

Review of the Bolivian play presented online at #FIBA2021
LEYES (LAWS) : THEATER CAN OVERCOME STOLEN FICTION

By Ruy Filho*

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Contemporaneity imposes on theater an impressive amount of labyrinths that artists are forced to go through without much certainty that there is even a way out. From the economic one, which brutally affects this practice, to the multiplicity of languages, which entered into a sort of dispute for a market of experimentations, more and more drowned every day, and which finds difficult to decide if it wants to provoke the spectator or surrender to simplifications in order to get some attention. Any attempt, therefore, is a risk. And the best answer is not to get carried away and instinctively follow the path that one imagines to be more interesting.

This is where artists differ. Some find the more classical context stimulating; others, on the other hand, devote themselves to unveiling strategies that may seem, in principle, too hermetic and personal. And whoever wants to answer about what would be best or right, right from the start, will be wrong. Certainties ceased to be decisive shortly after the idea of Modernity collapsed. That project, which began centuries ago and brought us here, seems to make little sense now. The planet is on the verge of an ecological catastrophe and civilization is collapsing, day by day, taken over by a pandemic that requires another way of living individually and collectively.

And, if society is not the same, artists are asked how to represent the unknown of tomorrow. What aesthetics, languages, resources, media, environments, environments, narratives, identities are fundamental questions for what we will have for theater in this already extremely near future. Not being so easy, the option is to try to unravel the present, even if it is equally enigmatic, in its caricatured condition of reality. Increasingly fictitious, events make explicit a counter-version of the narrative. If before we could point out the theatricality of the facts, noticing the exaggerated dramatization as a resource of emotional effects on people; now we are subjected to a spectacularization, in which, the greater the spectacular context, the more confused about the veracity of what is addressed. This is what makes facts susceptible of being fictions and fictions understood as truths.

Given this, how can theater exist as a poetic, aesthetic or lyrical experience? The exhaustion of interest in theatrical language is due to an excessive coexistence with its parameters. Going to the theater is like living the same fictional-narrative structure in which reality has buried us. There, one of the ways out was to have the artist as the subject and object of his creation; his own intimate self, made interfaces of experience. However, when the impossibility of finding stability for the subject (and the notion of such) becomes evident, this has also become anachronistic.

This initial reflection is not to create doubts in the reader, but to help him in what follows, for some artists exist at the crossroads of this labyrinth as one who defies it. This is

the case of Diego Aramburo. His shows are, rather, perforations, holes in reality through which he articulates new possibilities of moving between the corridors. The intensity in the way he organizes ideas and aesthetics makes his shows a kind of challenge to the expectations even of those who follow his works. And in Leyes, presented digitally at FIBA - Buenos Aires International Theater Festival-, being responsible for the concept, dramaturgy and direction of the play, he adds another quality: the final cut of the 3 videos that make up the project in the form of chapters.

The initial argument is to investigate departing from the journey of Marvell José María Leyes, Mayor of Cochabamba city, tried for corruption, convicted and acquitted several times, how much there is of fiction and representation in reality and if we are able to free ourselves from its traps. Within this narrative, Aramburo elaborates another layer of inquiry: can theater and the performing arts still avail themselves of any of their qualities, or have they all been taken over by politics in their narrative and aesthetic strategies?

Throughout the chapters – What's Real, What's Temporal and What's Fictional - politics and theater are problematized without reaching a conclusion -that would be obvious. But with a difference: for art, the questions are complex philosophical structures impossible to answer simply and immediately. Meanwhile, as for politics, man and the absurdity of reality, places it as a farce so explicit that the real is confused with fiction. It is as if the director is determined to ask us how to approach the spectacle of politics and, once recognized, to deconstruct its intentions. The problem is that Leyes, in fact, he exists, like so many others, and the spectacle he uses is profoundly real, to the point of having consequences.

Regarding theater, the question veers towards another paradigm: how to deconstruct the stolen fiction in order to allow art the ability to recover fiction as a perspective for the invention of looks and thoughts? And the answer is even more confusing when living a pandemic, since there is no longer even the performance space to provoke the encounter with the public. Then, distant and isolated, the audience needs to be convinced to stay in front of the screen and want to experience a performative imaginary, without being properly prepared for it.

Thus, the spectacle invades the contemporary, making communication an aesthetic language of immediacy, both because of the excess of our coexistence with social networks and mobile devices, and because of the banalization they offer. The chapters organized in a recognizable narrative structure facilitate access to the content right after the first one. Once the structural logic is recognized, the viewer moves on to the second and last chapter with ease and a freer participation.

The images are loaded with the information gathered after the research on theater and politics, but also on the performers themselves and the scenic game in which the documentation is a kind of fictitious record of themselves, only not as they are, but as they want to be for the public. Just as in social networks. Thus, by superimposing word and image, videos and voices, Leyes makes a demand on the pictorial labyrinth: it is necessary to move away from the screen to get a broader view of the overall picture. In the distance, the whole makes possible the quality of the details of the superimposed images, of the texts that run across the screen, and the observer can freely devote himself to one or the other,

allowing himself by the way his perception is captured by one information, to follow it, while the other layers merge into a suggestive mass that completes the sensitive encounter.

Aramburo overcomes the digital screen and the editing in what was the case of many: using technological resources only because they fit there. The work exposes what has already been exposed by giving two more experiences that are not from the space of the computer or the mobile: the one that demands a spectacle from the spectator, the choice of the look, of how it will go through and get involved with each element; and as a painting, with which it is necessary to be at the same level, observing it also with distance, to understand it as a single image.

Finally, Leyes considers that there is someone on the other side of the screen, and wants from him his active and definitive presence in what will be the work, inverting the logic of looking to that of making oneself present by looking. In other times, the literary critic Paul Zumthor claimed that reading would be a performative gesture, since it would require the reader to choose how to behave in front of the book. Aramburo does the same with the screen: he turns observation into a performative process.

It means that, if the audience cannot go to the theater, and if theater, as a presential event, cannot go to the audience, it is possible to construct in the audience itself the performative dimension of a scene from its aesthetic-narrative. It is from this kind of experience that we will broaden our perception of representation, developing in the coexistence with this language a better symbolic vocabulary and, through it, read, for example, how the real is manipulated even by politicians. Leyes is especially a show about the most dangerous thing that exists in the ridiculous spectacularization of Latin American politics. I know it well, I am Brazilian, after all.

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LEYES, Artistic Sheet:

Concept, mise-en-scene and Direction: Diego Aramburo

Head Team: Carlos del Águila, Andrea Riera, Aramburo

Cast: Adriana Luján, Andrea Cornejo, Andrés Mariño, Avril León, Daniela Flores, Diana Velasco, Hernany Porcel, Jamil Estrada, Javier Silva, Jorge Barrón, Karla FloresManns, Katriel Hidalgo, Katy BustillosVila, Marisol Campos, Nancy Cronen, Nicel Zárate, Raisal Encinas, Samadi Valcárcel, Sergio Alavi, Stephanny Thaine

Sound and Mixing: Andrés Mariño, Sergio Alavi, Diana Velasco y Carlos del Águila

OBS Team: Adriana Luján, Jamil Estrada, Katy BustillosVila, Jorge Barrón y Carlos del Águila

Text & Final Cut: Aramburo

Executive Production: Andrea Riera

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