

Rio and Sao Paulo Theatres in 1970: Foreign Dramaturgy

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The Brazilian theatre in 1970 reached new heights in artistic achievement. The season was characterized by two major types of theatre activity. First, a number of foreign plays, particularly of contemporary French and American dramatists, were the inspiration for imaginative examples of "director's" theatre. The texts, in these cases, provided the bases for brilliant displays of directorial ingenuity and stagecraft. These productions, which illustrated some of the major trends in theatre ("physical" theatre, "poor" theatre), were of a level of professionalism which matches anything being done in the drama capitals of the world. Often, texts were chosen that reflected certain aspects of the Brazilian reality: the irrationality of the constituted order and the crisis in individual liberty.

Secondly, some of the world's major theatre figures chose to visit Brazil in 1970. Among the most famous visiting individuals and companies were Eugene Ionesco (with the company of Jacques Mauclair), Jean Genêt, the Julian Becks and other members of the Living Theatre, and Joe Chaikin, of New York's Open Theatre.

The American theatre left an impressive mark on the season. Young Brazilian directors turned to the dramaturgy of off-off Broadway and by so doing scored some of the biggest hits of the year.¹ *Hair*, which had opened in late 1969, reaped record profits in São Paulo and later in Rio. Producer Altair Lima and director Ademar Guerra (who had earlier staged *Oh! What a Lovely War* and *Marat/Sade*), with the outstanding cooperation of choreographer Máríka Gidáli and music director Cláudio Petraglio, gathered a *turma* of young unknowns who were then led by such pros as Armando Bogus and Lima himself. The production, with much less sophisticated staging than that of Broadway, was brightened by the enthusiasm of these "hippies," which compensated for the lower level of professionalism, especially in the realm of singing. The middle

class, backbone of the Brazilian theatre public, is less used to the "turned on" generation than is his North American counterpart. One result of this, coupled with the irrelevance of the Viet Nam war protest to the Brazilian situation, was to make the Brazilian *Hair* more picturesque than *engagé*. The adaptation was partial, with scenes from Brazilian *telenovelas* alternating with reference to New Jersey geography. An anti-militaristic production with Claude appearing in uniform and as a corpse at the end was simply impossible in a country where the theatre is censored by the army.

The Boys in the Band (Os Rapazes da Banda) by Matt Crowley was produced by John Herbert, a well-known actor, who also plays the "straight" character in an excellent cast led by star Walmor Chagas. Under Maurice Vaneau's fine direction, the play is now being done in São Paulo with no cuts by the censors, although it had been banned entirely in January, 1969, in Rio. Maurice Vaneau, a Belgian, was one of two important non-Brazilians to direct during 1970. He formerly directed the now-defunct Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia company, in which function he had been preceded by a long series of famous Italians (Salce, Bollini Cerri, Adolfo Celi, Alberto D'Aversa, Ruggero Jacobbi and Gianni Ratto) as well as the epoch-making Pole, Ziembinski. Today, however, direction in the Brazilian theatre is essentially nationalized.

Tom Paine by Paul Foster opened in September in São Paulo's Teatro Vereda with a spirited cast under the direction of Ademar Guerra. Othon Bastos, Miriam Muniz, and Chico de Assis led the cast. Music and choreography were by two key members of *Hair's* technical team, Cláudio Petraglio and Máríka Gidáli, and the scenographer was Joel de Carvalho. Unfortunately for the Brazilian public, the play is written with emphasis on the historical background of the American Revolution. Where *Hair* could overcome this obstacle since it is essentially not a "book" musical, *Tom Paine* stumbled. Intelligent efforts were made to inform the spectators of the "Who's Who" of that tumultuous time. Chico de Assis, in the first act, stopped the show and established a *bate-papo* with the audience. Questions were answered (as they should have been before the play began), so that there could be more response by the public thereafter. One is, however, tempted to agree with critic Sérgio Viotti, that "Tom Paine cai no Vereda como Silvério dos Reis cairia no Arena de Washington."²

Certain conclusions can be drawn about translations and adaptations. The experience of the homosexual as an urban phenomenon is quite similar in Brazil and the United States, while political-historical subjects are bound to suffer more from the dislocation. Undeniably, if true adaptations to Brazilian politics were permitted by the censors, a freer equivalency might be found, or even original Brazilian plays in this genre could be written.

