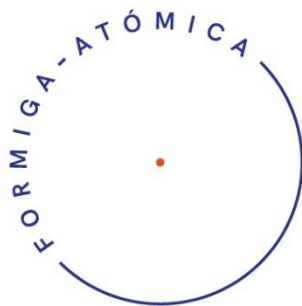




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The March of the Elephants

by Miguel Fragata and Inês Barahona



Promo Video (EN) <https://vimeo.com/114783786>
Full Video (PT) <https://vimeo.com/83819303>
(password: caminhada)



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Synopsis

This performance tells the story of a man and a herd of elephants. When this man dies, the elephants march mysteriously into his house to pay him one last homage: he wasn't just any man, he was one of them.

"The March of the Elephants" is about existence, life and death, and the journey we all must take someday, to say goodbye to someone.

A piece reflecting upon the end, which is a mystery to us all, both children and adults.

"The March of the Elephants" was preceded by an extensive research work together with about 200 children aged 6 to 10 years old, during gatherings and workshops. The collected material was used as inspiration and content for this piece.

directed by
Miguel Fragata
text

Inês Barahona
performance
Miguel Fragata
set and costume
Maria João Castelo
music
Fernando Mota
light design
José Álvaro Correia
technical direction
Pedro Machado

dramaturgy support in the field of psychology
Madalena Paiva Gomes

dramaturgy support in the field of education
Elvira Leite
artistic consultant
Giacomo Scalisi, Catarina Requeijo and Isabel Minhós Martins
translation
Patrícia Azevedo da Silva

production Clara Antunes and Luna Rebelo / Formiga Atómica
co-production Formiga Atómica, Artemrede – Teatro Associados, Centro Cultural Vila Flor, Maria Matos Teatro Municipal, Teatro Viriato

project subsidized by
Governo de Portugal,
Secretaria de Estado da

Cultura, Direção-Geral das Artes
target audience all audiences (ages 6 and above)
approximate length 50min
maximum capacity 80-100

(seating bank on the stage, on stage, or black box)

Premiere

MOITA · Fórum Cultural José Manuel Figueiredo · 17 November, 2013 – PT version

PARIS · Théâtre de la Ville · 26 to 28 May, 2016 (Festival Chantiers d'Europe) – FR version

NUREMBERG · Panoptikum Festival · 7 February, 2020 – DE version

CÁDIZ · FIT – Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Cádiz · 25 October, 2020 – ES version



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Framework of the Project

“The March of the Elephants” is a performance that tells the story of a man and a herd of elephants. When the man dies, the elephants march mysteriously into his house, to pay him one last homage: he wasn’t just any man, he was one of them.

With the concept, dramaturgy and staging of Inês Barahona and Miguel Fragata, this piece for both children and families deals with the thematic of death. It was constructed as an attempt to go against the infantilization and fable-like conception of this theme, which is difficult and profound. Concept and ideas on this subject are presented in the piece, and children are given the space to analyse, explore, and understand death in a personal and intimate way.

On the path of making this piece, several gatherings with children aged 6 to 11 took place, which constituted the occasion to discover and confront their ideas on death and how to handle it. Adult testimonies from several working areas were also assembled, in an attempt to answer the question “How would you explain death to an 8-year-old child?”

From a technical point of view, all this process was accompanied by Madalena Paiva Gomes, a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist for children, adolescents, and adults. The consultant for “The March of the Elephants” adds: “this piece is intended to be a joint march towards a personal growth, where by means of sharing you live and revisit emotional experiences of loss, where you build or reinvent new thoughts, concepts, meanings and tools to be able to deal with those sentiments.”

The performance also relies on Elvira Leite as a consultant for the educational field, whereas on the artistic field there are contributions from consultants Catarina Requeijo, Giacomo Scalisi and Isabel Minhós Martins.

“The March of the Elephants” is a piece on life and death, and the journey we all must take one day, to say goodbye to someone. It is a piece reflecting upon the end – a mystery for all, whether children or adults.



