

TRANSATLANTIC CIRCUS — ARTISTIC FLOWS BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND BRAZIL

Rui Leitão

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal
Conceptualization, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft

Daniel de Carvalho Lopes

Faculdade de Educação Física, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, Brazil
Conceptualization, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft

ABSTRACT

The circus constitutes an artistic practice historically characterised by mobility, circulation, and cultural reconfiguration. The movements of circus artists have occurred across different geographical contexts since the 18th century. This article analyses the migratory flows of circus artists between Portugal and Brazil at two historical moments: the presence of Portuguese artists in 19th-century Brazil and, in the opposite direction, the migration of Brazilian artists to Portugal from the late 20th century onwards. Drawing on bibliographical, documentary, and fieldwork research, this study examines the trajectory of Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva in Brazil and the cases of Fernanda Dutra, Adriano Marçal, Beatriz Quintella, and Juliana Moura in Portugal. We argue that the circus, as a space of transculturality, not only involves the movement of artists between countries but also reconfigures artistic practices and aesthetics. The article contributes to addressing the paucity of studies on Luso-Brazilian cultural relations within the circus sector. The analysis brings together contributions from cultural history, transcultural studies, and field research to understand how the circulation of artists, techniques, repertoires, and pedagogical practices has produced both continuities and transformations on the two shores of the Atlantic. By placing 19th-century periodical sources, bibliographical documentation, and interviews with artists in dialogue, the article demonstrates that Luso-Brazilian circus flows should not be understood merely as individual movements but as processes of cultural mediation, knowledge circulation, and institutional formation. It is therefore argued that the notion of a “transatlantic circus” enables the study of Lusophone cultural relations to be broadened beyond the domains most frequently analysed, incorporating popular, itinerant, and pedagogical performing arts.

KEYWORDS

circus, history, migration, transnationality, transculturality

CIRCO TRANSATLÂNTICO — FLUXOS DO CIRCO ENTRE PORTUGAL E BRASIL

RESUMO

O circo constitui uma prática artística historicamente marcada por mobilidade, circulação e recomposição cultural. As deslocações de artistas circenses ocorrem em diferentes

geografias desde o século XVIII. Neste artigo, analisamos os fluxos migratórios de artistas de circo entre Portugal e Brasil em dois momentos históricos: a presença de artistas portugueses no Brasil oitocentista e, no sentido inverso, a migração de artistas brasileiros para Portugal a partir do final do século XX. Recorrendo a uma pesquisa bibliográfica, documental e de trabalho de campo, este estudo analisa o percurso de Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva, no Brasil, e os casos de Fernanda Dutra, Adriano Marçal, Beatriz Quintella e Juliana Moura, em Portugal. Consideramos que o circo, como espaço de transculturalidade, não só desloca artistas entre países, como reconfigura práticas e estéticas artísticas. O artigo contribui para preencher a ausência de estudos sobre as relações culturais luso-brasileiras no campo circense. A análise articula contributos da história cultural, dos estudos transculturais e da investigação de campo para compreender como o trânsito de artistas, técnicas, repertórios e práticas pedagógicas produziu continuidades e transformações nas duas margens do Atlântico. Ao colocar em diálogo fontes periódicas oitocentistas, documentação bibliográfica e entrevistas com artistas, o artigo evidencia que os fluxos circenses luso-brasileiros não devem ser lidos apenas como deslocamentos individuais, mas como processos de mediação cultural, circulação de saberes e formação de instituições. Defende-se, assim, que a noção de “circo transatlântico” permite ampliar o estudo das relações culturais lusófonas para além dos domínios mais frequentemente analisados, incluindo as artes performativas populares, itinerantes e pedagógicas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

circo, história, migração, transnacionalidade, transculturalidade

1. INTRODUCTION

This article understands “transculturality” (Welsch, 1999) not as a simple influence between national cultures, but as a process of circulation, appropriation, translation, and transformation of artistic practices in migratory contexts. In the case of the circus, these processes are particularly relevant because the language of circus itself has historically been constituted through mobility, nomadism, aesthetic incorporation, and the transnational transmission of bodily, technical, and aesthetic knowledge. Within this theoretical framework, this text seeks to map the flows of circus production between Portugal and Brazil across different periods, as part of a research partnership between the research team of the website <https://www.circonteudo.com> (Brazil) and the Instituto Nacional de Artes do Circo (National Institute of Circus Arts; INAC, Portugal), initiated in 2023. In this context, by bringing together debates and studies on circus in both countries, multiple migratory flows within the circus field between Portugal and Brazil were identified. As a consequence of these flows, different forms of transcultural exchange can be identified between the two countries, particularly in the artistic field.

