



Iben Nagel Rasmussen: *transparency in the maturity*

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ABSTRACT – Iben Nagel Rasmussen: *transparency in the maturity*¹ – *Transparency* is proposed as a quality that emerges from the career of the actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen, a representative of a *laboratory dimension*, of work on oneself in the European theater. An analogy is suggested between Han's *aromatic time* and the quality of *transparency*. The *artistic maturity* of Stanislavski is a starting point to inquire about the meaning of the mature actor's experiences, in light of the principles of the Noh actor by Zeami. The quality of *transparency* in Rasmussen's autonomy in relation to the Odin Teatret, in the creation of biographical performances, as well as pedagogical projects, and as a value to be cultivated in the contemporary scene is highlighted.

Keywords: **Actor. Artistic Maturity. Laboratorial Dimension. Training. Acting.**

RÉSUMÉ – Iben Nagel Rasmussen: la *transparence* dans la maturité – Il est proposé la *transparence* comme qualité qui émerge de la carrière de l'actrice Iben Nagel Rasmussen, représentative d'une *dimension laboratoriale*, du travail sur soi, du théâtre européen. Une analogie est suggérée entre *temps aromatique* de Han et la qualité de la *transparence*. La *maturité artistique* de Stanislavski est point de départ pour se demander sur le sens des expériences de l'acteur mature, à la lumière des principes de l'acteur nô, émanant de Zeami. La *transparence* de l'autonomie de Rasmussen vis-à-vis d'Odin Teatret, dans la création de spectacles biographiques, ainsi que dans projets pédagogiques et en tant que valeur à cultiver dans la scène contemporaine, est soulignée.

Mots-clés: **Acteur. Maturité Artistique. Dimension Laboratoriale. Entrainement. Actuation.**

RESUMO – Iben Nagel Rasmussen: a *transparência* na maturidade – Propõe-se a *transparência* como qualidade que emerge do percurso da atriz Iben Nagel Rasmussen, representante de uma *dimensão laboratorial*, de trabalho sobre si, do teatro europeu. Sugere-se uma analogia entre o *tempo aromático* de Han e a qualidade da *transparência*. A *maturidade artística* de Stanislavski é ponto de partida para indagar-se sobre o sentido das experiências do ator maduro, à luz de princípios da arte do ator nô, provenientes de Zeami. É salientada a qualidade da *transparência* na autonomia de Rasmussen com relação ao Odin Teatret, na criação de espetáculos de inspiração biográfica, além de projetos pedagógicos, e como valor a ser cultivado na cena expandida contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: **Ator. Maturidade Artística. Dimensão Laboratorial. Treinamento. Atuação.**

Introduction



Figure 1 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen, in the performance *The tree*, Odin Teatret's most recent one (2016).
Photo: Francesco Galli.

This article is a development of my doctoral dissertation, *Maturidade do ator ofício e cultivo de si* (Actor's Maturity Craft and Self-Cultivation, original in Portuguese, 2019). The research had as its inspiration the propositions of Italo Calvino (1992) in his book *Six memos for the Next Millennium*; the Italian author points out qualities that should be preserved in the future of literature. In the dissertation, I proposed qualities that should be cultivated in the theater, in the face of the present non-synchronic and *non-aromatic* times, and the challenges of the contemporary expanded scene. I associate different qualities to different actors, all of them over 60 years old. They are representatives of a generation that was formed, and which operates in Europe within a *laboratory dimension* (Schino, 2012), related to the scope of the work about oneself. In this article, I focus on the *transparency*, a feature which I attribute to the career of Iben Nagel Rasmussen (Figure 1), a 74-year-old actress of the Odin Teatret (Denmark), seeking to highlight how such quality could offer meaning to the accumulated experiences in her artistic course².

Part of the doctorate was held abroad, in a cartographic perspective of monitoring processes (Steps, Kastrup; Escóssia, 2014) alongside the subjects participating in the research. In the case of Rasmussen, interviews and the

follow-up of work routine, of rehearsals and of the actress' performances, as well as bibliographic research in OTA – Odin Teatret Archives in Holstebro (Denmark), were carried out. The interviews (recorded in audio) were undertaken at the house of the actress and aimed at producing data, based on her professional experience and her life's history. This article presents part of the elaboration of such data.

Artistic Maturity: quality and time as lingering

The advent of maturity for the actor may be understood as the pinnacle of ability conquest and of potentiality development, or it might bring a sense of fear about what will come next, as well as about the loss of vitality, energy and creativity. Artistic maturity, however, does not necessarily coincide with age maturity. It is possible to mature artistically in youth, just as one may grow old without having matured artistically. The notion of artistic maturity is inspired by Stanislavski; in his case, that seems to have been achieved at the age of 60, at the time he was writing his autobiography – *My Life in Art* –, the first of his books. In that moment, Stanislavski's acting career was practically finished. His research on the art of the actor, however, gained new momentum and would only be interrupted by his death, at the age of 75. The writing of his books and the coordination of practical research on the performance of the various *Studios* under his guidance would culminate in the development of his ultimate legacy: the method of physical action. The final chapter of his autobiography is opened with a reflection on his artistic past. The Russian master wondered where his "old creative joy" had gone and conjectured:

In the time referred to above, I had accumulated with my artistic experience a reservoir full of material of all kinds about art technique. All of that was sort of heaped up, lacking classification, confused, mixed, not systematized, with no conditions of being exploited as artistic wealth. It was necessary to put it in order, to analyze the heap, to examine it, to evaluate it and, so to speak, to distribute it on the spiritual shelves. What was crude had to be polished and laid as the corner stone of the new art. What the time has been wearing out should be refreshed, without that, progress would be impossible (Stanislavski, 1989, p. 407-408).

Stanislavski formulates uncertainties, fears and worries about the last period of his life. He shows full awareness of his career's value, but he has doubts about his legacy and whom and how to convey it:

Who am I and what do I stand for in the new life that springs up in the theater? Will I be able, as I once did, to understand even the subtleties, everything that takes place around me, and what involves the youth? [...] How can I share with the new generations the results of my experience and warn them of the errors generated by inexperience? When I cast a glance today on the way I have gone through, over all my life in art, it makes me willing to compare myself to a gold miner, who must first err by insurmountable wounds in order to discover where the rough gold is and that, only after washing hundreds of tons of sand and stones in order to separate some nuggets of the noble metal. As a gold miner, I can convey to posterity not my work, my inquiries and deprivations, my joys and frustrations, but only the precious mineral I extracted (Stanislavski, 1989, p. 537-538).

