



APRESENTA

# OKAN





"Where are we going now? I don't know, we're just studying the path!" (excerpt from the work)

Continuing the language research we've been developing since 2007, which led to the award-winning performances "Marruá," "Leontina," and "So.corro - if I were you, I'd move," OKAN brings a poetic approach that deepens the work of body awareness and the state of presence of the performers. It recovers from dance and theater their most festive, popular, and allegorical aspects, creating spaces of affection that break the boundaries between performers and spectators. The performance blends fiction and reality in an unmistakably Brazilian and engaged dramaturgy, based on the research we've conducted through the accounts of community leaders. The history of women in the Northeastern Brazilian cangaço, the Guaraní indigenous people of Mato Grosso do Sul, the rural communities in the interior of São Paulo, the waste collectors of Maracaí, the Mothers of May, the Union of Women, black and quilombola women, refugees scattered throughout the outskirts, and the women from the families of group members. Narratives that convey a historical and cultural dimension resulting from collective ways of feeling, living, and thinking.





OKAN means "heart" in Yoruba and is the name of the performance that the Xingó Group took five years to produce. Yes! Five years. From crafting each costume by hand using the leather craftsmanship of Mestre Romualdo (Arco Verde/PE), to conducting 17 interviews with the eldest individuals and editing them into short videos for the Heréticas Channel, studying movements from dances like "cavalo marinho," "xaxado," and contact improvisation, collecting over 40 t-shirts from social movement collections, contributed by historian Astrogilda Pereira and loaned to the group, as well as the hand-embroidered net by one of the interpreters' great-grandmothers or the iron structure for hanging our flag clothesline. Every element of this performance was born from our ancestries and deeper research, initiated in 2018.

We wanted to explore the resistances of women, and this gradually altered our way of feeling, producing, and acting in the world. Still, in search of an aesthetic that aligned with this ethic, we began studying Bantu languages, Yoruba, the mythology of the orixás, and Afro-corporeal experiments. We delicately sewed together each word of the text, which has already gone through four versions. Just as we were about to premiere, the pandemic led us to revisit each path. We returned to the rehearsal room, engaging in a challenging exercise of detachment. We invited two more artists, Black women like us, Thais Dias and Helena Menezes, who joined the direction by Juliana Pardo and the corporeal performances of Erika Moura, Valquiria Rosa,

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and Natália Siufi. Six women. In April 2023, finally, we gave birth to OKAN! A name bestowed by the writer and master Waldete Tristão. THIS PERFORMANCE carries the pursuit of something as ancient as humanity itself. It encapsulates the essence of corporeal resistance in struggle, creating scenes that bring forth the necessary estrangement to comprehend this everyday resistance. We are thousands!

Embodiment, creating movement through sound and images. Synesthesia: sensory experiences.

Real-time frames. Comic improvisation. Brazilian roots like "xaxado," "cavalo marinho," and "bumba meu boi." The loas and distinctive passages of mamulengo theater. The diversity of tools harnessing various corporeal materials and drawing us closer to this ancestral, potent, and revealing matrix. The refinement of physical work combined with engaged practice and encounters with other references.

Theater taken to radicality: physical, imagistic, sonorous, in the investigation of networks of relationships, alliances, and kinships that sustain Brazilian hinterland culture, inheriting blood and diverse cultures, fused and shaped by the encounter with an almost impenetrable geography and climate. Hinterland not limited to the northeast, concrete hinterland and metaphorical hinterland. The production of life, sustenance, family relationships, medicines, songs... in rites that resemble one another, women shape the culture that makes us people of a certain place. Over 70 hours of audio-visual recordings, along with notes and photographs, surfaced the collective unconscious of a colonized, exploited, and besieged people, yet a people that resists. Relationships that nurtured our imagination, in the quest for this corporeal existence stemming from affection and the creation of meeting spaces magnified by theater and its dynamics. Not a mimetic portrayal, but an appropriation of experience, transformed into body, music, and movement.



When we're in the squares and streets, we create living grandstands, assembling audiences in an arena of inflatable balls of three different heights, bringing theater to places that lack any kind of cultural equipment. There are 60 Swiss balls that not only serve as chairs but also encourage moving together in harmony. These balls can support up to 350kg and create slight slides and movements that lubricate the vertebrae. We've been creating these grandstands for eight years, starting from the performance "SO.CORRO," and the feedback is always positive.









