

Dende Collective
presents

**Dona Flor & Her Two
Husbands**

Education Pack



INTRODUCTION

This pack serves as support material for any teacher, student or audience member who attends a performance of Dende Collective's Production of *Dona Flor & Her Two Husbands* at the Lyric Hammersmith Studio from the 15th March to the 1st April 2006.

You will find in this pack background information on the novel of *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, its author Jorge Amado and the area of Brazil in which the novel is set. There is also information on Dende Collective and notes on the production. At the end of the pack there are a series of practical and theoretical activities for teachers and students.

Dende Collective is also offering a range of different workshops that support the production and explore the Company's experimentation in **Polyphonic Theatre** (see page 3). For more information on these workshops please contact: Paddy Chatterton, Education Officer, on 0779321 6108 or email paddygc@hotmail.com

Contents:

- Page 3: Who are Dende Collective?
- Page 4: Magical Realism, Jorge Amado & his novel *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*
- Page 7: Bahia, the setting of *Dona Flor*
- Page 9: Dende Collective's production of *Dona Flor*
- Page 10: Ideas for practical and theoretical follow up work

WHO ARE DENDE COLLECTIVE?

Dende Collective was created in 1999 and is a growing culturally diverse collective of international artists: directors, writers, translators, actors, designers and technicians. Our members and collaborators come from a wide range of different nations including the UK, Brazil, Spain, Japan, Uruguay, Philippines, USA and Trinidad and they bring with them expertise in a huge variety of different cultures, performance styles and skills.

Much of Dende's work has a strong Brazilian flavour to it, exploring its unique and fascinating culture and comparing it to the modern Western culture in which we live. Brazilian culture is a hybrid and proud of cannibalising other cultures and art forms and, following the same tradition, Dende Collective's work combines different elements, languages, cultures and styles to create experimental but accessible theatre.

Through our work we are developing a new form of theatre, one that we have tentatively called **Polyphonic Theatre**, meaning, literally, a theatre of many sounds. We are exploring how a story can be enlivened by using a wide variety of different performance styles from all over the world. We are only at the beginning of this exploration. The performance of *Dona Flor and her Two Husbands* will, we hope, continue us on our journey.

'... A young company who are intent on forging a unique voice for themselves...'

Lyn Gardner - The Guardian

More on our past productions:

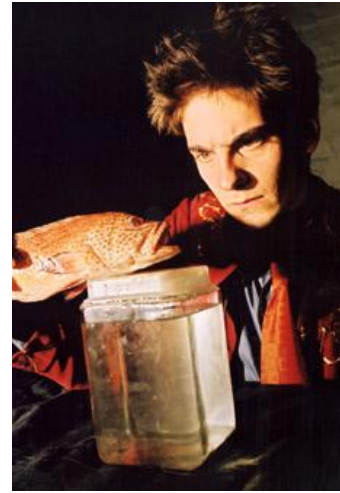


Agreste - 2005

AGRESTE, by Newton Moreno, one of the most promising playwrights who has emerged from Brazil in the last five years. He won both the Shell and APCA prize for Best Playwright with *AGRESTE* in 2004. This piece is still in development and it was shown as a research and development at Lyric Studio in September 2005.

ONEFOURSEVEN, devised by the company, was first seen as the result of an ACE-funded research period of three months at Oval House Theatre in late 2003. It was re-worked to tour the UK in the spring of 2005 thanks to another ACE grant. Using inventive design which places the audience in the centre of the action, **OneFourSeven** takes place in the mind of a young immigration officer, Angelo Walker, as he descends into a world of waiting rooms and a journey into his past and future.

THE PIRANHA LOUNGE was based on stories by Murilo Rubião, the first Brazilian writer of the genre Magic Realism (see page 4). The play transformed a small studio theatre into a seedy after-hours club where audience members met the strange characters of Rubião's stories. It premiered at the Oval House Theatre in December 2002. The show was then invited for another three-week run at the Oval where it performed to packed houses and received *Time Out* Critics' Choice. It was also performed at The Lyric Studio in March 2004.



