

## Hispanic Theatre in the United States: Post-War to the Present

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### The Southwest

The postwar period in the Southwest has seen the gradual restoration of the amateur, semiprofessional and professional stages in the Hispanic communities of the Southwest. From the 1950's on, repertory theatres have appeared throughout the Southwest to produce Latin American, Spanish and American plays in Spanish translations. In San Antonio the extraordinary efforts of such actors as Lalo Astol, La Chata Noloesca and her daughter Velia Camargo were responsible for keeping plays and vaudeville routines alive in the communities, even if they had to be presented for free or at fundraisers. Actors like Lalo Astol made the transition to radio and television, usually as announcers, at times as writers and producers. Astol even wrote, directed and acted in locally produced television drama during the 1950's and 1960's. In Los Angeles, veteran actor-director Rafael Trujillo-Herrera maintained a theatre group almost continuously during the war and through the 1960's, made up of his drama students and professionals who quite often performed at a small theatre house that he bought, El Teatro Intimo.

While there are a few stories of valiant theatre artists managing to keep Hispanic theatre alive during the war and post-war years, in most cases the tale is of theatre houses that once housed live performances becoming cinemas forever, or at least phasing out live performances during the war and through the 1950's by occasionally hosting small troupes of vaudevillians or subscribing to the extravagant "caravanas de estrellas," or parades of recording stars, that were syndicated and promoted by the recording companies. Through these shows promenaded singers and matinee idols, with former *peladitos* and other vaudevillians serving as masters of ceremonies and comic relief. Vestiges of this business strategy still survive today in the shows of Mexican recording and movie stars of the moment which are produced, not at movie houses now, but at convention centers, sports and entertainment arenas of large capacity.

But the most remarkable story of the stage in the Southwest is the spontaneous appearance in 1965 of a labor theatre in the agricultural fields, under the directorship of Luis Valdez, and its creation of a full-blown theatrical movement that conquered the hearts and minds of artists and activists throughout the country. Under the leadership of Luis Valdez's El Teatro Campesino, for almost two decades Chicano theatres dramatized the political and cultural concerns of their communities while criss-crossing the states on tour. The movement, largely student and worker-based, eventually led to professionalism, Hollywood and Broadway productions and the creation of the discipline of Chicano theatre at universities. In 1965 the modern Chicano theatre movement was born when aspiring playwright Luis Valdez left the San Francisco Mime Troupe to join César Chávez in organizing farmworkers in Delano, California. Valdez organized farmworkers into El Teatro Campesino in an effort to popularize and raise funds for the grape boycott and farmworker strike. From the humble beginning of dramatizing the plight of farmworkers, the movement grew to include small, agitation and propaganda theatre groups in communities and on campuses around the country, and eventually developed into a total theatrical expression that would find resonance on the commercial stage and screen.

By 1968 Valdez and El Teatro Campesino had left the vineyards and lettuce fields in a conscious effort to create a theatre for the Chicano nation, a people which Valdez and other Chicano organizers of the 1960's envisioned as working-class, Spanish-speaking or bilingual, rurally oriented, and with a very strong heritage of pre-Colombian culture. By 1970 El Teatro Campesino had pioneered and developed what would come to be known as *teatro chicano*, a style of agit-prop theatre that incorporated the spiritual and presentational style of the Italian Renaissance *commedia dell' arte* with the humor, character types, folklore and popular culture of the Mexican, especially as articulated earlier in the century by the vaudeville companies and tent theatres that had toured the Southwest.

Almost overnight, groups sprang up throughout the United States to continue along Valdez's path. In streets, parks, churches and schools, Chicanos were spreading a newly found bilingual-bicultural identity through the *actos*, one-act pieces introduced by Valdez that explored all of the issues confronting Mexican Americans: the farmworker struggle for unionization, the Vietnam War, the drive for bilingual education, community control of parks and schools, the war against drug addiction and crime, and so forth.

