



# **Landscape as Operational Notion in the Performing Arts**

**Maurílio Bertazzo Schuquel<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universidade de Brasília – UnB, Brasília/DF – Brazil

**ABSTRACT – The Landscape as Operational Notion in the Performing Arts** – This essay aims to trigger the landscape as an operational notion in the Performing Arts. It reflects the landscape of Gertrude Stein theater as a paradigm for a scene architected from a co-relational way. It appears, that the landscape as an exemplary condition can operate as a theatrical poetic perceived in its entirety, in its materializations and in its possible imaginary senses.

Keywords: **Performing Arts. Creative Process. Landscape. Gertrude Stein.**

**RÉSUMÉ – Le Paysage comme Notion Opérationnelle dans les Arts de la Scène** – Cet essai vise à réfléchir le *paysage* en tant que catégorie opérationnelle dans les arts de la scène. Il réfléchit sur le paysage du théâtre de Gertrude Stein comme un paradigme pour une scène architecturée de manière relationnelle. Donc, Il semble que le paysage dans son état exemplaire peut fonctionner comme une poétique théâtrale perçue dans son intégralité, dans ses matérialisations et dans ses possibles sens imaginaires.

Mots-dés: **Scène Contemporaine. Théâtre Brésilien. Processus d'Épicisation. Perspectivisme Amérindien. Anthropologie Contemporaine.**

**RESUMO – A Paisagem como Noção Operacional em Artes da Cena** – Este ensaio objetiva problematizar a paisagem como noção operacional em Artes da Cena. Reflete-se sobre a paisagem no teatro de Gertrude Stein como paradigma para uma cena arquitetada desde uma forma correlacional. Depreende-se, então, que a paisagem na sua condição exemplar pode operar como uma *poiética* teatral percebida na sua integralidade, nas suas materializações e nos seus possíveis sentidos imaginários.

Palavras-chave: **Artes da Cena. Processo Criativo. Paisagem. Gertrude Stein.**

This article, in essay form, aims to problematize landscape as an operational notion in the Performing Arts. It starts with the following question: how can the notion of landscape operate in (contemporary) performing arts? In order to do so, it first contends that landscape makes one see a whole that is correlational. Therefore, when speaking of landscape as something to be verified within the specific field of the performing arts, it does not anticipate the sanctioning of a new concept to be applied and proven. Instead, the wholeness that the landscape makes us see (and feel) serves as a force field for the manufacture and thought of art. In fact, Gertrude Stein's theater (1874-1946) reveals more about the paradigmatic condition of the landscape for the field of performing arts than about its function as a metaphor, that is, the production of analogies or implicit comparisons.

According to Giorgio Agamben (2019, p. 21), paradigm is “[...] a series of singular historical phenomena [...] which decide on a broader problematic context which at the same time constitute and make intelligible”. It is in this sense that landscape is understood here, as a phenomenon, since it is inevitably linked to the body of those who observe it. It only exists in the reciprocal movement of the observer and the thing observed. Therefore, landscape as phenomenon serves to define a wider problematic context, which includes the experience of a creative process. If landscape, as an overlay, makes one see a whole, it is therefore by means of an economy of the parts. As such, it makes us “[...] see the whole through the part [...]” (Pereira; Schuquel; Malavolta, 2019, p. 548), going from the private to the common, from the singular to the plural, in a dynamic movement of exchanging experience, which this writing intends to make intelligible within the creative process.

In this context, landscape is no longer understood as a solid scientific concept, but as a notion. Icle (2011), by subverting the comprehension of notion in the field of Theater Pedagogy explains that it is only in (theatrical) practice that notions are realized (*that one has the notion of*), and can operate more effectively in the relationship with the scenic doing, which unlike cinema or the fine arts, is ephemeral and refers to the experience of the present. To this end, the essay as a form of writing (or literary genre), seems to convey this necessary malleability when writing about modes of production and reception of the staging.

According to Adorno (1993, p. 18), a characteristic of the essay is its capacity for “[...] aesthetic autonomy [...]”, which differs from artistic creation, since its specificity is the work through concepts and its aspiration is the “[...] truth devoid of aesthetic semblance” (Adorno, 1993, p. 18). Therefore, in theoretical reflection on any staging, essay writing seems to present itself as an expressive resource since, unlike art, which has an aesthetic appearance, it offers the essayist a freedom of spirit. Instead of defining its concepts, the essay prioritizes their interaction within an “[...] intellectual experience” (Adorno, 1993, p. 29).