Another American work, *The Exercise (O Exercício)* by John Carlino, featured an outstanding performance by Glauce Rocha, one of the greatest actresses on the Brazilian stage. Directed by Guanabara's School of Theatre Director, B. de Paiva, the show has toured nationally.

For the production of Jean Claude Van Itallie's *The Serpent*, a new group, A Gente, tried to prepare its performances in a democratic laboratory that even eliminated the role of director. The group is the brainchild of American

expatriate Lance Belville and includes carioca dancers, actors and playwrights. Klaus Vianna, a leading choreographer, had been associated with the organization throughout the early stages, but was voted out for fear that his ideas might dominate. In terms of improvisation and bodily expression, the results were interesting, but critics commented on the anachronistic references to the United States and the lack of unity and cohesion that an artistic leader might have given to *The Serpent*.³

Of translations from other countries presented in Brazil in 1970, plays from France and Germany were most in evidence. Ruth Escobar opened a theatre in the Copacabana Shopping Center (the third there including the Teatro Opinião and the Cimento Armado) with the staging of Arrabal's *The Automobile Graveyard*. Consisting of four one-act plays, *The Two Executioners*, *Prayer*, *First Communion* and the title work, the show utilizes an immense scenic space. The director, Víctor García, has the audience seated in ramps around the walls of the theatre, and on swivel seats on the unadorned concrete floor—an atmosphere reminiscent of nothing more than a large garage.⁴ The dramatic action takes place on a ramp around the sides, on a raised platform in the center of the floor, and in and on the carcasses of rusty automobile wrecks suspended from the roof at the far end of the theatre. In *The Two Executioners*, the action centers around a large jalopy, which has been prepared to open out in various different ways (the roof lifts up, the doors open vertically as well as horizontally). A scooter is driven around the ramp, and at the end, after Arrabal's Christlike protagonist has been betrayed, he is hoisted on a motorcycle into a sort of modern crucifixion.

The erotic and ritualistic aspects of the production are integrated into an example of "poor theatre" in *The Prayer*. After the murder, Fídio and Lilbe mock man's traditional relationship with God in sacrilegious paraphrases, and tumble about under a cape on the center platform. Later moments also reflect the same use of Christian symbolism to replay the Passion amidst rotting machinery, eloquent scenery of our polluted age. The orgiastic procession which accompanies the Grandmother's bourgeois marriage advice—the first communion of the title—integrates dance, primal rhythm, costumes, and scenic space, and reaches a masterful climax.⁵

Later in the season, Ruth Escobar produced, and García directed, a play by Genêt that turned into the hit of the São Paulo *temporada*. *The Balcony* was a refinement of the physical theatre García evolved through *The Automobile Graveyard*. In the latter, the seating of the audience high on tiers, the rather acrobatic activity on the cars suspended high above the floor, and the bizarre *mise-en-scène* foreshadowed García's version of Genêt's play. The former utilized a specific form, the funnel, and developed a more complicated set of spatial relations in the scenic space.

His montage, constructed by workmen in over five months (at twenty hours a day) was done in conjunction with designer Wladimir Pereira Cardoso, cost an unprecedented sum (about \$50,000) and required the rebuilding of the Teatro Ruth Escobar.⁶ The structure consists of five tiers in which the audience sits on padded metal benches surrounding a funnel-shaped space about twenty meters deep. These ramps are not on the horizontal, but rather are angled

toward the pit, and to add to the sense of suspension, there are no solid surfaces. Some 500,000 soldered points are used to create an iron mesh framework which is solid and yet airy. At the bottom of the funnel, a parabolic mirror reflects up through the "stage" (a translucent acrylic dish). This, in turn, is raised and lowered by cranes and when not in use is retracted up and out of the way on the ceiling.