The Piranha Lounge

VIVA MARIA! was a double-bill written by Mark O'Thomas. It was presented at The Oval House Theatre in 2001 and toured the state of São Paulo in Brazil in 2002. The two plays -*Tia Maria* and *Maria Alves* – explored the myths Brazil holds about Europe and Europe holds about Brazil. It was described by *Time Out* as "a fresh, bold venture with a raw and thrilling aesthetic".



Two Lost Souls on a dirty night

TWO LOST SOULS ON A DIRTY NIGHT by Plínio Marcos at the Grace Theatre in 2000. The founding father of Brazilian proletarian theatre, Marcos's naturalistic two-hander deals with two street kids who fight over a new pair of shoes. The play was Critics' Choice in *The Metro* newspaper and established the company's reputation as a "terrifying force with universal relevance".

OTHER PLAYS :

**CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PIRANHA INN - Cabaret
Oval House, December 2004**

**GUERNIKA by Fernando Arrabal – rehearsed reading
Oh!Art in the War Stories Festival, November 2004**

MAGICAL REALISM, JORGE AMADO & HIS NOVEL *DONA FLOR & HER TWO HUSBANDS*

What is Magical Realism?

Latin American writers first explored the literature genre, Magical Realism in the early to mid twentieth century. Jorge Amado, the author of *Dona Flor & Her Two Husbands*, was one of the first writers to use this genre. In order to explain clearly what Magical Realism is, however, it is perhaps easier to explain what it is not!

Magical Realism is not to be confused with science fiction or fantasy literature; genres with which we are more familiar in Western society. Science Fiction or fantasy writing does not pretend to be in any sense "real". It normally involves the creation of a world or characters that are entirely supernatural and unreal. They do not nor cannot exist, at least for the foreseeable future. *The Lord of the Rings* is a

good example of fantasy literature, as it inhabits a world that the reader knows does not exist (unless of course they are a particularly obsessive fan!).

Magical Realism literature is different in that although it contains elements of the supernatural: ghosts, monsters & ancient gods, it presents them as being real. It is important to remember that for many cultures based in Latin America, Africa and Asia, supernatural creatures, ghosts and gods are a very real and present part of their lives, not just imaginary creations we dream up to tell exciting stories.



Magical Realism literature is therefore always based on the real world, as opposed to one that has been invented, and is written in a realistic style. In this way it is a hybrid (mixture) of a realistic form of writing, styled on Western writers such as D.H. Lawrence or Charles Dickens, with a spiritual and magical subject matter based on the Latin American cultures. In many

The Piranah Lounge, Lyric 2004

ways Magical Realism represents the struggle between two opposing views of the world.

The Magical Realism movement in South America counted many famous writers amongst its numbers, including Gabriel García Márquez & Jorge Luis Borges. Novels by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, such as *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, have helped to spread Magical Realism around the world and ensure its place as an important literary genre.

Who was Jorge Amado?

The importance of Jorge Amado's work as one of the founding fathers of Magical Realism cannot be underestimated and he has influenced the work of many other South American writers. He wrote over 25 novels, which have been translated into 48 languages and have figured on the bestseller lists in 52 countries. He remains to this day the most popular writer in Brazil.

Time line of his life

1912: Born in the state of Bahia, the son of a cocoa planter. Grows up as a keen writer and journalist.

1931: His first novel *Land of Carnival* is published

1933: Marries Matilde Garcia Rosa. They have a daughter named Lila. That same year he publishes his second novel, *Cacau* (Cocoa).

1937: Published his best selling novel, *Captains of the Sand*. Meanwhile his firming beliefs in militant Communism are gaining him unwelcome attention.

Early 1940s: He is forced into exile for his beliefs and spends the time in Uruguay and Argentina.

1944: Returns to Brazil. He and his wife separate.

1945: Elected to the National Constituent Assembly as a member of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). That same year, he marries Zélia Gattai.

1947: His party (PCB) is banned and Jorge Amado is forced to flee to France, then Czechoslovakia.

