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## THE ACTRESS BEYOND THE STAGE

### 1. *Actresses*

The following article focuses on 18th-century Portuguese actresses (and other performers) beyond the scope of their acting, exploring their working conditions and the impact they had on society. The article aims to present new information regarding theatre practice in Portuguese troupes by analysing historical documents and coeval reports.<sup>1</sup> It relies mainly on document analysis, with conclusions supported by related bibliographies on women's education, the rise of feminism in Portugal, and the study of actresses in European contexts.

In 18th-century Portugal, a significant number of women engaged in a wide range of occupations, with varying levels of demand. A plethora of examples can be found in short plays, frequently named after a female worker: *Castanheira* (chestnuts seller), *Adela* (second-hand dealer), *Cozinheira* (cook), *Regateira* (market vendor), and *Floreira* (florist),<sup>2</sup> to name but a few. However, actresses constituted a professional group that was distinguished by its prominence, which transcended the mere execution of their job, thereby securing their recognition within public sphere. In the latter half of the century, a diverse repertory of Portuguese plays, Italian operas, and Spanish comedies, amidst the representation of more popular shows, could be seen in all the major public

1. This article is a follow up of the research presented in 2021 Divino Sospiro encounters, *On Stage and in the Audience: Contribution to the Study of Women in Theatre in 18th Century Portugal*, and a result of the research project entitled *The Feminine Paradox in Portuguese Eighteenth Century Theatre* (DOI 10.54499/2020.02930.CEECIND/CP1592/CT0001) financed by FCT.

2. The jobs reported are the titles of, for example, the following plays: [J.C.de FIGUEIREDO], *Entremez novo da Castanheira, ou a Brites papagaia*, Lisboa, Of. Filipe da Silva e Azevedo, s.d.; *Piquena peça intitulada O alfayate, e a Adella*, Lisboa, Of. Antonio Gomes, 1792; *Novo entremez intitulado A cozinheira amorosa*, Lisboa, Of. Antonio Gomes, 1792; *Novo entremez das Regateiras bravas*, Lisboa, Of. Patriarcal de Francisco Luiz Ameno, 1786.

theatres of Lisbon and other venues, public or private. The focus of this article will be on public theatres presenting straight plays in Portuguese, mainly the Bairro Alto Theatre, the Rua dos Condes Theatre, and also the Belém Theatre. Given the absence of existing studies that address this specific topic,<sup>3</sup> the intention is for it to be a starting point for knowledge about the working conditions of Portuguese declamatory actresses.

The data collected in the context of professional contracts pertaining to theatre companies indicates that female artists have historically entered the theatre milieu through familial connections, often at a tender age, with prior experience in amateur circles before committing to professional theatre, as it happened worldwide.<sup>4</sup> An illustration of this phenomenon is the trajectory of Luísa de Aguiar, who subsequently assumed the name Luísa Todi, joining the Bairro Alto Theatre company in 1763 at the age of 10, accompanied by her father and two sisters, Cecília Rosa and Isabel Ifigénia, and a brother who also pursued a career in theatre. It was obligatory for the children to participate in operas or comedies in Portuguese, Spanish or French. The father assumed the role of music instructor and was accountable for ensuring the fulfilment of the contractual agreements.<sup>5</sup> Another actress, Maria Joaquina, was also brought into the theatrical world by her father, Francisco Xavier Vargo, who signed her first contract in 1764<sup>6</sup> when she was still of young age. It is notable that the contractual clauses pertaining to the accompaniment of the father by his offspring, whether male or female, are a recurring feature in the documentation. This practice was not exclusive to young actresses but was also observed among male performers, actors, and musicians. The professional career may have arisen from a natural aptitude for the dramatic arts (or even singing or music), or it may have been driven by economic necessity. The precise moti-