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Support Text

by Miguel Fragata and Inês Barahona

We wanted to make a piece about death for children and families. Not because we have some sort of morbid obsession for this theme, but because we felt it was a subject no one felt like talking about, let alone with children. Death is perhaps the last great taboo of our time. Ignorance before death is universal. It is a matter that leaves us, adults, feeling very uncomfortable and insecure. And children sense that insecurity. They too have questions. But they have few to none interlocutors to talk to concerning this issue, and they usually understand it is a forbidden matter.

This work was devised following a long research process, which involved listening to the children, getting their ideas, understanding their questions, doubts, fears, etc, in workshops that took place in the different territories the co-producers were from. We also listened to adults, who were asked to answer just one question: “How would you explain death to an 8 years old child?”. We were interested in understanding what adults think children think about this matter, and work on the hiatus existing between both children’s and adults’ realities. This work was closely supervised by Madalena Paiva Gomes, a psychologist who helped in circumscribing the intervention of an artistic work in a field that is sensitive, yet having no therapeutic aspiration.

We appreciate transversal projects. We believe a good artistic proposal may create the space for dialogue, a space that sometimes does not exist. We believe a good piece may be seen by all, albeit being constructed for a specific audience, in this case children aged 6 to 12. With our work, we aim to reach all audiences, with different reading layers that meet diverse interests and understandings.

In this piece we created a game that consists in forbidding the usage of the word “death”, which works as a mirror for adults, in the sense that it mirrors what children read into their behaviour. It is a small provocation for adults and an effective game for children.

The result we came into is a piece that, following a true story – the story of a South-African conservationist and his friendship with a herd of elephants – opens once in a while the space to reflect on big questions surrounding death: where do you go, what happens, what rituals do the living perform, what are the beliefs on life after death, or why death exists.

These reflections are made using images and objects belonging to the children’s imaginary that are manipulated sometimes with humour but always with the naturalness that is part of the theme. Because after all, like we were told so many times by the children, “death is a part of life”, even if we don’t talk about it.

November, 2013.



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Support Text

by Madalena Paiva Gomes

Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist for children, adolescents and adults, consultant for the performance

Today's rapid consumerist society has little time to think about Life and Death. Feeling and thinking come after doing, which redraws time/space to think about Loss, Death, Grief, which are key components of Life.

It is through the possibility of someone – child or adult – getting depressed that the process of loss is integrated and fulfilled. This presumes the non-existence of an excessive culpability, nor invasive feelings of meaningless void and profound helplessness. Contrary to popular belief, sadness and acceptance and the incorporation of grief resulting from that loss, are fundamental in constructing a mourning process and for the maintenance of the lost object in the subject's internal world – child or adult. To lose someone or something implies sadness, and this feeling is considered a normal and adaptative reaction. To mourn comprehends the process by means that grief is elaborated, for instance, by the co-construction of the image that the person lost is kept alive both in memory and affect.

Parents find it difficult sometimes to approach the subject of death or the loss of a loved one with their children. Both adults' and children's language are easily conflicted, the same way that the adult's imagination on what the child wants to hear speaks more about the adult's mental elaborations than the child's possible emotional states. Before this situation, perhaps the answer is for the adult to share his own thoughts and feelings with the child, instead of providing "explanations" ... And the worse attitude will be remaining silent, which is rooted in the (wrong) conviction that if we do not talk about death too much, the emotional impact of that event will dissipate more rapidly. We know that is not true and that, on the contrary, it becomes a true obstacle to the unfolding of an adequate mourning process. However, such silence might somehow be understandable if you think about the embarrassment, if not the difficulty, adults have in watching, accepting, and dealing with the sadness of children.

In fact, the clinical work done with children, adolescents and adults shows us a significant part of emotional disturbances as the result of unresolved experiences of loss, of misconducted mourning processes. The incompleteness of the mourning process might be

repaired by means of co-constructed, non-arbitrary, and adjusted “narratives” to the specificity of each individual situation, family context, etc.