Consequently, the essay does not follow rules, its construction does not deduce or induce something equivalent to something that subordinates it; it is aesthetically autonomous. Being autonomous, however, it does not close in on itself; it assumes the aspect of transience, of finitude; it is changeable and ephemeral. “The essayist does not read and write for eternity, in a timeless way, neither does he read and write for everyone and no one, but for a time and a concrete and determined cultural context” (Larrosa, 2003, p. 111). It is in the concreteness of the present that it assumes its temporary character. The essayist writes in and for the present. Thus landscape is a way of looking at this present from the experience of the creative process.

To this end, initially this writing is based on a contextualization of the notion from the perspective of certain specific authors from Contemporary Theatre and Performance, such as Patrice Pavis (2016), Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri (2002). Next, Stein’s (2017) practice and theory are discussed, in order to reflect on how the author’s idea of a *landscape-play* can enhance the argument around the notion of landscape, as a force field in stage practice (from the modes of production to public presentation). Finally, consideration is given to how the notion of landscape can operate in the creation of strategies of thought and critical reflection for the field of performing arts, by pointing out certain characteristic aspects of it.

### **Landscape and Staging, a Contextualization**

Since the 1980’s, studies on landscape in the field of Performing Arts have developed more and more. The book *Land/Scape/Theater*, arranged by Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002), through various theories and practices of

modern theater (such as Gertrude Stein's *landscape-play* design, the analysis of some William Butler Yeats' plays, Antonin Artaud's trip to Sierra Madre, and the practice of certain performance art and contemporary theater artists such as Robert Wilson, Guillermo Gómez-Peña's and Robert Ashley) points to landscape aspects linked to the performing arts.

Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002) bring together texts by different authors with the intention of proposing landscape as a new paradigm for understanding theatrical spatial aesthetics. The book covers various points of view on the possible relationships between theatrical or performing practice and landscape, as in dramaturgical texts that value building an "[...] imaginary landscape" (Fuchs; Chaudhuri, 2002, p. 30) or, alternatively, in performances that, when addressing the relationship between theater and urban landscape, create their own *cityscapes*. This collection of texts reaffirms the strength of landscape studies in the field of arts on stage. It thus points to paths similar to this essay, even though both have their own characteristics.

For Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002), the conception of landscape in the theater comprises not only the importance of space, but a new spatial dimension, which takes space from the background. Along the authors' line of thought, the stage landscape is cogitated as a "[...] new spatial paradigm [...]" (Fuchs; Chaudhuri, 2002, p. 3) for the field of modern and contemporary theater.

Landscape is between space and place, it is the subject's experience with the world that he or she experiences, rebuilds and re-signifies. Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002, p. 3) write that "[...] landscape has particular value as a mediating term between space and place. It can therefore more fully represent the complex spatial mediations within modern theatrical form, and between modern theater and the world". Space, which is defined as something more extensive and can contain places or objects, in the landscape ceases to be *empty*, ceases to be *any* space. The place, which is a space that a person or thing occupies, is no longer so specific in the landscape. That is why the landscape is between the two, between the space and the place. It concerns the experience of the senses, of thought and of aesthetic reception in play with materiality, with the (scenic) terrain.

Landscape makes a movement of interaction exist, or rather, it is a movement between space and place, its experience is only possible within a

space and by holding a place and every image relationship possible. However, in the light of Fuchs and Chaudhuri (2002), questions arise: how can the notion of landscape be a critical category to understand the theater? And why talk about this category only based on modern theater and not since the classical period? In response, the authors point out that:

But we believe that at the threshold of modernism, theater began to manifest a new spatial dimension, both visually and dramaturgically, in which landscape for the first time held itself apart from character and became a figure on its own. As the century moved on, landscape would encroach on the traditional dramaturgy of plot and character to become a perspective and a method, linking seemingly unrelated theatrical practices in staging, text, scenography, and spectatorship.