El Teatro Campesino's *acto*, *Los vendidos* (The Sell-Outs), a farcical attack on political manipulation of Chicano stereotypes, became the most popular and imitated of the *actos*; it could be seen performed by diverse

groups from Seattle to Austin. The publication of *Actos* by Luis Valdez y El Teatro Campesino in 1971, which included *Los vendidos*, placed a ready-made repertoire in the hands of community and student groups and also supplied them with several theatrical and political canons:

1. Chicanos must be seen as a nation with geographic, religious, cultural and racial roots in Aztlán. Teatros must further the idea of nationalism, and create a national theatre based on identification with the Amerindian past.
2. The organizational support of the national theatre would be from within, for "the corazón de la Raza (the heart of our people) cannot be revolutionized on a grant from Uncle Sam."
3. Most important and valuable of all was that "the teatros must never get away from La Raza. . . . If the Raza will not come to the theatre, then the theatre must go to the Raza. This, in the long run, will determine the shape, style, content, spirit, and form of el teatro chicano."

El Teatro Campesino's extensive touring, the publicity it gained from the farmworker struggle, and the publication of *Actos* all effectively contributed to the launching of a national *teatro* movement. It reached its peak in the summer of 1976 when five *teatro* festivals were held to commemorate the Anglo bicentennial celebration. The summer's festivals also culminated a period of growth that saw some of Campesino's followers reach sufficient esthetic and political maturity to break away from Valdez. Los Angeles's Teatro Urbano, in its mordant satire of American heroes, insisted on intensifying the *teatro* movement's radicalism in the face of the Campesino's increasing religious mysticism. Santa Barbara's El Teatro de la Esperanza was achieving perfection, as no other Chicano theatre had, in working as a collective and in assimilating the teachings of Bertolt Brecht in their plays *Guadalupe* and *La víctima* (The Victim). San Jose's El Teatro de la Gente had taken the *corrido*-type *acto*, a structure that sets a mimic ballet to traditional Mexican ballads sung by a singer/narrator, and perfected it as its innovator, El Teatro Campesino, had never done. El Teatro Desengaño del Pueblo from Gary, Indiana, had succeeded in reviving the techniques of the radical theatres of the 1930's in their *Silent Partners*, an expose of corruption in a local city's construction projects.

The greatest contribution of Luis Valdez and El Teatro Campesino was their inauguration of a true grass roots theatre movement. Following Valdez's

direction, the university students and community people creating *teatro* held fast to the doctrine of never getting away from the *raza*, the grass roots Mexican. In so doing they created the perfect vehicle for communing artistically within their culture and environment. At times they idealized and romanticized the language and the culture of the *mexicano* in the United States. But they had discovered a way to mine history, folklore and religion for those elements that could best solidify the heterogeneous community and sensitize it as to class, cultural identity and politics. This indeed was revolutionary. The creation of art from the folk materials of a people, their music, humor, social configurations and environment, represented the fulfillment of Luis Valdez's vision of a Chicano national theatre.

While Campesino, after leaving the farmworker struggle, was able to experiment and rediscover the old cultural forms--the *carpas*, the *corridos*, the Virgin of Guadalupe plays, the *peladito*--it never fully succeeded in combining all of the elements it recovered and invented into a completely refined piece of revolutionary art. *La gran carpa de la familia Rascuachi* (The Tent of the Underdogs) was a beautiful creation, incorporating the spirit, history, folklore, economy and music of *la raza*. However, its proposal for the resolution of material problems through spiritual means (a superimposed construct of Aztec mythology and Catholicism) was too close to the religious beliefs and superstitions that hampered *la raza's* progress, according to many of the more radical artists and theorists of people's theatre.

The reaction of critics and many Chicano theatres playing at the fifth Chicano theatre festival, held in Mexico, was so politically and emotionally charged that a rift developed between them and El Teatro Campesino that has never been healed. El Teatro Campesino virtually withdrew from the theatre movement, and from that point on the Chicano theatres developed on their own, managing to exist as agitation and propaganda groups and raggle-taggle troupes until the end of the decade. The more successful theatres, such as El Teatro de la Esperanza, administered their own theatre house, created playwriting workshops and took up leadership of TENAZ, the Chicano theatre organization, while taking over El Teatro Campesino's former role as a national touring company. Other groups, such as Albuquerque's La Compañía, set down roots and became more of a repertory company. The decade of the 1980's saw numbers of Chicano theatre groups disbanding, as some of their members now became involved in local community theatres, with their own performance spaces and budgets supplied by state and local arts agencies. Thus, such companies as Houston's Teatro Bilingüe, San Antonio's Guadalupe Theatre and Denver's Su Teatro began serving their respective communities as stable, repertory companies. Other former Chicano theatre artists

