

Primer taller de teatro latinoamericano

CARLOS MORTON

There have been several attempts to infuse popular theatres from North and South America, most notably El Primer Festival de Teatro Popular in New York (1976), and El Quinto Festival de Los Teatros Chicanos in Mexico, D.F. (1974). Both were performance oriented and many valuable moments were shared, but some of the participants were looking for the time when they could rehearse the process of acting, directing, writing, sound, and lighting, among themselves—on the empty space, backstage—without the glare of the bright lights. That is, workshops where the work could be thought through from beginning to end in a rehearsal oriented process.

For this reason, El Primer Taller de Teatro Latinamericano was inaugurated during the month of August in Mexico under the organization of the Centro Cultural Mascarones de Cuernavaca, Mexico. One month of workshops and lectures were acted out in order to “exchange theatrical experiences and aesthetic techniques” according to the invitation which Los Mascarones sent out. The object, the open letter goes on to say, is to “elevate the theatrical level and practice of our groups, and in this manner contribute more effectively, by means of a theatre of the highest quality, to the process of liberation of our respective communities.”

Note that the workshops and lectures are but the means to achieve the end. Many of the live performances in the past had been wholly inadequate, ill prepared, left bad impressions, and sowed confusion instead of enlightenment among the people. The dedicated cultural worker knows that a superior performance of one hour’s passage on the stage is the result of many months of rehearsal.

The Program

Teatro Chicano	Feliz Alvarez
History of Art	Alberto Hajar
Function of the Artist in Society & History of Art	Fernando Marcos
Acting Technique	Humberto Proano

Brecht for Latin America	Atahualpa del Cioppo
Body Technique	Wilson Pico
Voice and Movement	Deborah Margolis
Choral Poetry	Teatro Los Mascarones
State of the Culture Before and After the Coup in Chile	Poli Delano

Furthermore, there were workshops in video tape, radio theatre, various exhibitions of cinema and television. In total, 30 artists from Mexico, United States, Uruguay, Argentina, Ecuador, and Chile attended the workshops which cost \$250 per month (U.S.), including room and board in a spacious villa on the outskirts of Cuernavaca, Morelos. There was a theatre with a seating capacity of one hundred people as well as ample space for the dramaturgs, directors, actors, choreographers, musicians, scenographers, and writers who worked from ten until ten five days per week.

The roadblocks which the Teatro Movement in the Americas find themselves running into must be broken down. Neither the Teatro Campesino of the United States nor Los Mascarones of Mexico have ever traveled to South America, although both groups have toured Europe. In fact, there seems to be more movement northwards, with groups like La Candelaria of Colombia and Teatro Triángulo of Venezuela presenting their works in Mexico, D.F. and New York. The cross pollination of styles and regions is needed to show the frustrations of the workers in the ghettos of Chicago, which are the same as the workers in the barrios of Caracas.

Mario Leyva, director of Los Mascarones, explained the reasons for the lack of interchange: "The first reason is economic, pure and simple. Who is to pay for the passage, transport the equipment, house, feed, etc. We do not have that kind of money. We are always looking for contacts and places in which to perform. But in order to survive we must recoup at least what we spend on the tour."

"Another problem is the political repression," pointed out Leyva, "which would deny us the right to present our works in many parts of Latin America. We would have to censure ourselves for fear of being arrested outside of Mexico."

Leyva has good reason to be wary—witness the way Enrique Buenaventura was censored in Colombia and Augusto Boal tortured in Brasil. But it is hoped that with the inauguration of this annual Taller de Teatro Latinamericano in Mexico a strong *mestizaje* can be forged between North and South America.

La Jolla, California