

Modern Dance: A perspective on renewal in São Paulo's cultural scene in the decades of the 1970s through the 1990s

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to investigate the innovation process in dance and theatre production in São Paulo, as initiated by two pioneer artists of modern dance, Ruth Rachou and Renée Gumiel. A study of the history of dance in São Paulo, starting from the founding of the IV Centenary Ballet, the country's first professional dance company, including an analysis of the emergence of modern dance in Brazil's largest city and how the cultural scene was affected by the innovative work done by these artists, primarily in theatre.

Key words: *Dance, Modern Dance, Theatre*

Introduction

The 1970s were the starting point of an intense artistic renewal movement in São Paulo. During this period, the first influences of two modern schools of dance arrived in Brazil: one which was German in origin (*Ausdruckstanz* or expressionist dance), founded by Rudolf Laban and Kurt Jooss, and introduced by Renée Gumiel and Maria Duschenes, and the other from America (Martha Graham), practiced primarily by Ruth Rachou. These two influences brought changes, both in relation to the emergence of new techniques and styles of training and to the performers, and themes of their productions. Absorbing the new perspectives brought by modern dance, the Brazilian theatre, influenced by directors like Artaud, Grotowski and Meierhold, established the actor's body as the focus of the theatricality.

Results and Discussion

Despite recognition of Renée Gumiel and Ruth Rachou's immeasurable historical importance, there are still only a small number of publications devoted to them. In this regard, this research makes it possible to begin the construction of an important historical record.

Through meeting Ruth Rachou personally, thanks to Raul Rachou's introduction, and through participation in the events related to the celebration of the artist's 90th birthday, organized by the MUD (Museum of Dance) and SESC, contact was established between the researcher, a young artist, and important performers of the period, who are for the most part still fully active.



Image 1. Spectacle Isadora Ventos & Vagas. In the Picture: Ruth Rachou and Julia Ziviani (right to left).



Image 2: Renée Gumiel at the theatric production of *Os Sertões* (Teatro Oficina direction of José Celso Martinez Corrêa).

Conclusions

Ruth Rachou and Renée Gumiel have had singular careers, due to their artistic innovation, to the creation of a new national theatre-dance language, and due to having established a network between dance and theatre artists, encouraging the creation of a new theatre movement, in which the focus became the actor's body.

As educators, their schools brought not only new techniques and visions of the body in the context of their art, but also became innovative centers of experimentation, bringing new life to São Paulo's artistic scene.

Women, actresses, directors, choreographers and dancers. The artistic, educational and individual legacies of Ruth Rachou and Renée Gumiel, both revitalized the city scene, and were also responsible for teaching and developing a generation of artists who are still active, contributing and revisited.

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