The opening scene utilizes the movable stage or module, as a common man, carrying out his fantasies by acting out the role of Bishop dressed in full regalia, is lowered on it from the top level. In the second scene the Judge, the Executioner, and the Woman Thief enter upon the stage, which is down below the five levels in rest position, through the stands or by means of the five individual elevators that are positioned around the funnel. Entrance onto the stage at rest is also effected by manual lowering of "bridges" from the bottom tier. In addition, cranes are used to maneuver suspended cages in which Irma, the Madame, and Carmen, her favorite, converse in the second act. Harnesses are employed, as well, to suspend actors in space so that the action occurs not only below the spectators (as with Grotowski) but above and in motion. Besides using the funnel itself, the Executioner chases his victim through the stands, and groups of Revolutionaries constantly burst through the audience. In the act in which we see Roger, leader of the Revolutionaries, with his lover, Chantal and his followers, a section of the entire structure opens mechanically, moving the public seated in that section back and away from the stage—opening an end of the circle. This gap also reveals an area behind the montage that is used for some of the action, as is a space *under* the Leader and his lover which is occupied by his followers. They reason with him and yet their physical position reflects a subservience to him.

García's version of *The Balcony* is a brilliant example of "physical theatre" which succeeds in creating a house of illusions, surrounded by terror and violence. It functions as a great metaphor of the theatre, where men give substance to their fantasies within the fearful oppression of a dictatorial regime. The show won 14 prizes in São Paulo, and audiences have filled houses for over a year, despite the revolutionary nature of the text and the spectacle. Controversy has raged over the apparently secondary role of the text. Translator Martin Gonçalves himself directed another approach to the play in Rio in August, one which used the proscenium stage and in which the text was virtually uncut. García, however, worked closely with Genêt on his interpretation, and this writer believes that despite the acrobatics, at no time was the language of the play lost. On the contrary, the staging served to give physical form to the essential ideas of the French playwright.⁷

Jean Genêt was invited by Ruth Escobar and Víctor García to see *The Balcony* in 1970. In characteristic fashion he refused to see the press on arrival in Brazil, rested the first evening instead of rushing to the theatre (thereby shocking the many who had expectantly awaited him), and then commented after the show, when asked his opinion, "Trés bien' if you care for theatre." Obviously, he did not. Genêt left soon after for Bahia, where he intended to learn something about Brazil's African traditions.

The third outstanding avant-garde French play of the season, in Rio and São Paulo, was Ivã de Albuquerque's version of *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria* by Fernando Arrabal. The young carioca director and actor had jointly founded the Teatro do Rio with Rubens Corrêa about ten years ago. In 1968 they opened a new house, the Teatro Ipanema, which has since been in the forefront of good theatre in Brazil.⁸ Expecting only a run of some six weeks with the exhausting *Architect*, Ivã and his two man cast of Rubens and José Wilker were overwhelmed by the critical and box office response. After four months in Rio, in September they traveled to São Paulo where they received excellent reviews. They were less successful with the public there, however. Nonetheless, it is quite impressive to have managed a half year run for a difficult play with only two actors and none of the gadgetry that had drawn curious audiences at *The Balcony*.

The play is a tale of a modern Robinson Crusoe with his man Friday, whose explorations are of the subconscious and not of the isle they inhabit. The excellent translation of Leyla Ribeiro, wife of the director, renders into Portuguese the nightmarish images of the Arrabal's fundamental truths. Aided by choreographic direction and evocative lighting, the two superbly conditioned actors convincingly portray the characters: the Emperor, an air crash survivor whose words echo an empty civilization and whose "philosophy" is nothing but a grandiloquent collection of clichés, and the Architect, the uncorrupted native with the innate power to move mountains. The strength of some of the scenes sear their way into the memory of the spectator. Rubens, as the Emperor, drags up from his tortured subconscious the guilt of the murder of his mother, and is brilliant in playing the accusing wife and brother in the mock trial. In another scene he displays a *tour de force* of acting skill using a doll to imitate the act of giving birth.

Other French plays in translation included an outstanding *Endgame* (Fim de Jôgo) in Rio with Sérgio Brito as Hamm inaugurating his new "Senac" Theatre. Amir Haddad, the director (and co-founder of the important experimental group, A Comunidade), created a simple version of this twentieth-century masterpiece. Under his guidance, Brito, from his wheelchair, captured through a detailed use of his hands and face the tired anguish of Hamm. The Molière prize winner of 1969 for his production of *A Construção*, a highly innovative interpretation of a Northeast tragedy, Haddad has assumed one of the leadership positions in Brazilian theatre direction. Co-founder with José Celso Martínez Corrêa of the Oficina in São Paulo thirteen years ago, he subsequently spent several years in Belém teaching at the Escola de Teatro da Universidade Federal do Pará. Returning to Rio, he briefly headed the João Caetano Theatre after its long delayed restoration was completed in September, 1965, and worked with the theatre group of the Catholic University of Rio, doing the *Coronel de Macambira* (by Joaquim Cardoso) in 1967 and *O Capeta em Carauru* (by Adomar Conrado) in March of 1968 with the Grupo 3. In September of that year co-director Paulo Affonso Grisolli launched A Comunidade with *The Parable of the Taming of the Shrew*. From the work developed with the ensemble came the prize-garnering *Construção* by Altimar Pimentel in June of