This piece aims precisely to create situations that contribute for the co-construction of said narratives, susceptible of embodying the experience of loss (mourning) and, at the same time, to create facilitating tools for regulating processes in future situations that might, in an equal matter, involve Loss. “The March of the Elephants” intends to be a journey together towards a personal growth where one lives and revisits shared emotional experiences of loss, and new thoughts, concepts, meanings and tools are built or reinvented in order for one to be able to deal with these feelings. It will certainly be a march made of important steps into the incorporation of these several elements, empowering Memory with its decisive importance in relation to Losses. Undoubtedly, a joint experience on reflection, a very creative challenge where, by means of sharing, one validates and provides meaning to each personal and unique experience.





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Biographies

Miguel Fragata

was born in Oporto, 1983. He studied at Oporto's German School. He graduated in Drama by the Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema. He completed his BA in Theatre at the Escola Superior de Música e das Artes do Espectáculo.

He is the founder and director of Formiga Atómica (FA), together with Inês Barahona. In 2018, he premiered the performance "Montanha-Russa" (FA; TNDMII, TNSJ, Teatro Virgínia and Terres de Paroles Festival co-production; a project subsidized by DGARTES in its research phase). In 2016 he conceived and directed the piece "Do Bosque para o Mundo" (FA; São Luiz Teatro Municipal co-production) whose French version, "Au-Delà de la Forêt, le Monde" (2017), was co-produced by Théâtre de la Ville (Paris) and is nowadays touring in France, having been presented in the 72nd edition of the Avignon's Festival (2018). That year, he also conceived and directed "A Visita Escocesa" (FA; TNDMII co-production), "Pedro, Pedra e Grão" (Teatro Viriato co-production) and "A Grande Demonstração de Xilofagia" (Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian - Programa Descobrir). In 2015, he conceived and directed the shows "The Wall" (FA; research phase subsidized by DGArtes; TMM, Teatro Municipal do Porto, Teatro Viriato, Teatro Virgínia, CCVF and Centro de Arte de Ovar co-production) and "O Homem sem Rótulo" (EGEAC co-production). In 2013 he has conceived, directed and performed the show "A Caminhada dos Elefantes"/"The March of the Elephants" (FA; financed by DGArtes and co-produced by TMM, Teatro Viriato, CCVF and Artemrede) whose French version, "La Marche des Éléphants" (2016) is showing, on tour, in France and Belgium.

In 2013 he directed, together with Giacomo Scalisi, the 5th edition of the project "Teatro das Compras", an EGEAC production for Festas de Lisboa. He created and performed several pieces integrating the previous editions of the same project.

He collaborated as a performer in shows by Jorge Andrade (Mala Voadora), Madalena Victorino, Cristina Carvalhal, Jacinto Lucas Pires, Catarina Requeijo, Giacomo Scalisi,

Rafaela Santos, Vera Alvelos, Bruno Bravo, Diogo Dória, Claudio Hochmann, Pompeu José, José Rui Martins, José Carretas, Gabriel Villela, Agnès Desfosses, amongst others. In cinema, he has worked with Pedro Palma and Maria Pinto.

He develops projects that connect arts and education regularly, through the making of artistic workshops, staged visits and small pieces for several institutions. He also collaborates with book publisher Orpheu Negro, by creating staged readings.

Inês Barahona

was born in Lisbon, 1977. She graduated in Philosophy and has a Masters in Aesthetics and Art Philosophy by the Faculdade de Letras (University of Lisbon).

She is the founder and director of Formiga Atómica together with Miguel Fragata, and she is co-creator of the following shows: “A Caminhada dos Elefantes”/“The March of the Elephants”, “The Wall”, “A Visita Escocesa”, “Do Bosque para o Mundo” and “Montanha-Russa”.

