

NORROCA

CHOREOGRAPHY

Lia Rodrigues

CHOREOGRAPHY ASSISTANT

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WELCOME

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Annabelle Bonn ry

Dear audience,

We are very happy to present Lia Rodrigues's work in collaboration with Carte Blanche.

Lia represents one of the most important choreographers in the last decade, a strong voice in the international scene and a major figure in Brazilian dance.

She is a committed artist rooted in her time, believing in the synergy between creation and social processes and raising individual awareness to the issues of contemporary art.

At the invitation of the dramaturg Silvia Soter, Lia Rodrigues has founded the Centro de Artes in Mar , one of the largest favelas in Rio de Janeiro, in collaboration with the Redes de Mar  association.

We decided to meet her in Mar , in her place and context to start the project there with the whole artistic team. This unique experience has nurtured the creative process and has built a crucial cultural and human encounter.

Nororo a is directly inspired by the creation *Pororo a* which means tidal bore. For Lia it is a metaphor for the collision of differences. She creates an unceasing swell onstage, a spirited wave, a compact energy that bulges, rolls, recedes, breaks and reforms into a new embrace of bodies. The silences foster hope of harmony.

Nororo a, which includes the encounter North-South, does not shy away from the complexity of alterity. To be together remains an ongoing challenge.

Welcome to
Carte Blanche!



PHOTO TALE HENDRIS

LIA RODRIGUES

CHOREOGRAPHER

Nororooca is Pororooca from the North. It is a recreation of *Pororooca*, a dance piece that I created in 2009 together with the 11 dancers of my dance company.

Text Lia Rodrigues

4 *Pororooca* is a word that comes from the Tupi language (one of the more than 150 indigenous languages spoken in Brazil) and is the name of a natural phenomenon caused by the confrontation of the water of the Amazon river with the water of the sea. It is a violent encounter that can bring down trees and changes the banks of the river, but at the same time a fragile process, resulting from a delicate balance of the factors of nature.

In the very same way, *Nororooca* provokes a meeting between opposite currents, which generate waves that break over one another and mix together. It's a meeting of differences. How to build a community on stage? What challenges does this situation present? How does everyone find their place – always provisional – with their similarities and differences?

It is always a challenge to work with artists from other parts of the world. Life in the city of Rio de Janeiro is the opposite of

life in Bergen in many ways, mainly in the fields of social and economic issues and working conditions. We can learn from our differences and learn to collaborate with each other. At this moment when walls are being built all over the world, when territories are being defended and borders are enforced and rigidly controlled, this exchange proposed by Carte Blanche inspires us to move in the opposite direction and offers new possibilities for sharing, interaction and creation.

Special thanks to: team of Centro de Artes da Maré/Rio de Janeiro, Redes da Maré/Rio de Janeiro, Sammi Landweer, Silvia Soter, and the dancers who participated in the creation of 'Pororooca' in 2009: Amália Lima, Allyson Amaral, Ana Paula Kamozaiki, Leonardo Nunes, Clarissa Rego, Carolina Campos, Thais Galliac, Volmir Cordeiro, Priscilla Maia, Calixto Neto, Lidia Laranjeira, Jamil Cardoso.

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A MEETING WITH LIA RODRIGUES

In August, the Carte Blanche dancers went to Rio de Janeiro for two weeks to start the creation process with Lia Rodrigues.

Text Caroline Eckly

Lia says herself that her work would not be sufficient if it was only about making dance pieces and that the whole context around her creations is as important.

Even if I don't know yet, when I am writing this article, how much the context will affect the process for us, it was an overwhelming experience to meet with Lia in Rio and working in her space in Maré, one of the numerous favelas (slums) of Rio and meeting with her dancers and students.

On our first day she came to visit us at the house we stayed in, on top of the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa to present herself before we would start working in the studio the next day.

Lia has been running her own dance company for the past 30 years, and started the project of the Arts Centre in Maré. She created the dance festival Panorama in 1992 that is still running and directed it for 14 years.

At the moment, the company consists of nine dancers, one assistant, one administrator and Lia. All the dancers are Brazilian, from different parts of the country, five are born in Maré. Lia tries to pay her dancers twelve months a year, which is very exceptional in Brazil, it is extremely important for them to tour outside Brazil. The company is regularly invited to Europe to present the different pieces and is dependent economically on the travels to survive.