Patrice Pavis (2016, p. 117), in the *Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre*, considers that,

The notion of landscape, used more and more frequently in theatre and 'performative' studies as well as in the human sciences in general since the 1980s, is not so much evidence of a 'spatial turn' in all these disciplines as a convenient metaphor for surveying and looking down from a distance on a phenomenon that involves the point of view on the textual and stage landscape. The walker sometimes stands over and above the work, and sometimes moves through it, as if immersed in it.

He briefly calls attention to the use of notion in certain specific areas. He identifies landscape as object of research in *Performance Studies* and points out that the use of the concept goes beyond *land art*<sup>1</sup>, since it began to encompass sound, textual and visual practices. Pavis (2016) comments on the work of the dramatic author Michel Vinaver, which is based on the understanding that landscape is formed from a combination of themes, one after the other, constituting a *world* in constant formation.

Another reference that Pavis (2016) mentions is Gertrude Stein, an important figure to understand the relationship between landscape and staging, because perceiving the stage as landscape was precisely Stein's<sup>2</sup> desire. Pavis (2016) also observes the production of a textual landscape (textscape), which depends on the reading (reader) or staging (spectator) in order to exist: "[...] when we talk of textual landscape (textscape), we are suggesting that the text depends on the point of view, on the gaze, on the ability to move through the landscape, on the inside-out duplication produced by reading" (Pavis, 2016, p. 117). Even though not mentioned by

Pavis (2016), one may consider here, as an example, the spoken pieces by Peter Handke<sup>3</sup>.

Pavis (2016) also refers to the production of a soundscape<sup>4</sup>, which he identifies as the creation of a sound environment resulting from different sources, such as voices modified by computer and the overlay of audio stimulus. The soundscape gains the status of a work in itself; it is autonomous, without any need to be accompanied by other elements of the spectacle. Although Pavis (2016) does not cite examples of soundscape, we could cite here the celebrated work of Laurie Anderson, or even venture to mention the albums *Araçá Azul*, by Caetano Veloso, in 1972, and *Ouvir/Birds*, by Tetê Espíndola, in 1991, as works that may possibly come close to the concept of soundscape.

Therefore, it is considered here that landscape is a perceived field, in which several scenic elements are agencied and placed in relation, in an equivalent way, a poetic and relational apprehension of a *whole scenic writing*. Thus, the possibility is contemplated that landscape comes to comprehend a synthetic and relational apprehension of the elements, of the things that, in the whole of the process and the staging, are presented. In landscape, which has to do with a whole, with an absence of center, with an horizon, there is no hierarchy, there is no beginning, middle and end, there is no linear time of past, present and future, because times mix in a game of continuities, juxtapositions, repetitions and displacements.

In contemporary times, an example of landscape in theater is *Stifters Dinge*, by the director Heiner Goebbels, analyzed by Maria Clara Ferrer (2017) in the article *Presenças Impessoais: tons de humano na cena-paisagem* (Impersonal Presences: tones of human in the landscape-stage). In the work in question, which has no actors, Gobbels creates a whole motorized machinery, an animated world of things, made with screens, water pools, tracks, lights, smoke, voices, machine noises, chants, etc. The artist brings the exhibited things to life and explores the three dimensions of the stage space (Image 1). According to Ferrer (2017, p. 639), in the work in question there is

[...] a continuity between the planes; three-dimensionality is worked in all the senses without allowing the creation of a hiatus between the front and the background of the stage. All the front of the staging space is worked in a creeping way by the presence of immense bubbling water puddles. From

this lower aquatic plane emerges a stack of branches and pianos whose verticality is accentuated by the ascending movement of smoke. Thus, as the gaze moves back, it is raised. The depth is conjugated to the verticality, creating a continuous movement of the gaze and avoiding a hierarchy between the first and the second plane of the scenic composition. The material limits of the scenic box (floor, ceiling and walls) are concealed by the shade, the projections, smoke and the water, so that the spatial dimensions seem infinite, and the gaze is worked by an horizon effect of the stage. There is frontality, but it is an immersive frontality, in contrast with the Italian-type model that frames the vision and separates the stage-object from the spectator- subject. Just as facing a landscape, the spectator simultaneously feels in front of and already inside what he/she beholds.