Indeed, the modern circus, created in England in the late 18th century, expanded rapidly across several countries. Within less than thirty years, different entrepreneurs had already exported this model of performance production to countries such as France, Russia, the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico. The rapid expansion of the circus, as well as the adoption of a nomadic way of life by several companies, made it a form of organisation and performance production that is structurally transnational and

transcultural. This circulation is partly because the circus has “its principal expressive mode in the body, alongside a strong visual presence, and is therefore free from linguistic barriers and easily exportable” (Santos, 2022, p. 90). Thus, circus, as a form of performance production, became a promoter of cultural flows across various regions, as it incorporated artistic, aesthetic, and cultural elements from different countries and, in its intense migratory circulation, disseminated them in each location where it was performed, in a constant movement of incorporation, resignification, and dissemination of these elements (Silva, 2007/2022).

The historical relationship between Portugal and Brazil has led to extensive cultural exchange. Portuguese influence in Brazilian territory was more intense until the late 19th century. From the mid-20th century onwards, these influences were reversed by the presence of Brazilian culture in Portuguese territory (Cunha & Silva, 2014; Morais-Alexandre, 2020).

Circus was not excluded from these processes of cultural influence between the two countries. Given that transcultural processes can be observed across different historical periods, particularly in art history (Welsch, 1999), we mobilise this concept to analyse the migratory flows of circus artists and how these movements have shaped the histories of the circus in Portugal and Brazil. As a result of the research into the movements of circus artists between Portugal and Brazil, two crucial moments in the circus histories of both countries were identified. The first refers to Portuguese influence in Brazil during the 19th century, specifically the migration of Portuguese circus performers. An example of this is Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva, director of the Circo Olímpico da Rua da Guarda Velha. The second moment occurred at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century, a period in which several Brazilian circus artists migrated to Portugal, where they developed their artistic and pedagogical work. Some of them significantly marked the history of Portuguese circus. These include Fernanda Dutra, Adriano Marçal, Beatriz Quintella, and Juliana Moura, who are analysed in more detail in this article.

The aim of this article is to analyse how circus migratory flows between Portugal and Brazil produced artistic, pedagogical, and institutional effects across two historical moments: the Portuguese presence in 19th-century Brazilian circus and the activity of Brazilian artists in Portuguese circus from the 1990s onwards. Several research questions guide this investigation: which Portuguese circus artists emigrated to Brazil in the 19th century, and which Brazilian artists developed their practice in Portugal in the final decades of the 20th century? How did these artists establish themselves and produce their performances or enterprises in both countries? Is it possible to assess or even understand the significance of their contributions both to the history of circus in Brazil and to the recent history of circus in Portugal? Are there studies in Portugal and Brazil addressing this topic? What contributions do these cases offer for understanding circus as a transnational and transcultural practice?

The first observation emerging from this research is the scarcity of studies on the migratory flows of circus artists and entrepreneurs, and on how this model of spectacular

organisation and production inherently involves strong transnational and transcultural components. In the case of Portugal and Brazil, we found no studies specifically analysing the influence of the multiple migratory movements of circus artists between the two countries. This research may therefore represent a starting point of new studies and reflections on these flows. The cases studied show that these artists are decisive in shaping the history of the circus. Furthermore, we highlight the importance of historical, social, and cultural analysis of these migratory processes and cultural influences in circus through the lens of transnationality and transculturality. This study confirms transcultural influence in the artistic field of circus in both countries, generating multiple resignifications in its organisational, production, and pedagogical processes, thereby supporting the hypothesis of the conceptual existence of “transatlantic circus”, which is the guiding theme of this research.

Given that the research analyses two very distinct periods, an interdisciplinary methodology was adopted. For data collection and analysis regarding the presence of Portuguese artists in Brazil, a historiographical methodology was prioritised. In research on Brazilian artists in Portugal, an ethnographic methodology was adopted. A bibliographical review was also conducted to support the data analysis. Given the scarcity of thematic bibliography, catalogued circus documentation, and research on circus as a transcultural phenomenon, this article seeks to help fill this gap. The article is structured into five sections: Methodology; Portuguese Performers in the 19th-Century Brazilian Circus; Brazilian Performers in Portuguese Circus in the 20th and 21st Centuries; Migratory Flows and Transculturality: A Structural Reality of Circus Arts; and Final Considerations.

2. METHODOLOGY

Considering that this research bridges two distinct cultural realities, though connected by historical and linguistic ties, we adopted an interdisciplinary methodology to frame the circus’s contribution to understanding transnationality. This was undertaken while respecting different scholarly perspectives on the cases analysed in both countries in a non-hierarchical manner (Bachmann-Medick, 2014). The research examines two distinct temporalities: the 19th century and the transition from the 20th to the 21st century. For this reason, we adopted an interdisciplinary methodology (Pickering, 2008) combining historiography and anthropology.