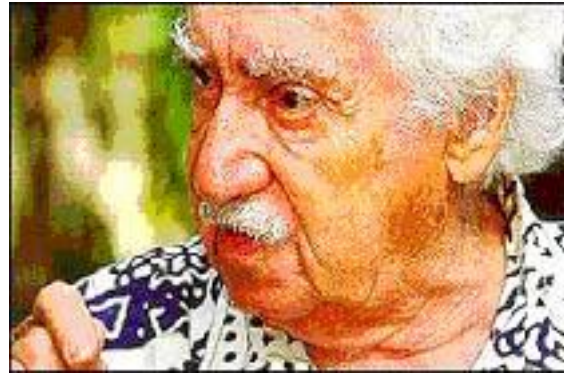
1952: Returns to Brazil and gives up his political militancy. From now on he dedicates all his time to writing.

1966: Nominated for Nobel Prize

1969: *Dona Flor & Her Two Husbands* is published

1977: Highly successful Brazilian film based on *Dona Flor* is released

1983: Made member of France's Legion of Honour.



2001: Dies.

Amado shortly before he died in 2001

Jorge Amado's novels portray the life and customs in the Northeastern region of Brazil, especially of his native state of Bahia. Bahia was the first area of Brazil to be colonized by the Portuguese, and its port of Salvador saw the arrival of African slaves, brought over by the colonizers (see page 7). The region's geography and its mixture of races and cultures gave Amado's writing a distinctive taste. All of Jorge Amado's books were successful, yet *Dona Flor & Her Two Husbands* is his most popular. It is also a fine example of a piece of Magical Realism writing.

The story of *Dona Flor*

DONA FLOR takes place in the Brazilian city of Salvador. It tells the story of a woman torn between the ghost of her passionate but relentlessly unreliable first husband, Vadinho, and the second - the attentive, studious yet sexually redundant Teodoro. It is a tale of passion, love, culinary delights and Brazilian mysticism. At the end Dona Flor finds a creative way of dealing with her divided loyalties for the two men, managing to unite her contradictory desires. The overall message is one of embracing diversity, both culturally and artistically.

It is also a strong piece of feminist writing, showing an empowered and independent woman who is able to achieve a situation where her desire for both sexual excitement and domestic security are achieved. In a time where the rights of women in Brazil were still very much secondary to those of men, this was a highly forward thinking and political novel. It is also of course a fine example of Magical Realism; the realism of a woman struggling to make the most of her life within the confines of her society, conflicting with the mysticism as presented in the character of her dead husband's ghost and the presence of the Orixás (Afro-Brazilian gods)



BAHIA, THE SETTING FOR DONA FLOR

Jorge Amado came from a region bordering the coast of Brazil, known as Bahia. Many of his novels were set in this area and in order to fully understand *Dona Flor* it is important to understand something of its unique culture and history.



Salvador

A Brief History of Bahia.

Up until 1500, Western colonisers had not yet discovered Brazil and it was inhabited solely by indigenous people. A tribe known as the Tupinamba occupied the area of Bahia. In 1500 however the first colonisers landed on Bahia's coasts: first the Spanish and then shortly afterwards the Portuguese. One of the first Portuguese colonisers landed on November 1st 1501. Delighted by the sights of this exotic new land, and with perhaps an inflated sense of self-importance, this coloniser decided to name the **entire** continent after his first name, Amerigo, now of course *America*.

The colonisers used slaves they had brought from their African colonies to harvest the sugar plants that they had discovered in Brazil, and it is this influx of African people into Bahia that provides it with its interesting culture, still present today. Up until 1888 and the abolition of slavery, 1.3 million African slaves made the journey to Bahia, and many remained there after they were freed. The fact that the area of Bahia is greatly influenced by African culture is something that marks it out from the rest of Brazil. The region has its own particular kinds of food, music, religion and art. Below are two examples of Bahian culture: the martial art Capoeira and the religion Candomblé.

When you are watching Dende Collective's performance of *Dona Flor* see if you can find examples of these two cultural identifiers.

Capoeira

Capoeira is a mix of martial art, dance, religion and music. It has been present in Bahian culture for over 300 years and recently has spread throughout the world, now proving to be a popular sport in Britain. The history of how capoeira came about provides a fascinating insight into Bahian culture.