3. Previous studies have typically focused on operatic theatre.

4. Portugal's main influence in what theatrical dynamics is concerned was Spain, where generations of the same family join a theatre company (see J.P. SOUSA, *A arte e o ofício do teatro em Portugal no século XVII*, tesis de doctorato en Estudos Artísticos, Lisbon, University of Lisbon, 2018, tutor prof. José António Camilo Guerreiro Camões) and also Italy, country with which there was a main exchange of performers, specially for the operatic theatre, beginning with the bolognese Paghetti family, Alessandro and his daughters Elena and Anna, who introduced the public operatic theatre in Lisbon (see M.C. BRITO, *Opera in Portugal in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989) or Anna Zamperini, the italian opera singer, who came to Portugal with her father, who acted also as her manager (see M.N. CICCIA, *Équivoque et ironie dans la poésie satirique contre la cantatrice Anna Zamperini à Lisbonne (1772)*, «Carnets», 11, 2010, pp. 81-97), just to name the more emblematic.

5. See Lisbon, District Archive (from now: DAL), 6º Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 24, ff. 71r-72v.

6. See DAL, 7º B Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 18, ff. 16v.-20r.

vation for each individual remains uncertain, as the trend of artists biographies only emerges in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and press was limited in Portugal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> As a result, unlike in other parts of Europe, Portuguese theatre lacks entertainment news or performance reviews that could shed light on actresses' lives and their role in society.

In order to be admitted to a theatre company, female performers were required to have the agreement of their father if they were unmarried, as well as their husband if they were married. It was customary for their husband to sign with the same company. Consequently, the hiring of single or married women was contingent upon the authorisation of a male figure. However, in the case of widows, they were at liberty to sign contracts for themselves, as evidenced by the contract between Leocádia Joaquina Rosa and her daughter, Jasuína Maria de São José, with the businessman António José de Paula – the mother signs on behalf of her daughter, without intervention or mention of a male figure.<sup>8</sup>

In the latter half of the 18th century, contractual agreements between comedians (male and female) encompassed a series of rights and obligations that were formally reiterated and adaptable to the prestige of the contracting party. This signified that artists with greater public approval were granted more favourable working conditions. It is customary for such contracts to be formalised at the commencement of the theatre season, typically following the Lenten period, and concluding at the time of Carnival the subsequent year. Theatre managers, their tenants, or acting companies were empowered to enter into contractual agreements with artists for the utilisation of venues or for the formation of companies. Contracts could be either individual or family contracts, in which a couple, parents with their children, or siblings joined a pre-existing company, or collective contracts, which could include other theatre professionals in addition to the performers. The remuneration, typically disbursed monthly, could be structured on a weekly basis or in accordance with the number of performances, or alternatively as a fixed sum. The frequency of performances was typically three times per week.<sup>9</sup>

7. Cfr. J. TENGARRINHA, *Nova história da imprensa portuguesa das origens a 1865*, Lisboa, Temas e Debates-Círculo de Leitores, 2013. In addition to being scarce, the press was under very close scrutiny by the *Real Mesa Censória* (Royal Censorship Board). Consequently, the periodicals that managed to be published during this period mostly focused on encyclopaedic knowledge rather than everyday life.

8. See DAL, 7<sup>o</sup> B Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 153, ff. 71v.-73r.

9. See, for instance the conditions on the contract between the *empresario* Agostinho da Silva and a theatre group on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1759 (ivi, book 7, ff. 4-6).