The more time advances, the more likely it is for an actor to achieve artistic maturity. I think of time as duration, as lingering, as a path, and not as isolated points of a course, moments of present between the past and the future. As knowledge is accumulated, it also occupies another kind of space, such as the perfume of an *aromatic time* that remains in the air. The notion of *aromatic time* or of *time with aroma* is suggested by the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2016) and it is inspired by the *hsiang-yin*, a Chinese incense clock. It is a container that holds a stencil of drawings or of characters in continuous line. The powdered incense is poured into the container and, upon the removal of the mold, the powder remains with the shape of the drawing. When burned, the powder becomes ash, but it maintains the original form of the ideogram or drawing (Bedini, 1963). The ember that consumes the drawing represents the transitory character of life; the characters, which do not lose their meaning after being reduced to ashes, transmit the sense of duration:

The time that contains aroma does not pass or elapse. Nothing can empty it. The aroma of the incense fills the space beforehand. By giving space to time, it gives it the appearance of duration (Han, 2016, p.73).

For the Korean philosopher, the current sense of acceleration, of ephemerality, of loss of the rhythm that ordainates time, of difficulty regarding the finitude of things and of life, could be reversed:

Daily *hyperkinesia* robs human life of any contemplative element, any ability to linger. It presupposes the loss of the world and of time. [...] The temporal crisis will only be overcome when the *vita activa* [active life], in the midst of the crisis, will once again welcome the *vita contemplativa* [contemplative life] within itself (Han, 2016, p. 11, emphasis in original).

According to Han (2016), the current idea that we have about the contraction of the present is not precisely due to time acceleration. This phase would have been overcome. The current crisis would be more about a non-synchrony, the loss of the rhythm that ordainates time. In this sense, the relation between the loss of duration and the acceleration is due more to a precipitation of time, that is, to an avalanche; nowadays, time is stumbling, because it no longer has its own support:

Each point of the present, among which there is no longer any force of temporal attraction, causes time to unravel, the processes to accelerate without direction – and it is precisely the lack of any direction that means we cannot talk about acceleration. Acceleration, in the strict sense, presupposes one-way paths (Han, 2016, p.17).

The quality emanating from the trajectory of the Danish actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen would be like the ideogram of the Chinese clock: the *transparency* would be like the *perfume* of her course. That quality would denote the possibility of lingering in artistic maturity. It is as if it was possible to read the characters of the Chinese clock, feel the perfume of an incense being consumed. Artistic maturity would be based on a practice of the craft that presumes some lingering within a *laboratory dimension* (Schino, 2012), in addition to carrying out performances. The *laboratory dimension* would correspond to the work of the actor on him/herself, a time of transformation of the actor Subject.

Rasmussen (2016) narrates that, on her arrival to work at the Odin Teatret, what most excited her interest was to see that, when the *older* actors of the group acted, something happened in their bodies; and she calls that something “transparent body”.

It was not a ‘skill’, it was not a will to build a ‘beautiful’ body, as in classical ballet. Nor was it an aesthetic, something that came from the outside. It was something *inside*... It was this that decided, that made the body becoming something else: not a beautiful or ugly body. But that body was, as if... yes, it was transparent, and I could see it very clearly in the Torgeir [Wethal], in the cat sequence [...] The same thing happened to Else Marie [Laukvik]: it was not



simply a beautiful or ugly voice , strong or subtle [...] it seemed that there was a force within it, and I always had that same feeling, as if it were some matter that became transparent (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 281, emphasis in original).

Although, perhaps unintentionally, the *transparency* seems to have traversed Rasmussen's course, going from an ideal to be reached to a quality to be transmitted to others.

Seeking the *Transparent* Body: training and autonomy in the Odin and in the Farfa

Iben Nagel Rasmussen was born in Copenhagen, in 1945, and has been an Odin Teatret actress since 1966. The Odin Teatret was founded in 1964, in Oslo (Norway), being transferred to Holstebro (Denmark) in 1966. Rasmussen's youth was marked by a mix of adventure, rebellion, ecstasy, freedom and suffering. At the same time that drugs' use represented a "mind revolution", it became "closed doors" and "some people were on the wrong side when the doors began to close" (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 268). It is no exaggeration to say that the theater saved the life of young Rasmussen. She says the Odin Teatret offered her the necessary conditions for another kind of transformation:

I needed land to be able to dive, to transform. And that was when I found the Odin Teatret, a 'floating island'. [...] I think my generation had something to develop, but it did not make it. It seemed like a new way of life, that a new time was coming. [...] it is necessary that the few who have reached this point as a whole keep that hope alive, as well as defend it and pass it on to others. It is like uprooting a plant from its ground because it is suffocating there, and then seeking a new ground, a more appropriate one to embrace and let it grow its roots. A smaller land, apparently more isolated, but where the fertile land is deeper (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 250-251).

Over the years, the rebelliousness of youth was not lost, but it was transmuted. Instead of establishing itself as a path of self-destruction, rebelliousness found in the theater another mode of expression, of affirmation of spaces and of autonomy in relation to the group and the director. This is manifested in several areas of the actress' work: "[...] practice has become an opportunity for independence, the key that can open the doors of ever new spaces" (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 122). That independence in practice was also transmitted to the creative processes. Here, *transparency* is manifested as a resource for retreating, as if the actress could *disappear* for what does not interest

her. About the performance *Brecht's Ashes* 1980, for example, Rasmussen (2016, p. 133) stated: “[...] I do not like being told what to do. I need to find my own material by myself, my own language. [...] for me, working with the director is a meeting”. In fact, Rasmussen was responsible for one of the fundamental points of change in Odin, when the collective practice, composed of various disciplines, began to give way to the personal training³ of each actor. Rasmussen started off with what she called *Swiss exercises* (so called because they were developed during a tour in Switzerland):

I think I had worked at Odin for at least four years [...] I could not find inside of me what I had seen in Torgeir [Wethal], in [Richard] Cieslak... Something was not working. [...] I suddenly began to reflect: what is a dramatic action? What is it *for me*? Not in general: *for me*. And that's when I began to try all the possible ways of sitting down, of going to the ground and of getting out of balance [...]. The practice itself had, for me, been reborn. I had found that *flow* that I had sought for years and had never found, because it was always interrupted by something: by thought, by fatigue, by the discontinuity of training (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 282, emphasis added).



Figure 2 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen in a rare situation nowadays: a training demonstration at the last session of ISTA in Albino (Italy) in April 2016. In the background, on the right: Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley. Photo: Francesco Galli.