successfully made the jump to television and movies, such as Luis Valdez himself. In fact, Valdez's play *Zoot Suit* had a successful two-year run in mainstream theatres in Los Angeles and had made its way to a Broadway and a film version. He followed up with stage and television productions of his play *Corridos* (Ballads) and then the overwhelming box-office success of his movie *La Bamba*. Other former Chicano theatre directors, like Jorge Huerta, became university professors of theatre and directors of productions in such mainstream organizations as San Diego's Globe Theatre. Thus, while the 1980's saw a disappearance of the grass-roots, guerrilla and street theatre movement among Chicanos, these were the years when greater professionalization took place and greater opportunity appeared for Chicano theatre people to make a living from their art in community theatres, at universities and even in the commercial media--the latter facilitated, of course, by the great rise of the Hispanic population and its spending power.

But the decade of the 1980's also saw the emergence of a corps of Chicano and Latino playwrights in communities from coast to coast, as the repertory theatres in the Southwest, New York and Miami began clamoring for works dealing with Hispanic culture and written in the language of Hispanics in the United States. Numerous playwriting labs, workshops and contests, such as Joseph Papp's Festival Latino in New York, sprung up from New York to Los Angeles. In the mid 1980's a major funding organization, the Ford Foundation, took official interest in Hispanic theatre and began funding, in a very significant way, not only the theatre companies in an effort to stabilize them (including El Teatro de la Esperanza), but also began supporting efforts by mainstream companies and theatres, such as the South Coast Repertory Theatre and the San Diego Repertory Theatre, to produce Hispanic material and employ Hispanic actors. Furthermore, the Ford Foundation even funded the nation's leading Hispanic press, Arte Público Press, to publish a line of Hispanic play anthologies and collections of works by the leading Hispanic playwrights. By 1991 Arte Publico Press had produced a new anthology of plays by Luis Valdez, Milcha Sánchez Scott, Severo Pérez and others (*Necessary Theatre: Six Plays of the Chicano Experience*, edited by Jorge Huerta), as well as anthologies of Hispanic women's plays, Cuban American plays, Puerto Rican plays, and collections by Luis Valdez, Dolores Prida, Edward Gallardo, Iván Acosta and Carlos Morton. It also re-issued its historic (1979) anthology that had been out-of-print for a decade: *Nuevos Pasos: Chicano and Puerto Rican Theatre*, edited by Nicolás Kanellos and Jorge Huerta.

## New York

During the war years and following, serious theatre in the Hispanic community waned, as first vaudeville drove it from the commercial stages, such as the Teatro Hispano, and then, as in the Southwest, the movies and the caravans of musical recording stars even began to drive vaudeville from the stages. Under the leadership of such directors as Marita Reid, Luis Mandret and Alejandro Elliot, full-length melodramas and realistic plays were able to survive in mutualist societies, church halls and lodges during the 1940's and 1950's, but only for smaller audiences and for weekend performances. With such attractions as La Chata Noloesca's Mexican company and Puerto Rican vaudevillians, including famed recording star Bobby Capó, vaudeville survived into the early 1960's, playing to the burgeoning working class audiences of Puerto Ricans. One notable and valiant effort was represented by Dominican actor-director Rolando Barrera's group Futurismo, which for a while during the 1940's was able to stage four productions a year of European works in Spanish translation at the Master's Auditorium. Beginning in 1950, Edwin Janer's La Farándula Panamericana staged three and four productions a year of classical works, as well as contemporary Spanish, Puerto Rican and European works at the Master's Auditorium and the Belmont Theatre.

In 1953 a play was staged that would have the most direct and lasting impact ever of any theatrical production in New York's Hispanic community. A young director, Roberto Rodríguez, introduced to a working-class audience at the Church of San Sebastian *La carreta* (The Oxcart) by an as yet unknown Puerto Rican writer, René Marqués, after its first production in Puerto Rico. The play, which deals with the dislocation of a family of mountain folk from their farm and their re-settling in a San Juan slum and then in New York City, effectively dramatized the epic of Puerto Rican migration to the United States in working-class and mountain dialect. René Marqués went on to celebrity and many more plays and productions in Puerto Rico and the continental United States, but his *La carreta* became a key for building a Puerto Rican and Hispanic theatre in New York in that it presented serious dramatic material based on the history, language and culture of the working class communities. Roberto Rodríguez joined forces with stage and screen actress Miriam Colón to form El Nuevo Círculo Dramático, which was able to administer a theatre space in a loft, Teatro Arena, in Midtown Manhattan. Although there were other minor and short-lived companies, it was El Nuevo Círculo Dramático, along with La Farándula Panamericana, that dominated the New York Hispanic stage into the early 1960's, when two incursions are made into the mainstream: in 1964 Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival began

producing Shakespearean works in Spanish and in 1965 there was an off-Broadway production of *La carreta*, starring Miriam Colón and Raúl Juliá.

