

LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE REVIEW

*a Journal devoted to
the Theatre and Drama
of Spanish and Portuguese
America*

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Abstracts

George O. Schanzer, "El teatro hispanoamericano de post mortem."

In the last two decades a number of Spanish American authors have written plays whose characters, all or nearly all, are dead before the curtain rises. Seven such plays are examined, by seven authors from five countries. These works by well-known writers were performed, printed (most of them repeatedly), and some also translated to other tongues. They range from one-act to full-length plays and from those in a lighter vein to works of profound seriousness; theatrically, from static starkness to ritual dynamics. While the presentation of dead characters is hardly new, the question arises whether these contemporary Spanish American plays, which are not retrospective in plot, may represent another form of the theater of the absurd. However, an examination of the seven plays reveals that in spite of the great variety of treatment, their authors seem to share a belief in human freedom and responsibility as well as in some continuity of existence. These ideas are deeply rooted in the popular Hispanic tradition. Therefore, the modern post-mortem plays somehow evoke the religious theater of old. (GOS)

William L. Siemens, "Assault on the Schizoid Wasteland: René Marqués' *El apartamento*."

In this play René Marqués reflects his concern over the apparent abandonment by the Latin American societies of their creativity in favor of a quest for convenience and security. Typically, he chooses the psychological mode for his expression of the problem, so that the features of the existence of his two principal characters reflect the characteristics of a schizoid individual. Thus they find themselves totally isolated from exterior reality in their apartment, with all their needs provided impersonally. When, after twenty years, there is dissatisfaction, their youthful creativity becomes incarnate in two characters who attempt to lure them from their circumstances. Their ontological insecurity results in the appearance of two more characters representing the forces of repression, who manage to kill the other newcomers. The only hope held out is in the appearance of an Indian symbolizing "America's historical conscience," who is bound by the "inspectors" but finally set free by the two original characters. (WLS)

René de Costa, "The Dramaturgy of Florencio Sánchez: An Analysis of *Barranca abajo*."

The *dénouement* of *Barranca abajo* has been the subject of critical debate since the play's premiere in Buenos Aires in 1905. An intrinsic analysis of Florencio Sánchez' major work reveals that the principal action concerns the protagonist's repeated assertion of self in his various efforts to retain his patriarchal position. The three-act form was advantageously used to represent the psychic anguish of Don Zoilo deepened by the loss of his estate, his civil standing, and finally, his family. The pattern is similar to that of *King Lear*. The suicide of Don Zoilo when viewed in the comparative context of Shakespeare's play does not seem so inappropriate as the River Plate critics have maintained. The dramatic question is not do gauchos commit suicide, but rather why do the fallen patriarchs (Zoilo, Lear) prefer death? The series of misfortunes afflicting both fathers leads to their insanity and death, and the untimely demise of a faithful daughter (Robusta, Cordelia) is the final blow for both defeated men. Florencio Sánchez carefully patterned the action of *Barranca abajo* so as to raise the plight of an ordinary *criollo* to the noble dimension of tragedy. (RD)

Hans Ehrmann, "Chilean Theatre: 1971-1973."

This article discusses the theatrical development in Chile during 1971 through 1973, while Chile was under the regime of the Unidad Popular. Emphasis in the theatre was placed on social commentary and reform, in regard to thematic content as well as constituting the basis for evaluating "good" theatre. Discussion of university theatre as well as professional theatrical companies is included. As political polarization intensified and the middle class began opposing the Allende government, the "social content" plays were rejected and light comedies and escapist fare became the norm. Also, a tentative peasant and working class theatre emerged, as in the Teatro Nuevo Popular; this proved to be innovative but sporadic.

The content of these plays dealt with class struggle, with the ruling class opposing the workers and peasants. A contrast is evident between the *teatro campesino* and the downtown, traditional plays, representative of the general polarization in Chile during this period. (CG)

Eleanore M. Dial, "Alvaro Custodio and His Continuing Dream: The Teatro Clásico de México in the 1960's."

Alvaro Custodio, founder of the Teatro Clásico de México (TCDM) in 1953, has had a dream of elevating the taste of theatre audiences in Mexico by presenting worthy productions of classical theatre, for the most part Golden Age drama. In the 1960's Custodio broadened the scope of his activities from Spanish classical theatre 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*. He again presented *La Celestina*. He continued to bring his vision to the theatre in Mexico and a major contribution during the decade was his imaginative use of historical settings (both indoors and outdoors), varying from pyramids to colonial churches or homes. Custodio also founded in this decade the Ediciones del TCDM which include his stage adaptation of Rojas' *La Celestina* (1968) and a bilingual edition of *Hamlet* (1968), which he translated in blank verse. (EMD)

Eugene R. Skinner, "Research Guide to Post-Revolutionary Cuban Drama."

This bibliography represents an attempt to construct from existing general bibliographies and from personal research in the Cuban journals *Casa de las Américas*, *Cuba internacional*, *Cuba, revista mensual* and *INRA*, a specialized bibliography on Cuban theatre since 1959. It includes three types of entries: general bibliographies employed in gathering data (12 items), article and book length reports (131 items), and reviews of books and of plays published during the post-revolutionary period (23 items). Paragraph length notices of plays in performance found in *Cuba internacional* and *Cuba, revista mensual* have not been included nor have titles of published plays. Future work in this area should include a more comprehensive sampling of Cuban journals and a bibliography of plays published and/or performed. (ERS)

Enrica Jemma Glickman, "Italian Dramatic Companies and the Peruvian Stage in the 1870's: Part II."

Part II: In 1874 Celestina Paladini, formerly the leading lady of Ernesto Rossi's company, returned to Peru at the head of her own troupe. The attractiveness of her repertory rested primarily on its novelty and variety, as it included no less than thirteen Italian dramatists along with numerous French and Spanish authors. Also in 1874 the famous Adelaide Ristori visited Lima. Her world-wide reputation and her choice repertory drew large and enthusiastic audiences, which she held spellbound with her incomparable interpretations. The Italian companies provided a memorable experience for the *limeños*, who gratefully acknowledged the Italians' contribution to the theatrical life of the country. Their activities in Peru coincided with a short period of political and economic stability. After 1875, however, only a few foreign companies ventured to Lima. These groups came from Spain and, although not devoid of artistic merits, brought limited and somewhat stale repertories. Despite their presence and the efforts of some local professional and amateur companies, by the end of that decade drama had relapsed into its former provincialism. Personnel and repertory of Paladini's and Ristori's companies are given in an Appendix. (EJG)

Robert J. Morris, "The Theatre of Juan Ríos Rey."

Juan Ríos Rey (1914—) was one of the three principal dramatists in Peru from 1946 to 1960, the year he ceased active participation in the national theatre. Unlike his more conservative peers, Salazar Bondy and Solari Swayne, Ríos cultivated a poetic and traditional dramaturgy free of national social and political influences. Of his eight compositions, only the last is in prose and is not directly based on an acknowledged source. Of the others, written in a variety of verse forms, four are directly based on classical myth or legend, and three are inspired in seventeenth-century Spanish sources. A critical analysis and evaluation of each