The actor must learn how to *flow* on continuous improvisations, experienced in training, otherwise he/she will not be able to *fly*. The over-thinking actor, who is worried about learning technical skills, tends to keep both feet flat on the ground, and does not take risks, does not fly. From her own experience, Iben Nagel Rasmussen (1996, p. 179)⁴ concluded that *flying* constitutes the connection between training and creative work:

It took me four years to start doing something that I felt was mine. At first, I felt that the training did not help me in the work with improvisations and what I did in the performance. Later, I discovered that between these two seemingly different things there was an underground connection: you should not use elements of training in the performance, but you should use training to learn how to 'fly'; training is what allows [the actor] to arrive at the performance in a totally different way. That's why it is important to work in a continuous way during training [...] in the beginning, the training is tiring because you cannot find the energy that flows, everything remains technical, you do everything as if it were gymnastics, but, little by little, you learn how to find the necessary air to 'fly'⁵.

From the perception of that "underground connection", the dramaturgical dimension of training emerged. That is the dimension in which *transparency* is the way for the individual to disappear, leaving something different from the Self to blossom. Rasmussen began to invest in the construction of *materials* and, thus, in guaranteeing her autonomy in relation to the director. Such procedure was tried by the actress in several Odin's performances. In 1996, Rasmussen considered *Isti-Bitsi* (1991) (Figure 3) to be the performance in which her autonomy with respect to Eugenio Barba would have reached its apex. Not only was the actress the author of the text of the performance, as she composed all her *materials*, along with her peers in the scene:

Eugenio [Barba] changed a lot of things, but almost nothing of the scenes' internal structure. When it comes down to that point, the *materials* offered by the actor to the director are not just simple improvisations, but rather actual dramatic constructions. The actor is not limited to improvise in order to create physical actions but, in creating them, he/she can structure them in a certain way, giving them a unity, an internal coherence. *Isti-Bitsi* is not an assemblage of scenic material, it is an assembly of dramaturgical blocks composed by the actors and preserved intact in their internal structure, in the final result (Rasmussen 1996, 181, emphasis added)⁶.

The actress' autonomy contributed to consolidate the notion of "dramaturgy of the actor" in the Odin Teatret as one of the basic principles of the Theatrical Anthropology – "[...] the study of human behavior in a situation of organized representation" (Barba 1993, p. 24). De Marinis (1996, p. 7, emphasis in original) defines the "dramaturgy of the actor" as such:

We can speak, in a non-figurative sense, of a *dramaturgy of the actor*, disregarding the limited but important case in our tradition of the 'actor-who-writes', but specifically, thinking about the construction of the role and of the performance in the actor's creative process, conceived as a work of composition, of plot and of assembly and, therefore, truly dramaturgic, that has as its object the physical and verbal actions, and that is developed in several planes⁷.



Figure 3 – *Itsi-Bitsi* performance. From left to right: Kai Bredholt, Iben Nagel Rasmussen and Jan Ferslev. Photo: Tony D'Urso.

Despite the importance of *Itsi-Bitsi*, I consider the performance *Marriage with God* (Figure 4), 1984, as a broader example of such autonomy sought by the actress, since it involves not only the scope of the *actor's dramaturgy*, but also the search for an independent space with respect to the Odin Teatret. Rasmussen's lack of interest in conducting short workshops organized by the Odin led her to seek a long-term pedagogical work with a small group of students: thus, the Farfa group (1980-1988) was

born, directed by her. However, the actress did not leave Odin to form the Farfa group. A new situation was then created: one group functioning within another group. One of the components of the Farfa was the Argentinean actor César Brie, with whom Rasmussen created the performance *Marriage with God*. The theme of the performance – Nijinsnki's oldness – was chosen by the actors. When Barba was invited to engage in the performance as a director, he found *materials* that were already elaborated and composed in small scenes, which clearly reveals the dramaturgical dimension of the actors' work.



Figure 4 – Cesar Brie (behind) and Iben Nagel Rasmussen (front) on the stage of the performance *Marriage with God*, from the Farfa group. Photo: Tony D'Urso.

It is interesting to note that, according to Rasmussen (The Training and The Figures ..., 2018), *Marriage with God* anticipated issues that are presented to her today, such as the decline of physical vitality. The performance was created in the same period in which the actress' practice had reached extreme vigor, strength and physical dexterity, with many



acrobatic elements and influences of the Balinese dances. The Odin had been asked about the ease of producing vigorous performances with such a practice: what would the actors of the group do when they reached an old age? The performance *Marriage with God* is a kind of an early response: the theme was, precisely, the oldness of Nijinski. The scores developed by Rasmussen and Brie, both at the summit of their physical vitality, they were extremely delicate, with small, subtle movements. The actors *became transparent* to show the story of Nijinski and his wife Romola.

In my opinion, the Farfa was the possibility found by Rasmussen to remain in the Odin. However, that autonomy of the group-within-the-group was not a peaceful situation; it was not possible to become completely *transparent* to the Odin. In the process of working for the performance *Marriage with God*, Rasmussen (2017) says that the relationship between Brie and the director Barba was not simple. Was the Argentinean actor, perhaps, too autonomous? Concerning him, says Barba (2016, p. 150):

César [Brie] was very good at practice and had an unusual ability to be the director of himself. Even coming from a theatrical experience far from ours, he was able to create interesting materials following a personal logic. And no less important: he was able to give scenic life to those materials.

To understand Rasmussen's effort to sustain Farfa functioning within the Odin, it is important to acknowledge the actress's enormous emotional and personal investment: Brie was Rasmussen's husband and the dissolution of the marriage coincided with the end of Farfa. In the group theaters of that historical period in Europe, personal vicissitudes were hardly detached from the professional activity of artists; life and art were one. I am convinced that, over the years, Rasmussen's spirit of independence was reinforced precisely by overcoming various affective traumas imbricated with her professional reality. The actress knew how to find autonomous possibilities of work within the group. For example, one of her initiatives ended up consecrating a new genre of work in the Odin: the performance-demonstration, almost always soloists. The first performance of that kind was *Moon and Darkness*, 1980, which paved the way for similar initiatives in the group. Rasmussen was also a pioneer in adopting students: young aspirants who joined the Odin. Her initiative had a double validity: to strengthen her individual autonomy and, at the same time, to contribute for strengthening the group. Thanks to initiatives like

Rasmussen's, what had begun as a small theatrical laboratory, made up of a director and a handful of actors, became developed and articulated. Nowadays, about to be 55 years old, the Odin Teatret is just one of the activities of what came to be later called the Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium/Odin Teatret.

