

10th International Festival of Theatre, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

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Brazil's third largest city and capital of the state of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, hosted the *Festival Internacional de Teatro: Palco e Rua* (FIT). The event included theater and street performances, dance, music, workshops, debates, movies, exhibitions, and classes from August 5-15, 2010. The city is best known for the theater group Teatro Galpão and the dance group Corpo. During this festival, local groups from the state of Minas Gerais took the stage along with eleven international troupes and nine national companies. The international performers came from Argentina, Belgium, Columbia, South Korea, Spain, Italy, France, Nepal, Peru and Switzerland. There were 101 performances presented in 46 different spaces around the city, including parks, plazas and streets, as well as more traditional theater venues. Some of the events were broadcast on television and local talk-show hosts interviewed local organizers and performers from the companies. In addition to the traditional newspaper style flier and booklet of events, the organizers developed an extensive website www.fitbh.com.br/2010. This event was smaller than the Festival of 2008 due to changes in the leadership in the mayor's office. The FIT was officially cancelled in March of 2010, but protests from the theater community and others lead to its revival and in four months the organizers were able to generate a respectable program of activities.

Of note in the international repertoire were a flamenco version of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* from Spain, the Beckett play *Happy Days* performed by the Italian group Change Performing Arts and directed by Robert Wilson and a South Korean troupe's representation of *Woyzeck* in movement. Several national groups that staged works at this festival have established reputations, especially Centro de Pesquisa Teatral an offshoot of Grupo Macunaíma, with *Lamartine Babo, Musical Dramático*, José Celso Martínez's Teatro Oficina with *O Banquete*, and Grupo Galpão in a return to street theater with *Till, A*

Saga de Um Herói Torto. Lastly, the festival included a tragedy by Nelson Rodrigues, *Memória da Cana*, performed by the São Paulo group Os Fofos Encenam. The four performances we were able to attend were given by Brazilian troupes and two featured musical comedy.

Belo Horizonte's local stars, Grupo Galpão, celebrated 27 years of activity with a street theater presentation from Medieval Germany about Till Eulenspiegel and his search to find his conscience in a world of corrupt and corrupting individuals. The play's frame is a bet between the Devil and God for the soul of Till who lives and dies by outwitting those around him. The play emphasizes physical comedy, imaginative costumes, actors playing musical instruments, and direct references to the topic of corruption in Brazil today. It is a crowd pleaser from the stage setting and special effects that include an attempt to burn Till's mother at the stake, to the involvement of audience members, and a repeating gag involving three blind beggars. The plaza in the outlying neighborhood of Barreiro was packed with young people at this free evening performance.

São Paulo's CPT (Centro de Pesquisa Teatral), an extension of the work of Antunes Filho and the Grupo Macunaíma, also provided a period piece focused on the work of Lamartine Babo, a composer of popular music in the 1930s and contemporary of Noel Rosa. The frame for this piece is a theater group's rehearsal of the songs of Lamartine Babo which attracts a mysterious guest with an uncanny familiarity with the composer and his music. Although the costumes, setting, and musical performances by the actors demonstrated a high level of competence and musical accomplishment, there is little more to the piece than a choral recital. The identity of the guest is never revealed, although his insight into the composer and his production of new music is attributed to his powers as a psychic. The audience members sang along on many of the numbers included in the performance and gave a standing ovation.

Grupo Ponto de Partida from the town of Barbacena, Minas Gerais, appeared in the festival for the first time with a lovely tribute to the poetry of mineiro poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade. The period piece refers to small town life in the 1920s-30s and creates vignettes about love, life, death, and daily events through a complex set of interactions, dances, poses, and movement. The choreography is refreshingly original in its use of light and dark, male and female, and simple textures of fabric and lighting. Like the CPT production, this work did not feature dramatic development, but the vignettes captured emotional moments in which tensions were created and

then released. Those familiar with the poetry of Drummond can recognize some of his more famous works, including selections from his book of erotic poetry, *O Amor Natural*. The audience was receptive to this play, although some expressed trouble understanding how the pieces fit together. It is noteworthy that Ponto de Partida has been in operation since the 1980s and has managed to keep an active schedule of classes, performances, and tours without moving their headquarters to the capital city. Although somewhat dated, the group's website provides a good history of its activities, tours, and workshops www.grupopontodepartida.com.br.

Although the description of gaúcha dramatist Vera Karam's piece *Dona Otilia e Outras Histórias* made the unfortunate observation that plays written by and about women are really about human beings too, the comedy by four actors from Rio de Janeiro was the highlight of the festival for us. The performance combines three short plays and a monologue. The bare stage with its large image of a slowly moving LP label and the repeating musical theme of Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets She's Unable to Lunch Today" set the mood for the unexpected encounters between men and women that speak not only about relationships, but also about theatrical performances of relationships, and the theater itself. The performance offers readings about the various phases of relationships. It illuminates the struggles and dynamics of initiation, duration and termination in hilarious scenes of comedic excellence tempered with sincere commentary on human nature. As a backdrop that ties the themes of theatricality in relationships and overt trials of life as a stage performer, the characters strive to understand the control or lack thereof that any one person has in any given situation whether played out on the stage or in one's own mind. In an entrancing moment of audience participation, the "atriz" expresses her frustration in her inability to control what occurs off and on stage, in life and in theater. She controls and manipulates the audience's response to her cue for them to laugh or cry, whistle or sigh. This juxtaposition outlines the overarching motif of the performance by embodying the ways that social and theater conventions delimit and control lives, constraining the roles of some and expanding the roles of others. The audience at the small venue was appreciative of the performance and the skills of the actors, however it is regrettable that there were empty seats.

