

**Luciana da Costa Dias**

### **Beyond the Peyote Dance: Antonin Artaud's trip to Mexico and its consequences**

Antonin Artaud is a well-known French poet, director, and actor from early 20th Century whose work is considered revolutionary and even paradigmatic to theatre and performance studies in general. Not so well known is the impact that Mexico – the conception and misconceptions of its native culture – had on Artaud's work. Mexico was the object of Artaud's theatrical fantasy long before he even visited the country, in 1936: his second manifesto even describes a play called *The Conquest of Mexico* in order to exemplify his ideas concerning the physicality of the 'new theatre'. Other parts of *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), his fundamental book, were even partially conceived during his long stay in Mexico, when he had contact not only with the Mexican avantgarde but also with the Rarumari, a native tribe from Sierra Tarahumara, later pictured in his book *The Peyote Dance* (1937) and in other writings. What does it mean to affirm that such impact of a "non-western" experience could have led his thinking, as self-proclaimed, "beyond western thought"? What was Artaud searching through his travels in Mexico and how such experience could have impacted his work are some of the topics to be covered in this lecture.

Dr. Luciana da Costa Dias works as Adjunct Professor at the *Federal University of Ouro Preto* (UFOP). She is also a founder member of the Brazilian research group: "APORIA: Philosophy and Theatre Studies" since 2014. Luciana's research activities are focused on a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach to theatre and cultural studies. For her post-doctoral research, she is particularly interested in the crisis of modernity (as a metaphysical crisis and its possible overcoming in art) through the works of Nietzsche and Artaud; as well as in a transversal perspective on art/performance – as an immediacy of presence – and how this might affect theatre studies.

**Annelis Kuhlmann**

### **Too much *hygge*, or 'paradox lost': national identity and 19<sup>th</sup> Century theatre directing in the Danish theatre.**

Today's theatre directors in Denmark are searching for new professional identities. Using the example of paradoxical theatre thinking – a diminished mode in today's theatre – I investigate what happened to theatre directing as theatre thinking. Given that theatre directing is historically and contextually dependent, there can be no overall general principle of directing. However, it is my argument that the limited appearance of a paradoxical theatre thinking tradition in Denmark (inspired by the French theatre's Enlightenment ideas) never really became visible. Any real dichotomy in theatre thinking was efficiently replaced by pietistic-radicalised dogmas, and turned into a support of the great myth of a national, hegemonic and unified culture in the field of theatre. In practice, this apparently unified culture was seen as a sign of common roots, harmony and identity for Danish theatre and 'Danishness', which, to a great extent, has had a considerable impact on the fictitious depiction of the Danish environment, 'patriotism' and rectory culture (Danish: *præstegårdskultur* [Georg Brandes]). I contend that the long 19<sup>th</sup> Century understanding of

national identity, through its undeniable fictitious characteristics, became a cultural self-understanding in a theatre context. Picturesque representations dominated theatre performances through a predominantly 'knot-free' understanding of vaudevilles and light comedy until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, without leaving space for historical avant-garde.

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"The Melody that Got Lost – a unique example of theatre avant-garde in Denmark". *The Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries*. Leiden: Brill. 2018.

"The Performance Tree of Knowledge – Eugenio Barba" in *Grotowski, Brook, Barba* (ed. Paul Allain) in the 9 volume series edited by Simon Shepherd, *Great Directors*. London: Methuen Bloomsbury. (forthcoming)

"Undercover by Hotel Pro Forma, Performing the National Archive: Staging Cultural Heritage at the Royal Library in Copenhagen". In Gade, Rune & Borggreen, Gunhild (eds.). *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*. Copenhagen.: Museum Tusulanum. 2013. 292-310.

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