She directed the pieces “A Verdadeira História do Teatro” (2012) for Teatro Maria Matos and “A Verdadeira História da Ciência” (2013) and “Direito de Autor” (2014) for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

She has worked in different creative areas, namely text and dramaturgy, with Madalena Victorino (“Caruma” and “Vale”), Giacomo Scalisì (“Teatro das Compras”), Teatro Regional da Serra de Montemuro (“Sem Sentido”), Catarina Requeijo (stage assistance for the performance “Amarelo”, text of “A Grande Corrida” and “Muita Tralha, Pouca Tralha”), and Circolando.

Under Madalena Victorino’s direction, she was a part of the Centro de Pedagogia e Animação of Centro Cultural de Belém, where she developed projects connecting arts and education for schools, families, and specialized audiences, between 2005 and 2008. In 2008 she developed, alongside Madalena Victorino and Rita Baptista, the book “O Livro Escuro e Claro” for Direção-Geral das Artes, whose distribution she accompanied, providing training for teams and teachers. That same year, she collaborated in the conception of the exhibition “Uma Carta Coreográfica”, by Madalena Victorino, for the Direção-Geral das Artes. She was a part of Giacomo Scalisì’s team in the inauguration of Teatro Municipal de Portimão, in the area of Production and Community Relationship Building, between October and December 2008.

She provides training in the areas of communication and writing for adults at the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Sou – Movimento e Arte, L2G, Circolando, and Artemrede.

Fernando Mota

is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, sound artist and an inventor’s apprentice for experimental musical instruments. He has created several visual and musical shows and performances, such as “Motofonia” and “Nana Nana” (both commissioned by CCB – Fábrica das Artes), which were a part of several festivals and programmes.

He has been composing music for theatre for about 20 years, having collaborated with several directors and companies, of which he highlights Teatro Meridional, John Mowat, Chapitô’s Company and Cie Dos à Deux.

“Para Além do Tejo” by Teatro Meridional, to which he composed the original soundtrack and performed it live, has received the National Critics Award in 2004 (Portuguese Association for Theatre Critics) and “Saudade - Terres D’eau” by Cie. Dos à Deux, to which he also composed the original soundtrack, has received the award for Best Show at the Avignon Festival in 2005 (ADAMI – Audience Award). For the original soundtrack and sound space of “Por Detrás dos Montes”, by Teatro Meridional, he has received an Honourable Mention (National Critics Award in 2006, promoted by the Portuguese Association of Theatre Critics), the Award for Best Original Music by the Theatre Awards in 2007 from the Theatre Guide, and was nominated for the Europe Prize New Theatrical

Realities XI, promoted in 2008 by the European Commission under the high patronage of the European Parliament. In 2007 he has received the Award for Best Portuguese Piece in the 8th International Competition of Electroacoustic Composition (Música Viva Festival).

On animated films he has collaborated with several directors and producers, namely RTP2, Zeppelin Filmes and José Miguel Ribeiro (Sardinha em Lata).

In the training area, he has collaborated with several entities such as ESAD (Escola Superior de Artes e Design), ESTAL (Escola Superior de Tecnologias e Artes de Lisboa), Centro Infantil Helen Keller and CCB, amongst others.

Maria João Castelo

was born in 1978. She finished her degree in Performance Visual Execution at ESTC. She participated in UNESCO'S initiative PrumAct International Workshops of Drama Schools – Busteni/Romania and the Échange Multilateral de Jeunes Européens: Atelier Théâtre, that took place at the Maison Jacques Copeau – Pernand Vergelesses/França. She participated in puppetry workshops supervised by José Ramalho, Catarina Pé Curto, and Luís Amarelo.

She collaborated with companies such as Teatro do Montemuro, Teatro Meridional, Teatro Praga, Teatrão and Comédias do Minho, where she designed set and costumes together with Ana Limpinho. She has worked with Natália Luiza, Luís Gaspar, José Oliveira Barata, Sónia Aragão, Graeme Pulleyn, Abel Neves, Cristina Carvalhal, Leonor Barata, Peter Cann, Thérèse Collins, Miguel Seabra, Madalena Victorino, Steve Johnstone, Frances Land, Nuno Pino Custódio, Gonçalo Amorim, João Pedro Vaz, Agnès Desfosses, Isabelle Kessler, Therese Angebault, Alfredo Brissos, Joana Furtado, Naomi Cooke, Maria João Miguel, Catarina Requeijo, Miguel Sopas, and Inês Barahona.