During this introduction, Lia also tells us about Brazil, that is «a huge country with of course beautiful people, but with a lot of paradoxes, very big inequalities between people, a lot of racism, a lot of violence». She says she will always point out «black» and «white» people because it is a very important issue in Brazil. Half the population is black (the last census in 2010 shows that 50,7% of the population define themselves as black or mixed race). We will indeed notice that the different populations are very separated. On our

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«Lia defines the school as a school of life, that it is not necessarily directed to build dancers, but citizens and helps them to get familiar with theatre and dance.»

last and very warm day in Rio, we went to one of the beautiful sand beaches of Rio, Ipanema and were only surrounded by white people.

Lia says she is «white and from the privileged part of the society in Brazil and as such had the right and opportunity to become an artist», and as the contemporary art field is mainly white, she started to question who she was making art for, «if it was only for the people who already go to theatres». Since 2002, she's worked with Silvia Soter, her dramaturg, who introduced her to the NGO Redes Da Maré with whom people from Maré develop many different projects, as for instance evening classes for children, after-school activities, a library, cultural events, tutoring for people with drugs addiction or educational projects for women.

Rio counts nine million inhabitants. The way the city is built separates the rich and the poor. There are more than 800 favelas. Maré is one of them, enormous, with 140 000 inhabitants. It is located on flat ground unlike the other favelas in Rio that are built on hills. Maré is divided in different areas that are owned by different groups of criminals and traffickers. Lia explains that there are 4 groups of traffickers in Rio, plus a police force that engages violently with them.

When Lia met the director of the Redes organization, she proposed to move to Maré with her dance company and give

classes to people of the favela. In Maré, there was no theatre, no way to go to the cinema because it's difficult to go to the rich part of the city when you live there. Lia and her dancers moved to Maré in 2004 and work now in a huge warehouse that was a factory for 20 years which they had to rebuild. They had to fix the ceiling, put in a wooden floor and install lights. During the reconstruction of the space, they created *Pororoca*, the piece that is the starting point for the project with Carte Blanche, and that is extremely connected to this space and this particular moment of rebuilding it.

Next, they created the school. Together with Silvia Soter, they created 2 different schools: one open for every one (about 300 students) to whom 3 classes are offered daily for all ages (ballet, hip-hop, afro-brazilian, dance together for older people, yoga...) and one for about 20 chosen students, who get a small scholarship and come every day after their studies for four hours to get dance classes, English classes and also advisory training on different topics, such as sexuality. They are mostly black students. Lia defines the school as a school of life, that it is not necessarily directed to build dancers, but citizens and helps them to get familiar with theatre and dance. Some of the Carte Blanche dancers got the opportunity to teach the students of the school who also spontaneously started a small dancing party one day after we had just finished the rehearsal. Their true joy for dance and

eagerness to learn and exchange with us was extremely powerful and moving.

To create the school was also a strategy to start building an audience for dance. All the pieces Lia creates, have their premiere in this space in Maré. They also organise transport for the people from the rich parts to come and see the performances, because they wouldn't come on their own. Lia says that this is normal, that there is a lot of prejudices, that she and her dancers as well were afraid at the beginning and that it is part of their mission to make it possible for different people to enter the favela.

Indeed, during our stay, we would talk to people from the richer part of the city, in a restaurant for instance, or to the taxi driver, and witness their reactions: they all clearly thought it was strange to work in a favela for a group of foreign white people and all of them added that they never go there themselves.

In Maré we could see people, some very young, carrying machine-guns. Lia told us we will not be bothered in the favela because there are strict rules that protect people, that it is safer to walk there than in

Santa Teresa where we stayed for instance, where you can often get robbed.

But she warned us that it could happen one day that we can't rehearse because of police operations in the favela that often result in tension and violence; she explains that they have a system to get informed from the people living in Maré about the situation and when it is too bad, they don't open the Arts Centre, she added that some days we might hear the guns shots but that inside the studio, we are safe. (She showed a video of a rehearsal day with her dancers with all of them lying in the bathroom while hearing the sound of heavy shooting, waiting for it to be over). She says that six of her dancers live in the favela and some days cannot come because of police operations against the gangs. When police operations happen, you can't go in the street, the schools are close.

They published a report stating that last year, children from the favela lose a full month of school because of this.

A few days after we came back to Norway, she sent us a video of one of the operation happening right where we had lunch every day in a small café next to the studio.

CARTE BLANCHE

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