The African slaves who were brought over to work on the sugar plantations in Bahia were poorly treated by their Portuguese owners. They often tried to revolt against their colonial masters, but without weapons or an organized leadership their rebellions often failed, with terrible repercussions.

One rebellion however was successful. A group of 40 slaves rose up and killed their master, burning his house and plantations. Helped by the native Indians, they then went to hide in the mountains and settled in an area they called Palmares.



Capoeiristas, photo by Verger

The legend of Palmares grew and many Africans and Indians fled to the safety of its mountains. Eventually Palmares was home to 20,000 inhabitants. Living peacefully together, the African and Indian people soon began to share and learn from each other's cultures and rituals. Capoeira benefited and developed from this cultural fusion.

In 1630 Brazil was invaded by the Dutch. The slaves joined forces with the invading force, with the result that the Portuguese quickly lost the war. Now however the slaves saw the Dutch invaders as the enemy. The Dutch tried many unsuccessful attempts to seize Palmares, but by now the slaves were experts in capoeira and used unexpected ambushes to inflict damage on the enemy. Nevertheless eventually one of the Dutch expeditions on Palmares was

successful and many of the slaves were returned to their plantations.

However the returning slaves continued to teach capoeira. In order to hide the fact that they were teaching a martial art, they disguised the moves with singing, dancing and music, thereby creating the modern capoeira that we know today. Over the next 25 years, the colonizers suffered 11 rebellions from their slaves. This eventually led to the abolition of slavery in 1888 and capoeira became a symbol of freedom and defiance.

One more interesting fact about capoeira. There is a name given to a capoeirista who displays fast reactions in their fighting and has a particularly mischievous personality. The name is derived from a spicy palm oil that is used in Bahian cuisine, it is called *Dende*.

Candomblé

Candomblé is an Afro-American religion that today has some 2 million followers in Brazil. It features heavily in *Dona Flor and her Two Husbands*: the gods who call the ghost of Vadinho back to the underworld are *Orixás*; the gods of Candomblé.

Candomblé was originally practiced in Africa, and was carried over to Brazil in the slave boats. Like capoeira, Candomblé was feared by the colonizers and banned by the Catholic Church. In an attempt to disguise their religion as something more Christian the worshippers of



Candomblé adopted many elements of Catholicism, displaying the crucifix in their temples and identifying their gods with catholic saints.

Candomblé worships a number of gods (*Orixás*) who were all created by a supreme God (*Olorum*). The gods all have different personalities and skills and are connected to different natural phenomena, such as rain, mountains, lightning e.t.c. It is believed in Candomblé that when a baby is born, it is chosen by a number of different gods.

The Candomblé ritual (*toque*) is an important part of the religion. It involves sacrificing animals for the gods, dancing, music, feasting, falling into a trance like state and being possessed by the gods. It is for this reason that the Catholic Church regarded it as witchcraft. It is worshipped at *Casas* (temples), which are managed by priests. Each temple has a head priest, who interestingly is often a woman.

In the play one of the characters is a priestess of *Candomblé*. Can you identify which one?

DENDE COLLECTIVE'S PRODUCTION OF *DONA FLOR*

Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands was first presented as a research production in November 2004 at the Lyric Hammersmith, after an intense five day devising and rehearsing process. This invaluable process enabled the company to experiment with ideas towards making a full adaptation of the novel in time for our forthcoming production.

Some of what we discovered and developed through the process:

- **The Script:** Mark O'Thomas, Dende Collective's resident writer, was present during the research phase of the work and has further developed and sharpened a version of the play for this production.
- **The Aesthetic concept:** Rachana (set), André (director) and Ramon (shadow puppets) spent large amount of time researching Brazilian Bahian art forms and how they could be fed into the show. Ideas were discovered, proposed and tested in the work in progress.
- **The music:** Rudi Rocha experimented with typically Brazilian score that punctuated the whole narrative. He has again been responsible for creating a new score for the play.
- **The Performers:** we have found an interesting balance in between British and Brazilian performers that adds a layer to the message of cultural diversity proposed by the novel.