1969. During the past season, Amir had two more productions with A Comunidade: *Agamemnon* and *Depois do Corpo*. In addition to *Endgame*, this year he directed a "vaudeville" interpretation of the dated *A Dama do Camarote* by Castro Viana, a sort of Brazilian Feydeau.

Agamemnon was staged in a wooden construction built especially for the production. The spectators sat within the area and action took place around and above them. The entire set was painted red to create a climate of bloodshed and passion. The adapted text of Aeschylus was recited, passing from one to another of the cast in a highly improvisational manner. The main characters were distinguished by using a distinctive cape or mantle which was requested and interchanged freely (with male actors taking female roles and vice versa). Other innovations included the distribution of lights throughout the space, turned on and off by the actors as the focus of action shifted; the smearing-on of red paint to designate the victims of violence; songs, non-verbal use of the voice, and the use of drums and other primitive instruments. There was a mixed response from the critics and the public to this rather avant-garde experiment. The show suffered from insufficient rehearsal due to the lack of even minimal economic support. Other shortcomings could be attributable to inadequacies in the more traditional acting skills, bypassed in the effort to be *para-frentex*—to be "with it." Whatever its imperfections, A Comunidade is still a unique group in Brazil although others (A Gente in Rio and 13 de Maio in São Paulo) with similar aims have sprung up recently.

Inevitably, the master of French comic playwrighting, Molière, was represented by several productions. *Les Foberies de Scapin* received a run at the Arena Theatre for schoolchildren, as well as a presentation in Rio for a similar audience. In July the Oficina did a version of *Dom Juan* by Molière that starred actor-writer Gianfrancesco Guarnieri. Billed as "opera-rock," Fernando Peixoto's production underlined the rebellious nature of the protagonist more than his penchant for women. There was a certain oscillation between a visual and musical pageant on one hand, and a great appreciation for the words of Molière on the other. Sábado Magaldi pointed out the conflict between irrational music and lucid text. He could not accept Peixoto's interpretation entirely. "O motivo provável é que o texto de Molière, apesar da intervenção do sobrenatural, se desenvolve com permanente lucidez, e o desvario do rock apela para o irracional das cenas coletivas, pelo próprio envolvimento sonoro, sufoca em grande parte a dureza do diálogo. E a limpidez genial da voz de Molière se dilui na ênfase da música."⁹

The Greek classics made their appearance in the 1970 season in several productions besides *Agamemnon*. Cleyde Yáconis, sister of the former first lady of Brazilian stage, Cacilda Becker (who died in June, 1969), was a striking *Medea*. The supporting cast, unfortunately, was weak, and director Silnei Siqueira too conservative in his conception. The *Mito de Medeia* was a student performance at the School of Theatre in Rio that showed the results of six months of Jungian research on archetypes. In São Paulo the School of Dramatic Art tackled *The Bacchae* for its end-of-year exam in December, and the direction of professional Celso Nunes led to a very positive experience there as well.

Spain was not absent from the boards either. Two plays by Cervantes and a Lorca masterpiece were presented with varying results. They included an adaptation of *La Numancia*, and of *Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*, as well as *El retablo de las maravillas*.

Several German plays were done in translation by the Arena Theatre of São Paulo, beginning with Antônio Pedro's production of the *Bravo Soldado Schweik* by Jaroslav Husek, in Bertold Brecht's adaptation. Virtually the same production had been seen in Rio in November, 1967, starring Hélio Ary with Antônio Pedro as director. Although the earlier version was successful, the June, 1970, show revealed certain serious problems in the group. Arena staging is, by definition, very demanding on the actors. In addition, Augusto Boal, the artistic director of the theatre, has formulated a dramatic theory called the *coringa* or "Joker" system. Among its characteristics is the sharing of roles throughout the cast, retaining certain salient features (an article of clothing, a lisp, a limp) so that the audience can follow the rapid changes.¹⁰ Despite the fine work of a few veteran actors, especially Ary, the remainder of the players were inexperienced, and in this modified *coringa* production, they had no place to hide.