Figure 1 – *Stifters Dinge*, by Heiner Gobbels, 2007, Lausanne, Switzerland. Photo: Klaus Grunberg.  
Source: Personal archive of Klaus Grunberg.

There is no unison thread, a center of the landscape, “[...] in it, as in a constellation, everything is correlated, without the existence of a central element that captivates and concentrates the spectator’s attention” (Ferrer, 2017, p. 633). Landscape is a relational process of apprehending an *scenic poem as a whole* (Image 2). From the spectator’s point of view, it is not something watertight, it is a displacement of the (physical) gaze and the (imaginary) senses. There is no destination, there is constant becoming, transformation.

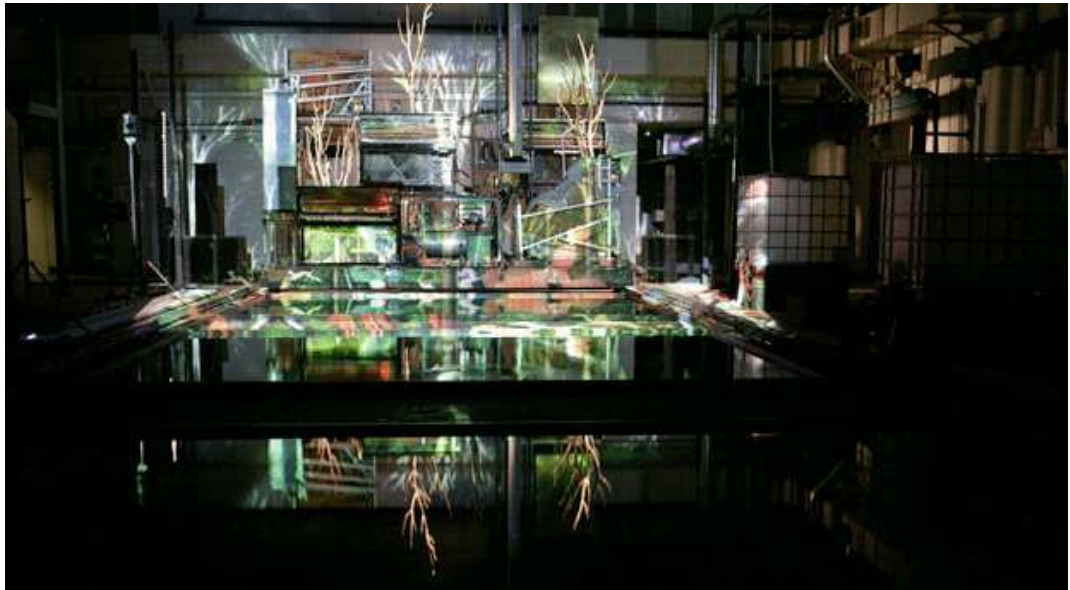


Figure 2 – *Stifters Dinge*, by Heiner Gobbels, 2007, Lausanne, Switzerland. Photo: Nick Cobbing.  
Source: Personal archive of Nick Cobbing.

Landscape, in the context of the performing arts assumed here, does not serve a *telos* (dramatic text, theme or fixed image). It is not anthropocentric, because it places space and things on the same footing as humans, who are no longer the center of the world; scenographic dramaturgy is no longer egocentric: “[...] the hypothesis put into play is that the decentralization of the actor should not be thought of as a weakening of his or her importance, but rather as a potentiation of his or her presence” (Ferrer, 2017, p. 628).

In landscape there are no polarizations, since the stage is *read* as a relational environment. To perceive and feel the stage as landscape is a poetic conjunction; it is to see a collective of things exposed and related in the staging, in space and in time. It is a kind of mobile framing of things. The stage landscape is the dimension of things, it is the relational play of beings with the world and its materiality. The materiality of the stage is enunciated through an act of exhibition, both the spoken text and the corporeality of the performers, the lighting and the sound.

Landscape can, of course, as a general concept, have many practical, geographic, and theoretical modes. However, it goes back to the possibility of reflecting on artistic practice from a relational dimension – as a relational practice – between the subject and the world, through the senses, and the world itself with the subject, through an immanent materiality. The landscape radiates, therefore, from creation to reception - making the spectator



subject him/herself a creator as well, taking part of the created, making the created, part of his/her own (Pereira; Schuquel; Malavolta, 2019, p. 557).

