

## Alvaro Custodio and His Continuing Dream: The Teatro Clásico de México in the 1960s

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While in the 1950s the Teatro Español de México had confined its efforts largely to producing Spanish classical theatre in Mexico, after 1960 Alvaro Custodio's company changed its name to Teatro Clásico de México (hereafter TCDM) and broadened its scope to include a greater variety of plays, plays ranging from Sergio Magaña's *Moctezuma II* and Alvaro Custodio's own version of *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* to *Hamlet* and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*.<sup>1</sup> The contributions of Alvaro Custodio to theatre in Mexico as director-producer have been many, and his productions during the 1960s merit discussion and analysis as a noteworthy part of the Mexican theatrical scene during that decade. He continued to bring his vision to the theatre in Mexico and perhaps a major contribution during the 1960s was his imaginative use of historical settings (both outdoors and indoors), settings varying from pyramids to colonial churches or homes. Although Enrique de Ruelas had used—and continued to use—colonial Guanajuato as the setting for the *Entremeses* of Cervantes and *El retablillo jovial* of Casona, it was Custodio who took advantage of Mexico's natural and architectural beauties whenever and wherever possible.<sup>2</sup>

Custodio's education in Spain at the Instituto Escuela in Madrid where students were taken on excursions to view the architectural heritage of that country had early instilled in him a love and respect for these living monuments. His appreciation for the past has remained with him in his exile in Mexico and is reflected in his choice of settings. In looking over the list of places where he produced his dramas during the 1960s, it is evident that it would have been far easier for him to stay in a theatre or theatres within the capital, but he was never content to do so. Rather he moved from pyramid to cathedral, to colonial residence, to the Castillo de Chapultepec, tirelessly seeking to incorporate the best that Mexico offers architecturally into his productions. As he writes in 1966, "No es casual que en nuestra época algunos realizadores teatrales hayamos

recurrido a escenarios al aire libre, de rica arquitectura, que comuniquen una natural y grandiosa belleza externa a textos consagrados—y nuevos problemas de concepción escénica—para hacer retoñar en los públicos el interés por la mejor literatura dramática.”<sup>3</sup>

The varied settings of the two plays by Calderón, *El mágico prodigioso* and *La vida es sueño* produced in this decade, illustrate this search for the appropriate—at times stunning—background. Custodio combined a shortened version of *El mágico prodigioso*, a “versión de cámara” in which he cut the text and eliminated all of the characters except the three central ones, with a dramatization of the *Coplas* of Jorge Manrique by Ignacio López Tarso and Amparo Villegas. Critics in Mexico at the time agreed that the cutting was skillful and praised the performances of López Tarso as Cyprían, Lorenzo de Rodas as Daemonio, and Reina Montes as Justina. Since this play deals with a version of the Faustus theme, an even more appropriate setting than the Teatro Milán, where it opened in March 1960, was the Atrio de la Catedral de Cuernavaca, where it was presented under the patronage of the Bishop of Cuernavaca, Dr. Sergio Méndez Arceo. Custodio always pays special attention to the music in his productions, and, in this instance, Miguel Vicens from Mallorca composed music for the Calderón play including a temptation song for Justina interpreted by Rosario Durcal.

In the next Calderón work of the TCDM in the decade, *La vida es sueño*, an *auto sacramental*, the first setting was the Capilla abierta del ex-convento de Tlalmanalco, Estado de México, in October 1960 and next, the façade of the Catedral de Santa Prisca in Taxco. Still later the setting was the Fuerte de San Diego in Acapulco during the Festival Pablo Casals, and in 1965, in the ex-convento de San Agustín Acolman, Estado de México. It is characteristic of Custodio that instead of choosing to do *La vida es sueño* in the “popular” version with Segismundo, he preferred the challenge of the allegorical version (1673) with *La Sombra*, *El Agua*, *La Sabiduría* for a twentieth century audience not accustomed to unraveling the intricacies of seventeenth century allegory. In the *Boletín* he includes an explanation of the meaning of the work and two excerpts by Menéndez y Pelayo and Valbuena Prat in which they discuss the three versions of *La vida es sueño*,<sup>4</sup> a work which Custodio regards along with *La Celestina* as “las dos cúspides de la literatura dramática española en las épocas renacentista y barroca.”<sup>5</sup> In 1965 as he looked back on twelve years of activities of the TCDM, he considered *La Celestina* and *La vida es sueño* to be the most significant productions of his company.

In that year critics acknowledged the beauty of the setting and the quality of his direction. About *La vida es sueño* in Tlalmanalco (a church built towards the end of the sixteenth century along the route of Cortés to Tenochtitlán) Mara Reyes in *Diorama de la Cultura* affirms that “Custodio aprovecha el escenario como pocos directores en México, especialmente en espectáculos al aire libre, como en esta ocasión, e imprime gran vigor a los personajes, a las situaciones y, en general, a la obra.” François Bagger in *Excelsior* remarks that in spite of the rain, the attention of the audience never wavered. Besides praising at length the setting, the acoustics, and the acting, Antonio Magaña Esquivel draws attention

to the original music of Juan D. Tercero, "realizada mediante una fidelísima y hermosa grabación."<sup>6</sup>