The work was developed in two phases. First, a bibliographical analysis was conducted in each country, based on books, articles, and academic works. In the research on Portuguese circus performers in 19th-century Brazil, the Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (Digital Newspaper Library of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro) was consulted, providing access to diverse sources (books, archival documents, iconography, and, in particular, a wide range of periodicals), which enabled multiple perspectives and the identification of contrasts regarding the topics addressed. Thus, we believe that the collection, organisation, and cross-referencing of different

sources allow for a closer yet comprehensive engagement with the themes under study. In this sense, this study is partly bibliographical and documentary. It is grounded in the theoretical-methodological framework of cultural history, a broad movement marked by the French historiographical tradition of the *École des Annales* in the early 20th century (Le Goff, 1978/1990), which promoted the expansion of research objects and sources in historical studies.

Regarding the multiplicity of records supporting this research, it is worth noting that the volume of journalistic sources and bibliographical materials accessed provides a solid temporal framework, particularly for the circus productions of Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva. Periodical sources constitute an important foundation for this research, reflecting the large number of newspapers and magazines published in Brazil from the second half of the 19th century onwards (Renault, 1978).

Regarding the research conducted in Portugal, in addition to published bibliographic sources, and the analysis of journalistic documentary records, fieldwork was undertaken to identify Brazilian artists in Portugal within the circus sector. We began by mapping Brazilian artists in Portuguese territory. Twenty-one artists were identified, of whom four were selected based on a combination of criteria: pioneering status, pedagogical and institutional impact, sustained presence in Portugal, and recognition of their contribution to the transformation of Portuguese circus. These were Fernanda Dutra, Adriano Marçal, Beatriz Quintella, and Juliana Moura. Following mapping and selection, we interviewed three of the selected artists. As Beatriz Quintella had already passed away, we spoke with a direct family member. These interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical principles. Consent was obtained from the interviewees for the use of interview data and for the attribution of their names in presenting the results. By cross-referencing the scarce bibliographical and documentary sources with the data collected in these conversations, it was possible to construct a coherent argument about the influence of Brazilian circus artists on Portuguese circus.

3. PORTUGUESE PERFORMERS IN THE 19TH-CENTURY BRAZILIAN CIRCUS

If we consider the history of theatre in Brazil, we find research, records, and references to actors, actresses, and companies of Portuguese origin that operated in the country and contributed to the complex formation of Brazilian theatre (Prado, 1993). However, when we turn to circus productions, there is a paucity of references and studies on circus performers of Portuguese origin and companies that emigrated to Latin America, particularly Brazil. From the 19th century onwards, hundreds of circus companies began an intense flow of migration to Brazil, many from Europe, especially Portugal. In Brazil, it is in 1818 that we find, in Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of the Empire, one of the first formally organised circus companies operating in the country (Lopes & Silva, 2022). The migratory flow of circuses to Latin America remains under-researched, which led us to reflect on the circulation of circus artists and companies between Portugal and

Brazil, particularly in the 19th century. Furthermore, it enabled us to identify some of these artists and to understand how they produced their performances in Brazil.

In this sense, this text focuses on the specific activity of Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva to promote research into the relations and influences that Portuguese circus performers established within the circus arts in Brazil throughout the 19th century. In doing so, we seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural flows and exchanges in this artistic and performative domain between both countries. Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva (1828–1917) was born in the Azores archipelago and trained in gymnastics, trapeze, and balancing at the Grande Escola de São Francisco. From adolescence onwards, he performed in circuses and variety performances in Portugal, and it was in Brazil that he established himself as an important artist, director, and founder of the Circo Olympico da Rua da Guarda Velha, a permanent circus in the centre of Rio de Janeiro that remained active from the late 1850s to 1934. According to Vieira (2015), upon arriving in Brazil in 1842, Silva established himself as a merchant, but by the 1850s, he was directing a group of around ten artists, along with five carts, materials, ironwork, stakes, canvas, and horses. As a performer in his new company, Silva presented mime acts (Circo Olympico na Guarda Velha, 1858), equestrian performances, and acrobatic acts (Circo Olympico, 1858). Around 1858, Silva settled in Rua da Guarda Velha, in the centre of Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of the Empire, and began the construction, on land donated by Emperor Dom Pedro II, of a permanent brick-and-mortar circus venue that became known as the Circo Olympico da Rua da Guarda Velha.

