

## **FOLLOWING THE TRACES OF DIONYSUS; FROM ATHENS TO RIO DE JANEIRO**

Interview with director Sotiris KARAMESINIS<sup>1</sup>  
by Dr. Athanassios N. SAMARAS

Sotiris Karamesinis is a Greek theater director and researcher. He is known to develop his own acting method MUSA (musical system of acting), a unique system that is based on the art of the ancient actor, and introduces music in contemporary actor's preparation and composition. Since 2012, he has been living mostly in Rio de Janeiro. He directs plays, teaches theater and prepares actors.

He is a Research Associate specialized in Cultural Diplomacy and Performing Arts at the Strategic Communication and News Media Laboratory, International and European Department, University of Piraeus. From 2008 to 09 he made a pioneering step to direct the tragedy 'Bacchae' with the award-winning troupe of the film City of God the theater group "Nós Do Morro". In the past two decades he has directed several plays of Euripides, Jean Paul Sartre, Jean Anouilh, Eugenio Ionesco, Graham Greene, Harold Pinter and many others in Greece, Cyprus and Brazil. As artistic director, he staged several Big events in cooperation with organizations and institutions such as the European Parliament, the University of Athens, the Athens Megaron Concert Hall, the Municipality of Athens, the Athens Festival, the Athens Olympics 2004, the International Theatre Institute among others.

Interviewee: Dr. Athanassios N. Samaras, Assistant Professor in International Political Communication, International and European Relations Department, University of Piraeus, Greece.

A.S - The origins of renaissance in Europe are attributed to the fall of the Byzantine world to Ottomans and the resulted exodus of Greek philosophers, intellectuals and artists to the West. The influx of these people brought the ancient Greek knowledge and

---

<sup>1</sup> **Sotiris KARAMESINIS** é diretor, professor e pesquisador de teatro. Conhecido por desenvolver o seu próprio método de interpretação e composição para atores, "MUSA" (musical system of acting). Estudou Teologia na Universidade de Aristóteles, em Salônica, música no "Conservatório de Atenas", "Iamvikón Conservatório" e "Studio Latin" em Paris, direção na Escola Superior de Cinema "Stavrakos" e teatro no "Laboratório teatral" do Município de Moscato. Em sua trajetória de 25 anos de teatro, dirigiu dezenas de espetáculos na Grécia, Chipre e Brasil. É pesquisador especializado em diplomacia cultural e artes, associado no laboratório da Estratégia de Comunicação e Media, do Departamento de Política Européia e Internacional, da Universidade de Piréus, e membro do grupo de pesquisa Formas e Efeitos, Fronteiras e Passagens da Linguagem Teatral, formado por professores do Curso de Estética e Teoria do Teatro do Centro de Letras e Artes da UNIRIO. Como Professor-Diretor convidado na Faculdade das Artes Cênicas (CAL), no Rio de Janeiro, dirigiu varios espetáculos de formatura. Em 2013 formou a Musa Cia Teatral.

Ethos to Western Europe and sparked the flames of renaissance. Nowadays a new catastrophe in Greece, financial in nature (called EMU), has instigated a new exodus of Greek intellectuals, scientists and artists.

This new age Diaspora, competent and confident in knowledge and capacity, is rapidly spreading around the globe and operates as a constructive force. As for the artists, their presence is tantamount to an intercultural communication experiment.

Mr. Karamesinis you are a Greek director, teaching theater and staging Greek Tragedy in Brazil and the creator of a unique method on actor's training based on your research on the ancient actor's art.

In this interview I single out and I would like to emphasize on these two items concerning the subject matter of this publication. The first item refers to the experience and the findings of your work in ancient tragedy, namely your work on the works of Euripides that you translated, taught and directed in groups of actors in Rio de Janeiro.

Why did you choose Brazil in order to expand your artistic activity and your research work on the ancient Greek tragedy?

S.K – As I have said in a previous interview in Greece, that even became the title of the interview in that magazine, that Dionysus lives in Brazil. This is a statement that I can confirm twice, as I have lived several years in Rio de Janeiro since that interview.

The Brazilian actors with whom I first worked there, were 18 young men and women between 20 and 30 years old, whom I chose personally. Most of them happened to be of Afro-Brazilian origin who had grown up in this community, with the Dionysian culture of the Hills of Rio de Janeiro.