Its next production, of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, although much better, still was not up to the standards of the golden days of the Arena. It marked the return of Guarnieri (in the title role) to his artistic home, which he left in 1967. Just as Antônio Pedro's *Schweik* showed the absurdity of war, Boal's *Arturo Ui* laid bare the intimidation and mendacity that make a Hitler possible. Censorship gave neither show difficulties despite the clear applicability to contemporary Brazil. The Arena has a large following because it has challenged the regime head-on with shows like the *Primeira Feira Paulista de Opinião*, drawn parallels between current events and past examples from Brazilian history, and presented numerous plays of foreign authorship that ridicule militarism and appeal to the Brazilian conscience to resist oppression.¹¹ The Arena continues to follow the same orientation toward nationalistic, pacifist social theatre that it has since the "Seminário de Dramaturgia."¹² Although Gianfrancesco Guarnieri is no longer officially associated with it, other important young directors, scenographers, and technicians have emerged. Carioca actor-director Antônio Pedro, Luís Carlos Arutim, who both acts and directs, and scenographer Marcos Weinstock all aid Boal in running the theatre.

Schiller's *Love and Intrigue* was playing for the first few months of the year, in a version by the "Teatro do SESI," the Teatro Popular de Serviço Social da Indústria, which performs in São Paulo's Teatro de Arte Israelita Brasileiro. It maintains a company for its productions, which have, at times, run for long periods. The money is provided by the industrialists and attendance is free for the workers and their families. Under the artistic direction of Osmar Rodrigues Cruz, it has presented works by foreign authors as M. Richard Nash, Marivaux, Lorca and Gil Vicente, and Brazilians ranging from Rachel de Queiroz and Antônio Callado to Oduvaldo Vianna. Through the Schiller production, the company has given 2,242 performances to over a million theatre-goers. In addition to the regular program, a road company plays at all times throughout the interior of the State of São Paulo (in 1970 they were doing an adaptation of

White Nights by Dostoyevsky). The children's theatre is held in SESI schools and in the theatre on Rua Três Rios. The longest-running show in its eleven years of existence (seven as a professional group) was *The Miracle Worker*, which ran for two years and three months in the capital and seven months in the interior, playing in all before 378,956 spectators.¹³

One of the most effective productions of the second semester was Celso Nunes' direction in São Paulo of *The Investigation* by Peter Weiss.¹⁴ The Studio São Pedro's excellent cast featured Fernando Tôrres, Sílvio Zilber and Lineu Dias as the attorneys and the judge, and Renato Consorte as a composite of all eighteen of the accused. Nunes retained all eleven of the *cantos* of which the play is composed, but made large cuts to reduce the play to two and a half hours. When Consorte appeared in the docket, slides of each defendant were projected, and the actor assumed the character of the man whose actual testimony he repeated. The victims, dressed in striped prison garb and speaking in unison or overlapping voices in many scenes, conveyed the horror of their experience. Slides, music, and non-verbal communication were well employed and the cast spent weeks reading about and looking at pictures of the concentration camps to bring an immediacy of experience to their interpretation.¹⁵ Here, as elsewhere in Brazilian theatre in 1970, the reference to the Nazi victims' passive acceptance of the dictates of the state draws obvious parallels to current problems. For instance, Brecht's *Terror and Misery of the Third Reich* received a commendable treatment in the June exams at the School of Dramatic Art in São Paulo.

England was represented by three Shakespearean plays and several modern detective shows. Maria della Costa and her husband, the producer Sandro Poloni, starred in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. A production of *Hamlet* opened in 1969 which featured Walmor Chagas, under the direction of Flávio Rangel.¹⁶ On the other end of the spectrum from these unimaginative and traditional shows was Fauzi Arap's version of *Macbeth*. Starring Paulo Autran and Tônia Carrero, it tried too hard to be modern and clever.¹⁷ And now let us turn to the visitors. Genêt has already been mentioned.