In expanding the repertory of the TCDM in the 1960s, Custodio added two dramas with pre-Hispanic themes. One was Sergio Magaña's *Moctezuma II*, "tragedia histórica poemática," performed in Teotihuacán against the setting of the Pirámide del Sol; the other, *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* (translated into English by Charles Lucas as *When Men Became Gods, The Legend of the Aztecs*) staged on the pyramid of Tepanzolco in Cuernavaca and in Tijuana in Spanish and in English. The production of *Moctezuma II* was particularly interesting because it could be compared with the original presentation in Mexico City in the Teatro del Seguro Social in 1954, when López Tarso had won the Critics' award as the Actor of the Year. However, one of the points that critics had made in 1954 regarding *Moctezuma II* directed by André Moreau was that, while López Tarso's interpretation of the Aztec leader was outstanding, the costumes and setting were not so impressive as his acting. As Wilberto Cantón in his "Balance Teatral 1954" affirms, for example, "Solamente el vestuario demasiado realista y la pobre escenografía deslucieron el espectáculo."<sup>7</sup> Custodio not only elicited a fine performance from López Tarso but he also took advantage of one of the most impressive spots in Mexico, the Pirámide del Sol, for the setting. His wife, Isabel Richart, who has worked with him on many productions as the costume designer, did careful research to insure the authenticity of the costumes. On opening night all of the bleacher seats that had been set up were sold out. The production was an outstanding success, and it ran during April and May of 1961 on weekends. During the run, in spite of difficulties with rain and dust storms which occasionally covered the actors and public with dirt, and the audience's having to travel over a poorly-paved road to reach the pyramid, the production was indeed a spectacular one.

In his "Autocrítica" of *Moctezuma II* in 1954, Sergio Magaña states that, "en la tragedia mexicana no aparece Cortés. Cuando su bota se asoma en el escenario se apagan las luces y cae el telón final de nuestra cultura."<sup>8</sup> Thus in the 1954 version of the drama the action takes place the day before Cortés' arrival in Tenochtitlán. Alvaro Custodio believed, however, that it would be theatrically more effective to end the tragedy against the setting of the Pirámide del Sol with Moctezuma in his most glorious clothing (the sunset of the Aztecs) going out to receive Cortés. Cortés and his men appear on horseback spotlighted in the distance with their banners flying and, as the Aztec leader waits and Cortés arrives, the lights go out.

According to Alvaro Custodio, it seemed to him that after doing *Moctezuma II*, it would be interesting to explore further the religion of the Aztecs. Moctezuma had enjoyed a great success because of the acting of López Tarso, the impressive writing of Magaña particularly in the monologues of Moctezuma, the setting of the Pirámide del Sol, and the quality of the costumes and lighting. "Entonces se me ocurrió," he says, "que la historia de México precortesiano y de este encuentro de Moctezuma y Cortés era un espectáculo notable y que se podía presentar en una forma intermedia entre lo que en Europa se llamaba sonido y luz sin llegar a ser sonido y luz pero tampoco con intervención directa

de los actores" (Interview 8 January 1973). One of the advantages of presenting *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* this way would be that the sound could carry easily in open spaces. In order to avoid the problems of *Moctezuma II* in Teotihuacán, where the actors had difficulties in making themselves heard and where their throats sometimes suffered because of the inclemency of the weather, Custodio made use of a sound system and amplifiers to project the voices of professional actors. The amplifiers, hidden from the view of the audience, were placed in the spot where the actor was speaking so that while the audience was able to hear perfectly well, the voices appeared to be coming from the appropriate spot. Custodio recorded the narrative and dialogue in Spanish and English.<sup>9</sup> Among those mentioned in the English version are Alyce Kuehne and Patrick McHenry, who are familiar to students of Mexican literature and history. The two versions ran from December 1961 to March 1962 in Cuernavaca, where one of the viewers, the noted Mexican diplomat Lic. Hugo B. Margáin, currently Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público in President Echeverría's government, insisted that *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* should be taken to one of the bordertowns, where it could be seen by Mexican and American tourists. The production would have the backing of the Departamento de Turismo.

In the summer of 1962, *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* was taken to Tijuana. In a country noted for its numerous and fine examples of colonial churches and pre-Columbian pyramids, Tijuana is singularly lacking in historical backdrops, and the most appropriate place available was the municipal auditorium—at one moment the bullring was suggested. In order to create the proper atmosphere, Custodio had decorations fashioned to make the auditorium appear to be a dwelling place of the Gods. Although *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* was narrated in alternate performances in English and Spanish, the English version attracted more viewers. Ads placed in papers in the U.S. brought people from the surrounding area who were responsive to the production. Alvaro Custodio speaks of the warmth of the reception of the people from the U.S. who would come to him afterwards to comment on the performance. However, towards the end of the engagement, the performances in Spanish were eliminated as interest in them waned. The Mexican performers from the area who took part in the production expressed their delight in hearing legends of their own people with which they had not been familiar before.

In one sense, the Custodio version might be considered to be purer than Magaña's, purer in incorporating myths of the Aztecs and simply presenting Moctezuma rather than trying to interpret a ruler of the past in terms of the present. A person seeing a production of *Moctezuma II*, notwithstanding the Aztec attire of the characters, draws parallels, as Sergio Magaña intends him to, with present-day leaders. In other words, *Moctezuma II* is one of the numerous historical dramas written in Latin America in which events from the past are used for protesting current situations. As Magaña writes in 1954, "*Moctezuma II* es además una vigorosa protesta contra los sistemas militaristas, contra el sectarismo, la superstición, la histeria colectiva y la ferocidad."<sup>10</sup> In regard to literary relationships, there is some hint of Hamlet in Magaña's lonely, vacillat-

ing Moctezuma and a touch of Macbeth in the three Viejas who confront Moctezuma in the *Prólogo* and later in the drama.