The concept of landscape is invested as a notion capable of creating strategies of thought, action and criticism, in order to enhance a type of “[...] affective tonality [...]” (Pereira; Schuquel; Malavolta, 2019, p. 557) and relationship between the artist and space, and between the spectator and an integral scenic writing.

### Gertrude Stein

In a 1935 lecture called *Plays*, Stein relates her difficulty in continuing to go to the theater to watch plays. According to the author, the fact that different times existed between what was seen and what was felt made her nervous. The problem lies in the need for spectators to be always under pressure to follow the scenic *plot*, to deal with visual and sound stimuli at the same time and to become familiar with the characters, preventing them from freely relating to the work. Spectators are unable to keep up with the tempo of the play, since their mental apprehension is always behind or in front of the action.

From her experiences as a theater and opera spectator, through the writing of her own plays, and after spending a few summers in Bilignin (France), where she observed the landscape, Stein (2017, position 62.347) reports that, little by little, she came to the following thought: “[...] I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance”.

Stein observes that both a landscape and a play (spectacle) have their own constitutions and are formed by the relations of one thing to the other, “[...] and since the story does not matter since we all tell stories [...]” (Stein, 2017, position 62.367), the interesting thing then would be to write plays about this relationship of things; “[...] All these things might have been a story but as a landscape they were just there and a play is just there. That is at least the way I feel about it”.

Stein’s theater texts (landscape-plays) value the experience of a *being there*, a gift and constant transformation. For the one who perceives it, writ-

ing is what is “[...] transformed into the mere sign, indication of an indeterminate possibility, thus at the same time leaving the sphere of beholding, transforming each perceived form into an index for one that is being missed” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 402) as, for example, it is possible to perceive the constant transformation in this passage from *He Said It* (1915):

[...]

What did he say today.

A great many mountains have seas near them.

And the moon. The moon has no tide.

When do you say that.

Every night.

Why.

Because I have never seen so much moonlight.

I feel it very much.

A great many people were listening. To your getting angry.

Talking about feeling.

[...] (Stein, 2014, p. 43).

Steinian plays distance themselves from drama, from the story with beginning, middle and end, and from easily identifiable characters since the author no longer tells stories, but rather shows and exposes *phrases* and *vocables* in the form of an *scenic poem as a whole*. In addressing Stein’s theory, Ferrer (2017, p. 633) points out the following

Putting the story on the backburner, Stein suggests a mode of action composition, with her idea of a landscape-play, that creates the possibility of a non-anthropocentric set. In other words, a stage architected in a correlational way, without there being a hierarchy between the elements present, without there being foreground and background, center and periphery.

The aim here is not to dwell on research into Stein’s landscape-plays - this would yield another composition - but to reflect on how this notion can enhance the argument of the very concept of landscape as a force field in staging practice. According to Lehmann, Stein, through her landscape-play project, is responsible for a prehistory of post-dramatic theater. Before wanting to destroy a structure, a tradition that precedes her thought, Stein

“[...] was encouraged in a creative activity independent of ‘cultural memory’ and tradition” (Hoffman, 1961, p. 32), abdicating certain institutionalized parameters, and seeking to shift her practice to the field of experimentation.

In her landscape-plays, Stein no longer tells stories, she exposes what happens the way it is and not how it could be. So the stage can be seen as a landscape, an almost static image that, through very subtle movements, “[...] the writer (Stein) shows the present that, little by little, leaves behind the past and receives new information from the future” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 86). A *continuous present*, as Stein calls it, in which, from a *parking lot* of time, actions are insistently repeated, but never repeated in the same way because, as they happen and gradually change, they are the very reiteration that the present is constant, for example, in this passage from *Bonne Année* (1916):

[...]

We have given you this.

Yes.

I give you this.

Yes.

You give me this.

Yes.

Yes sir.

Why do I say yes sir, Because it pleases you.

[...] (Stein, 2014, p. 107).

