



# LA IMAGINACIÓN DEL FUTURO

## INTERVIEW WITH MARCO LAYERA

### **Do you think theatre is the best tool for political action?**

Marco Layera: I think theatre is far from being the best, most effective means of action. I actually think its range of action is rather limited. There are other tools, other actions that are much more effective, but which of course lack the glamour and recognition of what we do. Looking at it like that, I recognise my cowardice and comfort. If I were to be radically engaged, I wouldn't do theatre. I would be on the street, where the sound of bullets isn't pre-recorded, where the buildings aren't made of cardboard. Sometimes, I think that doing art nowadays means turning your back on the world. It's easy to talk about the atrocities humanity commits with a glass of champagne in your hand, then to be applauded for it.

### **What do you think is the problem with current art forms?**

When talking about the tragedies of man, our dramatic tradition requires us to use a serious, heavy, or monotonous tone. Theatre, in our country, is often seen as a superior artistic form, full of solemnity and formality, almost lyrical. It gives it a certain gravity. I think it's necessary to disrespect it, to breathe new life into it by treating it with freshness and boldness. There's no rule that says you have to talk about the great themes of humanity in a sterile, dark place. Theatre can be fun without being shallow. There's no inherent contradiction between making people think and making them laugh, no dichotomy. It opens up other perspectives and points of view: irony, cruelty, the absurd, humour. Their power is much more unsettling and corrosive, which in the end is what makes you think. Things have changed, too, and theatre should strive to connect to its time. It has the capacity to face what's going on outside. For starters, we can't keep imitating past artistic forms and discourses. They were an answer to other times; today they're not appropriate for dealing with what's going on. Tragedy invites us to its funeral, our time has turned it into a naïve, ridiculous dramatic form. How could we perform a tragedy when the real one, the one that's going on outside, crudely rules us? How could we face it from a dark cube, lit by an artificial light, and inhabited by liars? How could we, from this place, exert pressure on the political stage?

### **How would you define subversion, and what does it lead to?**

What I think is subversive is the ability, the potential to change the order of things. I think art has lost that potential. The question, then, is how to find it again. That's the great challenge our generation faces: to find a way to produce new reflections that question and transfigure reality. It might seem outrageous, but it might be time for the world of theatre to think long and hard about the democratic system, otherwise the brutality of the neoliberal model will only strengthen, and under our own roof.

### **Your shows often revolve around the idea of changing the world. How can theatre take part in that change?**

My academic training taught me that there is an inalienable relationship between artistic and social practices. It was part of a long national tradition of art as social engagement. It taught me an ethics, a conception of the duty of art. As a result, I think theatre has a great political responsibility, and I have this great desire to use it to change society. I'd like to believe in what I just said and pretend that I don't feel the weight of postmodernism, that ideologies aren't dead. But what I'm saying is illusory, naïve, absurd even. I belong to another generation, one without a cause, whose convictions are malleable. But this awareness also grants me a measure of lucidity that allows me to see the contradictions of my generation: we still obey a cultural, ethical, and philosophical legacy that seems not to fit the reality of our time. That's what I believe in, and my creative impulse leads me every day to question my work, my convictions, this dreamy nostalgia I inherited. What's theatre today? A tool for social exchange? What about political theatre? Is it necessary? Is it useful? Are we?

### **In *Tratando de hacer una obra que cambie el mundo* (Trying to create a play that will change the world), you mock the hope of those you call "the last of the romantics." What is the place disillusionment plays in your theatre?**

A large one, because it's part of my history. I belong to a disillusioned generation, disappointed by our parents, our models, by those who announced the arrival of "brotherhood, equality, solidarity," by those who taught us how to dream and hope, by those who believed in a country that would be exceptional and that the restoration of democracy only wore out, by those who were betrayed and who betrayed us, by those who, once in power, disowned what they'd taught us, by creating an exclusively administrative system, creating contented pariahs in a country that is no longer ours. How could we not be disappointed?

### **What would you want to change in the world today?**

Absolutely everything.



