The Flourishing of Hispanic Theatre in the Southwest, 1920-30's

Nicolás Kanellos

By the turn of the century, major Spanish-language companies were performing all along the Mexico-United States border, following a circuit that extended from Laredo to San Antonio and El Paso, through New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles, then up to San Francisco or down to San Diego.[1] The advent of rail transportation and the automobile made theatre more accessible to smaller population centers. Tent theatres and smaller make-shift companies performed along the Río Grande Valley,[2] only occasionally venturing into the big cities to compete with the major drama and *zarzuela* companies. By 1910 a few of the smaller cities, like Laredo, even supported their own repertory companies.[3] Theatrical activities expanded rapidly, even boomed, when thousands of immigrants fled the Mexican Revolution and settled in the United States from the border states all the way to the Midwest.[4] During the decades of the Revolution, many of Mexico's greatest artists and their theatrical companies were to take up temporary residence in the United States; however, some would never return to the homeland.

Mexican and Spanish companies, and an occassional Cuban, Argentine or other Hispanic troupe, began to tour throughout the Southwest and as far North and East as New York, where there was also a lively Hispanic theatrical tradition. Some companies even made the coast-to-coast tour via the northern route: New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, and points west to Los Angeles.[5] The company of the famed Mexican actress, Virginia Fábregas, was of particular importance in its frequent tours, because it not only performed the latest works from the theatres of Mexico City and Madrid, but some of its actors left the companies during United States tours to form their own troupes here.[6] Also La Fábregas encouraged the development of local playwrights in Los Angeles by buying the rights to their works and performing them on tour. The Spanish companies of María Guerrero and Gregorio Martínez Sierra also made the coast-to-coast jaunts, assisted by New York booking agents and established theatrical circuits.[7] When vaudeville became popular in the twenties and thirties, the Mexican performers, many of whom

previously starred in high drama and *zarzuela,* toured not only the Hispanic but the American vaudeville circuits and even performed actively in Canada.[8]

It should also be noted that many companies offered a variety of theatrical genres from *zarzuela* and operetta to drama, *comedia, revista* and *variedades.* As the hundreds of companies throughout the Southwest adapted to changing tastes and economic conditions, the shifting of repertoires and the recruitment of new casts and musicians eventually brought about companies that could perform virtually anything, complementing a film with variety acts in the afternoon, producing a full-length drama in the evening, a *zarzuela* and a drama on Saturday and Sunday, different works each day, of course. The companies at times took names such as the Compañía de Comedias, Revistas y Variedades Peña-Mena, but this did not stop them from producing serious dramas like Brígido Caro's *Joaquín Murrieta,* even if this function were not covered in the name of the troupe.

The two cities with the largest Mexican populations, Los Angeles and San Antonio, naturally became theatrical centers, the former also feeding off the important film industry in Hollywood. In fact, Los Angeles became a manpower pool for Hispanic theatre. Actors, directors, technicians and musicians from throughout the Southwest and even New York were drawn here looking for employment in the theatre arts industry. Both Los Angeles and San Antonio[9] went through a period of intense expansion and building of new theatrical facilities in the late teens and early twenties. Los Angeles was able to support five major, Hispanic theatre houses with programs that changed daily from 1918 until the early 1930's. The theatres and their peak years were Teatro Hidalgo (1918-1934), Teatro México (1921-1933), Teatro

The Teatro California as it stands today in Los Angeles

Capitol (1924-1926), Teatro Zendejas (later Novel) (1919-1924) and Teatro Principal (1921-1929). Four other theatres—Princess (1922-1926), California (1927-1934), California International (1930-1932) and Estela (1930-1932)—were also important, and at least thirteen others housed professional companies on a more irregular basis between 1915 and 1935. These were the Metropolitan, Cabaret Sanromán, Lyseum Hall, Empress, Leo Carillo, Orange Grove, Mason, Million Dollar, Major, Paramount, Figueroa Playhouse, Alcázar, Philharmonic Auditorium and Unique.