In 2017, I was a guest at Rasmussen's small ranch in Ryde, a small village in the rural area of Holstebro (Denmark). In her daily routine, I noticed a form of actress' *transparency* with respect to the great structure that became the Odin Teatret: it is as if she could disappear, preserving its own interests. I think that having a work room attached to your home satisfies the need that is manifested cyclically. Regarding the Odin, ironically, Rasmussen (2017) has a precise name for this: *groupophobia*. When she is attacked by the *groupophobia*, the actress has a place to take refuge. In her room, Rasmussen develops autonomous projects like the international collective *Vindenes Bro* (*Bridge of winds*), directed by her, and rehearses its performances.



Figure 5 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen rehearsal room in Ryde (Holstebro province, Denmark), June 2017. The black chair and table in the background make up the scene of the *Halfdansk Rapsodi* performance.

Photo: Priscilla Duarte.

During my stay, I followed the rehearsals and the premiere of her new performance – *Halfdansk Rapsodi* (*Danish Rhapsody for Halfdan*, free translation) (Figure 5) – carried out in that room. Other presentations of *Halfdansk Rapsodi* were also carried out in a totally autonomous manner in relation to the logistics of the Festuge – international festival promoted by the Odin Teatret –, a shows' programming of which the performance was part. It was Rasmussen who loaded and unloaded the necessary equipment, with her own car, which she personally drove to the place where the performance would be assembled and presented, rural provinces near her house, and she would be aided only by an assistant, who also works as the light and sound technician.

The *Transparent* Actress and the Performances of Biographical Inspiration



Figure 6 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen in the performance *White as Jasmine*, in Paraty (Brazil), December 2016. Photo: Marta Viana.

After 52 years working as an actress in the Odin Teatret, what can be seen through the *transparency* of the actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen? Rather than a synthetic analysis of dozens of performances carried out in her long career, I will focus on my recent impressions as a spectator. My reflections will therefore focus on the live performances I attended during my stay in



Denmark in June 2017, – *White as Jasmine* and *Halfdansk Rapsodi* – and the performances in video – *Itsi-Bitsi* and *Ester's Book*.

Created in 1993, the performance-demonstration *White as Jasmine* (Figure 6) re-covers Rasmussen's course since her joining the Odin Teatret to the present day. The main theme of this retrospective is the work on voice. Recently I had watched *White as Jasmine* in Paraty (Brazil), during the stay of Rasmussen and the collective of actors directed by her, the *Vindenes Bro (Bridge of Winds)*. But the presentation I attended at Hosløstebro had a special atmosphere: the performance was presented in the room where it was designed and in English; in Paraty, the language was Spanish. Rasmussen is more fluent in English than in Spanish and that is reflected in the scene. In both presentations there was a short circuit in my memory: I had already witnessed this same demonstration in the 1990s. And here is the strangeness: both in Paraty and Hosløstebro there was the same vibrant energy of the actress, but in a concentrated way, while the body was another one, marked by the passage of the years.

In fact, some of the material in *White as Jasmine* is the actress's true warhorse. In addition to *training* practices, there are also scenes from the *figures* (a denomination that Rasmussen often uses, instead of *character*) created by her. A classic example is the character Katrin – the mute daughter of Courage mother – which was born in the work process for *The Million* (1978-1984), and was later developed in the performance *Brecht's Ashes* (1980-1984). As well as Katrin, Dressed in White and Trickster⁸ became autonomous figures, also appearing in other performances of the Odin. Rasmussen (2017) says that it is only possible to continue performing Katrin because the passages inserted in the present performances are short, but that she would be lacking the physical resistance to perform *Brecht's Ashes* completely. Rasmussen is not able to assess whether the character's energy is still the same as when it was created. From time to time, the actress asks Barba if she “is not ridiculous doing it” and, so far, he has said that she is well (Rasmussen, 2017). However, she does not usually make demonstrations of physical practice, because she is not able to support the physical effort needed.

Rasmussen says that when they are young, actors need to go to the maximum of their abilities, so then, in old age, they can reduce it; if you have never been to the maximum, you will not have what to reduce later

(The Training and The Figures ..., 2018). That applies both to practice and creative work for the performances. There is an analogy here with what Zeami says (1987, p. 108) about actors who know how to keep the secret of their craft: "the *flower*⁹ consists of a mind disposition; the craft should be its seed"¹⁰. In general, and not only for the old actor, the preservation of the craft of the Noh actor is due to a principle that relates more to a practice of the mind than of the body. The principle is that every actor should be able to reduce the movement of the body from ten tenths to seven tenths:

'Move your mind for ten tenths, move your body for seven tenths' is understood as: the learned movements, such as reaching out or moving the foot, are executed [before] according to the teachings of the own master; when perfection is achieved in this field, [the movement which consists in] the hand extension or hand withdrawing is not executed anymore as [is conceived] in the mind, but [the movement] is retained a little shorter than the [conception of] mind (Zeami, 1987, p. 156)¹¹.

Zeami further points out that it is especially important for Noh actors to observe such principle when they reach an old age, since it would not be appropriate to play certain roles that demand more energy, unless they have learned to reduce it:

[...] By becoming a master in the *ways* marked by serenity, the actors could be suited to the style imposed by the oldness [of the actors]. But, if by chance, their talent leads them to the *hataraki* technique¹², which expresses the delirium, then they will not suit it. However, in this case, they can represent under the condition of knowing how to reduce to six or to seven tenths a dance or a *hataraki*, which they thought before [that should be performed] to ten tenths, applying in a particular way the principle of 'movement of the body to seven tenths'. Know that is what one must study in old age (Zeami, 1987, p. 189, emphasis in original)¹³.

Another principle of Noh that is well applied to Rasmussen's trajectory is *not to forget one's own beginning* (Zeami 1987, p. 189). The fact of revisiting her own experiences in performances that dialogue with her biography, in the demonstration-performances or in re-acting characters, reveals how the actress feeds on her own trajectory to move on, in a continuous process of reevaluation, as Zeami suggests:

[...] in our school we have a universal saying: 'Do not forget your *beginnings*' [...]: This maxim is the object of an oral tradition and is divided into three parts: [...] 'Good or bad, do not forget your *beginnings*': if they are kept ever

present without never forgetting it, the memory of the *beginning* of your youthful years may result in many advantages in the old age. ‘To know the flaws of what has been precedent is the condition of the quality of what follows’, it is said. [...] forgetting the very *beginning* means returning to the very *beginning*. [...] ‘Do not forget the *beginnings* in every period’: from the *beginning* until the ripe age dedicate oneself to the search of appropriate *ways* of art forms that suit each age, that is to say (make) the beginning itself in every period. [...] ‘Do not forget your *beginnings* in the old age’. There is an end to life; there can be no end to Noh. When they have studied one by one the proper *ways* to each age, they will still study the way that suits the old age: that is the *beginning* of old age (Zeami, 1987, p. 189-191, emphasis in original)¹⁴.

