Drama Schools in Latin America

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2.1 Global citizenship, cultural identities and arts education

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Drama Schools in Latin America: where are Afro and Indigenous languages?

By Zeca Ligiéro

Synopsis

The presentation will start exploring the complex relations between the government and the establishment of drama schools in Brazil, starting with its historical roots in the 19th century. It will be discussed the educational project developed during the Vargas years (1930-47), when were created major conservatories of drama and music in accordance with a nationalistic policy. The paper will take as example the history of creation and the development of the School of Drama (Escola de Teatro) originated from the former Conservatory when Brazil was ruled by the new military dictatorship (1964-1985). At that moment, the most progressive professors were expelled. A series of transformations marked that period, fights, losses and conquests. Following the new policy, under the censorship, the school became more traditional, adopting an orthodox theater point of view by electing realist and classical theater. By the end of the dictatorship, the school programs became more flexible. Earlier this century, a new course of Theater and Pedagogy was created with a design aimed towards diversity of methods and trends – from traditional training to a post-dramatic theater. However, the methods adopted by the school continued being centered basically into the European and North American educational standards opposing to the decrees issued by President Lula´s Government leading Educational institutions to adopt African and Indigenous cultures in their programs.

The last part paper will explore the new guidelines proposed by the Lula´s government that have created new standards for education in the country through laws requiring the academic curricula to include arrays of cultures from African and Indigenous people, which had been disregarded by the Brazilian academic
education since colonial times. From this example the presentation will propose to other countries from Latin America an ongoing discussion about processes of creation of curriculum and theater educational methods, emphasizing a most favorable balance between European traditions and Afro-Amerindian aesthetics and pedagogical approaches according to the local contexts.

The paper will arise questions concerning about why theater schools in Latin American adopt curriculum based only on European and North American theater traditions if there is an enormous presence of other forms of performance in the popular traditions such as one may find in rituals, fiestas and other kind of celebrations. If there are techniques of dancing, singing, drumming and telling stories in various traditional communities Afro and Indigenous they should be part of their theatricality. If countries like Brazil, Colombia and Bolivia have already strong policies towards ethnicity why their theater schools are resisting to changes and denying such fertile manancial? Probably they do not have professor expert in such fields, but certainly they have theater groups, authors, researchers, and informal masters from traditional communities. Is it not time to open the educational spaces for those masters, before their knowledge disappeared? If Latin American breathes freedom far from old dictatorships (with few exceptions), why they stay using old theater techniques for showing their own identities?

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Identification form for the submission of abstracts on Arts Education

(research/case studies/experiences of best practices)

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