

# ***CASA PORTUGUESA***

**by Pedro Penim**

**production Teatro Nacional D. Maria II**



*Casa Portuguesa* [*Portuguese Home*] tells the (fictional) story of an ex-soldier of the Portuguese Colonial War who, while talking with the ghosts of his past, finds himself confronted with the decadence and transformation traditional models of home, family, country and the father figure canon. A portrait of what was, is and could be (or not), the patriarchal family unit par excellence – the home. A production with a backdrop of recent events in our democracy that revisits the most painful of our history's open and festering wounds.

At an unspecified time perhaps towards the end of the 1940s, in a bar in a hotel in Mozambique, three Portuguese write the song *Uma Casa Portuguesa* [*A Portuguese Home*]. It is a cheerful but sad fado<sup>1</sup> that echoes the stereotypical nostalgia of an idea about Portugal, so dear to the Estado Novo's<sup>2</sup> ideology. Even after 48 years of democracy in Portugal, many Portuguese still know this song by heart.

In 1968, Joaquim Penim set off against his will and beliefs to the Colonial War in Mozambique. This experience provided the material many years later for his book called *No Planalto dos Macondes*.

In 2021, Emanuele Coccia published *Filosofia della Casa*, an essay that describes home as a space where injustices, oppressions and inequalities have been concealed and repeated mechanically for hundreds of years. It's at home and through it, for instance, that most of the sexual violence that encourages heteronormativity and racism takes place.

It was by bringing together these three strands - fado, war diary and philosophical essay – that *Casa Portuguesa* emerged as a stage play.

text and direction

Pedro Penim

withCarla Maciel, João Lagarto,  
Sandro Feliciano, Fado Bicha  
(Lila Tiago and João Caçador)set designer

Joana Sousa

costumes

Béhen

lights

Daniel Worm d'Assumpção

sound design and original music

Miguel Lucas Mendes

final songJoão Caçador (music),  
Lila Tiago (lyrics),  
Miguel Madeira (production)master carpenter

Filipe Dominguez

graffiti

Claúdio Sena

posterCristiana Morais (photo),  
André Barreto (assistance),  
Beatriz Texugo (makeup),  
Bárbara Lizardo (graphic  
composition),  
R2 (design)stage assistance

Bernardo de Lacerda

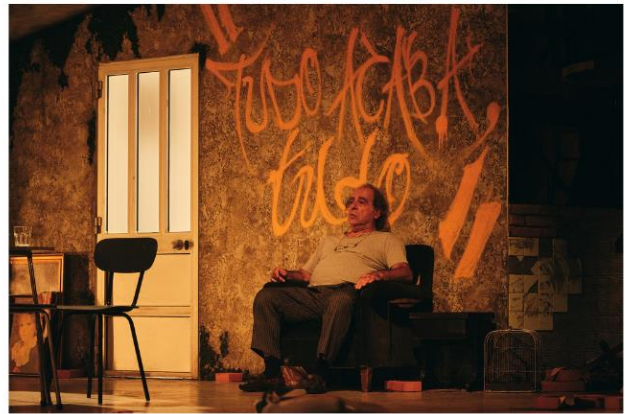
productionTeatro Nacional D. Maria II  
(Portugal)special thanks toAPICCAPS, Centro Cultural de  
Belém, Joaquim Penim,  
Josefinas, Levi's, Mariano,  
Palácio do Grilo, Sanjo, Teatro  
Praga, Vasco Araújo

+14

duration 1h50

<sup>1</sup> Lisbon's traditional song of longing and lament

<sup>2</sup> The authoritarian and autocratic regime that lasted from 1933 to 1974 in Portugal





## About the play

“I was interested in talking, thinking and writing about these questions and I wanted the spectator to find a way to transpose them to the present. Firstly, the idea of family, an idea that comes from my previous play [*Father & Sons*, 2021] and was far from finished insofar as what I wanted to say – and still is even with this play ... there’s a third chapter on the horizon [laughs]. It’s the idea of the family unit as a basic structure underpinning the capitalist society we live in, nourishing it and being nourished by it and that the capitalist structure depends entirely on it to exist – to exist with a set of rules and specific formats – and how the discourse about dismantling families is not about dismantling them in the sense of finishing with families as we know and love them. It’s about reframing what the idea could be in the light of greater justice. It’s not about destroying our own families when they are functioning families. It’s about thinking about the fact that it’s within families that most cases of abuse and exclusions occur and some of the greatest evils in our current society begin. As Carla [Maciel, the Wife / Woman] says in the play, ‘instead of paying attention to those who are not the abusers’, I prefer to listen to those who try to describe their pain. This pain, related to family problems, is very audible. Fortunately, not in my own personal case. On the contrary, I had the privilege to enjoy great family stability. Although biographical facts were present when writing this play – my father’s wartime diary [for instance] – this is not my story nor is it my father’s story. It’s a story that listens to History with a capital H rather than to stories with a small H.

Then there’s also fado, which is one of the elements that defines the - so to speak - national soul. The song *Uma Casa Portuguesa* was a pretext – almost a scapegoat – to speak directly about the Estado Novo model, that of the Portuguese family, home and even its character. And also about how all that is no longer of any use – just as that home is not of any more use to us – although we know the song by heart. In the end, the play is a way of sharing this bewilderment as to how the way these structures are at the same time very attractive and violent [...]”