They were part of the legendary theater group “Nós do morro” (We from the Hill), the group had already been in action for 22 to 23 years when I first met and worked with them back in 2008-2009. They were based on Vidigal, an emblematic neighborhood of the city over the known twin Brothers hills (Dois irmãos), that looms in the background left of the famous beaches of Ipanema and Leblon.

The troupe was first known for the participation of dozens of children, adolescents and young actors in the famous film of 2001 “City of God”, by film director Fernando Meirelles.

This film brought existence of the group to my ears. I kept following their work on the Shakespeare plays, and their cooperation with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon by the press. Finally, in 2008 I managed to travel to Rio and met

them, and started our cooperation. This was the first attempt; as far as I know, to stage Greek Tragedy in a community's theater group in Brazil.

I chose to teach and explore the *Bacchae* with them, because the culture they bring from their homes is Dionysian, their relationship with their acts and the music is organic and immediate.

Even the fact that their perceptions about ancient tragedy were as minimal as zero, it worked positively in this case. As they were eager and impetuous, they were the best people for the climate, conducive to my theatrical research and my vision for this tragedy.

Speaking about this issue of tragedy now, in Greece and in Europe, we have so much information from the literature, so many perceptions of performances. I can personally count that I might have attended 200 performances of ancient tragedy in Greece in my summers to date, from directors and troupes from around the world, excluding my contact with tragedy as a student or a professional in theater.

What does this mean? Maybe we think we know how to stage a drama of ancient tragedy, or we know what is allowed to do and what is not. What's the result? Mostly entrapment in recycling and copying without awareness often - meaningless - into an aesthetic form, or a specific code.

Or, in contrast, we demonstrate our 'kitchen'; - something that is the latest fashion- to show theater games and improvisations, efforts for acceptance and exculpation usually facing one's inability to conceive, view and say really something that matters.

Of course, we can start a revolution against old standards and schools, without even knowing how to compose something meaningful. Without knowing structuring, we begin with deconstruction. This fashion domineered and removed any meaning from many of the performances of ancient tragedy in the past 3 decades, mainly in Europe of course.

It seems that it was the only way out for many directors, who could not find how to build and what to say, how to compose with renewed and personal aesthetics a meaningful artistic result.

Because ancient tragedy cannot be divested of meaning, it is especially meaningful.

Brazil then and the specific group I chose to start my work there, was an attempt to way out of this environment and the choice of those actors was a selection of structuring

from the beginning, far away from these traps.



The Bacchae in action, training with music by Nana Vasconcelos, March 2009, Photo: Mari Gardner

A.S - But I imagine that cultural differences, the very specific working conditions, the lack of plenty of hires of your actors on the field and other issues, raised up certain difficulties to encounter you and your actors there. Mostly in relation with the reception of Greek tragedy in general, what were the main issues raised?

S.K - There are some inaccessible issues in relation to the perception of Greek tragedy, and it is not only in relation to the Brazilians and the Greeks, but about all of us in the 21st century, as we try to understand and express ourselves artistically with texts of a theater written and performed 2,500 years ago, in the State of the radical Republic of ancient Athens.

Of course, there is the attitude of many directors, to face the Greek tragedy as any other

play, to avoid the trouble to be involved in research and special treatment that involves teaching, directing and acting. I do not even need to say how I find this attitude sterile and devoid of any substance. There is no reason, in my opinion, to deal with the ancient drama if you do not have the curiosity and availability to study all the universe contained.

The first key challenge then, is to resume and present to your actors the era, as well and simply as you can, to understand the birth and flourishing of Greek theater, but more importantly, it's role in the Democracy, and the involvement into public life.

This connection and the catalytic role of theater in the lives of citizens, is a phenomenon that always needs to return during rehearsals and teaching.



The Chorus of Bacchae is relaxing in a break of the training, Rio de Janeiro, March 2009, photo: Mari Gardner.

The second challenge is to always try to move your actors away from the easy interpretations and conclusions based on Christian ethics, which willy-nilly all speak with its terms, so that we can conceive a pre-Christian world. All ethical issues and the

words we use were inherited from Greek thought in Christian literature, but the concepts were differentiated.

This is a beautiful trip and meaningful journey, to think on new meanings of words, and in a moral bygone era with your actors.