Each sentence, although very similar to the one before it, is experienced in a different way, thus valuing the experience of *being there*. Syntactic displacements created and recreated. The difference insists on a temporal game, in which time is slowed down and distorted through a *continuous present*. The place of the sentence is somehow modified through micro variations which, through a slow and gradual process, unfold the notions of time and rhythm.

The successive recommencements and repetitions suggest that experience undergoes a temporal mutation distinct from any other stylistic reference existing at the time when Stein composed her texts. Frederick J.

Hoffman (1961, p. 27) uses an enlightening notion about the *continuous present*,

[...] the objects, she says (Stein), do not present themselves accommodated to perception in a tumult of colorful details; they are (like experience) chosen for a gradual change, in which each successive detail preserves what had been before, changing slightly and within one minute.

Another issue that can be observed, from Gertrude Stein's idea of a landscape-play, is that of a defocalization – non-hierarchisation of the constituent elements of this landscape. The parts, the rudiments, are equivalent. There is a care, an attention that *designs* the features in such a way that none overlaps with the others, but are elements in presence and potentiality, and despite a distorted aspect, modified by repetition, Stein's scenic poetry is characterized, according to Lehmann (2006, p. 103), by a wholeness, and, as per Joseph Danan, in his *Lexicon of Modern and Contemporary Drama* (Sarrazac, 2012, p. 135), as a textual power more susceptible to play with the various material elements of the set (stage) than destined to be a *theatrical piece*.

Stein's landscape-plays occur through a continuous movement of updating and re-updating a *being-there*, so they are never the same thing. If it is in constant transformation it is because it no longer exists – at least in the contemporary theater and performance described here –, be it a story to be told or a centralizing theme. And if there are neither more stories nor a distinct theme, one cannot say precisely that there is a character. In Stein's texts, according to Lehmann himself (2006, p. 104), there are no more identifiable characters, they are “[...] merely sketched figure(s) of undefined possibility”. In this sense, the stage can now also be perceived in a figurative, sculptural way.

The different elements that occupy the landscape (play) are perceived and *read* as *drawings*, as figures in relation. They are sculpted (inscribed) forms, bodies that expose their physicality. In any case, for Stein “[...] much more important was the visual sense that intrigued her, the form, color, depth, dimension and context of the thing seen” (Steiner apud Moreira, 2007, p. 113), rather than the representation of a story, “[...] a play for Stein has no plot, it is pure visible activity” (Steiner apud Moreira, 2007, p. 113). What is perceived in the landscape is an established and correlational scenic body.

The landscape has its formation and as after all a play has to have formation and be in relation one is always telling something then the landscape not moving but being always in relation, the trees to the hills to the trees to each other any piece of it to any sky and then any detail, the story but the relation is there anyway (Stein, 2017, position 62.367).

In this sense, the relation is one of the fundamental characteristics in the apprehension of a landscape. What Stein helps us to understand is the importance of this relational aspect of the landscape on the stage, the *being* of things always in relation. The staging architected as landscape takes on a correlational form. Therefore, it is not in vain that here the landscape functions as a force field, as that which serves both to apprehend a *ready* scene and to reflect the relations *in and about* the creative process, a horizon constituted by relationships, of the body with space, time and text, of space with body, time and text, of time with text, body and space, and of text with body, space and time. An infinite set of relations to be experienced, as they come.

Stein's aim was to make plays like landscapes and about this *being in relation* to the things on stage. In another way, to this day this desire doesn't seem to have disappeared from the scope of the theater. Nowadays, when the idea of landscape in the theater is addressed, Robert Wilson's staging is an expressive example of how the stage space can transfigure into a kind of landscape intrinsically constituted by the relational aspect of things on stage, both visually and acoustically. Lehmann (2006), for example, points out that the notion of sound landscape in (post-dramatic) theater has as its point of reference Stein's own idea of landscape-play.