# XINGÓ or the waters that flow between stones:

*"There's no safe place. Nothing guarantees the improvisation of the performer, the certainty of the work, the functionality of the steps. We have nothing to sell. We WILL PERFORM! Not like cans on a color shelf, from which the white masters would choose the one that looks best. We will perform TOGETHER. Like flames, like thunder, like remnants of shooting stars that only serve to make warts!"*



The Xingó Group stubbornly exists as a theater group in the eastern part of the city for 16 years, producing and circulating art, systematizing methodologies of its practice, seeking other possible working relationships, more horizontal, strengthening partnerships within and beyond the category, in movements, forums, and networks. Our process was built through a poetics that incorporates theater into life and therefore constructs within it. Whether through the tasks applied to the collective in relation to the "home base," or in numerous aesthetic participations in social scenes of struggle, in encounters with the audience, in celebration, in intense debates, in relentless itinerancy, a tireless battle for praxis... Our theater gained substance in a life in motion, not in isolation. Twenty years of experience in the journey with masters Cristiane Paoli Quito and Tica Lemos created a reference for the practice of contact improvisation and clowning combined with dance-theater and somatic awareness and education. The exchange with the Grupo Parlandas in 2012 added experiences of street theater, activism as practice, the popular aspects and foundations of "mamulengo" and "bumba-meu-boi," and a network of resistance territories that enriched and provided a more specific focus to the work of bodies. In 2013, the Group changed its name to Xingó, which refers to water flowing between stones. Xingó is also a region along the São Francisco River traveled by the movement of the Northeastern cangaço, a



current focus of the company that has deepened the study of Brazilian women engaged in processes of contesting capitalism in recent years.

The headquarters "Tekoha," established 8 years ago, has hosted free classes and courses in Brazilian dances, ballet, theater theory, "orixalidades" (pertaining to the orixás in Afro-Brazilian religions), contact improvisation, aikido, popular sounds, street theater, popular puppet theater from the Northeast, Body-Mind Centering, Pilates, Dance-Theater, and other training sessions, always sponsored by public projects. We have expanded from our headquarters to the

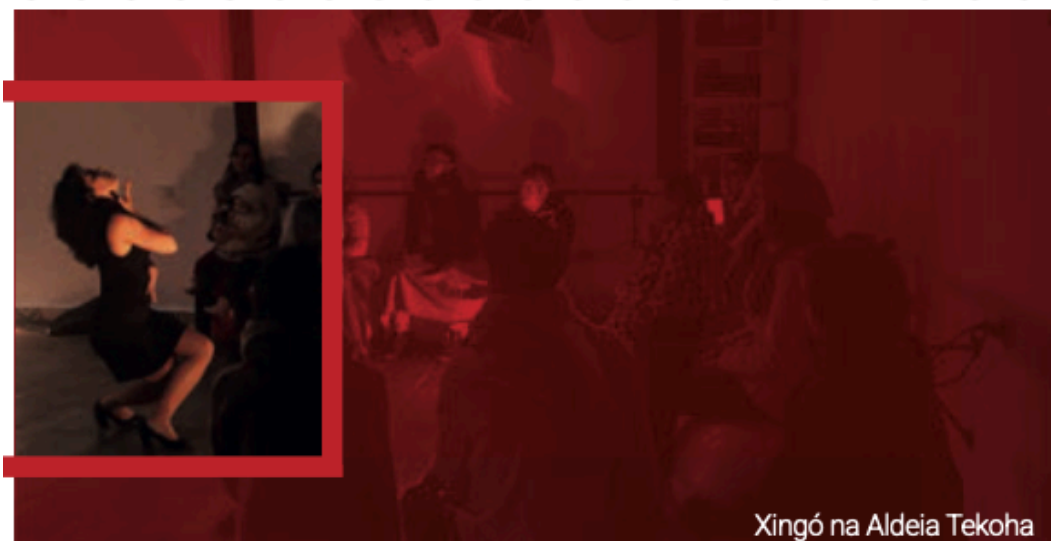
Arthur Azevedo Theater, our neighbor, where we've held two editions of the "FESTA XINGÓ" (Xingó Festival) with groups and artists from all over Brazil.