The first performances of his company date from 1856 in Niterói (Rio de Janeiro), and included attractions such as “rope work, beautiful equestrian scenes and various gymnastic exercises” (Circo Olympico, 1856, para. 6). During this period, Silva also staged various theatrical pieces, including Portuguese national themes such as “D. Pedro no Cerco do Porto” (D. Pedro in the Siege of Porto), an episode related to the Portuguese civil war. Newspaper reports highlight the strong presence of Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva’s company in the daily life of Rio de Janeiro even before the construction of its permanent circus, noting that “the director with his entire company will tour some streets in groups dressed in old Portuguese costumes”, accompanied by music and song (Circo Equestre no Campo da Acclamação, 1856, para. 4), as part of a promotional benefit performance for the director himself. Of particular interest here is the description of the performers as being “in old Portuguese costumes”, which likely refers to attire inspired by that of Portuguese settlers who arrived in Brazil from the sixteenth century onwards. It is noteworthy that his performances throughout his career included both urban parades and a wide range of shows, from musical numbers and equestrian performances depicting North American Indigenous figures, to equestrian vaulting, rope dancing, and clown scenes involving various animals (Circo Olympico no Campo da Acclamação, 1857).

In this sense, we may cite another example of his integration into, and impact on, contemporary society, as well as the multiplicity and scope of his enterprises. In 1859, Silva repeatedly set up small tented or wooden circuses across various neighbourhoods

and locations in Rio de Janeiro, including São Gonçalo, Saúde, Botafogo, Largo do Machado, Ilha de Paquetá, and Niterói, even while maintaining his Circo Olímpico da Rua da Guarda Velha as his main permanent venue. This itinerancy across the city, known as the “Circo Olímpico Volante” (Itinerant Circo Olímpico), proved particularly significant, resulting in circus structures that were subsequently used by national and foreign companies visiting Brazil (Circo Olympico na Guarda Velha, 1859). It was thus possible for Silva’s company to present multiple performances on the same day and at the same time, in different locations across the city.

From 1858 onwards, Silva obtained provisional authorisation to establish his permanent circus in Rua da Guarda Velha (currently named 13 de Maio), at the corner of Rua Senador Dantas, on a plot of land where fellow circus entrepreneur Alexandre Luande had established his circus in 1856 (Vieira, 2015). According to Lima (2006), the masonry building for the Circo Olímpico was completed only in 1865 by Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva, and it included a private box for Emperor Dom Pedro II. Vieira (2015), by contrast, states that, from 1863, the circus adopted a wooden structure modelled on European winter circuses. Despite this divergence regarding the renewal of the circus structure, the venue was characterised as a “magnificent establishment”, and “the population of Rio de Janeiro was astonished by this gigantic work”, built “through the sheer efforts of that worthy artist” (Circo Olimpico, 1870, para. 1).

In 1871, the Circo da Guarda Velha, described as a “gigantic work” by the periodical *Opinião Liberal* (Circo Olimpico, 1870, para. 1), was renamed Teatro D. Pedro II and, following renovation, featured improved acoustics. In 1875, it was renamed again, Teatro Imperial D. Pedro II. During this period, it was considered one of the largest circus/theatre venues in Brazil, frequented by high society, accommodating more than two thousand people, and hosting a variety of performances by equestrian companies as well as major carnival balls (Lima, 2006).

Addressing what the Circo Olímpico da Rua da Guarda Velha represented and its importance to Brazilian circus arts over more than seventy years of its existence is a highly complex task. Much could be said about the major and notable attractions presented both by Silva’s company and by other companies that performed at his circus. It is important to emphasise that Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva established himself as one of the most important circus artists and entrepreneurs in 19th-century Brazil, arriving in the country with significant prior experience in his craft, acquired in European circuses. It is also important to note that Silva belongs to the group of Portuguese-origin circus practitioners who established permanent circuses in Brazil, and his Circo Olímpico was among the longest-lived and most active in the country. For this reason, Silva and his circus productions are particularly significant for the history of circus in Brazil, given the substantial gap in knowledge about this form of production and architecture in the country, as well as the significant presence of Portuguese-origin circus practitioners.

Thus, it can be argued that Silva, through his enterprises, promoted an intense flow of diverse and creative circus productions in Brazil, both through his own company

and by hosting foreign circuses. Circus practice during this period was shaped by his extensive and sustained activity as both an artist and an entrepreneur. He thus produced spectacular models that were innovative and diverse in structure, form, and content, incorporating popular and national elements into his performances, along with knowledge and cultural elements derived from his Portuguese origin and training, which contributed to the transculturality of the circus language in the country. Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva was a pioneering circus artist, entrepreneur, and promoter in Brazil. His influence on the history of Brazilian circus is significant and deserves further historiographical attention. The manner in which his work developed in Brazil demonstrates a process of pre-globalisation transculturality (Juneja & Kravagna, 2013; Welsch, 1999), thereby reinforcing the premises of this research.