The 1960's also saw the introduction of improvisational street theatre similar to Latin American people's theatre and Chicano theatre, which attempted to raise the level of political consciousness of working-class Hispanics. Among the most well known, although short-lived groups were the following ensembles, which usually developed their material as a collective: El Nuevo Teatro Pobre de las Américas (The New Poor People's Theatre of Americas), Teatro Orilla (Marginal Theatre), Teatro Guazabara (Whatsamara Theatre) and Teatro Jurutungo. But the most interesting of the improvisational troupes, and the only one to survive to the present, has been the Teatro Cuatro, named so for its first location on Fourth Avenue in the Lower East Side and made up at first of a diverse group of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and other Latin Americans. Under the directorship of an Argentine immigrant, Oscar Ciccone, and his Salvadorean wife, Cecilia Vega, the Teatro Cuatro was one of the most serious troupes, committed to developing a true radical art and to bringing together the popular theatre movement of Latin America with that of Hispanics in the United States. As such Teatro Cuatro became involved with TENAZ and the Chicano theatre movement and with *teatro popular* in Latin America, and sponsored festivals and workshops in New York with some of the leading guerrilla and politically alternate theatrical directors and companies in the hemisphere. During the late 1970's Teatro Cuatro became officially associated with Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival and began to organize the biennial Festival Latino, a festival of Hispanic popular theatre. Today, Ciccone and Vega manage the Papp organization's Hispanic productions, including the festival and a play-writing contest, while the Teatro Cuatro has gone its own way, functioning as a repertory company in its own remodeled fire-house theatre in East Harlem.

The type of theatre that has predominated in New York's cosmopolitan Hispanic culture since the 1960's is that which more or less follows the patterns established by the Nuevo Círculo Dramático and the Farándula Panamericana mentioned above, in which a corps of actors and a director of like mind work as a repertory group in producing works of their choosing in their own style. Styles and groups have proliferated, so that at any one time over the last twenty to twenty-five years at least ten groups have existed with different esthetics and audiences. Among these theatres, many of which have their own houses today, are INTAR, Miriam Colón's Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, Teatro Repertorio Español, Nuestro Teatro, Duo, Instituto Arte Teatral (IATE), Latin American Theatre Ensemble (LATE), Tremont Arte Group, Pregones and Thalia. In addition to the reason that New York has

over one million Hispanic inhabitants, another reason that so many organizations are able to survive--although many of them do not flourish--is that the state, local and private institutions that provide financial support for the arts have been generous to the theatres. Compared to other cities and states, the financial support for the arts and theatre in particular, in the capital of the U.S. theatre world, has been excellent.

The three most important theatre companies have been the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, Teatro Repertorio Español and INTAR. The PRTT, founded in 1967 by Miriam Colón, takes its name from its original identity as a mobile theatre that performed in the streets of the Puerto Rican neighborhoods. At first it performed works by some of the leading Puerto Rican writers, such as René Marqués, José Luis González and Pedro Juan Soto, alternating Spanish-language performances with English-language ones. The company also produced Latin American and Spanish works and in the early 1970's pioneered productions of works by Nuyorican and other U.S. Hispanic authors, such as those of Jesús Colón and Piri Thomas. In addition to its mobile unit, the theatre maintained a laboratory theatre and children's theatre classes. Its most important development came in 1974 when it took over and remodeled an old firehouse in the Broadway area, on 47th street, and opened its permanent theatre house. To this day, the PRTT provides the stage, audience and developmental work for New York Hispanic playwrights, such as Jaime Carrero, Edward Gallardo, Manuel Ramos Otero, Pedro Pietri and Dolores Prida.