Over the past 6 years, we have deepened our studies in decolonial, Black, African diaspora, indigenous, and peasant references, connecting invisible literature and forgotten bodies to create new narratives. Our YouTube channel, "Heréticas," has more than fifteen women sharing their lives and stories, and our performances highlight these new references as



protagonists. We prioritize LGBTQIAPN+ individuals among performers, invitees, visual artists, and in every possibility of partnership and work. For the past 3 years, we have been running open and free practice and research centers focused on an anti-racist perspective that stems from previously unoffered knowledge about the history of fundamental matrices in Brazil. These centers offer a decolonial view of African history and Bantu and Yoruba languages, while also seeking alternative aesthetic references in cinema and audiovisuals that don't stem from a unilateral and hegemonic premise. The members of these centers sometimes act as instructors in formal and informal theater institutions or theater and dance groups, which is an integral part of our creative process. Each artist's exchange with other works in transit brings current issues and themes into the group, which we collectively discuss. There is no exclusivity; rather, there is a priority in our work because it is through it that we can establish other relationships. Our engagement involves creating references, modes of production, forms of relation and involvement, both within and outside the group. "TEKOHA" is our base and root, from which we branch out into other villages and territories of contestation, in pedagogical and artistic processes. Regarding our networks and circuits for disseminating our works, we have meticulously stitched together and mapped out other locations where dance and theater usually do not reach – in villages, settlements, rural communities, cultural or social organized movements, interior artistic groups, through project tours, and in a festival we created called "Curto Circuito" (Short Circuit) in rural interior areas for over 12 years. This festival makes the community itself a producer of the activities, which include not just art, but also discussions, celebrations, and food. "FESTA XINGÓ" and the "FESTIVAL CURTO CIRCUITO" are independent initiatives organized and created by our group, which has already mapped more than 60 rural communities in the state's interior that had never experienced cultural activities before.





## WITH THE XINGÓ GROUP, WE HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING AWARDS:

- Zé Renato Theater Award 2014, with the "Em Contato" project, involving workshops and the play "Leontina."
- PROAC Dance Production and Season Award 2014, with the performance "So.Corro. Se eu fosse você eu me movia."
- PROAC Theater Performance Circulation Award 2014, with the "Em Contato" project, workshops, and the play "Leontina" in rural areas, settlements, villages, and quilombos.
- Dance Promotion Award 2016, with the "So.Corro" project, to sustain the group's activities at the headquarters, practices at the Arthur Azevedo Theater, and the circulation of the play "So.Corro."
- PROAC Arts Festivals I Award 2017, with the "Curto Circuito" project, a cultural festival in settlements and social movements in the interior (anti-asylum movement / waste collectors movement / landless movement / theater groups).
- PROAC Territories Maintenance Award, with the "Tekuna Tekoha" project in 2021.
- Aldir Blanc Historical Dance Award, with the "Xingó or the Waters that Flow between Stones" project in 2021.
- Maria Alice Vergueiro Award for maintaining the Xingó Group in 2021.
- Aldir Blanc Online Show Production Award 2021, with the project "Sem Saída ou é A vida gritando da janela."
- Dance Promotion Law 31st Edition, with the "[B]oi;a Dissidências Submersas" project in 2022.
- Territories Maintenance Award, with the "tekoha Territória das Corpas" project in 2023.

**ERIKA MOURA** - Performer Founder of the Xingó Group and the company Ação Moura Produções Artísticas. Member of the award-winning Nova Dança 4 Company. Began her theater journey in 1992. Was part of the Tabefe Theater Group, under the direction of Olair Coan. In 1999, she graduated from EAD-Escola de Arte Dramática/ECA/USP. From 1998 to 2006, she attended the Estúdio Nova Dança, taking classes and workshops in dance and theater with the best teachers and masters from Brazil, Europe, and the USA, including Steve Paxton and Isabel TICA Lemos. Starting in 2001, she also taught Contact Improvisation and Interpretation at Estúdio Nova Dança. From 2000 to 2008, she assisted in directing nine plays at EAD/ECA/USP. She teaches Interpretation, Contact Improvisation, Body Awareness, and Clowning. In July 2007, she premiered the play "Leontina," directed by Marat Descartes, which won the ZÉ RENATO Award and PROAC Circulation Award. She was an actress and movement coach for the group "As Meninas do Conto" for ten years. In 2013, she directed the solo clown performance "Retalhos Populares," by Iris Fioreli. She served as a Dance Mentor for the Ademar Guerra Project from 2015 to 2017. She was a guest professor of Contact Improvisation at Universidade Anhembi Morumbi from 2014 to 2016. Erika has been involved in various teaching and artistic roles, and she coordinates the TEKOKA Space in the East Zone, offering practices in Brazilian dances, Contact Improvisation, and ballet.