### **Do you have a clear idea of the world you would replace it with?**

I yearn for an ideal world, in a humanistic perspective. Not so ideal, though, because if it were, I wouldn't have anything to talk about in my shows, I most likely would have to do something else. If I want to keep doing what I do, it is necessary that the world be a mess. I'm aware of the paradox.

### **Who or what is the object of the resentment that gives your company its name?**

It is directed at those who turned our country into a sort of "banana conclave," at those who taught us to dream of a country that would be more just, more united, and who betrayed us. Chile hasn't change all that much. We're far from being this "democratic, diverse, and justly developed" country some official voices claim we are. Our country, like the rest of the world, is built so that only a select few profit from it. It doesn't shock anyone anymore, we've got used to this apathy towards others (immigrant workers, the Palestinian people, Africa, etc.). I think this indifference has become permanent and also touches a large number of people who suffer from it. It generates resentment, hatred, frustration, and strongly violent feelings that can be the seeds of a social movement, like the student uprising that took place in our country a few years ago.

### **You were born in 1977. What is your relationship to the Allende years?**

I spent almost all my childhood living in a dictatorship. Of course, my parents told me about the events that led to it; which can be roughly summed up with the rule of the Popular Unity coalition and the 1973 coup. By taking part in demonstrations with my mother, I saw firsthand the violence the army was capable of. As a child, I hated the dictatorship and admired its opposite, embodied by the figure of Salvador Allende, popular martyr and symbol of a democratic and pacific revolution. Nowadays my generation, those of us who came of age during the post-dictatorship era, have a more nuanced, more controversial vision. We look at the past critically, we try to reevaluate it to understand our present. We ask new questions, painful and unsettling ones that are nonetheless necessary. Was the dream of the Popular Unity coalition worth the seventeen years of dictatorship and violence that followed? Or the twenty-five years of "transition to democracy" during which the neoliberal system only grew stronger? Was that utopia possible in the first place? Could it actually happen in our country? Or was it just the fancy of a bourgeois President?

### **What have been the consequences of those events for the politics of Chile today?**

They are inarguable. Our country is divided, socially and ideologically. A same land is inhabited by human groups with irreconcilable social ideals. One group still enjoys the generosity of the dictatorship and of its legacy, and argues in favor of the political, economic, and ideological status quo. Another, to which thousands of Chileans belong, has taken to the streets several times over the past few years to demand that deep changes be made to the system. Students, activists, Mapuche Indians, and sexual minorities are at the helm of a new social movement, which highlights the real nuances of our country, the transformation Chile has been through. Youth is probably the engine of those aspirations, this generation born in the 1980s and 1990s in a context in which the social debate had been neglected because of the political transactions and compromises of the previous generations.

### **Who makes up your company, la Re-sentida?**

The company is made up of Benjamin Westfall, Pedro Muñoz, Carolina Palacios, Nicolás Herrera, Carolina de la Maza and Diego Acuña. All of them are actors. Some of them I went to school with, others I taught or met when I directed them in other shows. We also regularly work with guest artists, such as the cartoonist Paul de la Fuente, with whom we have been working steadily for the past four years.

### **How do you work? Are the texts written beforehand, or do you prefer to create your shows directly during rehearsals?**

Before we begin rehearsing with the actors, I go through a process of personal research during which I only have a general idea of what the show is going to be like, and which uses all sorts of material—complete scenes, fragments, images, situations, independent sentences, etc. It forms a basis I give the actors on the first day of rehearsal, and it serves as a guide for all the work we do thereafter. Then we begin improvising and writing with the actors. From the meeting of those two processes emerges another textual material, the one I then proceed to rewrite and which becomes the text of the show, although we always reserve the right to modify it until the very end.

Interview conducted by Marion Canelas.

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	Pour vous présenter cette édition, plus de 1750 personnes, artistes, techniciens et équipes d'organisation ont uni leurs efforts, leur enthousiasme pendant plusieurs mois. Plus de la moitié relève du régime spécifique d'intermittent du spectacle. Ce carré rouge est le symbole de notre unité.	