Ionesco came as a celebrity, recently elected to the Academie Française, to lecture and to be lionized. Brazilians of the *classe teatral* found most of the works presented by the Company of Jacques Mauclair (*La Leçon, Les Chaises*, and other more recent and secondary plays) uninteresting and the performances very uninspired. Of course, the Teatro Municipal was filled with glittering members of the aristocracy, but critics and serious students of theatre were greatly disappointed.

The Living Theatre came to Brazil in August on the invitations of José Celso Martínez Corrêa, director of the Teatro Oficina who had met them in Paris, and of producer Ruth Escobar, who offered to foot the bill. Celso's original plan was to have the Becks and a few other Americans from their company work in the Oficina theatre with the Oficina regulars (Renato Borghi, Fernando Peixoto, *et al.*) and the Grupo Lobo, five young actors from Argentina. Other participants, at the outset, included numerous outstanding figures in the São Paulo theatre scene. Meetings were held in which the Becks explained their

motives for the Brazilian experiment and engaged in frank exchanges with critics, directors and actors, who received them warmly and with some awe.

The workshop, as well as the "rap" sessions, were greatly handicapped, however, by several key factors. It was obvious that the Americans had no previous knowledge of Brazil, and although they engaged in long, polemical discussions of politics, and assured everyone that they had come to "get into" Brazil, the impression which they gave was more one of superimposing their perceptions, biases and style on the hosts. While at first they received the deference they expected, they were in fact working with the leading innovator in Brazilian direction, José Celso, and members of the Oficina, experienced professionals who had shocked and fascinated with their productions of Oswald de Andrade's *O Rei da Vela* and Brecht's *Na Selva das Cidades*. The Brazilians wanted collaboration; the Becks expected to dominate.

Ruth Escobar gradually became impatient for some public demonstration of the laboratories and insisted that the group accept two nominees from the Brazilian theatre to give the experiment breadth in its national representation. The outstanding actor and director Fauzi Arap and the brilliant scenographer, Flávio Império, were suggested. The Becks refused, and instead took in several young actors and actresses who would be more malleable. Both the Oficina and Ruth thereupon decided to go their own ways, and the attempted joint effort was abandoned.

In December, 1970, the Living Theatre received money from the São Paulo State Theatre Commission under President Renata Pallotini to give a laboratory for the students of the School of Dramatic Art of the University of São Paulo. The faculty of the theatre school voted to schedule these classes after the end of the term performances and before the Christmas vacation. Although the "Living's" stay in Brazil has not been as successful up to the present as it might have been, there is no question that the interest stimulated and the intellectual ferment generated reflects the already existing high professional standards and open-minded internationalism of the *classe teatral*.¹⁸ On July 1, 1971, the Living Theatre members, who had been living in Ouro Preto for several months, were arrested by the DOPS for possession of marijuana. Julian Beck, Judith Malina, and 11 others were expelled from Brazil by order of President Médici at the end of the next month.

In August, under the auspices of the Instituto Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos, and on the suggestion of Yan Michalski, critic of the *Jornal do Brasil*, Joe Chaikin came from New York to Rio. A former key figure in the "Living," he had left to found the Open Theatre, where he currently directs. A group of eighteen leading actors was chosen from all the local theatre companies and productions, ranging from established professionals to young talents. Through an interpreter, Roberto de Cleto, Assistant Director of the School of Theatre of Guanabara where the lab took place, Chaikin introduced and ably illustrated techniques for relaxation, non-verbal use of the voice, and bodily expression. Attending as well were critics, directors and choreographers who took notes, asked questions and participated in a less physical manner than the actors.

Every day for over a week Chaikin worked from 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. or

later, and despite the busy schedule and short stay he managed to see some local theatre (he was especially invited by Víctor García to see *Automobile Graveyard* when it was still in rehearsal).¹⁹ He also visited a *favela* with director Luís Mendonça, where the latter teaches hygiene by means of theatre. Luis attended the lab and his wife Ilva Niño, a noted actress, also participated.²⁰ Yan Michalski succinctly summed up the importance of Chaikin's visit: "Desde a visita do saudoso diretor George Devine, em 1963, nenhum homem de teatro estrangeiro trouxe ao nosso teatro uma contribuição tão construtiva como Joe Chaikin. . . ." ²¹