### **Landscape as Operational Notion in Performing Arts**

The idea is notion comes from Gilberto Icle's (2011) reasoning, whereby he recognizes in the term a certain operationality. The concept of notion seems to be more open and malleable, having a better understanding of the intrinsic ephemerality of doing theater. Icle (2011) explains that, unlike scientific concepts, which have a certain stability, notions are more mobile and are instruments for creation. In this sense, it is necessary to constantly update them. Notions are between practice and theory, they inhabit an *inbetween-place* and, as much as they can be found in writing, as concepts, they only exist in the concreteness of practice, when experienced by

the body. According to Icle (2011), the notions of *being on stage and being off stage* would be an example in the field of theater, because only when they are experienced in practice is it possible to know what sensations the body experiences, the difference of being on stage or not. He states that

[...] the creative dimension is particular to theatrical notions, in which there are spaces available for solving concrete problems for which there is no correct answer, but rather a multiplicity of possibilities. That is why theatrical notions are not scientific concepts, they do not have a predictability, they are dependent on the emergency context in which they are constituted (Icle, 2011, p. 76).

Recognition of the operational concept of notion within the performing arts helps to understand, in the context of this writing, the specific role of landscape within a creative process. Here, landscape becomes a scenic notion and, in this sense, it is a phenomenon that is linked to the body (of the public) and to a language (the artist's form of expressing him/herself). By being connected to subjectivity, there is no way to say that there is a precise content to be apprehended, a concept to be applied or a conclusive answer. Whenever the notion is experienced by someone, in a given context, there will be "[...] a multiplicity of possibilities" (Icle, 2011, p. 76). Theatrical notions "[...] are exteriorities that remain in a vacuum of consciousness" (Icle, 2011, p. 76), and what legitimizes them is the discursive framework through which they are created, the ways of talking about theater (Lehmann's or Féral's approach, for example).

It is in this sense that we consider landscape here as an operational notion and not as a ready and definitive concept. For Belloni, the term operation, revisited by the author from the perspective of the Mallarmé *Book* project, corroborates towards making viable a possible "[...] automation of the creative process [...]" (Belloni, 2012, p. 143), since it refers to the operation of a machine, which therefore denotes the possibility of experiencing a creative process free of purely subjective, egocentric ties. On the other hand, Belloni also recalls, in the style of Blanchot, that the word *operation* may refer to a surgical intervention, in the sense that something is suppressed; "[...] time is subtracted from the narrative, as one chooses to show rather than tell. The *concept* is eliminated, since one operates only in the sphere where art is pure language" (Belloni, 2012, p. 143).

Therefore, landscape should *operate* here as a way of engendering other scenic knowledge. So what is it all about? It is a study that is circumscribed in the scope of certain concepts and scenic practices that make it possible to create a common space, characterized by the possibility of theater as “[...] scenic poem as a whole” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 103). Landscape can operate as theatrical *poietics* perceived in its integrality, in its effects (realization) and possible (imaginary) meanings. In other words, theater as landscape. Lehmann (2006, p. 103), in associating Stein’s “[...] landscape-play [...]” notion with aspects of a *new theater*, points out that,

If it is often tempting to describe the stagings of the new theater as landscapes, this is rather due to traits anticipated by Stein: a *defocalization* and equal status for all parts, a renunciation of teleologically time, and the dominance of an ‘atmosphere’ above dramatic and narrative forms of progression. It is less the pastoral than the conception of theater as a *scenic poem as a whole* that becomes characteristic.

“Less the pastoral aspect” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 103), because it is no longer about representing the life of those who lived in the countryside and the natural landscapes. What characterizes this *new theater* is a distancing from the representational model, a model linked to drama, which has as its principle the development of an action towards an outcome, with the intention of making the event a reliving for the spectator. In this sense, the representations of the actions coincide in the time and space of the stage, in the dialogic exchange between *you and me*. The action of the fable “[...] unfolds before me, forming an ensemble that imposes itself on me and that could not be shredded without losing all substance” (Pavis, 2011, p. 111). The spectator is submissive to the dramatic form, since it imposes itself, has a narrative linearity and does not allow for free imagination.

“More the conception of theater as a *scenic poem as a whole*” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 103), since it is the poetic, lyrical, static, progressive and reflective aspect of Stein’s *landscape plays* that make it possible to establish connections with the practice of some directors in contemporary theater and performance. As Fuchs (1996, position 82) points out, “[...] it is above all the lyrical tone, essentially static and reflective, that is the key to linking Foreman back to Stein and Maeterlinck, and horizontally to Wilson and many of his contemporaries creating landscape stagings”. Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson are representative names of the theater who were in-

spired by Stein and consequently inspired by a language influenced by the notion of landscape<sup>5</sup>.

