

Foreword

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The papers included in this special issue are selections from the Symposium on Latin American Theatre held at Florida International University in April, 1979, under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Florida Endowment for the Humanities, the Latin American Caribbean Studies Committee of Florida International University and the International Affairs Center of Florida International University. The goal of the Symposium was to provide an exchange of information and ideas on current Latin American theatre between U.S. scholars and critics and Latin American dramatists and critics. The conference was planned to include less extensively studied topics of urgent necessity to the field. Thus, for example, special sessions were devoted to Caribbean theatre, Hispanic theatre in the United States and women in Latin American theatre.

Due to the limitations of space, we were unable to include all of the papers presented and were forced to edit greatly for length some of our collected papers. Several of the Latin American dramatists and critics that had been invited to the Symposium were unable to attend and as a result our final selection includes many more papers by U.S. scholars than by specialists from Latin America.

Within the field of Latin American literature, Latin American theatre is the area that has most recently gained widespread attention. This surge of interest reflects the renaissance of Latin American dramatic activity during the last thirty years, a period which began in the early 1950's with the writings of Mexico's Emilio Carballedo, Argentina's Carlos Gorostiza, Brazil's Jorge Andrade and others, and has continued to the present.

Though this movement is best characterized by its diversity of type and of theme, the playwrights are united by a spirit of experimentation and an interest in sociopolitical themes. Central to their work is a concern with Latin American social reality which is expressed through a variety of trends such as existentialism, the theatre of the absurd, the theatre of cruelty and ritual and most recently

the *creación colectiva*, or the writing of texts by a group. At the same time, the interest in social concerns does not preclude an interest in problems of universal or psychological concern. Indeed, the unique nature of Latin America's best theatrical works has been the expression of social reality through the study of human universals. Works such as José Triana's *La noche de los asesinos* (Cuba) and Enrique Buenaventura's *Papeles del infierno* (Colombia) are good examples. In both of these plays a sociopolitical event—the Cuban revolution in Triana's play and a period of unrestrained violence in Colombian history in Buenaventura's play—is given dramatic form through individual human experiences.

The development of contemporary Latin American theatre has been accompanied by a concomitant surge in critical interest. Several journals dedicated solely to the study of Latin American theatre, notably, the *Latin American Theatre Review* at the University of Kansas and *Conjunto* in Cuba, have contributed to the dissemination of plays by new authors and critical essays. Frank Dauster's *Historia del teatro hispanoamericano*, George Woodyard and Leon Lyday's *Dramatists in Revolt*, and *A Bibliography of Latin American Theater Criticism* (1976) are indices of the great interest that Latin American theatre has aroused in critics. Other basic works dealing with the literary-theatrical histories of Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela, too numerous to list here, have appeared within the last five years. In addition, the plays of Latin American dramatists have been translated and edited in volumes by Oliver, Luzuriaga, Woodyard, and Colecchia, among others.

Nevertheless, there are still great areas of important bibliographical work needed in the field of Latin American theatre. Many of the national theatres have not been studied in a scholarly and analytical way. Edited anthologies of recent playwrights are not readily available and basic reference works need to be up-dated to include the latest changes in Hispanic American theatre. A final problem in the study of Latin American theatre is the lack of communication between theatre critics in the United States and their Latin American counterparts. Critical material published in the United States is not always readily available in Latin America and recent Latin American plays are difficult for North American scholars to obtain in written form, much less for them to see performed.

With these needs in mind, the topics covered in the following papers suggest an attempt to fill in some of the gaps in current Latin American theatre research. Reflecting the growth of women's studies, papers by Sandra Cypess, Evelyn Picon Garfield and Kirsten Nigro and an address by the Argentinian dramatist Griselda Gambaro focus on female dramatists in Latin America. The appearance of Hispanics as the fastest-growing minority in the U.S. and their increasing political power and demand for bilingual education are reflected in a developing Hispanic theatre. Thus, two of our papers explore the nature of Chicano or Mexican-American theatre and the dramatic art of a Cuban-American writer, Matías Montes Huidobro.

A major portion of the symposium papers focuses on general trends in Latin American theatre. Studies by José Monleón, Joan Boorman, and Tamara

Holzappel probe the diverse nature of absurd theatre and social protest theatre. The others present overviews of the theatre in Cuba, Brazil, Argentina and Peru, including an essay by the Argentinian dramatist Osvaldo Dragún. Finally, two studies narrow the perspectives of the more general national studies to a critical examination of individual playwrights. David Foster explores the use of language in Argentinian author Pavlovsky, while Howard Quackenbush discusses the concept of anti-theatre in the plays of the Mexican writer Sergio Magaña. This collection opens some new areas and updates others. In general, it is a testimony to the vitality and interest in the growing field of Latin American theatre.

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