A note must be added here concerning the Oficina's season, since this is one of Brazil's most important groups. The difficulties it faced were reflected in its work, which during 1970 was not indicative of the group's outstanding ability. After the successes of *O Rei da Vela* (1968), *Galileo* (1969) and *Na Selva das Cidades* (1969), José Celso travelled for the first six months of 1970. It was during this time that the Living Theatre was invited. With the frustration of the plan, bickering within the company (actress Ítala Nândi left in a dispute over a film done in Santa Catarina by the Oficina in July and August), and the need to eliminate the large debt (estimated at \$16,000) accumulated by the company, the decision was made late in 1970 to restage *Dom Juan*, *Galileo* and *Selva*. In the company's much-publicized "Saldo para o Salto" (the *salto* perhaps being the leap into the unknown with the Living Theatre), Raul Cortês replaced Guarnieri as Dom Juan, and in *Galileo* Renato Borghi replaced Cláudio Corrêa e Castro. Neither show "took fire." Even worse, in the *Galileo*, a controversial "carnaval" scene was retained and caused more stir than usual when several of the actors, on the last night of performance, decided to disrobe. An irate *pater familias* complained to the police, and the press had a field day.

The group spent December restudying Oswald de Andrade. In January, 1971, it opened in Rio with a restaging of another former success, *Os Pequenos Burgueses*; in February they did *O Rei da Vela* again, and filmed it. The Oficina had a bad year in 1970, but had its Living-Lobo experiment worked, it would have been a great breakthrough for modern staging in Brazil.

The variety of theatre fare in translation was truly impressive in Brazil in 1970. Often foreign dramas lent themselves to an interpretation which provided a relevant comment on Brazilian reality that would have been denied by censorship to native dramaturgy. The firsthand contact of American and European playwrights and directors with the Brazilian stage helped to stimulate the already sophisticated *classe teatral*. Experimental and commercial, "physical" and "poor," all the important directions of world theatre were represented. It was a season that Brazilians could truly be proud of.

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Notes

1. From Broadway they imported *Promises, Promises*, starring Jardel Filho. In 1971, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Man from La Mancha*, in Rio; and *Luv* by Schisgal in São Paulo. In 1970, *The Price*, *Plaza Suite* and *There's a Girl in My Soup*.

2. Sérgio Viotti, "O Herói Traidor no Arena," *Estado de São Paulo*, October 11, 1970.

3. See Michalski's review, *Jornal do Brasil*, November 26, 1970, and Lance Belville, "Behind the Scenes in Brazil: Notes from an American Producer," *Brazil Herald*, November 29, 1970.

4. Víctor García is a Franco-Argentine director, aside from Vaneau the only other foreigner to direct during 1970, who first came to Brazil in 1968, and now makes his home there part of the year. His sensational production of *The Balcony* with the courageous backing of impresario-producer Ruth Escobar was the greatest success of 1970. Originally invited to Brazil to stage the *Cemitério de Automóveis* in São Paulo (November, 1968), which he did again last year in Rio, García made his reputation in France. He is also an associate director with Peter Brook in the International Center for Theatre Research. García won first prize at the Théâtre des Nations with a play of Lorca in 1963, directed for the Compagnie Marie Serrau *Rosa de Papel* of Valle-Inclán and the *Retablillo de Don Cristóbal* of Lorca (1964), which won first prize at the International Festival of Lisbon. He also did *Ubu Roi* of Jarry, *Así que pasan cinco años* of Lorca, the *Automobile Graveyard* (in Dijon in 1966), *Autos Sacramentais* of Gil Vicente and the *Gran teatro del mundo* of Calderón (1967). In 1968 he performed an unpublished oratorio of Claudel, *La Sagesse ou la Parabole du Festin* (1968), as well as *Les Bonnes* of Genêt for the Cia. Nuria Espert in Belgrade at the International Festival where he won first prize.

5. As Fernando Arrabal said, in "Entretiens avec Arrabal," as quoted by Yan Michalski, "Digo sempre ao diretor: faça algo de prodigioso, mesmo que você me traia. Às vezes fico chocado, mas deixo sempre uma liberdade total . . . [em] *Cemitério de Automóveis*, por exemplo. Essa construção desaparece completamente no trabalho que Vitor García fez em cima da minha obra. . . . Trata-se de uma satisfação inteiramente pessoal." *Jornal do Brasil*, August 16/17, 1970.