4. BRAZILIAN PERFORMERS IN PORTUGUESE CIRCUS IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

In contrast to the influence of Portuguese performers in Brazilian circus, which dates back to the 19th century, the history of Brazilian performers in Portugal remains relatively recent. The limited presence of Brazilian artists before the 1990s is partly explained by the fact that itinerant circuses were relatively closed structures that employed predominantly artists from circus families. It was only from the 1980s onwards that the first forms of circus practice outside the traditional family-based travelling tent system began to emerge. With the establishment of circus schools in France for artists without a family background in circus, new forms of circus practice developed, particularly what is commonly referred to as “new circus” (Costa, 2005). It is within this framework that Teresa Ricou, following her circus training in France, founded in 1981 the “(...) Coletividade Cultural e Recreativa de Santa Catarina, the institutional basis of Chapitô” (Chapitô, n.d., para. 3). Initially conceived as a social project, it later became, in 1991, a circus school named *Escola Profissional de Artes e Ofícios do Espetáculo* (Professional School of Arts and Entertainment Crafts).

It is possible to identify that the migration of Brazilian circus performers to Portugal occurred mainly in two periods, the 1990s and the 2010s, corresponding to two of the four identified waves of immigration (Fernandes et al., 2021). Bilateral relations began to take on a new diplomatic framework following the end of the dictatorial regimes in both countries. In 1990, the Orthographic Agreement of the Portuguese Language was established, and in the following year, 1991, the first Ibero-American Conference took place. International relations between Portugal and Brazil continued to strengthen, and various diplomatic and migration instruments facilitated the circulation of Brazilian nationals in Portugal (Brum, 2024). Although a direct, simplified causal relationship between these agreements and the migration of circus artists must be avoided, this diplomatic context, together with migration dynamics, is considered here insofar as it suggests a possible link between these developments and the creation of opportunities for the mobility of Brazilian artists to Portugal.

In this study, artists who participated in gala events or Christmas circus programmes were not considered, due to their short-term presence in the country. The focus is primarily on four artists who have shaped the history of the circus in Portugal through their sustained artistic and pedagogical work in the sector. Luciano Reis (2004) had already identified the first Brazilian circus practitioners working in Portugal: Fernanda Dutra, Adriano Marçal, and Beatriz Quintella. In addition to these three artists, another later and significant case was identified, namely the artist and educator Juliana Moura.

The first Brazilian circus artists to work in Portugal within this wave were Fernanda Dutra and Adriano Marçal. A couple and artistic duo, they arrived in Portugal through a protocol between the Escola do Chapitô (Chapitô School, Lisbon, Portugal) and the Escola Nacional de Circo Luiz Olimecha (Luiz Olimecha National Circus School, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Dutra and Marçal were the first of several artists to come to Portugal under this agreement between the two schools. In addition to teaching at Chapitô, they undertook administrative tasks, for Dutra, and technical responsibilities, for Marçal. Some artists remained in Portugal beyond the protocol's duration; however, as in this couple's case, economic sustainability required them to work outside the country. In the 1990s, the labour market offered limited opportunities for these artists, namely, those circus artists operating outside the traditional family-based travelling tent circuit. After completing their contract at Chapitô, Dutra and Marçal decided to remain in Portugal and continue their artistic work. As professional opportunities were limited, it was through their professional relationship with the German circus artist Detlef, based in Portugal, that their work expanded across Europe, particularly in Germany. In that country, they performed acrobatic and trapeze acts in entertainment contexts and other financially viable engagements. In Portugal, they developed artistic projects, although not always with the expected level of success. Their artistic work was not consistently recognised; nevertheless, they were pioneers in establishing circus practice outside family tent circuses in Portugal. However, much of their work was developed in the entertainment industry across various contexts, including nightclubs, product launches, public events, and municipal programming. This constituted their main source of livelihood. Their permanent residence in Portugal ended shortly after they participated in "Expo 98" in Lisbon. Following this event, according to Dutra and Marçal, a growing number of artists entered the entertainment field, leading to a decline in demand for their work. They subsequently moved permanently to Spain between 2007 and 2008, where they currently live and work.