Although the technique of the Noh actor has its specificities, what is seen in *White as Jasmine* is a mixture of two similar teachings to those of Zeami’s: the capacity to reduce, in the sense of making denser what has already been great, and the capacity of keeping alive the memory of the beginnings of a journey. Rasmussen concludes that “what remains [as one ages] within the actor is the energy before action, the *sats*, as we say in the Odin” (The Training and The Figures ..., 2018). The term *sats* (from the Norwegian, it means literally: impulse, preparation) is thus defined:

The *sats* is the moment in which the action is thought-executed by the whole organism, which reacts with tensions also in immobility. It is the point at which you are determined to act. There is a muscular, nervous and mental effort already directed towards a goal. It is the extension or the retraction from which action sprouts [...] *Sats* are the impulse and counter-impulse (Barba, 1994, p. 84-85).

Itsi-Bitsi (1991), *Ester’s Book* (2006) and *Halfdansk Rapsodi* (2017) are particularly representative of performances that dialogue with moments of Rasmussen’s biography, as examples of “[...] stories that must be told to recover lives that would otherwise be lost” (Schino, Taviani, 2016, p. 10). Iben Nagel Rasmussen is the daughter of Ester Nagel and Halfdan Rasmussen, a couple of writers, peace activists, who split up in the early 1970s. *Itsi-Bitsi* deals with the actress’ youth, political activities, travels and drugs, and about her love affair with the poet and musician beat Eik Skaløe; the theme of *Ester’s Book* (Figure 7) is the life of her mother, from the time she was pregnant with Iben to her old age sick with senile dementia; *Halfdansk Rapsodi* is about his father’s life, from childhood, through youth political activism, family life during World War II, the childhood of Iben with her brother Tom and the separation between Halfdan and Ester.



Figure 7 – Iben Nagel Rasmussen in the performance *Ester's Book*. Photo: Tony D'Urso.

In the program of the performance of *Ester's Book*, Iben Nagel Rasmussen (2006) tells that the decision to finalize the project, for which she had been collecting materials since 1999, came when his mother's health state worsened. At 85 years old, Ester Nagel had to be admitted to an asylum. The creation of the performance responded to the deep concerns of Ester Nagel's daughter: "My mother's story is also a reflection on the aging today in Denmark, about loneliness and separation. No one is born old. I wanted to prolong my mother's voice. I am the "Ester's Book" (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 1)¹⁵. In that performance, the *transparent* actress lets to be seen, through herself, her very origin, her own mother. One of the guiding threads of the performance's text, written by Iben N. Rasmussen is *The Seed's Book*, a kind of diary, written by mother Esther to the still unborn daughter:

[...] it is a unique document: a pregnant woman, during the war, takes care of her two-room apartment on the fifth floor, and writes to the embryo in her womb, describing daily life, dreams of the future, terror of dying prematurely (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 3)¹⁶.

In the report about the process of creating a first sketch of the performance, it is possible to perceive the mixture between the private and the artistic sphere, personal and professional anguish, affection and craft, in an indissoluble ball of thread involving the daughter/actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen (2006, p. 6-7)¹⁷:

I had little time. What to do? I could mix old black and white images [photos] taken by my father with new, colorful pictures of my old mother. I could read something from *The Seed's Book*. I could tell past facts, family stories, episodes of all kinds. And as an actress, what to do? Oh, yes. Scenes from old Odin Teatret performances, already existing characters: for example, the Trickster of *Talabot*, with his red threads and his bag of sand, which had been used several previous occasions. I also joined the scene of *Mythos*, in which Medea strangles her own children. And I presented this sketch in Bologna in 2003 [invited by the Ridotto Theater]. Reflecting upon that, a posteriori, I realized that the structure resembled *Itsi-Bitsi* a lot. That performance was also based on a biography, with personal texts, memorabilia, sequences and characters from previous performances. I was beginning to be bothered with this *self-actress* who was always repeating the same scenes. What could I do that would be new? [...] In the meantime, my mother was admitted to a treatment center for the elderly, in a state of advanced dementia. Our conversations were both moving, grotesque and tragicomic, with her wanting to leave the asylum to live in my house, maybe in a trailer in the garden. I drew up a dialogue, from those conversations, I chose fragments of the *Seed's Book*, and I added some childhood memories. The first draft of the text was ready. [...] The collaboration with Anna [Stigsgaard, violinist] was decisive for the work-in-progress. Her musical expertise, her age (she could be my daughter), and especially her life experience, so different from mine, brought to the performance the freshness that I sought. The temptation to fold in old scenes and characters already created disappeared. It also disappeared the idea of a vigorous physical expression.

Finally, in the final assemblage, Iben Nagel Rasmussen plays her mother, Ester Nagel, and the young actress/violinist plays the daughter, Iben Nagel Rasmussen. In the play's text, Rasmussen narrates that the familiar sound of childhood, the beating of the keys of the mother's typewriter, was deposited in her memory, in her body. In the imprecise rhythm of her mother's typewriter, the actress identifies the same *a-rhythmic* rhythm that she would later imbue to her drum in Odin Teatret's street parades: childhood experiences deposited in the body constitute a "tacit knowledge", she concludes (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 4).

Ester's Book is another of Iben Nagel Rasmussen's autonomous projects within the Odin Teatret. Eugenio Barba was called at the end of the process to "lend a helping hand" (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 7). The minimalist character of the play is very different from most of the performances produced by the Odin Teatret, to the point of causing

strangeness to the director and the actress: would it really be a theatrical performance? In a text in the form of a letter, in the play's program, Barba (2006, p. 19)¹⁸ tells Rasmussen that both know that despite of calling it a performance "[...] you and I know it is something else. But the right thing is to silence, each one nourishing oneself with one's own words. Not everything is shareable". On the other hand, Rasmussen (2006, p. 7)¹⁹ adds further perplexities to that doubt:

Is *Ester's Book* a performance or a [story]telling? Is its essentiality, its renunciation of dramatization, its strength, or is it the result of the tiredness of an old actress in face of her own profession and herself? What importance do questions like those have, if the story wants and can be told, and if someone wants to hear it?

