nor lose humility. Every concept which precedes the context is preconception, it means, prejudice.

I understand that aesthetic development must be associated with affectivity, on the basis of which the critical propositions are constructed through the directions proposed by the vectorizations of dramaturgy. In *LACATUMBA*, I try to provide reflections on the relativity of imposed beauty standards, to seek new insights on the question of the constitution of gender, as well as to emphasize that there are differences of thought in the different cultural configurations. I think it is very important that children realize from an early age, albeit subliminally, that our values ​​are socially constructed and can be questioned, highlighting the "logical conformisms" according to Emile Durkheim, which determine many perceptions about life. *LACATUMBA* brings some collages of characters, songs, and situations that I elaborated in different contexts in the last fifteen years. The mummies, for example, came from a poem I made for illustrations by Mônica Papescu and that even are in our book "*Amor de Múmias*" (Mummies’ Love), published by the Papo Abissal Publishing House. In my research, I discovered how much Egypt is present in the Brazilian imaginary, with great intensity in the state in which I live, Rio Grande do Sul, where innumerable establishments receive Egyptian names to be linked to a mystical perception of their products. Evidently, mass media vehicles, especially certain soap operas, have potentiated this perception significantly. The imaginary Egypt where the Lacatumba settlement is situated is also a reference to Arabic Africa, opening up paths that allow representations of African culture in a more plural way than the repetition of some ever recurring images. *LACATUMBA* is purposely a reflection of cultural globalization, without understanding it as loss of identity. I understand the construction of identity as a dialectical process that has always been in permanent mutation and which is constituted in the movement of life. It is a complex subject that can’t be reduced to fragmentation and cultural opposition. For these reasons, *LACATUMBA* navigates through different rhythms and requires multiple artistic techniques. I tried to work with contradiction in many ways, for example, in the non-Manichean construction of the characters, because none of them are completely good or bad and all are subject to transformation. At least, that is my intention, since the author can’t determine, but suggest the meanings of his work. Thankfully, right?

**CBTIJ/ASSITEJ:** *LACATUMBA* is one of thirteen books written by female playwrights of Rio Grande do Sul, launched by PUCRS Publishing House, under the editorial coordination of Antonio Hohlfeldt.

The publications are the result of actions of the collective As dramaturgyturgA, coordinated by Patrícia Silveira and Fernanda Moreno, who make up the group along with Carina Corá, Dedé Ribeiro, Elisa Lucas, Jéssica Barbosa, Jéssica Lusia, Lourdes Kauffmann, Natasha Centenaro, Patsy Cecato, Stella Bento, Vika Schabbach, and Viviane Juguero, whose book has a preface written by Jorge Rein.

The release was held on November 17, 2018, at the Porto Alegre Book Fair, encompassing dramatic readings, in the Multipalco's Music Room and autograph session at the Rio Grande do Sul Memorial. The dramatic reading of *LACATUMBA*, was directed by Jessé Oliveira and had Joana Orth, Fabiola Orth, Ana Caroline Ledur, Isadora Dahmer Hanauer and Gabriela Mauss in the cast, in addition to Dirce Orth and Michelle Perceval, in the production team, in a realization the Bando de Brincantes and the Artistic and Sports Cultural Association "Educating for the Future" of Harmony (ACEFH). The presentation had the special participation of Daniel Soares Duarte on the piano, performing the sound environment.

To have access to a free trial of the book, offered by PUCRS Publishing House, go to http://ebooks.pucrs.br/edipucrs/livro/lacatumba