While it is true that in the Southwest, as in Mexico, Spanish drama and *zarzuela* dominated the stage up to the early twenties, the clamor for plays written by Mexican writers had increased to such an extent that by 1923 Los Angeles had become a center for Mexican play-writing probably unparalleled in the history of Hispanic communities in the United States. While continuing to consume plays by peninsular authors such as Benavente, Echegaray, Martínez-Sierra, Linares Rivas and the Quintero Brothers, the theatres and communities encouraged local writing by offering cash prizes in contests, lucrative contracts and lavish productions. As the local writers became more well known, the popularity of their works brought record attendance into the theatre houses.[10]

It was often repeated in the newspapers that the Hispanic theatres drew their largest crowds every time they featured plays by local writers. For instance, Gabriel Navarro wrote in *La Opinión* (April 12, 1930), that the largest profits of 1929 were made at the Teatro México from local plays. Nevertheless, as popular as these plays may have been, business interests at times worked against their production and against the playwrights reaping the benefits of their craft. According to Esteban V. Escalante, writing in *La Opinión* (April 20, 1930), the writer's 25 percent share of the opening-day box office—which often amounted to $100 to $150—led impresarios jealously to limit the author's payment to a flat fee of $20 or $30 or simply to eliminate local plays and produce instead well-worn *obras* ("españolas o chichimecas") for which they did not have to pay a dime.

The period from 1922 to 1933 saw the emergence and box-office success of a group of playwrights in Los Angeles composed mainly of Mexican theatrical expatriates and newspapermen. At the center of the group were four playwrights whose works not only filled the theatres on Los Angeles' Main Street, but were also contracted throughout the Southwest and Mexico: Eduardo Carrillo, an actor; Adalberto Elías González, a novelist; Esteban V. Escalante, a newspaperman and theatrical director; and Gabriel Navarro, poet, novelist, orchestra director, columnist for *La Opinión* and editor of *La Revista de los Angeles.* Writers like Escalante were also important for popularizing the life of Mexicans in the United States on the stage in Mexico, for once they had returned to their homeland, they continued to compose works based on their experiences in California.[11] There were at least twenty other writers residing locally who saw their works produced on the professional stage,[12] not to mention the deluge of *revistas* that dealt with local and current themes that were written by and for the Mexican companies that presented a different program each day. A few of the most productive and popular authors of *revistas* were: Don Catarino, los Sandozequi, and Guz

San Antonio's Teatro Nacional in 1917

Aguila (Antonio Guzmán Aguilera). Guzmán Aguilera, famous in México as an *autor de revistas,* held the distinction of being under contract to the Teatro Hidalgo in Los Angeles for the extraordinary fee of $1000 per month (*La Opinión,* August 8, 1933).

The Los Angeles writers were serving a public that was hungry to see itself reflected on stage, an audience whose interest was piqued by plays relating to current events, politics, sensational crimes and, of course, the real-life epic of people living under the cultural and economic domination of an English-speaking, American society on land that was once part of Mexican patrimony. Of course the *revistas* kept the social and political criticism directed at both the United States and Mexico within the lighter context of music and humor in such pieces as Antonio Guzmán Aguilera's *México para los mexicanos* (*La Opinión,* December 25, 1924) and *Los Angeles vacilador* (*El Heraldo de México,* July 24, 1924); Daniel Venegas' *El con-su-la-do* and *Maldito jazz;* Brígido Caro's *México y Estados Unidos,*[13] Gabriel Navarro's *La ciudad de irás y no volverás* (*El Heraldo de México,* October 8, 1927); and Raúl Castell's *El mundo de las pelonas* (*El Heraldo de México,* October 8, 1927); and *En el país del Shimmy* (*El Heraldo de México,* August 25, 1923); and *Los efectos de la crisis, Regreso a mi tierra, Los repatriados, Whiskey, morfina y marihuana* and *El desterrado,* to mention just a few of the *revistas* of Don Catarino, who often played the role of the *pelado* in these works.