Beatriz Quintella (1963–2013) is another figure who has left a significant mark on the history of Portuguese circus. Although her trajectory is primarily in hospital clowning and theatre, her work can be understood within the circus sector through the prism of clowning. A trained actress, she arrived in Portugal in 1992. She chose Portugal as the country in which to develop her work and establish her family, despite the challenges it presented (Frazoa, n.d.). In 1993, Quintella encountered an article on the work of Clown Doctors in the United States of America. From that moment onwards, a life trajectory

unfolded that is now recognised as having had a significant impact on Portuguese society. For eight years, she worked alone as a volunteer at Hospital D. Estefânia in Lisbon. It was there that she created her clown doctor persona, Dr Graça. Following this isolated experience, she decided to visit the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit, founded in 1986 in New York, and the Doutores da Alegria (Doctors of Joy), founded in 1991 in Brazil (Operação Nariz Vermelho, n.d.). These two institutions inspired her to found Operação Nariz Vermelho (Red Nose Operation, ONV) in Portugal in 2002. “In 2006, Operação Nariz Vermelho was awarded the Diploma of Recognition of Merit by the Portuguese Medical Association, and in 2009 it received the Human Rights Prize of the Assembly of the Republic” (RTP Notícias, 2012, para. 9). At present, ONV operates in 21 Portuguese hospitals. Shortly after celebrating the tenth anniversary of ONV, Beatriz Quintella died of cancer. Although she did not explicitly frame her work as directly related to the circus, many of the clown doctors working within ONV come from circus training backgrounds and also work alongside circus companies. It can be argued that Quintella marked the history of clowning in Portugal and, consequently, contributed to the recent history of Portuguese circus.

Finally, we highlight the work of circus artist and educator Juliana Moura. It was during her dance degree in Rio de Janeiro that she discovered a circus school in her country. Through a friend, she visited the Escola Nacional de Circo Luiz Olimecha. “When I went under the tent and saw Pirajá, the teacher, giving acrobatics classes, it struck me so strongly that I began to cry” (Juliana Moura, personal communication, March 25, 2025). From that moment onwards, everything changed in her life. She completed circus training alongside her dance degree, finishing both courses simultaneously at the age of 24. In 2010, she moved to Portugal and began teaching dance in Chaves. Experiencing difficulties adapting to the city, she began seeking out Portuguese circus companies and discovered Erva Daninha in Porto, with whom she began working in 2012. That year, she premiered a trapeze performance in Guimarães, as part of the European Capital of Culture. It was at this point that she began to establish contact with circus artists in Portugal. She founded her own circus company, Cia Um Por Um, with Bruno Machado. In 2016, together with Bruno Machado and André Borges, they founded the INAC (Coentrão, 2016). Initially, the school operated in a shared space with another association in Maia, and in 2017, it relocated to Vila Nova de Famalicão. INAC is an internationally oriented circus technique school. In nine years of activity, it has welcomed students from 48 countries across six continents. Although she settled in Portugal and no longer travels the world as she once intended, she feels that through INAC “the world came to me” (Juliana Moura, personal communication, March 25, 2025). The circus landscape in Portugal, particularly in the north, changed significantly following the creation of this school. She is currently the school’s pedagogical director and develops its social inclusion programmes (Tibiriçá, 2024).

Circus in Portugal, as in much of the world, underwent significant changes in its *modus operandi* following the cultural turn of the 1970s. It was no longer necessary to be a descendant of a circus family to work in the circus. Between this shift and the

establishment of a democratic regime in Portugal, which opened the country to the world, the conditions were created for the arrival of these artists, who, in a relatively short period, contributed to expanding and enhancing the history of Portuguese circus.

Considering the trajectory of Brazilian circus artists in Portuguese territory, it is possible to observe a transformation in how circus is produced in Portugal. Portuguese circus has historically been strongly influenced by Spain, France, and Italy. Many Portuguese circus families descend from families originating in these countries, particularly Spain. With the advent of circus schools and “new circus”, a strong French influence is evident in the aesthetics and techniques of Portuguese circus creation. The institutionalisation of French circus also led to artistic hegemony felt in Portugal. The first Portuguese circus artists without a family background in circus were trained in these schools. Teresa Ricou, founder of Chapitô, is one such example. However, in the context of establishing protocols between this school and the Escola Nacional de Circo Luiz Olimecha in Brazil, a new process of pedagogical transformation in Portuguese circus begins and continues to this day. This Lusophone relationship facilitated the exchange of pedagogical practices originating in Brazil, thereby transforming circus schools in Portugal, namely Chapitô and INAC. In the case of INAC, this pedagogical influence is even more evident, given that its director, Juliana Moura, is Brazilian and a former student of a leading circus school in Brazil. Her educational trajectory brings a pedagogical model that complements and expands the European model.