A third major obstacle is the action in Greek tragedy. The action of Chorus mainly bears evidence of the origin of tragedy - the ritual and this is being investigated, because the body and the action of the ritual are far from the naturalistic acting of modern actors.

The roles, however require the actor to concentrate on speech, and it is necessary that the actors understand that the speaking is action, that a crucial and revealing phrase uttered with your whole being has strength stronger than a naturalistic action of the actor.

Crimes in the ancient theater are never presented on stage, but they are described in detail and in such a powerful way that the viewer can see more terribly in imagination than it could be offered by the actor's action.

Most importantly, the reason for the dialogue, arguments, conflicts of ideas are always at the center of thought and of the tragic poets, it is because as such it serves the City and the Republic.

A fourth important issue is the problem of translation. Translations of classical philologists are academic, scholastic, their texts have another purpose, they are not written to be spoken and understood by the actors for performance.

As a result, such texts are disconnected from the mind and emotion of the actor and therefore it becomes impossible to be perceived by the public.

To solve this issue, I do and I have always been doing the very difficult task to make new - stage translations - not simplified, but with the specific objective of having a text addressed organically to the actors' first and above all, so they find their target in the theatre square.

Last but not least important issue, it was necessary for me to condition the communion through the joint action of actors in ritual. To find the Dionysian nature of theater art, certainly in the case of tragedy it is desired as an experience of the actors, so that they transmit it to viewers as communion and cleansing experience.





The Bacchae after training with music, actresses of the theater group Nós do Morro. March 2009, photo: Mari Gardner.

A.S - What is your assessment of the overall operation? Which is, in your opinion, the dominant signifying difference between the actors performing in the Bacchae of Brazil, and the actors performing in Greece and in other parts of the world that you staged theatre and taught your method?

S.K - Let's start with the second part of your question going to the first. As I said before, Dionysus lives in Brazil. This is for me the special feature and advantage, but the great trap simultaneously. Somehow Brazil can still find Dionysus to govern, within the state of Pentheus, as an anarchist who in opposition to the City is dear to the people.

While in modern democracies, Dionysus is theoretically tamed, if you like, with the laws and repression, with endless tens of hours of work and the threat of unemployment in the slightest doubt, with the conservatism and the rise of a new-Puritanism of the so-called Christian right, with the economic strangulation, with the big brother and control movements of every citizen, in Brazil negotiations between Pentheus and Dionysus still last.

The strong presence of African culture through the nationwide samba, their syncretism and contradictory cults of all kinds of dogmas and beliefs together, their paganism being still alive, the presence – though less yet still penetrating – of traditions and customs of pre-Colombian Indian cultures, their religious dedication to samba schools and preparations of the carnival, the childishness and enthusiasm in relation to their participation in mass events like huge concerts in Copacabana, and passionate football crowds, the street culture with bars (botecos) 2 and 3 in each square of the city, the too many holidays for workers in the public and private sectors, the power of telenovels on TV and the messages that are passed always giving higher priority to emotion and passion over logic. I have to mention the cult of sensuality / sexuality and pleasure of course and above all what I call the culture of “being happy whatever it takes” (o ser feliz) as the unique and supreme value above all dogmas and values.

All these are some of the reasons that make this enormous country still having the active missions of Dionysus.

Dionysus, not against, but interlocutor and by the arm several times with Pentheus regime of “order and progress” at all costs for the development of the country.

Certainly Dionysus in the tradition of Brazil, comes with the face of the drunken childish Bacchus of the Latins, but we know that the faces of Dionysus are many, the merry God of celebration of drunkenness, of liberation and ecstasy, can be easily transformed into the face of brutality is he who in the war looks like God Mars, and paralyzes enemies with his face, as Euripides says in his *Bacchae*.

So, the other side of the same coin is experienced by the general lawlessness, anarchy, with huge problems of violence, etc. In order not to elaborate any further on general findings, because I have been living for over 6 years in Brazil and there is much to say, at this level I will say that the actors as everywhere else, are the offspring of a culture and the fruits of their ground; only in this case, the Dionysian culture is an asset and not a defect.

Up there on the hills of Rio de Janeiro, there is a very particular culture in the communities, which I had the chance to learn in depth, living up there all these years. Among the advantages of my actors, beyond the energy, the bright smiles and the lovely human beings they are, was a comfort with the rhythm and a natural relation to the music, which as I said, was my main aim.