It is in the *revistas* that we find a great deal of humor based on culture shock typically derived from following the misadventures of a naive, recent immigrant from Mexico who has difficulty getting accustomed to life in the big Anglo-American metropolis. A plot summary of Romualdo Tirado's *De*

México a Los Angeles, published in *El Heraldo de México* (November 28, 1920), gives a good idea of an early example of this immigrant-type comedy:

> Un sastre, establecido en la capital de México, ya entrado en años, ha oído hablar frecuentemente de las grandezas y adelantos de los Estados Unidos, y en especial (porque es lo que a él le interesa) lo referente a su oficio. Entusiasmado por las fabulosas noticias que recibe, y ambicionando aprender y hasta hacerse rico, se viene a los Estados Unidos, sin más compañía que una pequeña libreta en la que alguien apuntó algunas frases en inglés, con lo que él cree estar al cabo de la calle en cuanto a la ignorancia del idioma; pero resulta que desde el mismo momento en que llega, se convence de que el librito de marras no le sirve de nada y después de recibir varias hostiles manifestaciones de parte de unos 'primos,' un gendarme de quien él hace el panegírico, comparándolo con nuestros polizontes, se lo lleva a rastras y lo mete en un hotel donde sigue pasando la pena negra, por no poder hacerse entender. Por fin llega a un restaurante mexicano(?) donde cree estar a salvo de molestias y resulta que le dan un tremendo golpe con el timo de la 'indemnización' que le obligan a pagar a un individuo norteamericano a cuya esposa ha invitado a un modesto 'ice cream soda.' Va nuestro héroe a Venice, y se encanta; pero a pesar de todo, más impresionado por lo desagradable de sus chascos que por la belleza de la playa, decide regresar a México, sin haber aprendido siquiera un sistema nuevo de ensartar agujas.

Later on in the decade, when the Depression and repatriation take hold, the theme of culture shock is converted to one of outright cultural conflict, especially in dramas based on early California history.

The more serious, full-length plays addressed the situation of Mexicans in California on a broader, more epic scale, often in plays based on the history of Mexican-Anglo struggle in California. Brigído Caro's *Joaquín Murrieta,* the tale of the California bandit during the Gold Rush days, not only achieved success on the professional stage, but was also adopted by the community for political and cultural fund-raising activities. Such groups as the Cuadro de Aficionados Junípero Serra performed this play to raise funds for groups like the Alianza Hispano Americana, according to *El Heraldo de México* (December 27, 1927). Eduardo Carrillo's[14] *El proceso de Aurelio Pompa* dealt with the unjust trial and sentencing of a Mexican immigrant and also was performed for fund raising purposes in the community.[15] Esteban V. Escalante's pieces, however, were more sentimental and usually written in a one-act format: *La vida de amor de Rodolfo Valentino, Las incomprensibles, La cuerda floja, Sangre de tigre, La pura verdad, Al fin solos, Un beso en las tinieblas, La muerte, Tres piedras, La que los amó locamente, Las mariposas de Hollywood* and *La agonía de un sueño.* His three-act play, *Almas trágicas,* was a realistic drama based on local material. Gabriel Navarro also developed one-act pieces, but in a more satirical and humoristic vein: *Los Angeles al día* (in collaboration with Eduardo Carrillo), *La cuidad de irás y no volverás, La ciudad de los extras, Su excelencia el amor, México quiere paz* (apropósito cómico-lírico), *La maldita guerra* (zarzuela), *El Gran Visir, Loco amor, El proceso de Los Angeles, Las luces de Los Angeles, Los Angeles en pijama* and *Revista de radio 1934.* But his full-length dramas, *Los emigrados* and *El sacrificio* again dealt with the epic of Mexicans in California, the latter play with a

setting in 1846. Other dramas by Navarro are *Cuando entraron los Dorados, Alma yaqui, La señorita Estela* (after his novel by the same title) and *La venganza.*

