

Fulvia Almeida full interview for People of Faro

1. For those who don't know you, how would you define yourself? Who is Fulvia?

I'm a person who likes to communicate, to create, to be surrounded by people, to travel, and someone who does a lot of things at the same time.

2. You directed a documentary about the Algarve and you work in ArQuente. Where does your passion for the arts come from?

When I was a kid, I didn't know if I wanted to be a journalist, or an actress. Finally, I decided that I wanted to be an actress, but it was difficult at that time in Portugal to start theatre and to live like an artist. My mother didn't like the idea either, so I came to Faro to study communication, and in the university, there was a theatre group called Sin-Cera. I got in, did the course with a very good director, called Pedro Wilson. I fell in love with it and said to myself "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life!", but at the same time, I was studying communication and I liked that too. In 2019, I was doing performances, and was also working on the radio station Rua FM. One time, I felt like it was time for me to decide and finally choose between the two. I decided to come to ArQuente and make some changes in the association, turning it more professional, but performance and art have been part of my adult life since I can remember.

I was part of different theatre groups, and at some point, my friends from ArQuente invited me to do a show for kids with them. I accepted and very naturally, I developed a good connection with them, and I became part of the group. They started inviting me to take part in several projects and also to become a member of the association.

It doesn't matter if you are the president or vice-president of the association. What matters is that we are together and that we have people to represent the others.

3. What changed in ArQuente?

Before, we were all volunteers, but there were some people who wanted to be real artists and make a living out of it. Because of this, I thought "Ok, why don't we create a structure for people to work here and give them some more time to create?". Now, we're trying to get funds and build this structure. It's not easy, but it's possible.

In the beginning of the year, we prepare the cultural program. Recently, we had a premiere in Loulé, on the 21st of January. It was fantastic, because it was the first time that we worked with a very good guy, Luis Marrafa. He's a choreographer and has a

company in Brussels and came here to work with us. We were in Loulé, doing different artistic residencies, and we will present again the show we worked on – Credo – in Teatro das Figuras, on 7th of April.

4. What does it take to live from art?

We didn't believe that it could be possible to live well as an artist. Sometimes, in Portugal there's this idea that the artists don't have enough money, that it's not easy to make a living out of it. I think we had this problem in ArQuente. All of us were doing different jobs, and being an artist seemed to be just a dream, never a reality. And I told them "Why don't we try at least?". I launched the invitation, now I'm working on the structure, so if they want to come, they can. If they don't, it's ok too. For me, it's important to believe it's possible and to try to make it happen.

I have a friend who says "If you want to be a dancer, you can't be a farmer. One day, you must dance!"

5. We are doing the interview in the courtyard of the association. What does ArQuente represent for you and for the city?

For me, it's the place where I can be myself and where I can try things. There's no fear of the ridiculous. Everything is possible here. We see art as a way to remove the barriers, and to mix all kinds of arts, and it's really great to be part of this.

I think ArQuente has an important role for the city. When it was created, the city didn't have a lot of cultural associations. It had theatre groups, but not performing groups, which is a different kind of theatre. If we have a classical text, we try to illustrate it in an original way. We bring here musicians from other parts of the country that have never been in Algarve. People who usually come to the concerts don't know the musicians. They're like "Ok, if ArQuente brings them, I'm sure they're cool".

6. One of the most recent projects of ArQuente is "Credo". Tell us more about it.

For me, it was a big challenge, because I'm not a dancer. I did some workshops and trainings, but I'm not a dancer. When we started to work with the choreographer Luis Marrafa, he knew that he would work with two performers and one dancer, and he had the courage to make all of us dance. It was the first time I had to memorize the movements, and to speak just with my body. At first, Teresa and I – Carolina was the professional dancer – were like "What are we going to do? How will we memorize

everything?”. The movements are sentences and you must memorize them and they should make sense in your head. Luis was incredibly creative and he would even ask us to come up with new movements. Also, Teresa, Carolina, and I worked very well together. It was perfect.

Before, people were working during the day, so they only had time for the rehearsals in the evening. For this project, we were able to work from 9 am till 6 pm. That’s why we wanted a production with just a few people. It’s easier to synchronize our schedules this way.

For this kind of projects, we invite someone whose work we appreciate to collaborate with us. We discuss the theme we want to tackle – in this case, it was the beliefs that we have –, but after this, everything is open. We can do what we want. Normally, they improvise a little bit with us, and after this, the director decides what he/she wants to introduce in the show.

I discovered that my body can do more than I thought. This is the way ArQuente works. With each project, we find out more about ourselves. It’s about getting out of your comfort zone – you are a bit afraid, but you also feel alive at the same time. You don’t have to be perfect, just authentic.

7. It seems like the concept of performance is becoming more and more present among the means of artistic expression. Why do you think this is happening?

The world changes every day, and people as well. The artists are trying to challenge themselves too, and I believe it doesn’t make sense for a lot of people to work only in one artistic area. What is interesting and important is to mix everything and I think that culture is following this direction. Of course, there will be all the time people who prefer the traditional theatre and it’s ok. It’s important too.

8. How can Algarve and, in particular, Faro contribute to the field of performing arts and culture?

I think everything can be an inspiration. Faro is a really beautiful city, we have the sea, this beautiful lagoon – Ria Formosa, some inspiring places. Working with the community is nice, and we would like to do more of it. Faro has a lot to give us, especially since it competes for the title of European Capital of Culture 2027. If Faro starts to believe that it’s possible to do more for the cultural area, then the city itself will become an inspiration for the other associations.

Sometimes, people think that culture is to see a concert, or to go to the theatre, but for me, it's much more than this. Culture is to work with people, to rethink our lifestyle. In my opinion, the main role of an artist is to think about what's around him. The most important is not to show what you are doing, but to share something, to send a message. What people understand from what I share with them is not my problem.

9. Do you think that this cultural movement is reaching people here, in Faro?

Yes, I'm sure. Faro has many cultural associations. Most of the things that you see happening in the city are done by these associations. People might think that it's the municipality doing it, but no. Sometimes, there are people like us doing things in the city. I don't imagine how Faro would be like if these associations didn't exist. It would be sad.

10. What do you like most about Faro? What is the first thing on your mind when you think about it?

Ria Formosa, for sure. Some years ago, I went to Morocco to work and that's when I realized where my home was. I'm not from Faro, but I came here to study and I stayed. I was missing a lot Ria Formosa. I was picturing myself with my bike, coming by the river, and going to the beach, and I was really homesick. Faro is my home. I really believe I have a deep connection with Ria Formosa. For example, I spend my holidays in Culatra. Last year, I even organized some sunset concerts there. It was the first time we did a concert in Culatra on Friday, in Faro on Saturday, and in Sagres on Sunday.

Culatra is magic; it's a really special place, with special people. There are actual fishermen living there, it's not for tourists. When you go there, you feel part of the community. In Culatra, I feel like home – I know that I go to tia Maria to buy fish, that Galo brings me some barbegao, that Marelia has the supermarket that it's open all the time. Small things that make the difference.

11. What would be the soundtrack of your life?

Shimbalaiê - Maria Gadu