They were somehow ready to accept and endorse my proposal of daily training and creation based on music because of their relationship with dance and music. They didn't have the common defect to censure and sabotage their actions in their minds even before they were born in body, due to the lack of fear of the exposure, as in their relationship with their bodies and expressions they did not have any complex.



All of them also had strong and correct voices, some up to excellent, and four of them were also musicians. Additionally, they had the body background to work out with an intense training program, so after the difficult adjustment of the first month, they were able to follow the pace of work and take ownership of the new method of action for them.

Finally, as I emphasized, the lack of a past in connection with the ancient tragedy and my own difficulties with the Portuguese language caused some difficulty regarding the perception of theoretical and philosophical issues, but on the other hand; they kept willing and available to try and experiment in practice each proposal without hesitation or prejudice.

On account of my project with the group “Nós do morro”, and always talking about my actors and our relationship, their progress, creativity, research and rehearsal, we had a very good artistic result.

I mean that not only I met and worked with talented people, but my method itself was developed and enriched, perhaps because of the difficulties of language and culture.

Daily, I had to find ways to pass it with real solutions, and to give answers to difficult questions. Thanks to their own momentum and commitment to our cause I think we all have grown through this experience as artists and as people.



The troupe of “As Bacantes” after rehearsal on March 2009 in Vidigal. Photo: Mari Gardner.

A.S - Talking about music, you have for many years focused on a research and proposal for an interconnection of the use of music in a very special manner, I would say, in actors' education and stage creation of modern acting. In this context, it is very interesting that you have so strongly connected a technique and a tradition of ancient Greek tragedy with the preparation of actors' not only in the modern theater, but also in film and TV series work of actors. I talk about perseverance, watching and knowing your artistic research and development in recent years in Brazil, but also your path in Greece beforehand. How can you define the relation between music and speech in ancient drama, and how it could be the contemporary theater and acting methods related?

S.K - I will answer by firstly commenting on your comment about my insistence on the deep connection of the acting of the ancient actor of tragedy with the acting of the modern actor, through music. To be understood, I must say that although my work is somehow a "theatrical archeology," the action of the actor in ancient tragedy and its relationship with music is not interesting to me from an academic perspective, nor do I think that our questions may ultimately only be answered with certainty through the sources and vessels, illustrations, references by Aristophanes etc.

Since we will never be able to watch even for a day, a trilogy and a satirical drama in the theater of Dionysus, and make a good interview to Sophocles or Euripides and the crew of their presentations thereof (it's a pity, but I am about to finally realize that this will not happen to me in this life), we must look for answers in the field of research and rehearsal.

Indeed, the most important field of my research is complemented by the sources, but in the field of anthropology. Too many things changed since Athens in the 5th century BC, but people just changed in terms of culture and certainly not in terms of human nature. So, I see that in theater, which always focus on the adventure of being a human being - or to be more precise, the study of the adventure of people's common life-fate, therefore, humans have not changed at all.

The limitations of our nature, our needs, imagination, emotion, body, language, our relationships and ultimately the knowledge of mortality remain unchanged. But our relationship with the music and ritual, our habits and the contact we have with music and ritual, they have decisively changed.

For example, we can no longer, in most western-consumerist and neurotic way of living, relate with music in a direct and deep, psychosomatic way, where music occupies and fills body and mind. We have learned that music is a sound environment for diversion, plays all the time, it usually is a pleasant noise that accompanies or gives a rhythm to another activity, sometimes it's an annoying presence that makes it difficult to communicate in a café or a bar.

Still, talking about music and acting, the musicality and rhythm in prose is based on the intention of director's and actor's capability or its absence, and they are not registered in the verse and rhyme of the text anymore. After all, education and work in rhyme has been abandoned for more than 100 years. The origin of the tragedy brings music as inextricably bound forever with poetry and dance. It is a fact that cannot have different interpretations by anyone.

The lyrics of the ancient tragedy were absolutely depended on music, which accompanied all the melodic and rhythmic lines, revealing the expressiveness and the mastery of the poetic text. The result was a complete unity of poetic text and musical expression with acting and dance.

This technique has its origins in the rituals and cults of the prehistoric world, but certainly, with the birth and development of the tragedy that was refined especially in Euripides as music was beyond the chorus parts, got extended with the introduction of the participation of the piper and the monologues of the actors, as a parallel musical monologue.