Finally, it is important to highlight the model developed by ONV. Beatriz Quintella’s trajectory enabled the creation of ONV in a format strongly influenced by the American continent. Clowning has a strong presence in South America, although comparisons with Europe should be made with caution and supported by empirical evidence. Today, ONV is one of the spaces where clowning remains active and institutionally visible. The intervention of this actress, clown and activist helped expand the traditional model of clowning in Portugal and created new spaces for clown practice. These transcultural processes, although subtle, have been profoundly transformative for the Portuguese circus community. These histories, still little studied and little known, demonstrate a reversal of influences in circus practices, with influences now increasingly flowing from Brazil to Portugal.

5. MIGRATORY FLOWS AND TRANSCULTURALITY: A STRUCTURAL REALITY OF CIRCUS ARTS

The cases analysed in the previous sections — the trajectory of Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva in 19th-century Brazil and the activities of Brazilian artists in Portugal since the 1990s — allow for an empirical understanding of the structural dimension of circus transculturality, which we now revisit from a more conceptual perspective. Bringing together the spheres of culture and politics, historiographical analysis shows that the definition of circus as it is known today derives from a model created in the 18th century. It consisted of a form of entertainment that combined different artistic languages with the equestrian arts. At the time, the performances of numerous fairground performers,

commonly known as *saltimbancos* (itinerant fairground performers), merged with equestrian arts in large-scale private performance events staged in amphitheatres that combined a stage and a circus ring. In addition to being one of the pioneers in creating this model of artistic production, Philip Astley was also among the first to introduce the circus model beyond England, particularly in France (Renevey, 1977).

However, it is important to recognise that the emergence of this form of performance owed much to fairground performers, who were already operating within a commercial artistic sphere during this period and were professionalised within companies directed by both men and women (Lopes & Silva, 2020). These performers mastered multiple artistic expressions, combining theatrical representations derived from Italian comic theatre with acrobatics, animal training, dance, and music, producing performances known as comic operas (Bolognesi, 2020). Moreover, through their broad and complex artistic practice, they incorporated and re-signified social, political, technological, and cultural elements from the various countries and cultures they encountered during their continual itinerancy across fairs in different regions (Camargo, 2006). In this way, they remained attuned to their own times, became intertwined with different cultures and ethnic groups, such as the Roma, and acted as important disseminators of themes from other cultures in their theatrical performances, as well as of musical and dance genres (Lopes et al., 2025). Thus, for centuries, they enacted a complex form of transculturality through their modes of performance production and artistic practices. This model was subsequently adopted by English equestrians, who incorporated these artists' performances into equestrian displays that became known as the "modern circus", exemplified by Philip Astley's work.

Shortly after Astley's initial success in Paris, however, the French Revolution forced him to return to England. Circus activity in France was therefore left in the hands of an Italian artist who held French nationality, Antonio Franconi. This may not have been the first step in the internationalisation of the circus, but it was certainly among the earliest. Thereafter, Antonio Franconi, Alessandro Guerra, and Gaetano Ciniselli are three examples of Italian circus entrepreneurs who contributed to the expansion of modern circus worldwide between the late 18th and 19th centuries (Serena & Dal Gallo, 2020). Whether in England, France, or virtually any other country, including Brazil and Portugal, this form of entertainment was characterised by itinerancy, the transnational composition of its companies, and artistic transculturality, as it continually incorporated, blended, re-signified, and disseminated social and cultural elements from the places it visited.

The 19th century was the period during which circus expansion and recognition took on an international dimension. Following the creation of the mobile big-top circus model in 1825 (Jacob, 2018), the circus became itinerant, marking a new phase in its history. This development consolidated a form of nomadism intrinsically linked to the art form. These multiple migrations across successive generations transformed the circus into a community that resonates with Lipovetsky and Serroy's (2008/2010) concept of "world culture". The circumstances of the period, combined with the entrepreneurial

and innovative spirit of circus entrepreneurs in the world of entertainment, created the ideal conditions for circus to develop into a hybrid and transcultural mode of organisation and performance production.

Despite its popularity and impact on the history of the performing arts, the circus has received relatively limited attention in scholarly research, which helps explain the scarcity of studies on these migratory flows (Silva, 2007/2022). The migration of circus artists, sometimes permanent, as was the case with Bartholomeu Corrêa da Silva, should be understood not merely as geographical movement but also as a force that transforms artistic and cultural production. Circus has consistently absorbed elements from different cultures and artistic practices encountered along its routes (Silva, 2007/2022). Over time, these cultural incorporations generated multiple technical and aesthetic transformations. They therefore constitute structural elements of the circus itself. The same dynamic can be observed in migratory flows from Brazil to Portugal. In addition to integrating elements of the host country's culture, these artists actively participated in the aesthetic, pedagogical, and institutional reconfiguration of Portuguese circus.