Founded in 1969 as an offshoot of Las Artes, by exiled members of Cuba's Sociedad Pro Arte, the Teatro Repertorio Español has grown into the only Hispanic theatre in the nation specializing in the production of both classical Spanish works, such as Calderon's *La vida es sueño* and Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*, and works by contemporary authors from Latin America. It is also one of the few companies in the nation to also stage nineteenth-century *zarzuelas*. Operating today out of a theatre, the Gramercy Arts Theatre, which has a tradition of Spanish-language performances that goes back to the 1920's, the Teatro Repertorio Español caters both to educational as well as community-based audiences, with productions in both Spanish and English. The Teatro Repertorio Español is the only New York Hispanic Theatre to tour around the country. This is possible because, of the major Hispanic companies in New York, the Teatro Repertorio Español is the only one still working basically as an ensemble, while the others are production companies that hold open auditions for all of their parts.

INTAR (International Arts Relations) was founded in 1967 as ADAL (Latin American Art Group) dedicated to producing works by Latin American

authors. By 1977 under the name of INTAR the company had achieved equity status as a professional theatre. After converting a variety of structures into theatre spaces, they currently occupy a theatre on West 42nd Street near the Broadway theatre district. Under the direction of Max Ferra, the company has offered workshops for actors and directors, staged readings for playwrights and a children's theatre. Today INTAR is known for its production of classical works in new settings and innovative directing, such as María Irene Fornés's *La vida es sueño* (Life Is a Dream) and Dolores Prida's *Crisp*, based on Jacinto Benavente's *Los intereses creados* (Vested Interests). INTAR also presents works in English, including some standard non-Hispanic fare. INTAR has been particularly instrumental in developing Hispanic playwriting through its playwright's laboratory and readings, quite often following up with full productions of plays by local writers.

While the Hispanic theatrical environment in New York has been of necessity cosmopolitan and lending itself to the creation of companies with personnel from all of the Spanish-speaking countries, there have been groups which have set out to promote the work and culture of specific nationalities, such as the Puerto Ricans, the Cubans, Dominicans and Spaniards. Most notable, of course, has been the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, but also the Centro Cultural Cubano was instrumental in the 1970's in developing Cuban theatrical expression, most significantly in producing the work of Omar Torres and Iván Acosta. Acosta's play, *El Super* (The Super), has been the biggest hit to ever come out of an Hispanic company and even led to a prize-winning film adaptation. And, in general, Cuban American theatre is well represented in almost all of the Hispanic companies of New York, with Dolores Prida, Iván Acosta, Manuel Martín and Omar Torres included among the most successful playwrights.

Puerto Rican playwriting is also well represented at most of the Hispanic companies, but during the 1960's an important new focus developed among New York Puerto Ricans that had long-lasting implications for the creation of theatre and art in Hispanic working-class communities; it was called Nuyorican (New York Rican), meaning that it emerged from the artists born or raised among New York's Puerto Rican working-classes. Nuyorican theatre is not a specific form of theatre, per se. Nuyorican theatre has included such diverse theatrical genres as collectively created street theatre, as well as works by individual playwrights produced in such diverse settings as the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theatre, Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival and on Broadway itself. Although the term was first applied to literature and theatre by playwright-novelist Jaime Carrero in the late 1960's, and it finds some stylistic and thematic development

in his plays, *Noo Jall* (a play on the Spanish pronunciation of "New York and "jail") and *Pipo Subway no sabe reír* (Pipo Subway Doesn't Know How to Laugh), it was a group of playwright-poets associated with the Nuyorican Poets' Café and Joseph Papp that first defined and came to exemplify Nuyorican theatre. Included in the group were Miguel Algarín, Lucky Cienfuegos, Tato Laviera and Miguel Piñero, all of whom focused their bilingual works on the life and culture of working-class Puerto Ricans in New York. Two members of the group, Lucky Cienfuegos and Miguel Piñero, were ex-convicts who had begun their writing careers while incarcerated and they chose to develop their dramatic material from prison, street and underclass culture. Algarín, a university professor and proprietor of the Nuyorican Poets' Café, created a more avant garde aura for the collective, while the virtuoso bilingual poet, Tato Laviera, contributed lyricism and a folk and popular culture base. It was Piñero's work (and life), however, that became most celebrated, his prison drama *Short Eyes* having won an Obie and the New York Drama Critics Best American Play Award for the 1973-74 season. His success, coupled with that of fellow Nuyorican writers, ex-convict Piri Thomas and street urchin Pedro Pietri, often resulted in Nuyorican literature and theatre becoming associated with a stark naturalism and the themes of crime, drugs, abnormal sexuality and generally aberrant behavior. This led to a reaction against the term by many writers and theatre companies that were in fact emphasizing Puerto Rican working-class culture in New York. Today there is a new generation of New York Puerto Rican playwrights who were nurtured on the theatre of Piñero and the Nuyoricans, and who have also experienced greater support and opportunities for developing their work. They quite often repeat and reevaluate many of the concerns and the style and language of the earlier group, but with a sophistication and polish that has come from drama workshops, playwright residencies and university education. Among these are Juan Shamsul Alam, Edward Gallardo, Federico Fraguada, Richard Irizarry, Yvette Ramírez and Cándido Tirado, most of whom have had their works included in the historic anthology, *Recent Puerto Rican Theatre: Five Plays from New York* (1991), edited by John Antush.