In certain contractual agreements, provisions pertaining to sick leave are incorporated. These stipulations allocate performers an allotted period of sick leave, which is typically up to a month's duration. Upon expiration of this period the contractual agreement may stipulate the cessation of the obligations, accompanied by the absence of remuneration for the performers. In instances where performers fail to fulfil their obligations, financial penalties are typically imposed on them. Interruptions due to the death of a member of the royal family or earthquakes are considered in many contracts as a specific situation, in which case the decision whether or not the performers should be paid varies. For instance, the contract of Francesca Battini stipulates that she shall not receive any remuneration in the event of the termination of the performances due to the death of a prince, an earthquake, or a fire.<sup>10</sup>

It is evident that contracts vary, however, in general, the individual responsible for the theatre venue, known as the *empresario*, would request that performers arrive in a timely manner for their assigned performances and be fully acquainted with their roles, ensuring that they are attired in accordance with the character they are to portray. Additional or expanded obligations may include:

- 1) The obligation to perform in different genres (e.g. operas or comedies).
- 2) Not only acting but also singing and dancing.
- 3) Acting and singing not just in one language, but also in Portuguese, Spanish or Italian.
- 4) Perform in other theatres, besides the ones to which they were signed to.

The impact of these additional commitments on remuneration is contingent upon the specific terms of the contracts. In some cases, it is stipulated that actors would receive a certain amount, that would increase if they danced, and even more if they sang as well.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the contract between Agostinho da Silva, the *empresario* of Rua dos Condes, and a group of artists, including Maria Joaquina, daughter of Francisco Xavier Vargo, explicitly stipulates that she is obligated to «act and sing»,<sup>12</sup> and for which she receives a higher income than the other male artists (for her and her father 2000 réis each, and the other four male actors 1800 réis and 1400 réis). With regard to the Vargos, their remuneration will increase in line with the growing recognition of Maria Joaquina's talent. In 1764, her father entered into a partnership with Agostinho da Silva, the *empresario* from the Rua dos Condes Theatre. One of the terms of this agreement stipulated that Maria Joaquina would be the lead actress.

10. See DAL, 3° Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 639, ff. 42v.-43r. Other contracts make the same exception, regarding the death of a member of the royal family or an interdiction.

11. See *ivi*, book 637, ff. 97v.-98v.

12. DAL, 7° B Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 18, ff. 16v.-20.

When women were signed for acting, their autonomy could be stated in a variety of ways.

1) In cases of lesser age, as evidenced by the deeds of the Aguiar siblings and Maria Joaquina, the act of signing was undertaken by their fathers.

2) In a deed for the Belém Theatre, in 1775, among several performers, it is stated, regarding the female performers, that they are being contracted with the agreement of the respective spouses and aunt:

E estando presentes Joaquim António, soldado do regimento da armada, casado com ela Margarida Teresa, e Vicente Agostinho, casado com ela Ana Inácia, e Brites Josefa, tia dela Filipa Maurícia de Vilhena, disseram que pela sua parte convêm que elas suas mulheres e sobrinha outorguem esta escritura e que por ela ficam sujeitos a todas as suas cláusulas.<sup>13</sup>

3) In the deeds of the sisters Maria Quitéria and Teresa Joaquina, although they are identified as daughters of Luís da Silva, they are the ones who signed the contract, probably because they were single and of legal age, with no mention to the agreement of the father.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate that degrees of autonomy varied, and that in certain circumstances, single women could join a theatre troupe without the involvement of a male signatory. In a number of contracts involving married couples, it is evident that the female partner is often perceived as a more significant revenue generator, with more favourable contractual terms. This phenomenon can be observed in the contract between Mariana Vinci and her husband, who is engaged in composing and writing music, with António José de Paula, in 1801, for the Rua dos Condes Theatre.<sup>14</sup> Mariana Vinci was an Italian singer who had previously worked at the São Carlos Theatre in Lisbon and subsequently at the King's Theatre in London, acting in the Portuguese theatre (as well as in the Spanish) as leading actress.<sup>15</sup> She was celebrated for her vocal technique; however, her husband was a jurist in Rome, not a

13. «And Joaquim António, a soldier in the navy regiment, married to Margarida Teresa, and Vicente Agostinho, married to Ana Inácia, and Brites Josefa, aunt of Filipa Maurícia de Vilhena, being present, said that for their part they agreed that their wives and niece should sign this deed and that they would be bound by all its clauses» DAL, 1º B (former 12º B) Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book. 763, ff. 16–20.