In interviews with Alvaro Custodio, one becomes aware of the great admiration that he has for Shakespeare as can be seen in *Lope-Calderón y Shakespeare, Comparación de dos estilos dramáticos* (Ediciones TCDM, 1969). Among the TCDM productions in the 1960s there were several of *Hamlet* (1964 in Acolman, 1968 in the Castillo de Chapultepec, and 1969 in the Teatro Hidalgo). Custodio first spent time in translating *Hamlet* into prose, since he was not satisfied with the existing Spanish translations of the drama. This prose version of *Hamlet* was produced in the ex-convento de Acolman, a magnificent place on the road to Teotihuacán, which had been the setting of his impressive productions of Unamuno's *Medea* and Calderon's *El gran teatro del mundo* in the 1950s, and he devotes almost the whole *Boletín* (julio 1964) to the presentation, photographs, and critical opinion of the work. It will be remembered that 1964 was the year of the commemoration of the birth of Shakespeare, and Mexico was among the countries honoring the playwright. Critics praised the setting, the direction, and the interpretation of *Hamlet* by Enrique Rocha, a young actor, who had done mostly experimental theatre with Juan José Gurrola up to that time.

When Alvaro Custodio was asked to participate in the Cultural Olympics in Mexico in 1968, it was suggested that he repeated his 1950s' success, *Fuenteovejuna*; but he wished to do *Hamlet*, only this time in blank verse instead of in prose, using the Castillo de Chapultepec as the setting. Jorge del Campo, who had started with the TCDM in 1953 as a Moorish king in *Las mocedades del Cid* and had played in a variety of roles since that time, took the leading role. The play opened 25 October 1968 and was received with many compliments both by Mexicans and foreigners. A BBC film producer, Kenneth Shepherd, who was in the country making a film on pre-Columbian Mexico, wrote a highly complimentary letter to Custodio about *Hamlet*, in which he says, "I must say that often as I have seen the play in London or Stratford-on-Avon I have not many times seen so vivid and spirited a performance. Being Anglo-Saxon one thinks that Spain and Mexico together would tend to overplay, to become almost operatic but it was so very powerful because of its restrained quality and your willingness to let the text make the impact. Marvellous." He further comments on what he considers is inspired use of the setting. A particularly exuberant comment appears in *ABC* in Madrid (18 enero 1969), when Ángel Laborda declares that because of the translation and mise en scène "ha constituido uno de los mayores éxitos teatrales conocidos en aquel país como asimismo uno de los más interesantes montajes shakespirianos que se han hecho en el mundo en los tiempos modernos. . ." <sup>12</sup>

Although *Hamlet* in Chapultepec had originally been planned for a fifteen day run, the drama was received with such enthusiasm that it ran for a longer period during October and November. It was a nearly four hour performance with one fifteen minute intermission. The setting, illumination, and acoustical effects were admired by public and critics. As Fermín Santa María writes in *El Herald*, "¿Usted se imagina, todo el Castillo de Chapultepec, convertido en

un solo escenario para *Hamlet*?" He goes on to state that Alvaro Custodio has succeeded in using the last rock of the Castillo, and that "nos ha demostrado cómo hacer uso de toda la técnica moderna para usar en forma inteligente los efectos de iluminación en escenarios antiguos; en el momento debido, preciso. . . Cómo aprovechar en foro tan gigantesco, la técnica del sonido, elevando millares de veces el tono de las voces, para que lleguen naturales al espectador. . ."18 Invisible microphones made it seem that the actors were right next to the spectators. This was the same effect Custodio had achieved for *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl*.

The enthusiasm shown for *Hamlet* in Chapultepec by critics and public led the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social to invite the TCDM to present *Hamlet* in the Teatro Hidalgo (capacity 800) in the heart of Mexico City near the Palacio de Bellas Artes. This meant that Custodio would not have to pay rent for the theatre and that advertisements for *Hamlet* would be included in the listing of the theatres of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social. Custodio was delighted to accept, and he eagerly began to plan to alter the staging of the work in a way that would be suitable for a production within a theatre rather than outside a castle. He envisioned a simple Elizabethan setting with two changes of decor made in front of the audience. There was one intermission. The production in Chapultepec had been impressive for the quality of the acting and the beauty of the Castillo in the background but in the Teatro Hidalgo intimacy could be—and was—achieved, and attention centered on Shakespeare's tragedy itself. While there were some changes in the cast, it remained substantially the same with Jorge del Campo as Hamlet, Emilia Carranza as Queen Gertrude, and Susana Alexander as Ophelia. Of the two productions, critics preferred the one in the Hidalgo as did Custodio himself, and although a few of the players changed, the period in the Castillo could be considered a time for the company to perfect its acting in this Shakespearean masterpiece.