The renunciation of the interpretation is the natural way for the Noh actor in maturity, according to Zeami (1987, p. 191, emphasis in original)²⁰:

I say that 'from the age of fifty there is no other way but the *non-interpretation*'²¹. There is no other way than the *non-interpretation*: in old age, would the willing of putting into practice a principle of such difficulty not be the willing to begin again?

Unlike the *Ester's Book*, the performance *Halfdanskt Rapsodi* was not born as a Rasmussen's project, but as an invitation for the actress to make a speech in honor of her father. The homage ended up becoming the sketch of the performance through the reunion of a series of texts, songs, photos and films of her father. The writer Halfdan Rasmussen is a true celebrity in Denmark. His work for children is very popular and his poetry is famous for the difficulty of being recited. Halfdan Rasmussen also composed songs, some of them already used by Iben Nagel Rasmussen in other performances. Another facet that was also explored in that performance are the *family films* made by her father, of cinematographic quality far superior to the norm. Halfdan Rasmussen "[...] proved to be an excellent photographer, with a natural instinct for composition, rhythm, dramatic framing. He loved Eisenstein" (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 5). Some excerpts from those films from her father are projected on the backdrop of the scene, consisting of only a small table and a chair. The minimalist style of *Ester's Book* is also present here. But in *Halfdanskt Rapsodi*, at no time does the actress represent her father. Here, the dramaturgy of the actor is closer to a composition that alludes to parts of the life of the father as a family.

At the performance's premiere (still a work-in-progress), which occurred in the actress' work room, the identification with the audience was immediate: most of it were contemporaries of him and admirers of Halfdan Rasmussen's work. The recital ended with the audience singing along with Rasmussen and there was no distinction between the end of the performance and the toast that gathered everyone around the appetizer table. The performance took on a dimension of celebration, sharing of memories and affections.

I consider that *Haldansk Rapsodi* puts the actress in the face of one of the greatest challenges for an experienced actor: the risk of being stuck in the repetition of a kind of *cliché of oneself*, a risk that is also observed by her. Since 1993/1994 Iben Nagel Rasmussen had already spoken of that in an interview with De Marinis (1996, p. 186): "[...] the older one gets and the more professional experience is accumulated on the shoulders, the harder it is to find and build a new kind of energy"²². In a text about *The Tree* – the latest performance directed by Barba, with the entire cast of the Odin, which premiered in December 2016 – she says it is necessary to "avoid clichés of previous performances" and, in the case of the voice, it is to be avoided "previously explored sound landscapes" (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 234). The impression is that theatricality is coming out of Rasmussen's scene. Here too, she seems to follow the indications given by Zeami regarding the importance of work on the voice in the Noh Theater (especially in relation to singing) for the mature actor:

You should focus the interpretation on the singing, adopt an unsupported *way*, reduce the part of movement in the dance [...] In general, singing is the technical *element* most advantageous for the elder. The old person's voice is stripped of any inflection that is too raw, it's a sincere voice, [...] and if the melody is good enough, it raises a sense of *interest* in the listener. This [voice] is the strongest card [of the elder]. To persuade oneself of various observations of this kind and, adopting the above [defined] *manner*, to dedicate oneself to the realization of what seems most advantageous to one: this is the *way* to be studied in old age (Zeami, 1987, p. 189 emphasis in original)²³.

A Transparent Master and her Children in the Wind

Rasmussen assigns a great value to the transmission, as if the students were her *children*:

A lot is said about practice, workshops, the transmission of techniques and theatrical knowledge, but it is as if people could not see what lies behind all of those: giving life. [...] To be a 'mother' is to follow the life that grows, is to be able to transmit to others something that is yours. To see them developing as autonomous individuals. The theater is this terrain kind of apart, restricted, but it is where you can find the process of life in its fullness. I am interested in people who I can follow over the years, and not for a few days. I want to see their development, I want to see their strength growing, also because we give them some of our own strength, but living together. So, it becomes my world, my land, something that is much more than 'theater' (Rasmussen, 2016, p. 253).

From her early students, whom she welcomed during the work process for *The Million*, Rasmussen's *children* have been many. However, after the Farfa group, the actress claimed to have *learned the lesson*: she did not want to repeat with her students the negative aspects of group theater. Rasmussen (2017) states that what suffocates, provoking outbreaks of *groupophobia* on her, is, paradoxically, the same thing that strengthens the individuals of the group: that great structure, which moves slowly, always in block, like a species of a flock, always compounded of the same people, same ideas, same conflicts. When touring, away from home – an increasingly valuable refuge for Rasmussen – moving in pack, with a single agenda, becomes even heavier (Rasmussen, 2017).

With the collective *Vindenes Bro (Bridge of Winds)*, Rasmussen claims she has found the ideal formula: it is not a group, but an international collective of actors, which meets once or twice a year for a limited period, in different countries. Then, each one goes back to their original countries, groups and activities. With those actors, Rasmussen can continue the researches initiated in her own training. Other exercises were born totally autonomously in relation to her, such as the *dance of the winds* (Figure 8), which was brought by a Danish student. The young student showed a very simple dance step – “it was like the egg of Columbus!” said Rasmussen (The Training and The Figures ..., 2018). From that simple dance step, innumerable variations were introduced: to do actions, to develop themes, to change direction in space, to establish relationships with peers, with space, etc.



Figure 8 – *Dance of the winds*, in the exchange of the collective *Vindenes Bro* (Bridge of Winds) with the *Ateliê de Pesquisa do Ator* (Actor's Research Workshop), in Paraty (Brazil), December 2016. Photo: Marta Viana.

I had the opportunity to follow the work of *Vindenes Bro* on two occasions: in 1995, as a participant, in Salvador, Bahia state, and in 2016 as an observer in Paraty, Rio de Janeiro state. Currently, the practice sessions take place in continuous flow of about one hour. Together with her actors, Rasmussen has her own sequence of warm-up exercises, which include even complex balancing exercises such as the headstand²⁴. Then, her attentive gaze follows everything, silently sat, to make observations and notes at the end of the work. Rasmussen seems to be concerned about inheritance. A documentary film about the history and work of the *Vindenes Bro* group has recently been released. She comments on the importance of that record:

When I saw the movie of the *Vindenes Bro* [*Bridge of Winds*], I relaxed so much! Because the work that was so important to me was documented! It is possible to see all the love inside and also the professionalism. The film by Francesco [Galli] is wonderful! There are so many other films about me in the Odin... But there had been nothing still about that group, about that job which is twenty-five years old... They are my children! I think of what I will leave: in the inheritance. That is more than thinking about death, which can happen from one day to the next (Rasmussen, 2017)²⁵.