14. See DAL, 7º B Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 153, ff. 68v.–70r.

15. Cfr. J.M. REINOSO, *El surgimiento del concierto público en Madrid*, Tesis de doctorato en Historia, Cultura y Territorio, Universidad de La Rioja, 2017, tutor prof. Miguel Angel Marín López, p. 134 and *Dictionary of Musicians from the earliest Ages to the Present Time*, London, Printed for Sainsbury and co., 1824, vol. 2, p. 509.

performer,<sup>16</sup> which explains the difference between the working conditions of the two. This circumstance may lead us to believe that the hiring of husbands was sometimes a pretext for the hiring of wives, since according to the conditions of the Spanish theatre (which influenced the type of structure and professional dynamics of Portuguese companies), married women could only be hired as actresses if their husbands worked in the same company. This may provide an explanation for the limited emphasis placed on the rights and duties of the husband in certain contracts.

During the theatrical seasons of the early 1760s, the Rua dos Condes Theatre showcased Portuguese straight plays, with a predominance of Portuguese actors. The contracts were typically collective in nature. However, in the case of dancers, one performer stands out from the others: the dancer Francesca Battini. In 1762, she signed a contract with Sebastião António Pientzenauer to perform at a venue to be designated by the contractor, presumably the Bairro Alto Theatre, as one of the clauses stipulated that she would have a box there.<sup>17</sup> In addition to a substantial wage and a box, she was entitled to a benefit, a furnished house with lighting provided by the *empresarios*, a litter to transport her to and from performances and rehearsals, and two months' sick leave. Conversely, her obligations encompassed the attendance of shows and rehearsals, with the stipulation that she refrain from performing in any venues other than those stipulated by the *empresarios*. Failure to fulfil any of these obligations would result in the imposition of a fine. The following year, she entered into an agreement with Agostinho da Silva, the *empresario* of the Rua dos Condes. In addition to the conditions she already had, a new condition was added, namely the payment of an extra amount for clothes for each new dance.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that many of the additional conditions that Francesca Battini agreed to in 1762 and 1763, such as transportation for rehearsals, additional amounts for costumes, and the use of a box, would only be part of the regular contracts of Portuguese female performers by the turn of the century.

## 2. Other duties of female performers

During the period spanning from 1780 to the close of the century, the theatres in Lisbon exclusively featured male performers, with female performers

16. See C.I. RUDERS, *Viagem em Portugal: 1798-1802*, Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional, 2022, vol. 2, p. 63.

17. See DAL, 3º Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 639, ff. 42v.-43r.

18. See DAL, 7º B Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book 1, ff. 32-33.

instead undertaking their activity in locations external to the city. Queen Maria I ordered this ban for reasons related to her excessive devotion, or out of jealousy, according to some.<sup>19</sup> Printed theatre plays bearing the names of the cast, individual reports from foreigners, and records from the General Intendancy of Police show that the ban was in place for almost two decades. Shortly after the beginning of the regency of King João VI, however, it was no longer enforced.<sup>20</sup> Records of theatre performances in various regions of the country, predominantly in the northern areas of Lisbon, as well as in the islands and in the Brazilian colony, demonstrate that, outside of the capital, actresses performed in professional troupes and assumed additional responsibilities, including management roles within the troupe.

A significant source for understanding the evolution of theatre in other regions is a deed from 1779, which details the establishment of an actors' society in Funchal, located on the island of Madeira. This deed reveals that women not only participated as actresses in the troupe but also played pivotal roles in other aspects of theatre operations. The deed in question details how seven artists came together to establish a theatre company, which would be responsible for renting the Theatre of Funchal and contracting other performers.<sup>21</sup> The society is established between Pedro Alexandrino da Silva, Joaquina Rosa (wife of the former), Maria Rita, António José de Paula, António João da Cunha, Estanislau José de Faria and Alexandre Álvares da Silva. The board of directors is comprised of three elected members, namely Joaquina Rosa (on behalf of her husband), who would be the treasurer, Alexandre Álvares da Silva, responsible for the costumes, sets and lighting, and António José de Paula, the 'artistic director' choosing the repertoire, music and directing the rehearsals.