**AWARDS AND PUBLIC PROJECTS** Erika Moura has received numerous awards and acknowledgments for her contributions to theater and dance, including the Governor of São Paulo State Award for the Arts: Dance for the trilogy "Influência" in 2010, PROAC Dance Circulation Award, the FUNARTE Theater Myriam Muniz Award, the FUNARTE Dance Klaus Vianna Award, and more.

**NATÁLIA SIUFI** - PERFORMER Founder of the Teatral Parlendas Group and co-founder of the Xingó Group. Began her theater journey in 1996 in Mato Grosso do Sul. Graduated from UNESP with a degree in Performing Arts Education. In 2004, she received the PRÊMIO-BOLSA FAPESP for creating the book "Que Palhaçada é Essa? Jogos Cômicos de Palhaço, para o ator" (What Clowning Is This? Comic Games for Actors) under the guidance of Mário Bolognesi, Alexandre Mate, and Marianna Monteiro. She is an author, playwright, actress, and director with a wide range of experience, from writing and acting in films to directing and producing theater shows. She has also been a teacher, coordinator, and curator in various theater-related projects and events.

**AWARDS AND PUBLIC PROJECTS** Natalia Siufi has been involved in various projects and initiatives that have garnered recognition, including PRÊMIO COOPERATIVA PAULISTA DE TEATRO PELA OCUPAÇÃO DE ESPAÇOS PÚBLICOS (Cooperative Award for Public Space

Occupation) in 2015, PRÊMIO COOPERATIVA PAULISTA DE TEATRO PARA GRUPO REVELAÇÃO (Cooperative Award for Emerging Group) in 2012, and more.

**VALQUIRIA ROSA** - Performer Graduated in Communication of the Body Arts with a focus on Performance from PUC-SP in 2006. Valquiria Rosa has been active in the artistic scene since 1986, participating in musical, theatrical, dance, video, performance, and art education productions. She has been involved in a variety of theater productions with different groups, including Grupo Ventoforte, Grupo Bonecos Urbanos, Grupo Caixa de Imagens, Grupo XPTO, and Grupo Ponkã. She has also worked as a percussionist with the Orquestra Jazz Sinfônica and accompanied various choirs and vocal groups. In the realm of dance, she has been part of performances directed by Ivaldo Bertazzo, accompanying dancers like Cléia Plácido and Luciana Porta. Valquiria has also been an art educator, teaching percussion and body preparation courses at various institutions. She has been involved in multiple projects, including her work as a performer, writer, and dramaturge with Cia. Nêga Luzia, where she has participated in solo performances such as "Deixa a Sambalelê em paz" and "Deixa a Nêga em Paz," under the direction of Kika Antunes. Valquiria has also pursued studies in music therapy and Oriental massage.

**ANA FLOR CARVALHO** - is a poet, composer, and performer who holds a degree in Literature from USP. She grew up in an environment rich with music, dance, and artistic expressions due to her parents' involvement in cultural research and folk traditions. She was exposed to various expressions and traditions of Brazilian popular culture through groups like Cupuaçu and Flor de Pequi. This early exposure led her to become an educator and advocate for these traditions, engaging in activities such as forming musical groups and working with young people in the periphery.

Ana Flor was a vocalist in the band Zafenate for seven years, a band that is also involved in education and agroecology projects. She has participated in shows and recordings alongside acclaimed musicians in the Brazilian popular music scene, including Zeca Baleiro, Tião Carvalho, and Ana Maria Carvalho.

She is a member of the Poesia Maloqueirista collective, which aims to foster a popular dialogue with a mambembe (wandering, itinerant) identity, reaching out to people and promoting cultural actions and publications.

Ana Flor is also part of the Banda Forró do Assaré, an all-female group created in 2013 with the goal of empowering women in the music scene while researching and promoting lesser-known songs and composers in the forró genre.

