

## Children's Theatre in Bogotá

Children in Bogotá enjoyed both entertaining fantasy and education during the month of August when the "Grupo de Teatro 502" presented the children's play *El viaje*, written by Enisberto Jarava. The simple plot involves a school-girl who skips classes. After becoming lost she falls under the tutelage of a beggar, who teaches her to beg money in the streets for him. As they travel through the different regions of Colombia the children spectators experience a colorful and imaginative journey through their country.

An American audience would see an obvious parallel between this production and the television program *Sesame Street*. The theatrical rendition, however, has the advantage of direct contact and interaction with the children, which is taken advantage of in several ways in *El viaje*. The audience is often called upon to resolve simple moral questions with a choral answer of "sí" or "no." At the beginning of the play the lost protagonist explains her situation while walking among the children, and later action also takes place at the spectators' level. In other scenes the children are invited on stage to drink make-believe coffee from a gigantic coffee cup and to participate in a bull fight. Throughout all this the lessons reinforced range from the more simple and practical (no not skip school and stay away from strangers) to the slightly profound (there are Indians in some parts of Colombia and they are most human).

Under the direction of Helena de Crespo the group's professional acting and well created stage effects made *El viaje* a most successful production. The group gave presentations in all parts of Bogotá, including lower-class "barrios" where admission was free.

Ray Williams  
*Bogotá*



Enisberto Jarava in *El viaje*.