In 1778, in another deed regarding Pedro Baquino's troupe, the responsibility for the company's accounts was retained by Margarida Teresa, who, in addition to her role as leading lady, also was one of the three key holders of the safe containing the profits from the itinerant group. In this particular case, women, who were usually considered to be of little importance and only had a role within the domestic sphere, were seen as a way to ensure the fairness of

19. Robert Southey refers that the ban was due to the Queen's jealousy (R. SOUTHEY, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal*, Bristol, printed by Bulgin & Rosser, for Joseph Cottle, 1797, p. 492), however, there is no information regarding the reason the ban was implemented nor was the official order found in regal archives.

20. Cfr. M. ROSA, *Indecências e obscenidades - As mulheres nos palcos portugueses entre 1774 e 1804*, «Sinais de Cena», 22, 2014, pp.15-19.

21. See Madeira Regional Archive, 2º Funchal Notary Office, *Office 4º*, book 2034, ff. 93v.-94v.

the payment process, as noted in the text of the deed: «To avoid any suspicion».<sup>22</sup> These are merely two illustrations of how actresses, in addition to their role as performers, are entrusted with pivotal elements of a theatre company. It is possible that these situations could occur more frequently but are not documented, given that in other countries it was also common for female performers to be responsible for the companies' accounting (as in Austria, for example),<sup>23</sup> and in Spain, women had already established their own theatre companies by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. *Regulations regarding professional behaviour*

In addition to the contracts, the working conditions of performers, irrespective of gender, and their professional conduct are delineated in other documents, specifically the reports of the General Intendency of the Police. In some cases, the regulations can be inferred, while in others, they are expressed as straightforward directives.<sup>25</sup> A notable regulation from 1802<sup>26</sup> offers insight into the dynamics of theatre professions and the professional conduct expected of performers, particularly female members of the cast. This regulation, an internal document for theatre venues in the capital, disseminated by the General Intendency of Police, is targeted at actors and *empresarios*. Its principal objective was to «evitar as colisões que podem acontecer entre os empresários e os atores do teatro nacional e para manter a harmonia que convém a uma corporação ligada entre si por convenções e ajustes particulares».<sup>27</sup>

By the close of the century, the provision of transportation for actresses to performances and rehearsals, as well as to their places of residence, had been incorporated into their rights. However, this right was exploited by them to establish a hierarchical ranking according to the order in which they were transported to the venue and back. This practice gave rise to complications

22. DAL, 1<sup>o</sup> B Lisbon Notary Office (former 12<sup>o</sup> B), *Notary Books*, book 769, ff. 110v.-112v.

23. See P. APRENT-M. BERGER, *Opportunities in Peripheral Spaces. Female Theatre Managers in the 19th Century Habsburg Monarchy*, oral presentation at the IFTR Conference, Reykjaví, 2022.

24. For example, María Navas (1666-1721) was a Spanish actress, writer and company director of the Siglo de Oro. See L. GONZÁLEZ, *Mujer y empresa teatral en la España del Siglo de Oro. El caso de la actriz y autora María de Navas*, «Teatro de Palabras», 2008, 2, pp. 135-158.