Although the first production of the 1960s should have been Custodio's adaptation of *La Celestina*, the most durable critical and financial success of the TCDM, it was not. Rojas' tragicomedy proved to be controversial in Mexico several different times. Arousing controversy is not, of course, necessarily bad for a theatrical piece because it can bring the kind of advertising that money cannot buy. However, in the case of *La Celestina*, the disadvantages of its being banned in the long run outweighed whatever value might have accrued from the controversy. Although there was no difficulty during the first showing of *La Celestina* in 1953, in a rerun in 1957, the work was temporarily prohibited, but a storm of protest among intellectuals and members of the acting, directing, producing fraternity caused the prohibition to be lifted. However, in 1960 substantially the same version of Rojas' masterpiece as in earlier productions ran into difficulties with censorship in Mexico, and Custodio was not allowed to present the tragicomedy at that time. In fact, the ban was not lifted until 1968. The difficulties with *La Celestina*, as Alvaro Custodio sees them, give some insight into the arbitrariness of the censorship in a Latin country.

Custodio was already rehearsing *La Celestina* in the Teatro Virginia Fábregas, when he heard that the play was to be prohibited. At the time a cartoon

by Guasp appeared in *Novedades* (13 enero 1960) in which one character is saying to another, "Peredo volvió a suspender *La Celestina*. . ." To which the reply is, "Nunca creí que era obra de tanto suspenso." Custodio went directly to the Oficina de Espectáculos, where Peredo, the head of the Oficina read him a list of the reasons which led to the banning of the drama and ended by saying that these were the reasons of the person who evaluated plays for the Oficina. This man was the dean of the Mexican critics, Armando de María y Campos (he preferred to write his name without an accent) who died in 1967. María y Campos had written a favorable review of *La Celestina* at the time of its opening in 1953. However, since that time he had engaged in a *polémica* with Alvaro Custodio regarding the latter's production of Jorge Ibarguengoitia's *Clotilde en su casa o un adulterio exquisito* which Custodio directed apart from his TCDM chores in 1955. María y Campos wrote what Custodio terms a scathing review of a Mexican play with a certain merit. After the opening of this play in the Sala Chopin, María y Campos wrote that it had seemed like a success on the first night because Custodio had filled the theatre with his Spanish political refugee friends, and therefore they were applauding him, a view which Custodio maintains makes little sense since the play had nothing to do with Spain, the Republic or anything of the sort. Custodio told me in an interview (8 January 1973) that he wrote an ironic letter to *Novedades* demolishing the review with wit, and María y Campos never forgave him for it. The critic intervened with the current Regente of the Distrito Federal, Uru-churtu (whose literary intuitions were not perhaps on a par with his managerial abilities), and who had done a notable task in cleaning up the markets, putting flowers into the public gardens, and water into the fountains, and convinced him that Custodio's *La Celestina* was not Rojas', that Custodio had written a pornographic version of the classic. One need only read María Rosa Lida de Malkiel's praise of Custodio's adaptation of the tragicomedy in *La originalidad artística de "La Celestina"* to know how insubstantial this charge was. The tragicomedy did not open in 1960 nor did it open until after Uru-churtu ceased to be Regente of the Distrito Federal. After eight years *La Celestina* ceased to be "una obra indigna de ser representada en un teatro de la capital de México," and permission was granted to present it. One feels that the idea of putting on *La Celestina* again obsessed Custodio, and during that time he had regularly presented a petition to the Oficina de Espectáculos asking that he be permitted to produce it.<sup>14</sup>

Now the actress who had created the title role in 1953, Amparo Villegas, was nearing eighty and to her great regret felt that she could no longer undertake the role. Although Virginia Manzano, the actress chosen to play the role, was warmly praised by the critics, Custodio himself felt she did not equal Amparo Villegas in background or dramatic temperament. Once the choice of the main actress was made, as in the case of other "reposiciones," Custodio was not content to repeat, he always strove for new effects. Here the stage of the Teatro Reforma was used like a seventeenth century *corral* with the actors mingling with the audience before the performance began. At the same time, the voice of Pleberio was heard saying the words from the monologue which ends the

tragicomedy, "¡Oh, mundo de congojas lleno, de miserias acompañado. . . !" Thus he set the tone of the work for the audience. Custodio, even aware of the use of music in Spanish theatre, added two fifteenth century songs to Act III sung by Melibea and Lucrecia accompanied by a lute, and during the intermissions the public heard Renaissance songs of Mateo Flecha, Juan Arenas, Mateo Romero, Luis Millán, Antonio Ribera, and Alonso Mudarra. Curtains designed by David Antón were used to indicate the many changes of scene during the Rojas tragicomedy.

Praise by the critics was abundant, particularly for the acting of Virginia Manzano, the scenery of David Antón, and the direction of Alvaro Custodio. Juan Tomás and other critics pointed out the beauty of the setting and costumes. As Juan Tomás said, "Para los decorados exteriores y apoyados en ediciones de *La tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea*, recurrió a la escuela italiana y primitiva, cuyos tonos suaves de color contrastan, sin embargo, con los sombríos de las escenas de algarabía y la del crimen en casa de Celestina. El vestuario (designed by Isabel Richart) es magnífico."<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of the decade during September 1960, when there was a concerted effort in Mexico to put on plays by Mexican dramatists, Celestino Gorotiza said in a memorable speech, "Si en México no se representan más frecuentemente las obras de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o de otros autores mexicanos excelentes, no es por defecto de esas obras, sino porque el público todavía no ha llegado hasta ellas."<sup>16</sup> Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Alvaro Custodio never wavered in his attempts to help cultivate public taste. In 1969 Custodio chose as his last play of the decade, Ruiz de Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*, with the roles played by essentially the same actors who had been in *Hamlet* in Chapultepec and the Teatro Hidalgo.