José Álvaro Correia

was born in Lisbon in 1976. He initiated his theatrical route in 1993 with the project “4º Período do Prazer”, supervised by António Fonseca. He finished his BA in light and sound at ESMAE in 1999, and his degree in Light Design in 2007. In 1998, he received a merit scholarship from the Instituto Politécnico do Porto. He undertook an internship at the National Theatre of Bergen (Norway) and at the Núcleo de Criação Teatral do Porto Capital da Cultura. He has since developed his activity as a light designer.

He has performed light designs for shows staged by several Portuguese and foreigner directors and choreographers. He has created light designs for Exhibitions (10 anos Refer, Rossio's train station), Concerts (Jazz in August by F. C. Gulbenkian, Real Combo Lisbonense), Events (Lisbon Fashion), Exteriors (Jardim de Santos' Project), Operas ("La Douce" by Emmanuel Nunes, Casa da Música) and short-films ("Preto e Branca" directed by Saguenail). Since 2000, he supervises workshops and training actions in the lighting design for performances and collaborates with ESMAE and the Professional School Balletatro. He is the author of “Technical Handbook of Lighting for Performances”.



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Production Needs

Transport

Crew: 3 pax – 1 actor, 1 technician and light operator and 1 production/sound operator

Origin: Lisbon

Note: if travelling to Spain, the company can consider renting a van (Ford Transit or similar) if the destination is less than 6h away from Lisbon, in which case there is no freight to consider (the set will be transported in the van)

Set Transport

Transport by airplane as personal baggage:

- 3 travel bags with 65cm x 45cm x 25cm, less than 23Kg (it requires buying one extra baggage)
- 1 volume outside the 80cm x 80cm x 40cm format, over 32Kg

Every volume should be packed at the airport to ensure the security of materials, as well as its traceability.

Usually, for reasons of baggage policy, the cheapest solution for the set transport implies buying 1 executive class ticket (when it allows for two hold baggage) + 2 regular class tickets.

Rooming & Perdiems

3 single rooms, staying in a minimum 3* hotel with breakfast included.

Perdiems for all the set-up period and presentations according to current rate, or meals in a partner restaurant (dietary restrictions to be reported).

Other needs

Costume maintenance (2 shirts + 1 pair of pants) between performances when there are more than two presentations.

2 raw cotton panels from the set with approximately 1,60m x 7m must be ironed prior do the performance's première (preferably vertical ironing)



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Technical Rider

The technical needs described represent the ideal conditions for the presentation of this performance. The need for adaptations might arise, according to the specificities of each space, and such adaptations must be negotiated between the technical director of the Theatre/Festival and the performance's technical director.

Stage

Seating bank for audience in three stages, 80 cm height platforms, 40 cm height platforms and cushions on the floor (see floor plan). Maximum capacity of 80-100 people in order to guaranty the proximity of the performance.

Minimal Dimensions:

Inner Width – 8 meters

Depth – 6 meters

Height - 5 meters

Masking will be defined accordingly to each space (German, Italian, or no masking).

Black floor: black linoleum (preferably) or dark wood, well cared.

Scenery

04 – Round tables (approximately 1 meter diameter)

04 – Net “Coocons” (suspended from the lighting bars or masking)

02 – Raw cotton panels with 1,60m width (variable height)

Note – these panels are suspended diagonally and fixed to the web or balconies.

4 cords and 2 bars are needed for that suspension.