By far the most prolific and respected of the Los Angeles playwrights was Adalberto Elías González, some of whose works were not only performed locally, but throughout the Southwest and Mexico,[16] were made into movies[17] and translated into English.[18] His works that were produced in Los Angeles ran the gamut from historical drama to dime-novel sensationalism. The most famous of his plays, *Los amores de Ramona,* a stage adaptation of Helen Hunt Jackson's California novel, *Ramona: a story,* broke all box-office records when it was seen by more than 15,000 people after only eight performances (*El Heraldo de México,* June 9, 1927), and soon became a regular item in many repertoires in the Southwest, having also been acquired by Virginia Fábregas for performance on her tours. So popular was *Ramona* that composer L. Mendoza López offered to buy the rights and tour it throughout Mexico as a *zarzuela* with music that he would write for it (*El Heraldo de México,* January 1, 1929). Two of his other plays dealt with the life and culture of Mexicans in California: *Los misioneros* (formerly titled *La conquista de California*) and *Los expatriados.* Probably his second most successful work was the sensationalist *La asesino del martillo o la mujer tigresa,* based on news stories in 1922 and 1923 (*El Heraldo de México,* October 14, 1923). On a more sentimental note are his *El sátiro,*[19] *Sangre yaqui o la mujer de los dos, La mal pagada, La desgracia del pobre, La flor del fandango* (based on a novel by Vargas Vila), *Nido de cuervos*[20] and *El enemigo de las mujeres.* Two other plays are related to the Mexican Revolution: *La muerte de Francisco Villa* and *El fantasma de la Revolución.*

In truth it must be stated that the greater part of theatrical fare served purely entertainment and cultural purposes, while obliquely contributing to the expatriate community's solidarity within the context of the larger, English-speaking society. The majority of the plays produced represented the standard fare from the stages of Mexico City and Madrid. However, as can readily be seen from the above list of plays written and produced in Los Angeles, the playwrights and impresarios did not falter in dealing with controversial material. Many of their plays dealt with the historical and current circumstances of Mexicans in California from a nationalistic and at times political perspective, but always with seriousness and propriety.

The *revistas,* on the other hand, represented a genre that had developed in Mexico as a format for piquant political commentary.[21] They articulated grievances, and poked fun at both the United States and Mexican governments. The Mexican Revolution was satirically reconsidered over and over again, and Mexican American culture was contrasted with the "purer" Mexican version. This social and political commentary was carried out despite the fact that both audiences and performers were mostly immigrants and, thus, liable to deportation or repatriation. It must be remembered that the performance language was Spanish and in-group sentiments could easily be expressed, especially through the protection of satire and humor. Even such a sensitive theme as the repatriation could be treated in *revistas.* An announcement in *La Opinión* on July 23, 1934, promoted Don Catarino's *Los repatriados* as follows: "En esta comedia podrá usted saborear las graciosas tribulaciones de los repatriados." The only sign of hesitancy on behalf of the

La Chata Noloesca (left) in a vaudeville sketch at New York's Teatro Hispano, c. 1939

Carlos Valero and Leonardo García Astol in their vaudeville act of "Don Lalo y Don Suave"

impresarios was the delay of the opening in 1932 of Antonio Helú's play, *Los mexicanos se van,* which realistically depicted the forced repatriation of Mexicans from California.[22] This further substantiates the difference between the play and the *revista* as far as which of the two genres was more open to controversial issues.

It should also be emphasized that from the beginning of the Hispanic stage in the Southwest the relationship of performers and theatres to the community and the nationality was close. The Hispanic stage served to reinforce the sense of community by bringing all Spanish-speakers together in a cultural act—the preservation and the support of the language and the art of Mexicans and other *hispanos* in the face of domination from a foreign culture. Theatre, more than any other art form, became essential to promoting ethnic or national identity and solidifying the colony of expatriates and migrants. Thus, over and above the artistic, within the expatriate Mexican community both professional and amateur theatre took on specific social functions that were hardly ever assumed on the stages of Mexico City.

The professional theatre houses became the temples of culture where the Mexican and Hispanic community as a whole could gather and, in the words of theatre critic, Fidel Murillo, (*La Opinión,* November 20, 1930) "keep the lamp of our culture lighted," regardless of social class, religion or region of origin. A drama critic for San Antonio's *La Prensa,* in the April 26, 1916 edition, underlined the social and nationalistic functions of the theatres: "Puede considerarse como una obra patriótica y de solidaridad de raza, el concurrir a las veladas artísticas del Teatro Juárez donde un modesto grupo de actores mexicanos luchan por la vida en suelo extraño, haciéndonos

conocer las más preciadas joyas del teatro contemporáneo en nuestra lengua materna o sea el dulcísimo y sonoro idioma de Cervantes." Thus the theatre became an institution in the Southwest for the preservation of the culture in a foreign environment and for resistance against the influence of the dominant society.