In my own opinion, this trend did not just serve aesthetic requests, and it wasn't just a soundtrack of the show or another way to influence the emotion and to delight the ears of the public and the judges.

The Greek word Music comes from the word Muse, and has a common root with the verb “μᾶω” which means conceive, seek something with the spirit, mentally. Music, therefore, was the gift of the Muses to the Greeks, the medium for cultural training and for spiritual maturation that led man to do, think and feel. The word music until the middle of the 4th century (BC), did not mean the art of Sound, but the insoluble unity of sound, poetry, and dance-acting.

Based on existing information sources, we have the assurance that the joint of music and speech in ancient tragedy is linked to the notion that music has a catalytic effect on the human psyche.

I am certain that the main reason for this presence, comes from the dominant concept of that era in which Plato, Aristotle, Aristoxenos and almost all of Greek philosophers and poets described and defended for the subsequent centuries. It is the ancient theory about the power and function of the music and it is called the theory of "Ethos of Music" which claims that every melodic and rhythmic movement of music corresponds to an emotional reaction that affects the volition. Of course, the theory of Ethos is not limited to general statements, but deepens into the research of aesthetic parameters and the effects of rhythms, modes, melody and different instruments onto the variations of emotions and articulation of speech. The other reason of the constant presence of music in the performances is the necessity to keep the processes in the ritual origin and theater's traditions about actor's metamorphosis abilities and their state of trance.



Training with MUSA, working on Trance-acting, September 2013 Photo: Philippe Lavra. CAL.



Training my actors with MUSA, working on the experience of Trance-acting, actress Elisa Caldeira and

Naara Barros September of 2013, Photo: Philippe Lavra.



Pushing the energy of actors; Sotiris Karamebinis on percussion, rehearsals on J.P. Sartre's *Oresteia*, The Flies, photo: Tatiana Farache, May 2014, Jockey's club theater Municipal of Rio de Janeiro.

A.S - Could you please further elaborate upon the process of the method you invented; the Musical System of Acting? How were you led to the need to invent this method? What was the inspiration at the beginning?

S.K - MUSA is a method of exercise, training and preparation of actors and role composition, using Music as a driving power and a catalyst. It is an autonomous and holistic acting method, and it focuses mainly on learning how to use music as a backbone of actor's composition of scenes or monologs.

This process is leading the actors to an organic creation and presence, enriching the expressive means and facilitating the acquisition of psychosomatic conditions and emotional readiness required for an actor's activity and unique artistic composition per role, not through a psychological but through a psychotechnical (psychotechnique) process.

The creation of MUSA is the result of years of research, kind of a project of theater "archeology", studying and discovering the actor's process in Greek tragedy and their relation with music. Theoretically; it is mainly based on the ancient 'Theory of Ethos of



Music, the central concept of power and function of music as I said.

My personal experience of musical improvisation in theatrical performances and courses have given me some space for experimentation and research on that issue. So, I dedicated more than a decade to find and organize how to reintroduce music in the art of acting.

In practice, I was “digging” at the excavations of rehearsal’s field, working in the laboratory of actor’s education and preparation on a monologue, an improvisation, a scene or a performance, so it came at light the almost magic role of music in the acting process.

I was searching the space in which music not only invests but catalytically influences the acts and the emotions of the actor, changing his rhythm, volume, intonation and dynamics, leading to a potential composition through the dialogue between the two - music and actor - during the time of research and action.

In all human’s languages the word has the information, but the vehicle of the word, which transfers it to its understanding lies in melody. The prosody of each expression in a particular language brings the expression to our ears as familiar and clear or not. For example, when I speak Greek with a French prosody and otherwise, I make communication unbearably difficult for my foreign interlocutor.

If the prosody of speaking words where like music, if melody, tonality, dynamics, rhythm, pauses and silences constitute a vehicle for expression and communication, and if all these characteristics are exactly the same means of musical expression in composition and interpretation of music, then why don’t these two arts, the art of oral speech studied by the actor and the art of music studied by the musician, use common codes and glossary?

These considerations led me to the teaching and using of the musical code with my actors, and together with the corresponding use of theatrical terminology in consultation with my musicians finally allowed me to unify them in a common code that allows for precision in communication. So, I used music codes that could literally punctuate a text as a melodic score and also, as a score of intentions and meanings.