The play, which Custodio calls, "la más inspirada comedia del gran clásico mexicano," was presented in front of the colonial facade of the Templo de San Agustín de las Cuevas in Tlalpan, a section of Mexico City.<sup>17</sup> In April and May of 1969, the TCDM recreated a corner of Madrid, a seventeenth century street people by the principal characters plus an assortment of musicians, singers, clergymen, peddlers, beggars, craftsmen, gentlemen, and occasionally, ladies. Against the backdrop of this street, Custodio wove the adventures and intrigues of Ruiz de Alarcón's Don García. The same actor who had received abundant praise from critics and public as Hamlet, Jorge del Campo, now played Don García with Emilia Carranza as Doña Jacinta and Susana Alexander as Doña Lucrecia. The acting experience gained in changing from roles in *Hamlet* to roles in *La verdad sospechosa* is precisely the advantage of having a company such as TCDM functioning on a more or less permanent basis so that actors are enabled to switch from one role to another. The costumes designed by Isabel Richart were fashioned after paintings by Velázquez and Antonio Alatorre chose the musical selections.

Alvaro Custodio has been in the past—and continues being—a director with a dream, the dream of producing classical theatre in Mexico in worthy productions. He has adhered to his dream with surprising constancy when one considers the barriers that he has encountered: economic worries, difficulties in



training of actors, censorship, and weather conditions when using out-of-doors settings. The financial barrier, for instance, is a particularly difficult one. A theme running throughout interviews with Custodio and recurring in the *Boletín del TCDM* and *Notas y Comentarios*, is financial difficulties incurred in producing this kind of theatre. Even in a production of reduced proportions such as *El mágico prodigioso* there are many expenses, and in one such as *Moctezuma II*, with a larger cast, expensive costumes, and costs for lighting, it is difficult to make a profit. A ceiling on tickets in Mexico City makes covering basic costs a burden. Thus, for instance, Custodio charged 30 pesos (including bus fare) for *Moctezuma II* in Teotihuacán, which is outside of the Distrito Federal, when prices in the capital were twelve pesos at that time.

To alleviate the financial burden a little, Custodio has had a group of *patrocinadores* since the beginning of the TCDM. The names of these patrons appear on programs and in the *Boletines*. Such distinguished men as Luis Buñuel are listed, and the steadfastness of these individuals or companies is commendable. However, the sums given—some larger than others—are still not sufficient when one considers the expenses. As Custodio points out in the *Boletín*, some kind of official backing must be obtained to maintain classical theatre in Mexico in noteworthy productions.<sup>18</sup> In the 1960s when Custodio received official help, the results were most gratifying.

Another difficulty in Mexico is the reduced number of trained actors. On many occasions, the actors Custodio picked for his productions received valuable training in a variety of parts, and then went on to other roles. Ignacio López Tarso, for example, started with Custodio as Pármeno in *La Celestina* in 1953, and, after distinguishing himself in a few other roles with the TCDM, he went on to become one of Mexico's most highly respected actors. In the 1960s he returned to TCDM for Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso*, the *Coplas* of Jorge Manrique, and the highly successful *Moctezuma II*. When a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the TCDM took place in 1963, the list of actors doing scenes from Custodio productions was an impressive one, and López Tarso was among the actors re-creating their TCDM roles. The program is included in the Repertory at the end of this article.

Another barrier Custodio has met is censorship, specifically in regard to *La Celestina*, which was banned by the Departamento de Espectáculos from 1960-1968. This was the period when Amparo Villegas would still have been able to play the role she created in 1953, and the banning prevented the TCDM from earning funds which would have helped to pay for other productions during those eight years. Nor can the weather in Mexico be overlooked as an occasionally adverse factor for the person wanting to produce outside spectacles. At various times cold, dust, and rain interfered with productions. Yet in spite of these difficulties—economic problems, training of actors, censorship, and weather conditions—Custodio, a man whose energy and imagination have enabled him to persevere when a lesser man would have desisted long ago, has been unswerving in his attempts to bring outstanding theatre to the people of Mexico.

And what of other attempts to produce classical theatre in Mexico during

the 1960s? There were a few productions worthy of note during those years. One instance was the splendid one-night performance of *El caballero de Olmedo* directed by Enrique de Ruelas in the Plaza de San Xavier that climaxed the week of celebrations in honor of Lope de Vega in 1962 sponsored by INBA in Guanajuato. During that year Fernando Wagner directed a creditable performance of *El perro del hortelano*. Later in the decade, Juan Miguel de Mora praised Héctor Mendoza's production of Tirso's *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*, although purists might be alarmed upon reading that "ha conseguido Héctor Mendoza que las damas de Tirso hagan en la jaula el baile 'a gogo,' que los caballeros jueguen *basquet*, que todos bailen *surf*, que algunos patinen por la escena, que una protagonista cante al estilo mexicano del corrido, que otra de ellas baile un paso doble sin dejar de actuar, que un caballero adopte la posición de torero entrando a matar para amenazar a otro. . ."<sup>19</sup>