The current production, what to look out for

Six actors from several ethnic backgrounds, three Brazilian musicians and a master shadow puppeteer from the Philippines, will share the stage throughout the entire show and will interact with the audience – one of Dende's hallmarks.

The production will have a strong multi-cultural element. Vadinho – the first husband - will be played by the Brazilian actor Luciano Gatti, while the second husband will be played by a British actor. Each of the husbands represents two different worlds, two approaches to love and life. The choice of actors also plays with the stereotypes of Brazilian and British-ness.

Elements from the set, designed by Rachana Jadhav are an important feature of the show's aesthetic and it takes its inspirations from the work of the *Bahiano* painter Carybé and the iconic photos of Pierre Verger, the French anthropologist. Screens on wheels will constantly move to create the different spaces where the action takes place and will also serve as support for the projection of shadows representing, amongst other things, Dona's sexual desires and the *Orixás*. As in previous Dende shows, we will experiment with the clash between art forms from different parts of the globe.



Berimbau played in Capoeira

The musicians on stage interact continually with the action and audience, and while the Brazilian percussion instrument *berimbau*, also used in Capoeira, follows the sexually athletic first husband, a bassoon marks the conservative second husband. The show uses a series of Brazilian dances and rhythms played live: Samba, Forro, Capoeira, Choro. Dona Flor works as a “domestic science teacher” who has her own cooking school; consequently, Afro-Brazilian recipes punctuate the narrative.

DONA FLOR is a feast for all the senses and champions our style of polyphonic theatre and cultural diversity.

IDEAS FOR PRACTICAL & THEORETICAL FOLLOW UP WORK

Below are ideas for follow-up work that teachers and tutors can do with their students. They are mainly centred around the inter-cultural aspects of The Dende Collective's production and their work on **Polyphonic Theatre**. For ease of use we have divided the ideas into different sub-headings.

SUGGESTED ESSAY TITLES FOR A-LEVEL & BTEC H.D. STUDENTS

1. Write a short story whose style and content is drawn from two or more different cultures.
2. Taking the storyline for *Dona Flor* from this pack (page 8) or from the Dende Collective's production, how would you stage your version of *Dona Flor*? (short essay)
3. Write a critical evaluation of the Dende Collective's production of *Dona Flor*.

PRACTICAL WORK FOR A-LEVEL & BTEC H.D. STUDENTS

1. As a group, discuss the many different performance styles that you are familiar with, for example: pantomime, realism, comedy musical, mime. Re tell a scene from *Dona Flor* by fusing these different styles together.
2. Dona Flor is torn between the passionate love of her dead husband, Vadinho and the domestic security of her new husband, Teodoro. In a

group of 3 (preferably 2 male and 1 female) create a scene that represents Flor's suffering as she tries to decide between her two lovers.

3. For the whole group. Having seen how Dende Collective present the moment in which Vadinho is dragged away to the underworld by the *Orixás*, devise your own method of presenting this scene. Think how you can use your bodies, sound, music and movement to create the *Orixás* in a way that would have the maximum impact on your audience.

SUGGESTED ESSAY TITLES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1. Describe how a series of historical and cultural events formed the unique culture and society of modern day Bahia.
2. Magical Realism is a product of the fusion of two different cultures and philosophies. Do similar fusions exist and if so how did they come about?
3. Bahia is an example of a peaceful, coherent multi-cultural society that should be used as an example to other countries coming to terms with multi-culturalism. Discuss.

PRACTICAL WORK FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

1. “...**Polyphonic Theatre** (means) literally a theatre of many sounds. We are exploring how a story can be enlivened by using a wide variety of different performance styles from all over the world.” (page 3).

In a group of 2 or more research a performance style that can be found in a culture different from your own. Lead a 10 minute practical workshop in which you teach the basic elements of this style to the rest of your group. Examples of different cultural performance styles: Noh Theatre (Japan), Brechtian theatre (Germany), Shadow puppetry (China), Narthaki Dance (India).

2. Choose any piece of theatre that you might know or are devising at the moment and try introducing performance elements for other cultures... See what happens to the piece and how it changes.