The research suggests that the historical relationship between Portugal and Brazil did not generate merely unidirectional cultural influences but rather complex processes of circulation, appropriation, and reciprocal transformation, involving the movement of people, ideas, and artistic knowledge that were continually reconfigured over time. In the case of the circus, these flows become visible both in the presence of Portuguese performers in 19th-century Brazil and in the activities of Brazilian performers in Portugal from the late 20th century onwards. In both movements, migration functioned not simply as the movement of people but as a vehicle for the transfer and reinvention of artistic, technical, pedagogical, and institutional knowledge. It is in this sense that circus can be understood as a transcultural practice, insofar as it incorporates diverse references, reorganises modes of creation, and participates in the construction of artistic repertoires shared between the two countries (Erll, 2023; Juneja & Kravagna, 2013). Considering the circus within this framework broadens our understanding of Lusophone cultural relations beyond the domains most frequently studied, such as literature, music, theatre, and television, to include popular and itinerant performing arts.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given this research's focus, two main periods of migratory flows of circus artists and entrepreneurs between Portugal and Brazil were identified. From Portugal to Brazil, this flow occurred in the mid-19th century, a period marked by the significant global expansion of the circus. Historical and documentary research reveals intense and productive encounters, relationships, and even influences established by Portuguese circus practitioners in Brazil throughout the 19th century, to the extent that they became an integral part of the history of Brazilian circus. From Brazil to Portugal, this flow is more recent, beginning only in the late 20th century, in a context shaped by cultural globalisation, political

democratisation, and new Luso-Brazilian migratory dynamics. Although this remains an ongoing and relatively under-researched process, the cases analysed allow for the identification of a significant Brazilian influence on circus production and pedagogy in Portugal, particularly in training, clowning, and the institutionalisation of contemporary circus. Despite differences in historical periods and social configurations, we identified transcultural processes of artistic production in both countries. These migratory flows were not merely geographical; they also transformed modes of production, pedagogy, and the institutionalisation of circus in each of the countries under study. The scarcity of references led to an interdisciplinary methodological approach that combined history and anthropology, drawing on bibliographic and documentary research as well as fieldwork.

The analysis of the circus through the concept of “transculturality”, developed by Welsch (1999), enabled a clearer understanding of the influences of migratory flows of circus practitioners between the two countries. Given the limited literature and scholarly contributions to transcultural and transnational circus studies, further research in this field is necessary, both within the Lusophone space and across other geographical contexts. In this sense, this article offers new perspectives on the circus as a model of artistic production and organisation strongly shaped by its transnational and transcultural characteristics.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Rui Leitão is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at the University of Minho. He holds a degree in Anthropology from the Fernando Pessoa University (2004). He is a co-founder of Fértil Cultural, where he oversees community-based projects. He has worked as an author, stage director, and musician in several theatre productions. His work is

characterised by the relationship it establishes between anthropology and the creative process. He was a lecturer and researcher at the Instituto Nacional de Artes do Circo. He has also worked as a researcher at the Centro de Antropologia Aplicada (Applied Anthropology Research Centre) at the University Fernando Pessoa on projects related to rural ethnography. He is the author of articles on performing arts and of a book on folklore, and has presented work at the “5th International Circus Seminar” (Brazil), the “9th Congress of the Portuguese Association of Anthropology”, and the “1st Theatre About Science Conference” (Portugal). He also participated in the ISTA seminar in Seville (2004) and in ISTA-NG Italy (2021), directed by Eugenio Barba of the Odin Teatret.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2295-1810>

Email: ruialvesleitao@gmail.com

Address: Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057, Braga, Portugal

Daniel de Carvalho Lopes holds a degree from the Faculty of Physical Education at the State University of Campinas (FEF/UNICAMP, 2010), a Master’s degree in Arts from São Paulo State University Júlio de Mesquita Filho (2015), and a PhD from the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo (2020). He works as a social circus educator and has been a member of the Circus Research Group (CIRCUS/FEF/UNICAMP; National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) since 2006, and has also served as coordinator of the website www.circonteudo.com. He is a researcher and co-curator of the *54th Ocupação Benjamim de Oliveira — Itaú Cultural*, as well as of exhibitions dedicated to the lives and works of various circus artists. He has also worked as a collaborating lecturer at the Escola Nacional de Circo Luiz Olimecha (Rio de Janeiro). He is the author of books, articles, and research on circus history, the history of physical education, and the pedagogy of circus activities.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2137-2060>

Email: territio@gmail.com

Address: CIRCONTEUDO – Rua Carlina Amália Grigol Gozzi, 270, Chácara Santa Margarida, CEP 13085-405, Campinas, São Paulo, Brasil

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