In 1969 Carlos Fernández, who had started his acting career with Custodio in the 1950s, directed *Fuenteovejuna* in the Teatro Jiménez Rueda. In evaluating his direction of Lope's play, Solana recalls a recent staging of the same drama by Felio Eliel and the 1957 production by Alvaro Custodio. As he writes, "todavía no se nos olvida la que vimos hace poco a Felio Eliel en una carpa, ni la que dieron, con caballos, en las Plaza de Chimalistac."<sup>20</sup> In his review, Solana appears to be treating a new director kindly, as he praises his use of space in the Teatro Jiménez Rueda, but laments the faulty diction of the actors in pronouncing Lope's beautiful verses. As Carlos Solórzano points out in *La Cultura en México*, "la reposición de *Fuenteovejuna* es un alivio y un aliciente que estimula, al comprobar que todos esos nuevos elementos del teatro de México están empeñados, y han de lograrlo, en continuar la tarea de todos los que (like Custodio) han querido darle una imagen que trascienda sus límites provincianos, para inscribir sus actividades en una generosa experimentación."<sup>21</sup>

In answer to an inquiry of the *Revista de la Universidad de México* about how to produce classical theatre, Custodio writes that "El teatro clásico hay que hacerlo, primero, con talento, después con buenos actores y por último con dinero. No importa el estilo, ni los procedimientos y ni siquiera las excentricidades: los grandes textos son de una increíble nobleza si se les trata con respeto, profundidad e imaginación."<sup>22</sup> It is safe to say that he himself has always treated classical theatre respectfully, profoundly, and imaginatively.

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## Notes

1. I am currently engaged in writing *The History of the Teatro Clásico de México, 1953-1973*. In January 1973 on a grant from the Language and Area Center for Latin America at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, I conducted a series of interviews with Alvaro Custodio in Mexico City, and he most graciously gave me all kinds of material to facilitate my study: programs from numerous productions, a complete set of the *Boletines del TCDM* and its supplement, *Notas y Comentarios*, copies of the publications of the TCDM, original manuscripts and their translations. For a discussion of Custodio's activities during the 1950s, see my articles, "Classical Theatre in Mexico in the 1950's," *LATR*, 4/2 (Spring 1971), 29-38, and "León Felipe: The Poet as Playwright," *Romance Notes*, Vol. 14, núm. 1 (Fall 1972), 19-22.

2. At the end of this article, see the list of plays presented during the 1960s, including locations where they were performed, and titles of the publications of the TCDM.

3. Custodio, "Agonía del teatro como gran espectáculo," *México en la Cultura*, núm. 880 (6 enero 1966), p. 1.
4. *Boletín* (15 octubre 1960), pp. 1, 7.
5. Program, *La vida es sueño*, 1965, p. 9.
6. Custodio has evinced throughout his career an interest in opinions of critics regarding his productions. Often he includes complete reviews in the *Boletín* or its supplement. These reviews were quoted at length in the *Boletín* (enero 1961), p. 5.
7. Wilberto Cantón, "Balance teatral 1954," *Panorama del Teatro en México*, núm. 6 (enero 1955), p. 52.
8. Sergio Magaña, "Autocrítica," *Panorama del Teatro en México*, núm. 1 (julio 1954), p. 33.
9. The original music was composed by professors Federico Hernández Rincón and J. Raúl Hellmer, based on indigenous themes and interpreted by them with pre-Hispanic instruments: flutes, ocarinas, whistles, huehuatl, teponaxtle, sonajas, and tortoise. This information is taken from the program in English. Many of the TCDM programs show a high artistic and literary quality. The program for *El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* has reproductions from the codices of the meeting of Moctezuma and Cortés and figures of gods who appear in the work.
10. "Autocrítica," p. 34.
11. Letter dated 16 October 1968 and printed in *Notas y Comentarios*, núm. 24 (septiembre-octubre 1968), p. 3.
12. *Ibid.*, núm. 25 (noviembre-diciembre 1968), p. 5.
13. *Ibid.*, núm. 24 (septiembre-octubre 1968), p. 5.
14. In *Notas y Comentarios* references to the prohibition of *La Celestina* abound: for instance, núm. 1 (enero 1966), pp. 1-2; núm. 7 (julio 1966), p. 1; núm. 8 (agosto 1966), p. 1.
15. Juan Tomás, *Mañana* (10 febrero 1968) quoted in *Notas y Comentarios*, núm. 20 (enero-febrero), pp. 4-5. 7 of the 8 pages of this issue are devoted to "'La Celestina' en el Teatro Reforma."
16. Quoted by Rafael Solana, *Noches de estreno* (Mexico, 1963), p. 217. The original speech is in *Cuadernos de Bellas Artes*, núm. 3 (octubre 1960), pp. 22-26.
17. *Notas y Comentarios*, núm. 26 (no month 1969), p. 1.
18. "El destino del teatro, subvención o muerte," *Boletín* (1 septiembre 1960), pp. 1, 4.
19. Juan Miguel de Mora, *Panorama del teatro en México* (Mexico, 1970), p. 89.
20. Rafael Solana, *Siempre*, núm. 818 (26 febrero 1969), p. 49.
21. Carlos Solórzano, *La Cultura en México*, núm. 367 (26 febrero 1969), p. XV.
22. Custodio, "¿Cómo debe representarse el teatro clásico?" (Respuesta a la encuesta de la *Revista de la Universidad de México*, publicada en abril 1966). Reprinted in *Lope-Calderón y Shakespeare*, pp. 62-69.