25. Cfr. ROSA, *Indecências*, cit.

26. See DAL, *General Intendency of Police*, book 201, ff. 178v.-181r.

27. «To prevent conflicts that may arise between empresarios and actors of the national theatre and to maintain the harmony befitting a corporation bound together by conventions and private agreements» (ibid).

during rehearsals and performances. To address these issues, the regulation stipulates that:

Findos que sejam os ensaios, como as representações, o Empresário fará logo reconduzir as atrizes a suas casas [...] pela forma seguinte: as que representarem na tragédia ou comédia ou outro qualquer drama primeiro que as que representarem só nos entremezes; e quando entrarem em qualquer das sobreditas peças, e ao mesmo tempo nos entremezes, de maneira que todas estejam no teatro em razão do seu ofício; recolher-se-à sempre primeiro para casa a que morar mais perto, porque as outras suas companheiras esperem menos.<sup>28</sup>

The text emphasises that there should be no claims of hierarchy among the actors, as all individuals must be regarded as equal, with the sole distinctions being based on their talent, intelligence, and dramatic genius. These qualities, if they are to be recognised, should be the sole source of public esteem and not give rise to any private rights. Furthermore, the costumes were also a source of rivalry among actresses, who would aspire to possess more opulent attire, regardless of the character they were portraying.

Atendendo ao que a pompa e a riqueza dos vestidos pode influir sobre o espírito de alguns atores, como se o merecimento teatral consistisse nos enfeites e atavios, e porque disto podem resultar alguns debates; os atores aceitarão os vestidos segundo o caráter que apresentarem no drama [...], porque peças há nas quais aquele, que segundo a rotina se chama laçao é o protagonista e o que se diz primeiro galã é das últimas pessoas do drama.<sup>29</sup>

In the same way as the rivalry between actors, the lack of professionalism was also pointed out, as actors (male and female) could be absent from rehearsals, as the paragraph on attendance and diligence shows:

28. «Once the rehearsals and performances are concluded, the *empresario* will immediately escort the actresses back to their residences, [...] as follows: Those performing in tragedy, comedy, or any other dramatic work are to be prioritised over those performing in short plays. Furthermore, when entering any of the aforementioned dramatic works, and concurrently during short plays, all individuals must be present in the theatre due to their profession. The first to return home shall be the one who lives closest, as their fellow performers will wait less» (ibid.).

29. «Given that the ostentation and opulence of the attire can influence the disposition of some actors, as if theatrical merit resided in the embellishments and finery, and because some disputes can arise from this; the actors will accept the attire according to the character they present in the drama [...], because there are plays in which the one who according to convention is called a lackey is the protagonist and the one who is called the leading man is one of the last people in the drama (ibid.).

Enquanto durarem os ensaios, o Empresário fará repetir a peça inteira, ou atos, ou cenas avulsas, segundo o seu autor ou tradutor julgar necessário, obrigando os atores a este trabalho, com o qual adquirem a perfeição da sua arte e a boa execução dos dramas que representam, conservando-se o mesmo escrúpulo, assim nos ensaios particulares, como no ensaios gerais feitos sobre o teatro.<sup>30</sup>

The regulation enables the drawing of several conclusions about the profession: there would be several days of rehearsal, which could take place in the morning or afternoon; the rehearsals would be held in a room designated for this purpose, where, in addition to the performers, only the *empresario*, author or translator and the prompter would be permitted to attend.

#### 4. *Female empowerment*

The previous document is also a testimony to the rivalry and intentions to endanger other colleagues, especially among the female performers. In the Intendency books, there are numerous reports pertaining to ameliorate relations between female actresses and circumvent enmity, thereby suggesting that the female artists held a high degree of self-regard and exhibited a propensity to impose their will and desires. These attitudes, which might be perceived as capricious, can also be interpreted as a demand for acknowledgement of their achievements and worth. It is interesting to note that while women in general were expected to be submissive and unassertive, actresses, possibly due to their experience on stage, were able to articulate their desires, needs and complaints more readily than other women. This suggests a higher level of assertiveness and a stronger sense of individual worth. As Sophie Tomlinson indicates, analysing female actresses of the British restoration stage [the] «threat of the actress in performance lay in the potential for presenting femininity as a vivid and mobile force [which] disrupted the symbolic ordering of gender... provid[ing] a model for female insubordination in the public sphere».<sup>31</sup>

What might initially appear as mere whimsicality can, over time, evolve into a form of self-recognition. For instance, in 1777, the actress Cecília de

30. «During the rehearsal period, the *empresario* will repeat the entire play, or individual acts or scenes, as deemed necessary by the author or translator, obliging the actors to engage in this work, through which they refine their craft and ensure the successful execution of the dramas they perform. This commitment to perfection extends to both partial and general rehearsals, both on and off stage» (ibid.).

