

eLEGY FOR THE END OF THE WORLD  
UMA PEÇA PARA QUEM VIVE  
EM TEMPO DE EXTINÇÃO  
**FRANCESCA RAYNER**



## UMA PEÇA PARA QUEM VIVE EM TEMPO DE EXTINÇÃO

**CRIAÇÃO ORIGINAL:** *A Play for the Living in a Time of Extinction*

**TEXTO:** Miranda Rose Hall **CONCEITO E DIREÇÃO:** Katie Mitchell

**COMPOSIÇÃO:** Paul Clark **DRAMATURGIA ORIGINAL:** Ntando Cole

**DESENHO DE SOM ADICIONAL:** Electric Farmer (Elisha Millard)

**RECRIAÇÃO PORTUGUESA:** *Uma peça para quem vive em tempo de extinção*

**ESPAÇO CÉNICO E FIGURINOS:** Ana Tang, Guilherme Gomes

**TRADUÇÃO:** Amarante Abramovici, Regina Guimarães

**INTERPRETAÇÃO:** Ana Tang **CORO:** Ana Mourão, Cecilia Veracini,

Gustavo Seia, Inês Corino, Joana Margaça, Joana Mendes Godinho,

Juliana Campos, Márcia Semedo, Navegante Estelar, Patrícia Bruheim,

Rute Miranda, Tomás Garcez **DESENHO DE SOM:** João Polido

**DESENHO DE LUZ:** Feliciano Branco **CONSULTORIA TÉCNICA**

**E DE CENOGRAFIA:** Bruno Bogarim **AGRADECIMENTOS:** Oficina das Energias

da Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa, Prof. Killian Lobato

**PRODUÇÃO:** Teatro Nacional D. Maria II **COPRODUÇÃO:** TAGES – Sustainable

Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift e vários teatros europeus

**COAPRESENTAÇÃO:** Teatro do Bairro Alto **INTERPRETAÇÃO EM LÍNGUA**

**GESTUAL PORTUGUESA:** Márcio Antunes **AUDIODESCRIÇÃO:** Ana Macedo,

Henrique Neves **FOTOGRAFIA:** Filipe Ferreira, Pedro Macedo, Joana Linda

**LOCAL E DATA DE ESTREIA:** Teatro do Bairro Alto, 5 de dezembro de 2024

**FRANCESCA RAYNER**

CEHUM – CENTRO DE ESTUDOS HUMANÍSTICOS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO

**SINAIS DE CENA**

SÉRIE III NÚMERO 4

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This performance piece about global extinction begins with a death closer to home. Ana Tang enters the performance space and informs the audience that the mother of her collaborator Guilherme Gomes is at death's door in hospital and that he has asked her to carry on nevertheless with the performance. This unexpected opening leaves the audience wondering whether this forms part of the artifice of the performance or the reality of its wider context. It also raises the question of whether the members of the audience can empathize with the mass extinction of species and far away humans in the same way as they might empathize with the plight of a Portuguese mother and son whom they have never met.

Although she frames the performance as herself alone in an ambiguous space between the stage and the audience, Ana Tang interacts throughout with the sign language interpreter, Márcio Antunes, and behind her there are a group of men and women on the stage. Who are they? Are they performers? Witnesses? To what? They are introduced as members of different choirs, but for the moment they remain silent. Moreover, the diminutive Tang is shadowed by a huge machine on-stage. It has a large wheel, somewhere between the wheel you might see in a water mill and a greatly enlarged cinema reel. Attached to the wheel are mechanisms that will power the machine. As the performance continues, people step up in pairs to operate the machine. As part of the strict parameters for this performance, the electricity generated by this co-construction between the performance's technical consultant and the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon is solely responsible for the light and sound in this performance and a small meter keeps track of the electricity generated during the performance. No mean feat when the stated objective for the performance is to reduce the power to 150 watts when a standard performance works with 300,000. In the conversation after the performance, we learn that



this machine distinguishes this Portuguese performance from other performances of the same work in the European context which used bicycles instead. The fact that this machine is more apparently industrial reminds the audience of the background of industrialization that has led to the climate crisis as it whirrs noisily throughout the performance. Pedro Penim, the Artistic Director of the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II, referred to the construction as Adamastor and this seemed an entirely appropriate parallel, with its warning of the consequences of human *hubris* for the natural environment and for colonized peoples.

The other main requirement of this European-wide initiative is that the performers and crew do not travel and that each reperformance of Miranda Rose Hall's text and Katie Mitchell's direction makes use of local artists instead. This enables the Portuguese cast and crew to respond both to the challenge of recreating someone else's work, but also to respond to the local context and local audiences. As such, the performance is as much a new creation as a recreation. The text itself is general enough to make its point about mass extinction whilst also open enough to include moments of audience participation and storytelling. In the performance I attended, these included the entire audience embodying single cell organisms and a beautiful story from an audience member about a cork oak tree her grandmother had asked her to care for after she was gone.

Yet the performance did not assume that empathy for living things could only be constructed through active audience participation. The text's own stories about the slow and painful extinction of a brown bat, intergenerational trauma and fleeting images of species threatened with destruction or already extinct trusted the imagination and affective force of the audience rather than needing to make this connection physically evident. Indeed, the format of the

performance, somewhere between a performance lecture, a TED talk and a sequence of dramatic narratives was an innovative in form as the machine and the requirement not to tour. The history of various extinctions and extinction events brought a sense of perspective to the current mass extinction of species while the emphasis on the slowness of geological time countered the tendency to universalize increasingly rapid human time. Yet even after this depressing role call of extinctions caused by external and human indifference, the earth resisted, and new species emerged. The performance ended soberly with a list of things to be grateful for and a desire for an individual and collective good death, whatever that might mean. The members of the choir echoed these feelings of gratitude in a somewhat elegiac sung finale which did not exclude the possibility of hope.

Eco-critical performances have tended to promote a message without consideration of how that message is produced. I remember writing about a 2015 performance from an eco-critical perspective and asking the TNDM II for information about its ecological footprint and disposal of potentially toxic stage objects which it was unable at the time to provide. This performance illustrates how thinking about and instituting ecological change also encourages theatrical experimentation. The contributions of the men responsible for lighting and sound as well as the co-creators and technical consultant in this performance made this clear in the post-show conversation. I did feel the need for key 'c' words to be made more explicit, namely capitalism and colonialism. 'Sacrificial zones' suffering at the hands of exploitative wealthier nations seemed something of a poor substitute for these political processes. Yet for its innovation combined with the traditional theatrical practice of imaginative storytelling, this performance suggested possible futures for theatre and the intense beauty and variety of ecological renewal. \*\*\*