Of course, within the theatre house itself, class distinctions were established by price and location of the seating, and if there were any members of the community that could not afford even the modest general admission ticket, touring companies often ended their runs in more modest local establishments in the so-called "barrios pobres." Houses like San Antonio's Teatro Nacional were at the disposition of the community for national celebrations, community-wide fund raisers, or any other special cultural event. The professional companies also felt responsible for their community as a whole in the United States as well as in Latin America, often donating percentages of the proceeds to establish a clinic or a school in San Antonio, Detroit, New York, or wherever a community was struggling to organize its own life and institutions. Theatres also crusaded to raise funds for flood and earthquake victims in Latin America and for defense committees for unfortunates, like Aurelio Pompa, who were being prosecuted by Anglo-American law. The community in turn showed its appreciation for the individual theatrical artists by showering them with gifts during special benefit performances in their name.

The Great Depression and the forced and voluntary repatriation of Mexicans not only depopulated the communities, but to a great extent also the theatres. Fidel Murillo, writing in *La Opinión* (August 8, 1934), tried to weigh the various factors (Depression, repatriation, summer heat, competition from the cheap American movies and variety shows, acculturation) that were thought to have contributed to the decline of the theatre movement:

> Estremece pensar en la verdad. Lo que falta es el público. Hace unos cuantos años, bastaba cualquier incentivo minúsculo para arrastrar a las multitudes a los salones de espectáculos. Tres llenos, en sábado, domingo y lunes, eran de cajón. Los demás días, cuando se les reforzaba con alguna atracción, o un estreno cualquiera, se defendían decorosamente. Ahora, ni con grandes atracciones—a no ser que se trate de José Mojica, de Dolores del Río o de Lupe Vélez—se puede llenar el teatro. Las excusas que se dan son las del calor, la mala situación económica de la colonia, etc. La verdad desnuda, desagradable como todas las verdades que hieren, es la asentada antes: que ya no hay público para nuestros teatros.
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> Y es que desde hace algún tiempo, han estado saliendo de retorno a México, grandes corrientes de repatriados, oficial o privadamente. Quedan en Los Angeles las familias que no han podido abandonar la ciudad o las que no han querido hacerlo. Aquellas, piensan más en resolver el problema del momento, que en divertirse. Estas, prefieren francamente el espectáculo americano.
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> Los viejos son pocos. Los jóvenes han aprendido inglés, y se encuentran con que un teatro de primera les ofrece variedades de primera también, más película, orquesta etc., por una cantidad ínfima, algo que no puede hacer nuestros teatros, que no cuentan con más patrocinio que el de la colonia de habla española local.

For a while in the 1930's the theatrical artists banded together in such cooperatives as the Compañía de Artistas Unidos and the Compañía Cooperativa in a valiant effort to buy or rent theatres, manage themselves and eke out a living. But the economy and the commercial interests of theatre owners, who could maximize their own profits by renting films instead of supporting a whole cast, could not sustain their efforts. Those who did not return to Mexico often continued to pursue their art by organizing non-commercial companies that performed to raise funds for community projects and charities. The stage of artists like Daniel Ferreiro Rea in Los Angeles and Carlos Villalongín in San Antonio was amateurish only in the respect that the artists were not paid. They continued to perform many of the same secular dramas, *zarzuelas* and *revistas* as before. Through their efforts theatre arts were sustained from the 1930's to the 1950's on a voluntary and community basis. A few of the performers, like La Chata Noloesca, were able to prolong their professional careers abroad and in New York where Spanish-language vaudeville survived until the sixties.[23] Others like Leonardo García Astol, followed up their vaudeville careers by working in local, Spanish-language radio and television broadcasting after World War II. The tenacious tent theatres also continued their perennial odysseys into the fifties, often setting up right in the camps of migrant farm laborers to perform their *revistas*. It is these traveling theatres that were in part responsible for giving a first exposure of the Hispanic theatrical tradition to some of the young people that would create a Chicano theatre in the late sixties.