Inspired by Stein, the idea here is the possibility that the landscape, beyond the static and formalistic aspect, can still yield fruitful challenges and concepts in relation to the performing arts and the creative process. Landscape can certainly operate as a possible way of problematizing formative, aesthetic and political aspects in the field of creation, reception and teaching of the performing arts. In fact, it can work both in the sense of stimulating new artistic practices, and in spreading new theoretical perspectives.

Authors such as Lehmann (2006), Pavis (2016) and Sarrazac (2012) presented clues on ideas contained in the very understanding of the notion of landscape within the field of the Performing Arts, such as, for example, defocalization, non-linearity, distancing from the fundamentally dramatic action, continuity, atmosphere and freedom of the spectator, who has at his/her disposal a *scenic poem as a whole* of elements in *presence*.

They are clues that are characteristic of contemporary theater and performance and can help to understand the landscape in the staging context, serving as instruments for questioning and problematizing the effects and constituent meanings of the process and the work. Pavis (2016) points out that landscape, as an object of study, has rendered concepts for theatrical and performative studies, such as the creation of a textual landscape, a plastic landscape and a sound landscape.

Landscape, beyond re-dimensioning the spatial potentialities, also seeks to apprehend, reintroduce and resignify other meanings linked to the production and reception of the staging. The landscape relationship presents the possibility of imagining another side of things, the one behind the *representation*, the scenic machinery, or even an interiority of things, the viscera of the performer. As a notion for the field of performing arts, it is evident that landscape can operate in the artist's doing, in the artist's *poietics*, in a radical sense of integrating the staging elements (light, scenery, performance, direction, lighting, text, etc.)..

Thus, landscape becomes a notion capable of generating scenic productions from a deconstruction, a de-hierarchisation of the elements, towards the construction of integral and correlational *poietics*, both in materi-



al (concrete) and meaning (imaginary) forms. Moreover, this writing sees in Adorno's words (1993, p. 16) a possible outcome, as "[...] it says what occurs to it in that context when it feels finished rather than when there is nothing left to say: hence, it is classified as a trivial endeavor".

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> According to Cauquelin (2007, p. 12), "Land art artists compose from the environment itself, using the resources of landscape art: focalization, dispersion and, again, concentration; the work is the vision of an orderly set of categories of space and time".
- <sup>2</sup> Stein's work will be discussed further ahead, with the intention of historically and culturally contextualizing the notion of landscape in theater.
- <sup>3</sup> The Brazilian Portuguese version by Samir Signeu is called *Peter Handke: peças faladas* (Handke, 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> It is important to mention that this concept is also suggested by other authors, such as the music studies of researcher and composer R. Murray Schafer. In his book *The Tuning of the World: A Pioneering Exploration of Past History and Present State of the Most Neglected Aspect of Our Environment: The Soundscape* (2001), Schafer seeks to systematically recount the history of the world soundscape until 1975. The author also proposes that "[...] soundscape is any field of acoustic study. We may refer to a musical composition, a radio program or even an acoustic environment as soundscapes. We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study, in the same way that we can study the characteristics of a certain landscape" (2001, p. 23). In this sense, it is possible to notice that there may be some approximations between the concept of soundscape suggested by Schafer (1993) and the perception of an acoustic environment that is associated with the stage. However, the author concentrates his work on the categorization of different soundscapes (from the countryside and the city, for example), often adopting a more semantic reading of certain sound elements. In view of this, it was decided here to start from some notes suggested by Lehmann (who makes no mention of Schafer's concept), because it is noted that points made by him make it possible to reflect more effectively on the perception of a sound *fabric* associated with staging.
- <sup>5</sup> Besides this, Fuchs (1996) considers certain works by contemporary directors, such as Reza Abdoh and Robert Wilson, as another version of the pastoral, a *new* scenic spatiality that the landscape notion can handle.



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Maurílio Bertazzo Schuquel is a Performing Arts graduate from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) and Master of Performing Arts Graduate Program of Universidade de Brasília (UnB).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3748-8989>

E-mail: [mauriliobertazzo@gmail.com](mailto:mauriliobertazzo@gmail.com)

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