The *transparency* in Rasmussen remains, as a quality to be cultivated, as a paradigm to be considered, not only for her *children*, who are like seeds thrown to the wind, but in general, for the art of the actor of the



contemporaneity. Perhaps, *transparency* can be a way of cultivating an actor's work that takes into account the *laboratory dimension*, as a privileged place of work on itself, resisting the present times that, so fast, have lost their rhythm. Rasmussen's course continues to echo as something that is made present, that lingers, that constitutes itself as an inheritance and tradition, as the perfume of an *aromatic time* that remains in the air.

Notes

- ¹ The present study was carried out with the support of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Brazil (CAPES) - Financing Code 001 (PDSE) and FAPEMIG.
- ² In addition to Iben Nagel Rasmussen (from the Odin Teatret, Denmark), the actors Beppe Chierichetti and Luigia Calcaterra (from the Teatro Tascabile di Bergamo, Italy) and François Kahn (France) participated in the doctoral research. They are actors I know, with whom I have worked, to a greater or lesser extent, and whose trajectories I have followed since the 1980s.
- ³ In this article, the word *training* is used as such when referring to a type of practice understood as a personal process, as used in the Odin Teatret. The word practice is used when it comes to a more comprehensive meaning of the term.
- ⁴ All quotations from foreign language sources in this article were translated by the author.
- ⁵ The original in Italian: "Ho avuto bisogno di quattro anni per arrivare a fare qualcosa che sentisse mio. All'inizio sentivo che il training non mi aiutava nel lavoro con le improvvisazioni o con quello che facevo nello spettacolo. Più tardi scoprii che tra queste due cose apparentemente diverse esisteva una connessione sotterranea: uno non deve utilizzare elementi del training per lo spettacolo ma deve servirsi del training per imparare a 'volare'; il training è ciò che permette di arrivare allo spettacolo in un modo totalmente diverso. Per questo è importante lavorare in modo continuo durante il training. [...] All'inizio il training ti stanca molto perché non trovi l'energia che fluisce, rimane tecnico, fai tutto in modo ginnico, però poco a poco uno impara a trovare l'aria necessaria per 'volare'".
- ⁶ The original in Italian: "Eugenio ha cambiato molte cose, ma quasi niente della struttura interna delle scene. Arrivati a questo punto, i materiali che l'attore offre al regista non sono più semplici improvvisazioni, bensì autentiche costruzioni drammaturgiche. L'attore non si limita ad improvvisare per creare coerenza

interna. *Itsi-Bitsi* non è un montaggio di materiali scenici, è un montaggio di blocchi di drammaturgia composti dagli attori che hanno conservato intatta la loro struttura interna nel risultato finale”.

- ⁷ The original in Italian: “Si può parlare non figuratamente di una *drammaturgia dell’attore* pensando non al caso tutto sommato limitato, anche se importante nella nostra tradizione, dell’‘attore-che-scrive’ ma proprio alla costruzione della parte e dello spettacolo, al processo creativo dell’attore, concepito come un lavoro compositivo, di tessitura e di montaggio, e dunque drammaturgia in senso próprio, che ha per oggetto le azioni, fisiche e verbali, e si sviluppa su vari piani”.
- ⁸ Dressed in White (the city’s messenger) is the character Rasmussen developed during the Odin Teatret’s stay in Carpignano (southern Italy), who stars in the documentary/fictional film *Dressed in White* (1976) which records that experience, directed by Torgeir Wethal. Trickster is a character created for the performance *Talabot* which mixes references of the Harlequin of the Commedia dell’Arte and the Tricksters, figures of the North American Indians’ mythology.
- ⁹ The ‘flower’ (*hana*) is defined as ‘a way of provoking in the minds of men an unexpected emotion’ (Zeami, 1897, p. 146), and it is fundamental on treatises on the Noh Theater written by its founder, Motokyo Zeami (1363-1443). The flower is a metaphor of the emotion that the actor offers the spectator, it is the fascination and the interest that is awakened, or yet something that is beyond that fascination. The blossoming of a flower arouses interest for being surprising and ephemeral. Its fugacity and fragility are not a limit, but the very foundation of its charm. The actors’ task is, through the constant work of perfecting their art, to create the conditions so that their ‘flower’ does not wilt, or rather, blooms with renewed freshness in each spring, continuing to arouse the interest of the spectator through the years, following the changes and adapting to the various occasions. It is in such sense that there is a distinction between the ‘flower of the moment’, linked to the momentary fascination produced spontaneously by the beauty of the young actor’s movements; and the authentic flower cultivated by the artist with practice and experience, which manages to flourish with renewed charm, overcoming the mutations and limits of age (Ruperti, 2015).
- ¹⁰ The original in Italian: “Il fiore consiste in una disposizione della mente; il seme deve esserne il mestiere”.
- ¹¹ The original in Italian: “Con: ‘Fate muovere la mente per i dieci decimi, fate muovere il corpo per i sette decimi’, ecco cosa s’intende: i movimenti imparati, come stendere la mano o muovere i piedi, si eseguono [prima] conformemente



agli insegnamenti del proprio maestro, poi, una volta giunti alla perfezione in questo campo, non si esegue più [il movimento che consiste] nello stendere o ritirare la mano come [lo si concepisce] nella mente, ma lo si trattiene un poco al di qua di quello che [concepisce] la mente.[...].

