

Simposio de Teatro Latinoamericano: Muestra Venezolana

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California State University at Los Angeles, located in the heart of the barrios of East Los Angeles, was the perfect site for this *simposio*, and it is hoped that the large metropolitan campus will continue to address the theatrical interests of the Spanish-speaking community. This two-day event held on December 1-2, 1978 included *mesas redondas*, workshops and presentations by some of Venezuela's leading theatre groups and playwrights. It was a microcosmic introduction to some very fine people and especially exciting theatre.

Dra. Susana Castillo can be credited with the organization of this *simposio*, and is to be congratulated for her vision as well as her participation. She personally previewed the performances prior to inviting them, and was the moving spirit behind the event. She moderated the round table discussions with scholarly and artistic astuteness, bringing her singular style of ease and interest to keep the discussions engaging.

The two *mesas redondas* were entitled "Caminos del Teatro Latinoamericano Contemporáneo," and "Nuevo Teatro Venezolano." The first discussion included Leonardo Azparren Giménez, President of the Instituto Internacional de Teatro en Venezuela; George W. Woodyard, Editor of the *Latin American Theatre Review*; and the present author. The second discussion included the participation of playwrights Elisa Lerner, José G. Núñez, and Rodolfo Santana, each of whom spoke of their individual evolutions as dramatic authors.

Various workshops in directing, acting, writing and style were offered in the afternoons, with each day highlighted by the evening's presentations. The first presentation was a "collage" of early twentieth-century Venezuelan writings fashioned into a series of monologues entitled *Adiós, pues, Caracas*. Expertly delivered by Ms. América Alonso, this one-woman show demonstrated her incredible range of characters, both male and female, as she re-created a wonderful collection of Venezuelanos, from the gossipy neighbor, to the country bumpkin

reading a letter from the United States. Ms. Alonso's magnificent acting was unfortunately hampered by too many costume changes and weak transitions which relied on nostalgic slides of a bygone era, but the moment was clearly hers, and the audience was enthralled. José G. Núñez compiled this piece with sensitive regard to variety.

For the second presentation of the first evening, the audience moved to a lounge in the student center, and though the performance space could have been better, the play compensated for any lack of technical facilities. A two-character piece, Rodolfo Santana's *La empresa perdona un momento de locura*, was very well-acted by Eva Mondolfi and Franklin González. This play marks a new direction for Santana, whose earlier works have been symbolic and non-realistic. The two characters are psychological studies, as is the play itself, for it presents us with an industrial psychologist who is attempting to counsel a worker recently gone berserk. An interesting study of both characters and their relationship to the all-powerful and forgiving "empresa." This, and the other Santana play were produced by the Grupo Cobre, of Caracas.

The second evening witnessed another of Santana's plays, *El animador*, with Carlos Carrero and Henry Galue. In this two-character piece, the author juxtaposes a television executive with a young man who sequesters him and demands that he re-enact some of his favorite programs, changing them to his will, rather than that of the station. Television has become the young man's only reality, and he is reduced to living-out his video-fantasies by forcing the executive to recreate the pap he has been producing. In a particularly humorous scene, the young man forces the executive to portray a child who is seen in cereal commercials, as the captor portrays his mother. The commentary on Venezuelan television can be easily applied to North American fare, and the audience greatly appreciated the relationships apparent.

The final presentation of the *simposio* was Elisa Lerner's *Vida con mamá*, with Chela Atencio and Herminia Valdez. Somewhat reminiscent of Tennessee Williams' decaying ladies, Ms. Lerner presents the audience with a woman and her daughter who spend their time "averiguando la verdad del delito que ellas mismas se han ocasionado." They reverse the roles of detective and criminal, as they look back at their lives and try to discover what went wrong. Excellent acting and staging made this production by el Nuevo Grupo a very memorable piece of theatre.

For this writer, the *simposio* was a complete success, combining all of the aspects of good theatre into a very valuable learning experience. If these two groups are indicators of the state of theatre in Venezuela, there is much to look forward to.

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