31. G. BUSH-BAILEY, *Revolution, Legislation and Autonomy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*, ed. by M. GALE and J.B. STOKES, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.18.

Aguiar had her engagement terminated by the groom's mother, who opposed the union due to the social stigma associated with the bride being an actress.<sup>32</sup> In court, Aguiar contended that her financial independence, evidenced by her substantial dividends, rendered her relationship with her suitor unnecessary.<sup>33</sup> Josefa Soares, who refused to perform on stage for the French occupiers at the Theatre of Rua dos Condes<sup>34</sup> for two years at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is another example of an actress who used her platform to advocate for causes she believed in. Upon her return to the stage, she donated a portion of her income to the *Caixa Militar*, a fund established to support the military. It is evident that actresses of this era were not afraid to advocate for their personal and political beliefs, and to act in accordance, thereby setting an example for their contemporaries.

Unlike other European countries the 'querelle des femmes' or 'debate on women', is practically nonexistent in Portugal before the eighteenth century", according to Vanda Anastácio<sup>35</sup>. Through pamphlets and manuscripts, Portuguese women began to debate their rights and duties in the public sphere, albeit in a very subtle manner. However, actresses and dancers, were acutely aware of their professional and personal worth, and thus sought to fulfil their desires, often defying prevailing norms. They attained financial independence and managed their own social networks, cultivating relationships that were sometimes harmonious and sometimes not. This demonstrated an independence that was seldom observed or appreciated during this period. Beyond the realm of performance, actresses could serve as role models for other women, not merely in terms of their physical appearance, as is often the case with hairstyles<sup>36</sup> and attire, but also in their attitudes and behaviours. The appeal of female performers extended beyond the male audience, garnering acclaim from the female public as well. The poems composed by Soror Tomásia Caetana (1719-?) and dedicated to the actresses Cecília Rosa de Aguiar and Lucrecia Battini<sup>37</sup> serve as a testament to the patronage of affluent women in the field of theatre. Another example is D. Leonor da Câmara, patron of Ma-

32. See DAL, 7<sup>o</sup> A Lisbon Notary Office, *Notary Books*, book. 596, ff. 74v.-75r.

33. Information provided by researcher José Camões.

34. See «Gazeta de Lisboa», 23rd March 1809, [p. 4].

35. Cf. V. ANASTÁCIO, *Feminism in Portugal before 1800*, in *A New History of Iberian Feminisms*, ed. by S. BERMUDEZ and R. JOHNSON, Toronto, University Toronto Press, 2018, pp. 67-81: 69.

36. The actress Anna Zamperini was a model for portuguese 18<sup>th</sup> century women who copied her haircut and use of a hat.

37. See I. MORUJÃO, *Entre o convento e a corte: algumas reflexões em torno da obra poética de Soror Tomásia Caetana de Santa Maria*, «Revista da Faculdade de Letras. Línguas e Literaturas». Anexo V. *Espiritualidade e corte em Portugal, sécs. XVI-XVIII*, 1993, pp. 123-142.

riana Vinci, in return for her «important support»<sup>38</sup> to the actress, had a performance dedicated to her.

Beyond their on-stage performances, actresses are often characterised as whimsical, lascivious, and frivolous. While some documents substantiate these portrayals, it is crucial to examine additional sources that reveal other facets of female performers, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of their true influence during that era.

38. See RUDERS, *Viagem*, cit., p. 63.