Several props

Sound – on stage booth

- 01 – CD Player
- 01 – Mixing table
- 02 – Sound Speakers on the background

Lighting – on stage booth

For a better adaptation of our work, we would like you to send us your venue's plans, indicating measures and location of light bars and set, as well as your technical rider. Following a careful evaluation, we will send an adapted light and set design.

Base List

- 01 – Light table with memories and chases
- 33 – Dimer channels 2Kw DMX
- 08 – PC's 1Kw with barn doors (4 for house lights – seating bank)
- 12 – Profiles 25°/50° (6 with gobo gates)
- 13 – Shucko circuits for lamps and company bulbs (6 need phantoming, in parallel)
- ## – Audience lights

Colours

- L022 – 4 profiles
- L101 – 6 profiles + gobo
- L132 – 1 PC
- L200 – 3 PCs
- L201 – 4 PCs
- L205 – 1 profile

Sound and lighting operation set-ups

Theatre technicians are needed for the set-up of set and light, as well as for sound tuning. 1 light technician and 1 sound technician are needed during rehearsals and performance. The performance operation is secured by the company.

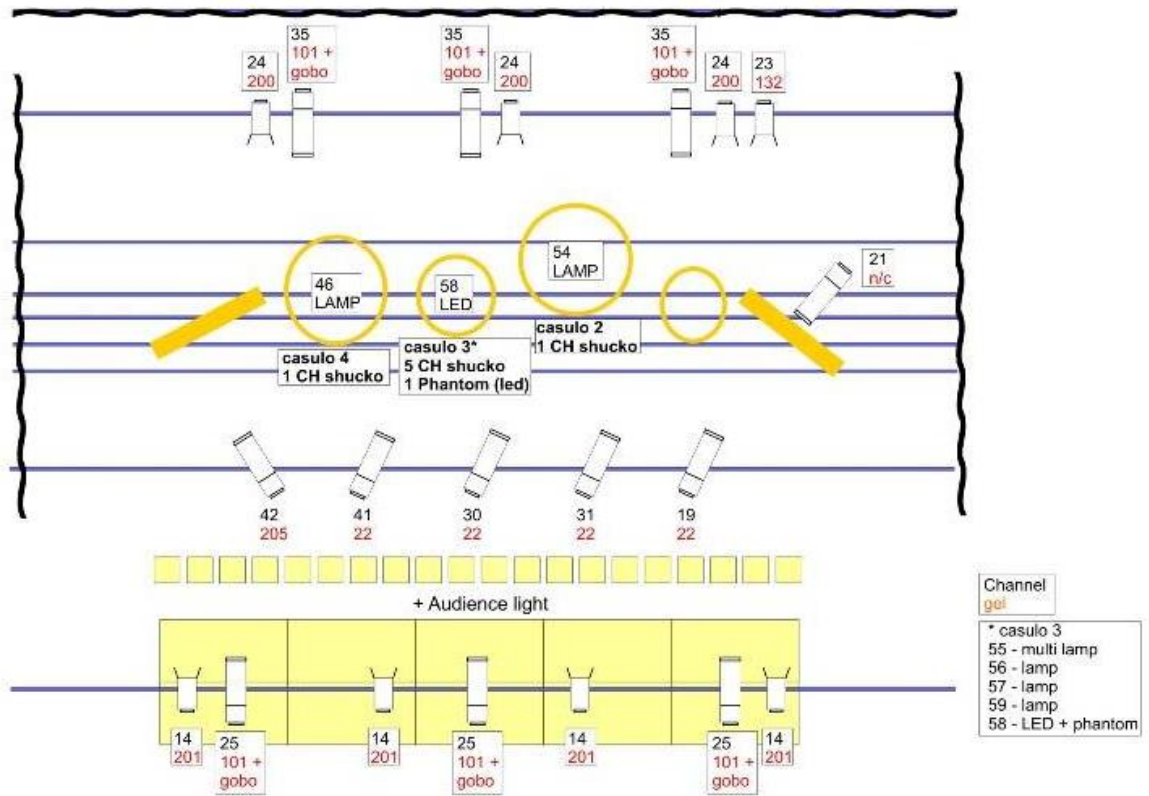
Workplan – example

Minimum of 3 shifts (if light is pre-rigged), ideal of 4 shifts prior to the première:

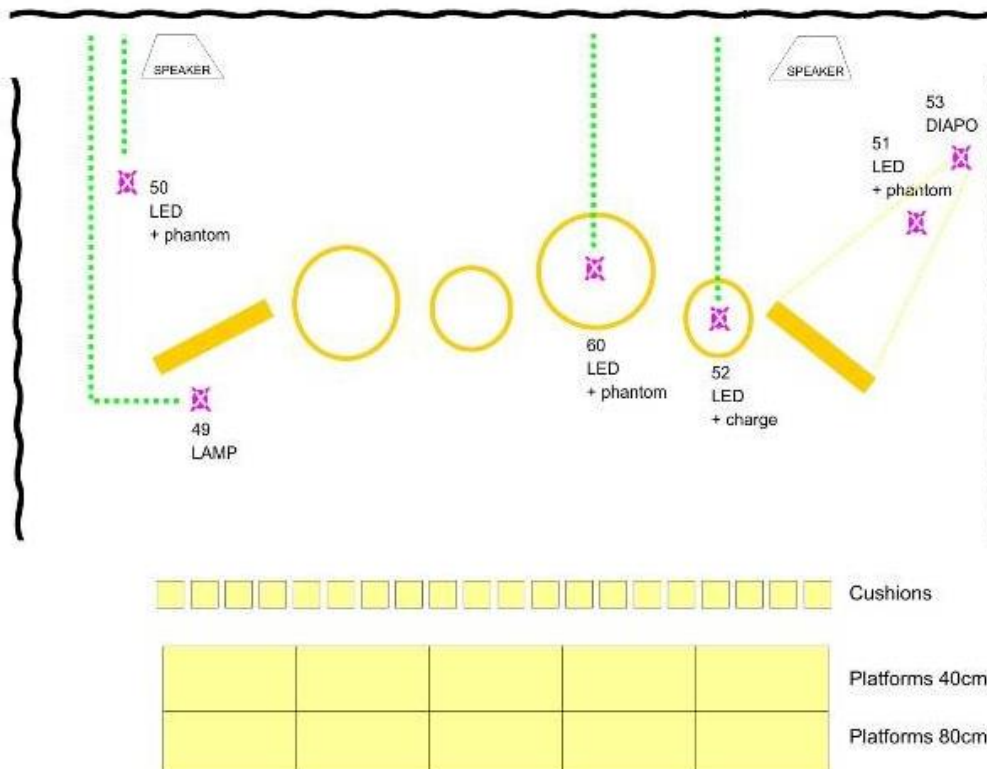
- Shift 1 – light and set set-up
- Shift 2 – tuning and light programming, sound set-up
- Shift 3 – technical tuning (if needed)
- Shift 4 – rehearsals
- Shift 5 – performance

Note: if we perform twice on the same day, the rehearsal shift must take place on the day before the first presentation.

Rig



Floor





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Technical Direction

Pedro Machado

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About Us

Formiga Atómica is a theatre company, found and directed by Miguel Fragata and Inês Barahona. Their creations are drawn from contemporary issues and are destined to all audiences. Their pieces are usually preceded by research periods motivated by the question and/or audience they are approaching. Amongst their creations one can highlight “A Caminhada dos Elefantes”/“The March of the Elephants” (2013), “The Wall” (2015), “A Visita Escocesa”/“The Scottish View” (2016), “Do Bosque para o Mundo”/“From the woods to the world” (2016), “Montanha-Russa”/“Rollercoaster” (2018) and “Fake” (2020).

The company usually circulates in Portuguese territory, but also French, Belgian, German and Spanish, having had conceived French versions of two of their shows, “La Marche des Eléphants” (2016) and “Au-Delà de la Forêt, Le Monde” (opening show for the Avignon Festival, 2018).

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