## Repertory of the TCDM from 1960-1969

Marzo y Abril de 1960—Reposición de las *Coplas* de Jorge Manrique con Ignacio López Tarso y Amparo Villegas y estreno de *El Mágico prodigioso* de Calderón de la Barca. Intérpretes: Ignacio López Tarso, Lorenzo de Rodas y Reina Montes. Música: Miguel Vicens. Canción interpretada por Rosario Durcal. Vestuario: Isabel Richart. Teatro Milán y Atrio de la Catedral de Cuernavaca, Mor.

Octubre, Noviembre y Diciembre de 1960—*La vida es sueño, auto sacramental* de Calderón de la Barca. Capilla abierta del ex-convento de Tlalmanalco, Edo. de México. Intérpretes: Sergio Bustamante, Aurora Molina, Daniel Villarán, Sergio Ramos, Marichú de Labra, Carlos Jordán, Mario Delmar, Graciela Orozco, Maricarmen Vela, Malena Doria, Raúl Quijada. Música: Juan D. Tercero. Sociedad Coral Universitaria. Vestuario: Lucile Donay. Giras con *La vida es sueño* a Taxco, Gro. (26 y 27 de noviembre), Acapulco, Gro. (Fuerte de San Diego durante el Festival Casals) y Querétaro (26 y 27 de diciembre). Se incorporó al elenco Yolanda Mérida. Reposición en el Teatro de la República de Querétaro, de *Las mocedades del Cid*.

Enero de 1961—Función especial de *La vida es sueño* en el patio conventual de la residencia del Lic. Nicolás González Jáuregui en México, D. F., para el Club Rotario de Chapultepec.

Enero de 1961—Reposición de *Las mocedades del Cid* de Guillén de Castro. Atrio de la Catedral de Cuernavaca. Intérpretes: Sergio Bustamante, Graciela Orozco, Daniel Villarán, Mario Delmar, Amparo Villegas, Malena Doria, Raúl Quijada.

Febrero de 1961—Reposición de *Las mocedades del Cid* en los Teatros Fábregas y Bosque.

Abril y Mayo de 1961—*Moctezuma II* de Sergio Magaña. Pirámide del Sol de Teotihuacán, Edo. de México. Intérpretes: Ignacio López Tarso, Daniel Villarán, Graciela Orozco, Rosa

Furman, Amado Zumaya. Ballet Raza de Bronce. Música: F. Hernández Rincón y J. Raúl Hellmer. Vestuario: Isabel Richart.

Mayo de 1961—Reposición de las *Coplas* de Jorge Manrique y *El mágico prodigioso* en la residencia del Lic. Nicolás González Jáuregui. Intérpretes: Ignacio López Tarso, Daniel Villarán, Graciela Orozco y Amparo Villegas.

Octubre de 1961—Reposición de *La discreta enamorada* de Lope de Vega en el Teatro Orientación. Intérpretes: Ofelia Guilmain, Carmen Salas, Guillermo Orea, Jorge del Campo, Sergio Ramos, León Barroso, Mario Delmar. Canciones: Antonio Alatorre.

Diciembre de 1961 a Marzo de 1962—*El regreso de Quetzalcóatl* de Alvaro Custodio. Pirámide de Teopanzolco, Cuernavaca, Mor. Música: F. Hernández y J. Raúl Hellmer. Ballet Raza de Bronce. Vestuario: Isabel Richart. Texto completo grabado en sistema estereofónico. Narrador: Daniel Villarán. Voces de Sergio Ramos, Socorro Avelar, Raúl Quijada, Héctor Andremar, Antonio Medellín. Reproducción sonora: Ing. Gustavo Cota.

Julio y Agosto de 1962—*The Legend of the Aztecs*, versión en inglés por Charles Lucas de *El Regreso de Quetzalcóatl*. Auditorio de Tijuana, B. C. Coreografía: Josefina Luna. Ballet Folklórico de Tijuana. Escenografía: Rafael Tovar. Narrador: Ronald Fletcher. Voces: Alyce Kuehne, Patrick McHenry, Mischa Dolnikoff, Charles Lucas, Raúl Ortiz y J. R. H.

Diciembre de 1962—*La cuna del niño Dios*, pastorela popular mexicana. Residencia del Sr. Jesús de la Garza. Dir. Emilio Obregón. Coro de Cámara del Colegio Alemán. Intérpretes: Alicia Quintos, Lilia Aragón, David Poval, Victoria Custodio.