Pedro Penim in an interview with Maria João Guardão

# Press

“What is there to say about *Casa Portuguesa*, the remarkable play written and directed by Pedro Penim [...] How to deal with a proposition that is both radical and pure, that challenges our current lack of critical thought (that goes far beyond theatre)? [...]

Why the profound sadness at our being what we are? In its marvelous creative joy, *Casa Portuguesa* merges acknowledgement of this sadness - that is to say, the fact that our cultural volatility means we resign ourselves to bemoaning our history - with highlighting dramatically the Colonial War [...]

Let's simply say that the humour that is (also) contained in all this is brought out on stage by the fascinating performance of Lila Tiago and João Caçador, the Fado Bicha duo.

João Lagarto, great as ever, is also there, physical and abstract at the same time. He meets the demands of Pedro Penim's text with rare precision thereby revealing his character's convulsive existence without letting it become some moral or ideological stereotype. Sandro Feliciano makes a splendid debut, a true 'natural' (as they say in the US) adding the illusion of happy spontaneity to the detailed work of creating a character. Carla Maciel has a magical stage presence (and screen presence too, might I add), as if the words had emerged on stage just moments before as she becomes the human incarnation of their inner fire - as well as the silences that they carry.

Life and death in Portugal - here's a possible subtitle for this *Casa Portuguesa*. Life that resists. Death that we find comfort in without knowing what place to give it in our obstinate desire to live.”

**João Lopes in *Diário de Notícias*** (October 2022)

«The tone is surprisingly light and well-disposed — also thanks to the presence of Fado Bicha (Lila Tiago and João Caçador), who provide musical counterpart, sometimes stepping into the narrative, sometimes in parallel complements — but also assertively activist.»

**Pedro Henrique Miranda in *Sábado*** (September 2022)

«And, due to its accurate sense of show [from Pedro Penim], he induces — we hope — the critical consciousness that awakes the spectator to realities that can shock and, eventually, make people react to them.»

**Rui Monteiro in *Público*** (September 2022)

«The ghosts of the Colonial War live in the play, remixing “open wounds of our history”, denouncing the claws of patriarchy, questioning the masculinities, rethinking family hierarchies.»

**Joana Moreira in *Time Out*** (September 2022)

«Penim's text pulses with a contradictory agitation that seems to correspond to a hyperactive brain, haunted by opposing and changing ideas. It contains a past that needs to be re-read; a present and a future that require the adoption of new meanings in the face of the new reality that is multiplying and imposing itself through generation Z.»

**Cristina Margato in *Expresso*** (September 2022)

«Penim takes the scalpel and dissects Portuguese colonialism and collective identity, placing us in front of a house whose inscription on the wall - "everything ends, everything" - rolls out the carpet for a reconstruction of the building we inhabit together together.»

**Gonçalo Frota in *Ípsilon*** (December 2022)

# Pedro Penim

Director, actor and playwright Pedro Penim was born in Lisbon on 5 July 1975. His work, which has also encompassed programming, conferences, translation and teaching, has been presented in several festivals and seasons throughout the whole of Portugal as well as other countries in Europe, South America, Asia and the Middle East.

He graduated with a theatre degree from Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema, in Lisbon, and he holds a master's degree in Cultural Management from ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon.

In 1995 he founded the Teatro Praga collective. Together with this iconic company that stages contemporary Portuguese theatre, he has premiered over 50 productions, including original work, contemporary versions of classics by Turgenev, Wedekind and Shakespeare, as well as revues and children's and young people's theatre, for which he has received various awards.

In 2013 he founded the cultural space Rua das Gaivotas 6, a pivotal project in Lisbon which hosts creative, unconventional works by emerging artists.

His own individual work as a director is usually rooted in biographical issues and endeavours to enmesh various strands of play between fact and fiction to blend reality with the theatrical. He has written a number of works that have been performed in Portuguese, English, Italian and Hebrew, amongst which special mention should be made to his plays *Doing It, Before, Tear Gas, Israel, Eurovision*, the radio play *As Obras no Escuro*, as well as *Pais & Filhos (Fathers & Sons)*, his latest production which premiered at the Teatro Municipal São Luiz in 2021. *Before* was also the screenplay of *Past Perfect*, a film directed by Jorge Jácome, which was included in the official selection of the Berlinale 2019 and received a number of international film awards.

He has been a drama teacher since 2009 and has taught at Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema in Lisbon, Balle teatro and ESMAE in Porto, Conservatoire Jean Wiener in Paris, SP Escola de Teatro in São Paulo, CIFAS in Brussels and Salt Galata in Istanbul. He wrote opinion pieces for the Público newspaper, Cadernos do Rivoli, O Elogio do Espectador, among others. He was a guest speaker at the IETM Plenary Meeting (keynote speech "How to be emerging") and a judge at the renowned multidisciplinary competition Danse Élargie (Théâtre de La Ville, Paris).

Besides Teatro Praga, he has worked on international projects with various artists and companies such as tg Stan - Belgium (*Point Blank*, 1998-2001), Tim Etchells / Ant Hampton - UK (*The Quiet Volume*, 2012), Forced Entertainment - UK (*Quizoola!*, 2014-2019) and Lola Arias - Argentina (*Mis Documentos*, 2020).

In November 2021, he was appointed Artistic Director of Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, in Lisbon.

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