After starting her solo project "Ana Flor em seu Jardim," where she performed songs from Latin America and her own compositions, she now presents her solo project "FLOR," which features her own songs as well as those of her close friends.

**MARIA HELENA MENEZES** - is a composer, singer, and instrumentalist in the music and theater fields. She resides in the western region of São Paulo, Brazil. She holds a degree in Geography from the University of São Paulo and has also studied sound design at the SP School of Theater.

Throughout her career, Maria Helena has engaged in various courses and workshops to hone her musical and artistic skills. She participated in courses such as "Tambores e Maracás" taught by Valquiria Rosa at the Escola Livre de Teatro, the "Oficina de Percussão" (Percussion Workshop) on Toré Potiguara led by Mestre Tonhô, and "Cantos de Tradição, Corpos sem Tempo" (Traditional Songs, Bodies without Time) coordinated by Luciano Mendes de Jesus at Oficina Cultural Oswald de Andrade. She was also a member of the "Oficina de Percussão de instrumentos Africanos Ilú Obá de Min."

Maria Helena has been involved in various theater productions as a sound designer, music composer, and performer. She has contributed her musical talents to productions such as "Okan," "Deixa Sambalelê em paz" by Grupo Xingó, "Cavalos Pretos São Imensos," and "Eu Atlântica" by Coletivo Oju-Oju. She has also worked as a sound technician for the Doutores da Alegria's "PFPJ09" show.

She has been an active contributor to different theater companies and projects, including Cia. do Despejo, Bando\_, Coletiva Vulva da Vovó, and more. She has co-created music, provided sound design, and performed in various productions, each adding to her diverse portfolio of work.

Maria Helena's involvement is not limited to performing; she has also ventured into the realm of music instrument construction and education. She created the brand "Igbó Ateliê," which focuses on researching, designing, and constructing musical instruments, decorative objects, and accessories using gourds, bamboo, and recyclable wood. She also offers workshops related to music and instrument construction.

In addition to her active artistic engagement, Maria Helena Menezes is a versatile and passionate artist who has contributed significantly to the cultural scene in São Paulo, Brazil.

**DARA FREIRE** - is an actress, experienced educator specializing in Afro-Brazilian rhythms at Winddrums, and an accomplished cultural producer. She has a Bachelor of Psychology from California Institute of Integral Studies (2022). She also has a Comunicação das Artes do Corpo (Theatre) degree from Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, Brazil (2010/2012) and Performing Arts degree from Fundação das Artes de São Caetano do Sul,

Brazil (2007/2009). Dara is proficient in Afro-Brazilian Atabaque drum and percussion instruments, expertise in Atabaque Drum through classes at Curimba School Pai Élcio de Oxalá, Brazil (2015). Dara has also had intensive vocal training, percussion studies, and Brazilian folklore with Tião Carvalho, Brazil (2012-2014). Dara Freire was a dedicated member of the Teatral Parlandas Group in Brazil from 2008 to 2014. She led the impactful Street Theatre Project “Marruá” in Brazil from 2012 to 2014. She initiated and participated in the transformative Social Theatre Project “Cidade Entraves ou Estad[i]o de Sítio” in Brazil from 2012 to 2014. Dara pioneered the Occupation of Public Space Project “Acordando Histórias” in Brazil in 2012. She promoted Inclusive Theatre through the Project “Companhia Olhos de Dentro” in Brazil from 2006 to 2011. Dara Freire is established as a Lead Teacher and curriculum developer for Afro-Brazilian rhythms at the School of Curimba San Sebastian, Brazil since 2016. She is also the Founder and Instructor of Afro-Brazilian rhythms at Winddrums school of percussion in Brazil/USA since 2015. Dara was empowered through teaching acting classes at Favela da Paz, settlements, and quilombos from 2013 to 2014. She engaged in enriching indigenous communities in the Amazon through acting classes in Brazil from 2013 to 2014. Dara nurtured artistic talents in children and teenagers through acting classes for theatre and video at various institutions in Brazil from 2010 to 2011.

## Links:

BOIÁ . vídeo-dança-teatro experimental (2023)

<https://vimeo.com/822695924/ad3294c297?share=copy>

Mini-Doc TekunaTEKOHA (2022)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1psxewzvMao>

Xingó: Água que corre entre pedras (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFRq6gxRKUk>

SO.CORRO se eu fosse você eu me movia (2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx3vPlw6Z6w>