So, the speech becomes music and music becomes speech in this unification of the actor with the music. It’s my way to answer and work on this big issue of the musicality and artistic use of the individual characteristics of human speech that illuminates with special light the feelings and the will of the actor.

During years of work, my system was enriched by a plethora of theoretical and practical sources through the continuous dialogue with the great masters of theatrical past and the great music composers and performers and other sources from the fields of music therapy, drama therapy and studies on anthropology of theater, performance and rituals.

On top of that, creating and binding new acting exercises inspired by the latest discoveries of neuroscience about the music and how it affects the human brain, came out a unique and particularly rich working system.

Besides the use of MUSA in the preparation of the actor and artistic composition, the method has therapeutic and liberating effects on those exercising it, so became a tool in the hands of art therapists and educators as well.



Giving last minute directions about the action of Chorus of the old ladies, May 2014, *Oresteia* by J.P. Sartre, “The Flies”, Jockey’s club Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro, photo: Kostas Tzimeas.



Electra; Camila Matoso, and Clytemnestra; Rosana Barros, at Jockey's club Municipal Theater, Rio de Janeiro, May 2014, *The Flies* by J.P. Sartre, photo: Tatiana Farache.



The Chorus of the old ladies in Korinthos, *The Flies*, J.P. Sartre, Translation and Directing Sotiris Karamesinis, May 2014 Jockey's club Municipal theater, Rio de Janeiro, photo: Patrick Granja



The old lady, old as the Olive tree, training with MUSA, actress Taiana Xavier, photo: Tatiana Farache

A.S - You talk and always refer to the experience of ecstasy, to an ecstatic acting. Why do you attach so completely the experience of ecstasy that is a characteristic of rituals to the art and technique of contemporary actor?

S.K - As a director and a musician, I have been able to experiment knowingly in this dialectical and dynamic relationship between music and acting. But in order to apply all that in a simple working system, I have had to discover and rediscover exercises for the actors in order to teach them how to listen and how to experience music in a new way - as I said, it is a forgotten art on how to really listen to music in an integral and organic way - and how to become more sensitive to the presence of music.

I have also had to search for the appropriate music and new rehearsal techniques so that the influence of music may become more conscious and controlled regarding the result. Moreover, all this work, lead me to substantially invent again, a technique forgotten beneath the embankment of the centuries, about how trance-acting, the experience of ecstasy, may return again to the actor, the favorite artist of Dionysus, with the help of music.





The Chorus of Flies with Orestes and Electra, *The Flies*, J.P. Sartre, photo: rudacomunicacao



The pentita adulteress between people of Korinthos, actress Juliana Paliologo, *The Flies*, photo: Tatiana Farache.



Orestes-Zeus, actors: Augusto Volcato, Ricco Lima, *The Flies*, J.P.Sartre, May, 2014, Rio de Janeiro, Photo Patrick Granja



Electra, Clytemnestra and Egistos, Marina Magalhães, Rosana Barros and Jano Moskow, ceremony of day of the dead, *The Flies*, J.P. Sartre, May, 2014 photo: [rudacomunicacao.com.br](http://rudacomunicacao.com.br).





Electra trapped by the Flies at Korinthos, actress Viviane Catalde, J.P. Sartre's *Oresteia*, *The Flies*, Jockey's Club Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro, May 2014 Photo: Tatiana Farache.



Listening to the voice of the state, actress Taiana Xavier and Camila Matoso working on Trance-acting, chorus of the Flies. March of 2014, Photo: Andreia Leite.

I think primarily poets-directors sought the empowerment, support and psychosomatic peak of intensity and emotion of the performers through music in this manner.

That through music, the actors acted for hours in this trance state that once was eminently a theatrical experience - the art of Dionysus - and it was the natural state of actors by imposed and crippling conditions of theatrical games in Athens.

The strengths and capabilities of the actors and chorus for the participation in the games had to be superhuman, super-athletes' performances, and without going into the state of trance, it would not be humanly possible to run this long feat.

Music was the element of the whole process that unified everything and lead to a certain way in ecstasy, always keeping in pace, the tone of the whole set, nourishing energy throughout this vast body of people to dance, lament, sing, changing masks, costumes, the use of sophisticated technical effects, operating at maximum energy in harmony under the sunshine of Attica's sky for hours.

