

# Beatriz Camargo

## The Voices of the Earth

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that express cultures and  
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environment and the earth in  
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usually in a sacred language.*

*Deep inside us is the incessant sound of our own vibrations,  
of which we are not aware,  
but which are the musical core that we all possess.  
We vibrate like the intact chord of the violin  
that resonates in sympathy with the chord next to it even  
though the arch does not touch it directly.*  
Yehudi Menuhin

By continuously stimulating the memory contained in myth, Teatro Itinerante del Sol has had music at the heart of all its productions for the last twenty-five years. And at the heart of the actors' and actresses' performance is song with its inner music and vibration, its vital beat shaped through breathing.

The voice is the soul of our actions on stage and in all our performances the actresses and actors sing the movement in an audible or inaudible way. This song is the body's dance. Sometimes our research has resulted in making the piece into song from beginning to end. This was the case with *Donde están mis hijos* (Where are my children) based on five ancestral songs from different Colombian cultures in which, through song, the mother character searches for her missing children in the wars of more than five hundred years. Other examples are *The Song of Songs*, from the Bible; *Song of the Woman without Hands*, based on an old Japanese legend; and our most recent work *The Witness or the Book of Prodigies*, based on the columnist Juan de Castellano's 14<sup>th</sup> century work, in a complete clash of cultures, where the Water Mother and her song are the soul of the play.

Remembering the old myth of Psyche and Eros, and Plato's words on creation, we could say that we consider voice as Psyche, the soul, and the body as Eros. We also take into consideration what many have expressed, that "the voice is the muscle of the soul".

Through research we have understood that voice is the divine breath of the soul, which becomes vibration,





Teatro Itinerante del Sol. Photo: Diego Arango

rhythm, musical drum beat, and the body is the instrument that receives and expresses it. We have understood that the voice is Ariadne's thread that weaves all blood types and that Dionysus is the one that transforms the feet into dance and the throat into laughter - into song. The person who sings represents the spirit of stone, mountain, tree, of the mask (person) that acts on the stage, the place where one cannot lie.

Decanting the fabric of myths that express cultures and ways of seeing their environment and the earth in connection with the cosmos, has brought us to appreciate what our aboriginal peoples call the Law of Origin, which is remembered and understood through the song, usually in a sacred language.

The Law of Origin is the law of nature interpreted by the people who are in continuous communication with it, observing and experimenting as nature itself and mirroring the ways in which it presents itself in each territory, giving birth to the different cultures.

Those people who have not made themselves orphans, have Mother Nature's infinite book of wisdom from which to learn. This explains the reason for the 'orality' of the millennial cultures, and why myths are summaries of knowledge. To be human is to be part of the fabric. To be human is to be an entity interrelated with each one of the entities that make up the whole.

When a culture is alive it has identity, memory and a voice. Usually a culture's oral tradition is transmitted and expressed by means of sacred songs that narrate the feats of its people, the history of its ancestors, its customs, vision of the cosmos, and Law of Origin. A culture is memory: during celebrations memory becomes a voice that sings to make present the a-temporal narrations of myths. In ancient times and still now in fully live cultures, the 'word' is sacred and the sacred song has a creative power, it is the embodied soul of the universe.

In many living cultures of the earth, like those of the Uwa or of the Kogui in Colombia, a sacred language exists, which is different to the one used for daily communication. This language is sung, and it is the one that favours communication with the ancestors, with the cosmic powers. The Uwa preserve their ancestral memory in more than five thousand songs. They have ceremonies that last for eight months, during which the old men and women sing all the time, to present the origin of time, to recreate and bring the awareness that the universe is in continuous genesis.

In our Teatro Itinerante del Sol productions, memory, myth and voice are inseparable. We always remember Antonin Artaud, in Mexico, when he detected what we also call the telluric songs. He referred to how the Tarahumara listened to the echoes from the interior of the earth to incorporate the sounds into their songs and dances.

To conclude I quote a text by Tolba Phanem, as a good example of what it means to live according to the Law of Origin:

*When a woman of a certain African tribe discovers that she is pregnant, she goes to the forest with other women. Together they pray and meditate until the new creature's song appears.*

*When babies are born the community meets to sing their song to them. When the children start their education, the village gathers to sing their song to them. When the children become adults, people gather again to sing. When the time of marriage comes, the people hear their song. Finally, when their soul is about to leave this world, family and friends come close and, as at birth, they sing their song to accompany them on the journey.*

*In this African tribe, the song is sung on another occasion: if at some point in their life*

*people commit a crime or an aberrant social act, they take them to the centre of the village and the community forms a circle around them and sings them their song. The tribe knows that the correction of antisocial behaviour is not punishment, but love and the establishment of their true identity. When we recognise our own song, we no longer have desires or need to harm anyone.*

*Your friends know your song and they sing it when you forget it. Those who love you cannot be deceived by the mistakes that you make or the dark image that you show to others. They remember your beauty when you feel ugly, your integrity when you are broken; your innocence when you feel guilty, and your purpose when you are confused.*

BEATRIZ CAMARGO (Colombia) graduated in Philology and Languages, and, in acting from the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramático in Bogotá. She was a member of Teatro La Candelaria directed by Santiago García from 1976 to 1982 and taught at the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramático until 1998. Beatriz has been the director of Teatro Itinerante del Sol since 1982, creating twenty-one performances that deal with the ancestral memory of the planet. She has toured in Europe, America and Indonesia.