## Florida

Today Hispanic theatre still finds one of its centers in Florida. However, most of the theatrical activity in Tampa has disappeared, with only the Spanish Repertory Theatre continuing to perform in the old playhouses (Centro Asturiano) with a fare that varies from the standard *zarzuelas* to Broadway

musicals in Spanish. With the exodus of refugees from the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Hispanic theatre in Florida found a new center in Miami, where the Cuban expatriates--many from middle class or upper class backgrounds were used to supporting live theatre in Cuba--founded and supported theatre companies and laid fertile ground for the support of playwrights. During the last thirty years the type of theatre that has predominated in Miami has produced standard works from throughout the Spanish-speaking world and from the theatre of exile, which is burdened with attacking communism in Cuba and promoting a nostalgia for the pre-Castro past. While the Cuban playwrights of New York, many of whom have been raised and educated in the United States, have forged an avant garde and openly Cuban *American* theatre, the Miami playwrights have been more traditional in form and content and, of course, more politically conservative. Most frequent in the exile theatre is the form and style inherited from the theatre of the absurd, from theatrical realism and, to some extent, from the comic devices and characters of the *teatro bufo cubano*; however, the predominant attitude among Cuban exile playwrights is the intellectual one, the creation of a theatre of ideas. The exile playwrights whose works are most produced in Miami are Julio Matas, José Cid Pérez, Leopoldo Hernández, José Sánchez Boudy, Celedonio González, Raúl de Cárdenas and Matías Montes Huidobro. An effort to bring together some of these with some of the newer voices, such as that of Miami's Miguel González Pando, is Rodolfo Cortina's important anthology, *Cuban American Theatre* (1991), in which the exile theatre is considered as part of the total Cuban American experience and esthetic.

But over all, the theatrical fare in Miami is eclectic, with audiences able to choose from a variety of styles and genres, from vaudeville to French-style bedroom farce, serious drama, Broadway musicals in Spanish and Spanish versions of classics, such as Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*. The theatre companies offering the most "serious" fare have included the Teatro Bellas Artes, the Teatro La Danza, Grupo Ras and Pro Arte Gratelli. Among the longest lasting theatres in Miami are Salvador Ugarte's and Ernesto Cremata's two locations of Teatro Las Máscaras, which for the most part produce light comedy and vaudeville for mostly working-class audiences. Two of impresario Ernesto Capote's three houses, the Martí Theatre and the Essex Theatre, have a steady line-up of comedies and vaudeville; and his third house, the Miami Theatre, provides an eclectic bill, including such hard-hitting dramas as *The Boys in the Band* in Spanish. The Teatro Miami's stage also serves for the taping of soap operas for television. The theatre which plays more to the working classes in Miami, as exemplified by some of the theatres named above and by some that use movie houses after the showing of the last

films, produce a type of re-incarnation of the *teatro bufo cubano* that uses working-class language and culture and uses comic style and characters from the *bufo* tradition to satirize life in Miami and Cuba under Castro. Here, comic characterizations of Fidel and his brother Raúl (Raúl Resbaloso-Slippery Raúl) join some of the traditional character types, such as Trespatines (Three Skates) and Prematura (Premature). This theatre is the most commercially successful Cuban theatre, while the other more, artistically elite and intellectual theatre often begs for audiences and depends on grants and university support for survival.

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