- ¹² Powerful dance of the characters that are gods, demons or warriors (Zeami, 1987).
- ¹³ The original in Italian: “L’attore diventato maestro nelle maniere [improntate] a serenità potrebbe essere adatto allo stile [imposto dalla] vecchiaia. Ma, se per caso, il vostro talento si indirizzasse verso la tecnica dello *hataraki*, che esprime delirio, allora non sareste adatto. Tuttavia, in questo caso, potete interpretare [a condizione di] sapere ridere a sei o sette decimi una danza o uno *hataraki* che prima ritenevate [di dover eseguire] per i dieci decimi, e di applicare in modo particolare il principio del ‘movimento del corpo per i sette decimi’. Sappiate che è questo che bisogna studiare nella vecchiaia.
- ¹⁴ The original in Italian: “[...] abbiamo nella nostra scuola una massima di portata universale: ‘Non dimenticate i vostri *inizi*’. Questa massima è oggetto di una tradizione orale articolata in tre punti: [...] ‘Buoni o cattivi, non dimenticate i vostri *inizi*’ se conservate sempre presente, senza mai dimenticarlo, [il ricordo] degli inizi dei vostri anni giovanili, ne risultano molti vantaggi nella vecchiaia. ‘Conoscere i difetti di ciò che precede è la condizione delle qualità di ciò che segue’, si dice.[...] dimenticare i propri inizi vuol dire tornare ai propri *inizi*. [...] ‘Non dimenticare i vostri *inizi* in ogni periodo’: consacrarsi, dagli inizi fino all’età matura, e perfino nella vecchiaia, alla ricerca delle *maniere* adatte alle forme dell’arte che conviene a ogni età, vuol dire [fare] i propri *inizi* in ogni periodo. [...] ‘Non dimenticate i vostri inizi nella vecchiaia’ C’è una fine per la vita; non vi vi può essere termine per il *nô*. Quando avrete studiato, una per una, le *maniere* proprie di ogni età, studierete ancora la maniera che conviene alla vecchiaia.
- ¹⁵ The original in Italian: “La storia di mia madre è anche una riflessione sull’invecchiare oggi in Danimarca, sulla solitudine e sul distacco. Nessuno nasce vecchio. Ho voluto prolungare la voce di mia madre. Io sono il ‘Libro di Ester’”.
- ¹⁶ The original in Italian: “[...] è un documento unico: una donna incinta, durante la guerra, accudisce un appartamento di due stanze al quinto piano e scrive all’embrione nel suo ventre descrivendo la vita di ogni giorno, i sogni del futuro, il terrore di morire prematuramente”.
- ¹⁷ The original in Italian: “Avevo poco tempo. Che fare? Potevo mescolare le vecchie immagini in bianco e nero di mio padre a quelle nuove, a colori, di mia madre



anziana. Potevo leggere qualcosa da *Il libro del seme*. Potevo raccontare fatti di allora, aneddoti di famiglia, episodi di vario tipo. E come attrice, che fare? Ah, sì. Scene dei vecchi spettacoli dell'Odin Teatret, personaggi già esistenti: per esempio il Trickster di *Talabot*, con i suoi fili rossi e con il suo figlio di sabbia, che avevo già utilizzato in diverse occasioni. Vi aggiunse la scena di *Mythos* in cui Medea strangola i propri figli. E presentai questo primo schizzo a Bologna, nel 2003. Riflettendoci sopra, mi resi conto che la struttura ricordava un po' troppo *Itsi Bitsi*. Anche quello spettacolo si basava su una biografia, con testi personali, ricordi, sequenze e personaggi di precedenti spettacoli. Cominciavo ad avere a noia questa me attrice che ripeteva all'infinito sempre le stesse scene. Che potevo fare di nuovo? [...] Nel frattempo, mia madre era stata ricoverata in una casa di cura per anziani in stato di demenza senile avanzata. Le nostre conversazioni erano commoventi, grottesche e tragicomiche assieme, con lei che insisteva a voler lasciare l'ospizio per venire ad abitare a casa mia, magari in una roulotte in giardino. Buttai giù un dialogo partendo da queste conversazioni, scelsi dei frammenti da *Il libro del seme*, e vi aggiunse qualche ricordo di infanzia. Il primo abbozzo di montaggio testuale era pronto. La collaborazione con Anna fu decisiva per il *work-in-progress*. La sua perizia musicale, la sua età (potrebbe essere mia figlia), e soprattutto la sua esperienza di vita, così diversa dalla mia, portarono allo spettacolo la freschezza che cercavo. Sparì la tentazione di ripiegarmi su vecchie scene e personaggi già creati. Sparì anche l'idea di una espressione fisica vigorosa".

- ¹⁸ The original in Italian: "Tu ed io sappiamo che è un'altra cosa. Ma è giusto tacerla, nutrendosene ciascuno con le sue parole. Non tutto si può scambiare".
- ¹⁹ The original in Italian: "Il Libro di Ester è uno spettacolo o un racconto? La sua essenzialità, la rinuncia a teatralizzare, costituiscono la sua forza, o sono il risultato della stanchezza di una vecchia attrice nei confronti della propria professione e di se stessa? Che importanza hanno domande come queste se la storia vuole, e può, essere raccontata, e se qualcuno ha voglia di ascoltarla?"
- ²⁰ The original in Italian: "Ho detto che 'a partire dalla cinquantina non esiste altro modo se non la *non-interpretazione*'. Non vi è altro modo che la *non-interpretazione*: voler mettere in pratica, nella vecchiaia, un principio di una simile difficoltà, non è forse *incominciare* [di nuovo]?"
- ²¹ According to Zeami's (1987) translator, René Sieffert, *non-interpretation* is a precise concept in the Noh Theater, which is about not ceasing to act, but limiting oneself to works that require less physical effort. However, in this article, I use this notion in a free and interpretive way, considering it as a more general

indication for a lower energy investment in the performance of characters by the elderly actor.

- ²² The original in Italian: “[...] quanto più si invecchia e quanta più esperienza professionale si ha sulle spalle, tanto più difficile trovare e costruire un tipo di energia che sia nuovo”.
- ²³ The original in Italian: “Dovete imperniare l’interpretazione sul canto, adottare una *maniera* poco sostenuta, ridurre nella danza la parte di movimento [...] In generale, il canto è l’*elemento* tecnico più vantaggioso per il vecchio. La voce del vecchio si è spogliata di ogni inflessione troppo cruda, è una voce schietta [...], e se a melodia è appena buona, suscita in colui che ascolta un senso de *interesse*. Questa [voce] è la carta più forte [del vecchio]. Persuadersi di diverse osservazioni di questo genere e, adottando la *maniera* [definita] sopra, consacrarsi alla realizzazione di quanto vi sembrerà più vantaggioso: ecco la *maniera* da studiare nella vecchiaia”.
- ²⁴ Yoga posture, known as *Salamba Sirsasana*, in which the body is upside down: the top of the head and the palms of the hands are supported on the floor, while the feet are suspended, pointing to the ceiling.
- ²⁵ The original in Italian: “Quando ho visto Il film dei Ponti dei Venti mi sono così rilassata! Perché è stato documentato il lavoro che è stato così importante per me! Si vede tutto l’amore che c’è dentro e anche il professionismo! Il film di Francesco è meraviglioso! Ci sono tanti film su di me, nel Odin... Ma non c’era niente su questo gruppo, su questo lavoro che ha venticinque anni... Sono i miei figli! Penso a quello che lascerò: nell’eredità. Questo è più che pensare alla morte, che può succedere da un giorno all’altro”.

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