

So Get up, Diana

What does it mean consciousness? Will? To compete? To go beyond the limits? What do you mean? What do we mean by saying "it's not possible", or "we can do it"? How can we teach a body to do something that it has already learned, and yet failed? *So Get Up, Diana* is a dance piece project addressing the process of recovery of the dancer and acrobat Diana Bastos Niepce, following an accident that left her quadriplegic.

On March 24, 2014, after falling from a trapeze during an acrobatic training, I entered the Santa Maria Hospital emergency room with a spinal cord injury: cervical fracture c5 and c6 and cervical dislocation C4 to C7.

A month later, I was visited by Rui Catalão (with whom I had collaborated in the book "Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker", 2013, ed. INCM). To write, I could only use the metacarpal bone of my right pinky finger, but I committed myself to writing a book as an integral part of my recovery process.

Two months after the accident, I moved to the rehabilitation center in Alcoitão, where I continued to write exhaustive reports on my new way of life as a hospital patient with an ASIA-B quadriplegia, with its population of doctors, nurses, therapists, as well as their clients, physiotherapy sessions, meal logistics, daily hygiene, wake up and bedtime schedules, visiting friends and colleagues from my recent past that soon became more and more scarce.

The transition process of an hyperactive dancer and acrobat life, with an average of eight hours of daily physical work, that went from training, performance and classes, to a quadriplegic dependent on medical professionals to perform the most elementary daily tasks, corresponded to a bipolar psychological state that oscillated between peaks of pragmatic optimism (doing what it takes to recover the fine motor skills of the hands and walking again) and moments of despair and frustration.

My body was disconnected from the neck down. Step by step, over the course of time, I witnessed the slow process of coming back to active life. The machine sometimes collapses and goes crazy. It is not within my power to control a body that strives to go beyond its new found physical limits and, at the same time, fails to obey me.

To which point will I ever recover what I took for granted in a recent past? Each new conquest corresponds to an awakening: to feel again the heat that passes through the nerve of the legs and that allows me to move again a toe; to feel that my deformed fingers are again able to tear the top of a packet of sugar or to light a match; to feel the spine straightening up again in the sitting position.

I awoke also to a body that does not understand me and does not respect me. A body that can not keep up with my goals. In the process of re-educating him, I can not afford the experience of a child that discovers a new possibility in a world of opportunities, risks and surprises. I find myself closer to the experience of a war veteran too much aware of what used to be possible, and what will not come back.

It is now a question of rediscovering the possibilities of my body, but also of discovering, or an alternative to its lost capacities. This process of being aware of every gesture, every movement, every twist, though tiresome, is not new to me. The novelty lies now in the blank spaces, with no clear access, that connect will and impossibility - how to re-activate muscular and nervous lost information, so that the movement becomes possible again? When I was a little girl I was told that I would never be a dancer. After the accident I was told that I could only move my head after six months of physiotherapy and that I would never again move my limbs. but in this process I found difficulties quite similar to the ones I faced as a dancer and an acrobat: the idea that persistence will allow me to overcome my new-found limitations. In both cases, it is the same challenge: to make possible what is accepted as being impossible. I can not analyze all the options and mistakes that got me here. I just take it as a new challenge.

Initially, my first goal was to move on from an Asia-B tetraplegia (with disturbances of Respiratory mechanics and muscles that preclude the movements of the four extremities of the body), to an Asia-C/D tetraplegia, tetraparesia (in which the four limbs, even suffering muscular dystrophy, already have active movements and some muscular strength).

In June 2015, with the support of a "walker", I managed to get up and take the first steps after the accident. The following summer I was able to walk supported by a pair of tripods. The next goal was to walk on crutches. And now i just want to walk with a cane, or simply walk. But it's not going to happen anytime soon. And yet I need to define goals. It is through them that I establish a working relationship with my therapists and physicians.

I have to admit that accomplishing those goals is something I can only impose on myself. In some way, my professional colleagues (doctors, physiotherapists) are not at ease with those goals, só close they are to an act of faith or simply self imposed dellusions. But experience has told me that impossible is what has not happened yet.

Biographies

DIANA BASTOS NIEPCE (n. 1985) Dancer, choreographer and writer, graduated at the University of Dance in Lisbon in 2009. She did Erasmus at Teak (Helsinki). Completed her studies with a formation at Forum Dança, Production Course Arts Management of the Spectacle, Hatha Yoga Teacher Course and Postgraduate of Art and Communication at the New University of Lisbon.

As a choreographer, she presented the pieces Lopussa on Vain with the Experimental Group of Caldas da Rainha, CroopCHORDS, Le naissance de l'organisme, Love after Love, Adois, Forgotten Fog with the circus Company Armazém 13, Morfme with the Plural Dance Company, and This is not my body with the Plural Dance Company.

She worked as a dancer in the Bail-Moderne with Company Rosas, Felix Ruckert, Willi Dorner, António Tagliarini and Daria Deflorian, La fura del baus, May Joseph and Sofia Varino, Miira Sippola, Jérôme Bel, Ana Rita Barata and Pedro Sena Nunes in the Company of CIM dance, and in the new creation Exi(s)t(s) of Mariana Tengner Barros.

Published an article in the book Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker in Lisbon, ed. Egeac / INCM and wrote the children's short story Bayadére, ed.CNB.

RUI CATALÃO (n. 1971) presented a series of autobiographical solos (starting in 2010 with "Inside Words", followed by "Av. Dos Bons Amigos", "Songs of Blarmino", "The Great Debt Conferences", "Precarious Work"), with portraits of his generation and the hidden history of his country. More recently, he presented "Journalism Amateur Hypnotism" (where he engages non-professionals to adress intimate issues by means of interviews), "Judith" (where he revisits the biblical feminine character), and "Now us" (with five afro-portuguese young amateurs, performing a real time decision making piece about the story of their lives) and "Fear on the way" (an autobiographical report by the Mozambique young performer Luís Mucauro).

He also wrote the piece "Esther" (based on the old testament's Book of Esther) to be performed by juvenile theatre groups, and has been quite active directing teenagers in

theatre workshops. His work deals with the border between private and public space and memory, and story telling.

As a dramaturg, he worked with João Fiadeiro, Miguel Pereira, Ana Borrvalho-João Galante, Manuel Pelmus, Brinjar Bandlien, Mihaela Dancs, etc. He also wrote scripts for the movies "Golden Helmet", "To Die Like a Man" and "Un été avec Diogo" (filming). He wrote the book "Ingredientes do Mundo Perfeito" (about the stage work of Tiago Rodrigues) and was the editor and co-author of "Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker em Lisboa".