Septiembre de 1963—Función extraordinaria en el Teatro Xola Lunes 9 de septiembre de 1963—X aniversario del TCDM. 1a. Parte I.—*La Celestina*, Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea de Fernando de Rojas, acto noveno. Intérpretes: Ampora Villegas, Ofelia Guilmain, Lilia Juárez, Alicia Quintos, Guillermo Orea, Sergio Ramos. Vestuario: Blanca Chacel; II.—*La vida es sueño, auto sacramental* de don Pedro Calderón de la Barca (Fragmentos). Intérpretes: Sergio Bustamante, Aurora Molina, Daniel Villarán, Sergio Ramos, Lilia Aragón, Vestuario de Lucile Donay. III.—*El regreso de Quetzalcóatl*, Adaptación de leyendas nahuas sobre la creación del mundo compuesta por Alvaro Custodio. Primera parte: Los Cinco soles. Música y efectos de Federico Hernández Rincón y J. Raúl Hellmer. Narrador: Daniel Villarán. Colaboración del Ballet Raza de Bronce. Directora y Primera Bailarina: Milagros Inda. Vestuario de Isabel Richart. 2a. Parte. I.—*Fuenteovejuna*, Comedia famosa de Lope de Vega, Monólogo de Laurencia por Ofelia Guilmain. II.—*La discreta enamorada*, comedia de enredo de Lope de Vega. Acto I. Escena 8; Acto II. Escenas 1 a 7; Acto III. Escenas 7 y 8. Intérpretes: Graciela Orozco, Alicia Quintos, Lilia Aragón, Enrique Aguilar, Guillermo Orea, Emilio Obregón, Juan Preciado, Alvaro Custodio (El Capitán Bernardo). Vestuario de Vlady. III.—*Coplas por la muerte del Maestre Don Rodrigo* de Jorge Manrique. Intérpretes: Ignacio López Tarso, Amparo Villegas, Daniel Villarán. Dirección de Alvaro Custodio. Coordinación e iluminación: Miguel Sabido.

Abril y Mayo de 1964.—*Hamlet* de Shakespeare (Traducción en prosa de Alvaro Custodio). Atrio del ex-convento agustino de Acolman. Intérpretes: Enrique Rocha, Beatriz Aguirre, Daniel Villarán; Eugenia Ríos, Eduardo MacGregor, Rogelio Guerra, Angel Casarín, Sergio Ramos. Elementos escenográficos: J. Reyes Meza. Ilustraciones musicales: Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras. Vestuario: Isabel Richart. Coordinación del espectáculo: Emilio Obregón.

Abril y mayo de 1965—*La vida es sueño* de Calderón de la Barca. Adaptación de Alvaro Custodio. Dirección de Ludwick Margules. Atrio de ex-convento Agustino de Acolman, Edo. de México. Intérpretes: Aurora Molina, Angel Pineda, Lilia Juárez, Federico Romano, Alfonso Meza, Ricardo Mondragón. Bailarines: Julieta y Rosa Bracho, Guadalupe y Carmen Castro, Fernando Valdez, Luis Fandiño. Música original de Juan D Tercero con la interpretación de la Sociedad Coral Universitaria. Elementos coreográficos dirigidos por Marianela de Montijo. Vestuario de Lucile Donnay e Isabel Richart.

Enero a Abril de 1968—*La Celestina* de Fernando de Rojas. Teatro Reforma. Intérpretes: Tomás Bárcenas, Juan Ferrara, Alicia Bonet, Miguel Córcega, Virginia Manzano, Mercedes Pascual, Mauricio Iglesias, Mauricio Herrera, Lourdes Guerrero, Belinda Corel, Enrique Gilbert. Escenografía: David Antón. Vestuario de Isabel Richart.

Octubre y Noviembre de 1968.—*Hamlet* (Traducción en verso blanco de Alvaro Custodio). En el Castillo de Chapultepec. Intérpretes: Ernesto Vilches, Pedro Lorna, Roberto Reséndez, Ramón Menéndez, Miguel Gómez Checa, Antonio Lampérez, Miguel Palmer, Farnesio de Bernal, Emilia Carranza, Jorge del Campo, Susana Alexander, Jorge Fegan, Manuel Lizola, Bernardo Castro, Angel Casarín, José Martí. Elementos escenográficos: David Antón. Música original y selección de Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras.

Febrero a Marzo de 1969.—Reposición de *Hamlet*. Teatro Hidalgo. Jorge del Campo, Emilia Carranza, Susana Alexander, Farnesio de Bernal, Manuel Lizaola, Fernando Castro, Ernesto Vilches. Los nuevos intérpretes: Ramón Menéndez, Guillermo Herrera, Enrique Becker, Ricardo Fuentes, Raúl Valerio, Rogert Oropeza, Roberto Aguilar, Alfredo Lara. Esceno-

grafía: David Antón. Vestuario: Isabel Richart. Música original y selección de Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras.

Abril y Mayo de 1969—*La verdad sospechosa* de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón ante la fachada colonial del templo de San Agustín en Tlalpan, barriada residencial de la ciudad de México. Intérpretes: Jorge del Campo, Emilia Carranza, Susana Alexander, Ramón Menéndez, Roger Oropeza, Raúl Valerio, Fernando Castro, Matías Saénz. Escenografía: David Antón. Vestuario: Isabel Richart. Guitarra de Sergio López. Canciones seleccionadas por Antonio Alatorre.

[This information was taken from the *Boletín* (julio 1963) at the time of the tenth anniversary of the TCDM and from that date it was compiled by me from materials given to me by Alvaro Custodio.]

Ediciones Teatro Clásico de México—All editions by Custodio except the last one.

*La Celestina*. Adaptación escénica. (México, 1968).

*La trágica historia de Hamlet, Príncipe de Dinamarca*. Edición bilingüe. Traducción en verso blanco. Estudio histórico y crítico. (México, 1968).

*Lope-Calderón y Shakespeare, Comparación de dos estilos dramáticos* (México, 1969).

*El patio de Monipodio*, mojiganga en dos actos basada en *Rinconete y Cortadillo*. *El celoso extremeño* y fragmentos de otras obras maestras de Don Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra (México, 1973).

Alvaro Arauz. *Teatro romántico español* (México, 1970).