Through perseverance and The similarity between the "trance" of the actor, in which body and mind work as a perfect unit, the conscious and the subconscious are present and active as a whole, and the ecstasy experience of poetic creation and of times of inspiration or of 'visit of the Muses ', or the times of common musical improvisation among musicians is also found in the bacchanal tradition and in every tradition in which with the help of music and dance, a change of consciousness and the transition to another "transcendental" state of consciousness is pursued.

Due to the concentration on feelings and emotions caused by music and the "taste" of actions risen, the actor is driven and "self-searching" is to be reached under the power of or in the state of an expanded consciousness and heavy psychosomatic conditions that have been conquered by the technique and are controlled. However it gives the sense of ecstasy. This different experience of acting, I named "Trance-acting" and it is the experience / objective of exercise within MUSA.



Trance-acting, training with MUSA, actress Anna Benchimol, March of 2014, photo: Andreia Leite.

A.S - Why did you enter in this long process of creating a method? What sort of need

conducted you in such a decision? Is making up new working systems in theatre a common procedure? Furthermore, aren't there too many available methods for working with actors? Is a new method, really necessary?

S.K - Every artist needs a working method. Actors need a method of work, and they make up one through their years of experience. Musicians, dancers grow up mostly with a given method, because of the nature of their art. But in acting and directing, things are different.

Theatre directors have an even greater need for a method, as actors with different backgrounds often gather around them, and they must homogenize disparate aesthetic directions with the use of a common code. A simple and proven way of working is what solves communication problems and greatly facilitates the process of rehearsal and the final composition.

For example; those directors who have a long background in acting have the advantage of knowing the process of stage presence very well, but are often limited by their own subjective experience and limitations they had as actors.

In my case, I came from Music to Theater. My method emerged out of the need to make my own tools in order to share a new working Code with my actors during rehearsals, for the aesthetic homogeneity and functionality of a very different system of preparation, which leads to an equally special aesthetic effect.

I know that I'm not the first nor the only one to deal with the theme of ecstasy in acting. Besides, the legacy of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski and their descendants is now ubiquitous in theater research. I firmly believe in tradition, and in the apprenticeship relationships among generations, between teacher and student.

Nevertheless, my way of learning and making something mine is to discover it again by myself. I don't know any other way of apprenticeship: we always need to reinvent everything from scratch, and my own Ariadne's thread to find my path was Music.

It is like children, who come in this world and one day they discover that they can walk standing, they can float in the water and they can produce sounds through clapping their hands...

But, even within the traditional path, I consider that a good teacher even working with his method, should work gently, almost as invisible, leading the student to the taking of the correct decisions on their ways, regarding paths and labyrinths and dead-ends, not to give up in the middle of the way, and to reach faster and safely to their own ways of personal discovery and experience, to create his unique personal way of working as an

artist.

So, in this personal route of mine, I've reached a very specific and forgotten issue, which is this mysterious absence of actors from the Dionysian experience, which is due, I believe, to the absence of music as I said. It is there, where I have eventually found a hidden treasure that I could not ignore, I had to organize a way to communicate this valuable information and path.



Training with Musa in the state of Trance-acting, Actress Marina Magalhães with Ricco Lima, photo: Andreia Leite.



A.S - What does the Greek tragedy have to offer to contemporary theater? And to what extent does this potential impact, this promise that the Greek tragedy carries define your position as a Greek director in the Brazilian theater scene? Could you please elaborate upon your experience?

S.K - The ancient Greek tragedy is a great and irreplaceable school for actors. It is of a demanding nature and a training ground for the body, the voice, and every expressive means at our disposal. The actor may be trained regarding the size, strength, precision, team work capacity, individual performance skills, rhythm and musicality, organization of thought, capacity of composition and emotion transference. As Bach cannot be out of a pianist's education because the pianist might later choose to play jazz, so the tragedy gives the foundations to the actor.

In modern Greece we have a long tradition of exceptional actors and directors who have devoted their lives to study, work and their refinement on this gender. Several generations have already passed. Whoever wants to confront existential texts, even from Contemporary Theater or Cinema, the meeting with the myths and the characters of tragedy are a gift. References and knowledge are necessary in order to have something serious to say as an artist.

It is not just a part of Greek tradition; it is the integral beginning and birth of an art, which never ceased to bind and to return there to be fed and to evolve.

