

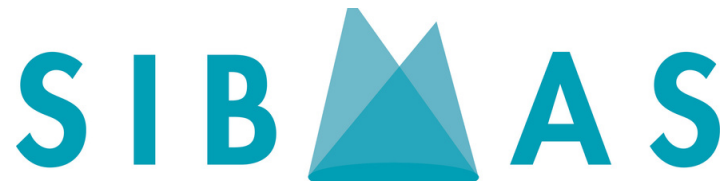
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The Festival Internacional de Artes Cênicas da Bahia 2021 (FIAC Bahia) and its digital transformation during the pandemic year

It is March 10th 2020, the pandemic is advancing throughout the world, and it is no longer so far from our home in New Jersey. On Friday, March 13th, my little daughter will make her first theater presentation in her elementary school. The children, the teachers and the staff rehearsed for months leading up to the performance. We are all excited but also worried to gather with more than 200 people in the same auditorium. The COVID-19 cases are skyrocketing in New York, emergency rooms are flooded with sick people, and medical staff are starting to get sick too. On television, social media, and people in the streets and stores are all talking about this new situation. Finally, on Thursday, March 12th, the school decided to cancel the show. One by one all the shows are canceling, Broadway lives the most unimaginable time since its creation. Not even during World War II did Broadway completely shut down. We don't feel the impact at first, everybody thinks it will take a few weeks to get back to normal. Little did we know this is the beginning of a new era.

Meanwhile in Brazil, the president decides to ignore all the advice from the World Health Organization (WHO), ignores the Brazilian science community, and the Brazilian citizens that try to protect their lives. For most artists and workers in the performance arts industry, it was surreal that something could completely stop their activities. Brazil has one of the most powerful industries of entertainment. Not only the music, the Carnaval, and the famous Festas Juninas, are a big source of its vibrant economy, but the theater and performance arts festivals generate an increase in its revenue. Not to mention these moments are the only ones for some communities to have access to different groups of theater, dance, circus, among other artistic experiences from around Brazil and the world. It is in this context that we will focus on the activity of the Festival Internacional de Artes Cênicas da Bahia (FIAC Bahia) during this pandemic.

In this paper we will study how the FIAC Bahia has to reconfigure its possibilities in this exceptionally historic moment. How the Festival was adapted to the new pandemic era, what kind of approach the organizers had to learn to survive. What tools were used to keep moving forward? How the internet helps to enrich their archives and create an online museum/consultation source about their activities. In the first part of this work we will make a review of the history of FIAC Bahia and its relationship with the digital tools. How this festival arose and came to complete the scene of Bahia in the map of international festivals and how technology helps to disseminate its production. How they use the technological tools to create their collection of work and how difficult it is to continually update and maintain these platforms without economic resources. In the second part of this work we will describe the changing process of the festival from in person (normal-healthy) to virtual-digital platforms (new normal-quarantine mode). How the precarious state of the economy affected its development and how despite all the adversity the festival could materialize its 2021 edition completely online in three different continents. Finally, analyze how this body, the FIAC Bahia, artists, students, directors, and actors, created its own antibodies, the virtual conference, to survive through the pandemic limitations. How the infection didn't allow the spirit of performance arts to be alive in the same way it used to be, and how the creation of digital antibodies could save the spirit of the festival.



Bio: *Maria (Regnicoli) Thompson graduated from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Brazil, with a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Drama. Her thesis research was about Tango and its Dramatic Quality. She also obtained a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Theater Directing from UFBA. An Argentine native, she studied in the National School of Dance. Mrs. Thompson was a Visiting Instructor at Rutgers University (REC) from 2008-2015. She served as a volunteer co-chair at the Summit Performing Arts Resources Committee (SPARC) in 2017 And also did volunteer work at the South Orange Performing Art Center (SOPAC) from 2015 to 2016. Mrs. Thompson participated in multiple productions at the Summit Playhouse Theater in 2018 and 2019. Since 2015, Mrs. Thompson has been an independent researcher and performance artist based in New Jersey.*