6. Pereira Cardoso is an architect by training, and was married to Ruth Escobar. He has since been running directing at the Teatro 13 de Maio.

7. The cast, at least at the opening, in January, 1970, was first rate (there have been many substitutions during the long run). It included Rofran Fernandes, Célia Helena, Sérgio Mamberti, Jonas Mello, Dionísio de Azevedo, Thelma Reston, Ruth Escobar, Paulo César Pereio, and Carlos Augusto Strazzer in major roles. On January 28, 1971, Ruth Escobar and Rofran Fernandes (who is assistant director) came to New York to show the documentary film of *The Balcony* by José Agrippino de Paula. They were introduced to a distinguished group of possible backers for a New York production by Joseph Papp at the Public Theatre. The author of this article attended and participated. Also, on February 11, the author and Joanne Pottlitzer showed the film and spoke at Brooklyn College.

8. Plays presented include *The Cherry Orchard* by Chekhov, *Diary of a Madman* by Gogol, *O Assalto* by José Vicente, *La noche de los asesinos* by José Triana, and *Como Se Livrar da Coisa* by Ionesco.

9. Review in *Jornal da Tarde*, July 28, 1970.

10. This "Coringa System" was described in the introduction to *Arena Conta Tiradentes* (Ed. Sagarana, 1967), 23-56, and in *The Drama Review*, T 46 (Winter, 1970). Boal won the 1967 Molière prize of Air France for the theory. For a contesting view, see Anatol Rosenfeld, "Heróis e Coringas," *Teoria e Prática* (São Paulo), No. 2, 24-52.

11. In February of 1971 Boal was picked up by the DOPS (Departamento de Ordem Pública e Segurança) and held for several months. In April he was released thanks largely to pressure from American theatre personalities, such as Arthur Miller, Joseph Papp, and others. He is currently living in Argentina and will be tried *in absentia*.

12. The period from about 1958 to 1962, in which playwrights such as Guarnieri, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, Roberto Freire, Francisco de Assis, Augusto Boal emerged from the Arena workshop.

13. There have been other experiments in popular theatre in Brazil, based on Jean Vilar's concept, such as the Pequeno Teatro Popular of Emílio Fontana in the late 50s and early 60s. In Recife the Teatro Popular do Nordeste is very successful, as was the Teatro de Cultura Popular, which was run by Director Luis Mendonça for political ends until 1964. However, the SESI is unique in Brazil.

14. The term "semestre" is used in Brazil to divide the season into two parts. These correspond to the school year (March to June, August to January) and are employed by producers and the Theatre Commission with regard to subsidy. I have decided to use its English equivalent for convenience's sake.

15. It was not hard for the cast to get into the mood. A co-owner of the theatre, Maurício Segall (whose wife, Beatriz, was in the production), was arrested at about this time for subversion and held incommunicado. At the time of this writing he still has not been released.

16. Several of the leading directors did not do much in the theatre in 1970. Rangel wrote for the weekly *Pasquim*, the only opposition publication allowed the Brazilian press. It too

was closed and the entire staff arrested for several months in 1970. Gianni Ratto only directed Dias Gomes' *Odovico*. He seems to have been badly burned by the failure of the Teatro Nôvo, a center for the arts created in Rio by industrialist Paulo Ferraz in 1968. In São Paulo, Antunes Filho spent the year making a movie, but has an exciting *Peer Gynt* planned for 1971.

17. Yan Michalski, Review, *Jornal do Brasil*, July 9 and July 21, 1970, as well as "Macbeth Revisitado," *Jornal do Brasil*, August 18, 1970.

18. For an interesting analysis of the Living Theatre and The Lobos' visit, see Anatol Rosenfeld, "Living Theater e o Grupo Lobo," *Palco + Platéia* (São Paulo), No. 5 (Agosto 1970), 34-38.

19. The author of this article served as interpreter for the evening these two talented directors spent together, August 5, 1970.

20. For more about Mendonça's fine work in a plastics factory, see Barbara Heliodora, "Theatre in Rio de Janeiro, 1968," *LATR*, 3/1 (Fall, 1969), 49-59. He is employed by the State Public Health Ministry and has had great success. Ilva made her debut in Rio as the baker's wife in the original production of *Auto da Compadecida*.

21. "Sentido de Uma Visita," *Jornal do Brasil*, August 13, 1970.

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