Because of my origins and my love for the tragedy, my involvement in projects, discussions, and anything related to tragedy and study is inevitable. Over time some key artists and researchers, professors, actors with zest and love for their craft have gathered around me, this thirst for quality and substance that exists in the tragedy is joining us. They are the persons and conditions to console the lack of my people and my country.

These meetings are something impossible even to avoid as I am the only – as far as I know – Greek director in Brazil. The opposite happens, wherever I go, whatever I do, my Greek origins combined with my interests as a director and teacher brings me back to it. Most of the plays that I've staged in Brazil are tragedies and the lectures, the workshops, even the way I learned Portuguese are related to my constant contact with the theater, the translation and the teaching of these texts.

This is mostly my daily contact with Greece, which I always miss, and it is both a blessing and heavy responsibility. As the official Greek state does not exist outside the Greek territory on issues of culture, language, all the responsibility and the burden is on

us, on the few of us in such a position.

I have been working in Latin America, perhaps someone else in Africa, another one in some part of Asia, in absolute loneliness in our mission and with a very heavy burden to lift on our back.

Certainly, my reward is the pleasure to have such a special identity and native language, which along with my determination to carry out the mission keeps me in a mental alertness and a balance that are difficult to be obtained by other means, in these working conditions as a free lancer artist.



Research on the body of Ritual, Trance-acting, The Chorus of Iphigenia in Aulis, Euripides, September 2012, CAL, Rio de Janeiro, Photo: Ricco Lima.



The musicians in action, always Live, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Euripides, Translated and directed by Sotiris Karamesinis, October 2012, Jockey's club Municipal theater, Photo: Tatiana Farache.



Iphigenia is coming; the announce of the messenger, Iphigenia in Aulis, photo: Tatiana Farache



Iphigenia in Aulis, Euripides, marching for the Final act, actress Rosana Barros leading the Chorus, October 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Translation and direction Sotiris Karamesinis, photo: Tatiana Farache.





Iphigenia arrived in Aulis, Iphigenia; Rafaela Azevedo, Clytemnestra; Vanessa Dias, photo: Tatiana Farache



The troupe of Achilles is upset, waiting for the winds to blow, Iphigenia in Aulis, photo: El Greco

A.S - What is the position of the ancient tragedy in theatrical activities in Brazil, and how would you compare that with Greece, in terms of research, directing, acting and education but also in terms of presence in the theater scene?

S.K - The ancient tragedy is a genre with which Brazilian theater artists are not in any way familiar in comparison to their Europeans or Greek colleagues. There isn't such presence of ancient tragedy on stage neither in theater nor in education faculties. It is covered under a high culture veil and with a sapient and almost inaccessible language by Brazilian media, so there is no easy access to these works neither for the actors nor for the audience, of course.

The post-colonial legacy left tragedy in the hands of experts and of those in the academic world of classical studies, with some exceptions of course, like Medea, Antigone, Oedipus and Electra, who passed through psychoanalysis and literature, cinema etc., through other paths and ways in their culture, and anyway less through theater and education.

Of course, with all the prestige and classical beauty that is bound to the Greek tragedy, it will forever be a grand and beautiful theater. You can see some directors to stage some of these plays at times, but unfortunately, usually these performances do not converse with contemporary theater, but with a kind of old fashioned aesthetics.

The theatrical audience, also, fears and is prejudiced when it faces these performances thinking that they may be out of date or they may feel stupid or too tired.

While the Greek world, always pointing to the classical world, the tragedy, philosophy, Homer, mythology, still continues to exert an irresistible charm and the heroes of the Trojan war and the Gods of Olympus are there annually, staring at Brazilian Carnival. There is a problem with the recruitment of the Greek universe of the artists and their connection with their art, their life and modern thinking.

However, to sum it up, I have also seen a trend here in Brazil, as well as in the rest of the world, to return to the study and search for meaning again, back to the roots of our culture, the Western Culture I mean. It seems that people want to go and find the lost path, what did not go right and so we are now in such a deadlock of ideology and practice.





Chorus on Fire, the prophesy of the disaster of house of Atreides and the kingdom of Agamemnon, Iphigenia in Aulis, October 2012, Rio de Janeiro, photo: Tatiana Farache



Iphigenia's Triumph, the Final Ascension, Iphigenia in Aulis by Euripides, Jockey's Club Municipal theater of Rio de Janeiro, October of 2012, Photo: Tatiana Farache.