To summarize briefly, as regards the Hispanic theatrical tradition in the Southwest, the following points have herein been substantiated and should become a basis for future study: 1) the Hispanic stage flourished in the Southwest during the 1920's and 1930's; 2) Los Angeles was the center of the most important Spanish-language writing and production for the stage in the history of the United States; the Los Angeles plays, besides representing commodity theatre, also reflected the life, culture and politics of Mexicans in California and the United States; 3)the *revista* genre that was so popular throughout the Southwest was the most important vehicle in reflecting the language, culture and political sentiments of Mexicans; 4) the theatre declined as a result of various forces coming to bear at the same time: the Great Depression, voluntary and forced repatriation of Mexicans, the rapid expansion of the talking film industry which could offer inexpensive shows during those economically difficult times.

It should be emphasized that the lights of the professional Hispanic stage were not snuffed out all at once, but that they were dimmed over a period of five to six years, beginning with the advent of the economic cataclysm of 1929, during which time impresarios and artists struggled to keep the stage alive, even to the extent of forming cooperatives. Furthermore, after the Hispanic professional stage finally died many of the professional artists put their theatre at the service of a wide array of community activities, including raising funds for local religious charities and celebrating patriotic and religious holidays. These artists simply continued to perform the most popular plays from their secular repertoires and only occasionally plays with religious themes. A few of the artists were able to extend their careers in the United States by moving to

New York, where Spanish-language vaudeville survived until the early 1960's or by working in local Spanish-language radio and television broadcasting after World War II.[24]

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Notes

1. Between 1900 and 1930, many of the smaller cities and towns along the route supported their own Spanish-language theatre houses. I have herein compiled a preliminary listing. In Texas: Teatro Casino (Eagle Pass), Teatro Estrella and Salón Hidalgo (Brownsville), Teatro Juárez (San Benito), Teatro Casino (Del Río), Teatro Melva (Corpus Christi), Teatro Mercedes (Mercedes), Teatro Chapultepec (East Donna), Teatro Nacional (Weslaco), Teatro Atenas (Kingsville). In New Mexico: Teatro Juárez (Las Cruces), Salón La Joya (La Joya), Salón Alianza Hispano Americana and Salón A.C. Torres (Socorro). In Arizona: Teatro Juárez (Sonora Town), Teatro Royal (Nogales), Teatro Mexicano (Superior), Teatro Amazu (Phoenix), Teatro Yuma (Yuma). In California: Teatro México (Brawley), Teatro México (Maravilla Park), Teatro Centenario (Ensenada), Teatro Salón (Santa Monica), Teatro Bonito (Belvedere), Club Hispano Americano (Pittsburgh), and many others.

2. One of my informants, Mr. Leonardo García Astol, performed along the Río Grande Valley during the late teens and the 1920's with his father's Compañía Azteca, after having performed in the interior of Mexico during the hostilities of the Mexican Revolution. Touring to the small towns on both sides of the border was called "puebleando." Mr. Astol also informed me that he eventually formed his own company and settled in San Antonio, where he still resides, to perform repertory and, later in the 1930's, vaudeville at the Teatro Nacional. He also performed as a "peladito" at the head of a company in Los Angeles during the 1930's.

3. By 1910, Laredo supported four fiercely competitive theatre houses: Teatro Eléctrico, Teatro Dreamland, Teatro Alarcón and Teatro Solórzano. When a major company was not performing at one of these, it would feature *sainetes, zarzuelas, couplets* and variety acts in between showings of silent films. According to the Laredo newspaper, *La Crónica* (December 14, 1911), the Teatro Eléctrico employed its own repertory company made up of local artists. They performed the following *zarzuelas: La marcha de Cádiz, Los camarones, Chin Chun Chan, El bateo* and *La banda de trompetas.* The Teatro Solórzano, on the other hand, varied its fare by offering "dramas y comedias los sábados, domingos y jueves, juguetes cómicos el resto de la semana," (*La Crónica,* December 14, 1911). During the next twenty years, the doors to other theatres would open here: Teatro Iris, Teatro García, Teatro Strand, Teatro Independencia, Teatro Variedades, Teatro Iturbide, Teatro Nacional.

4. See my article, "Mexican Theatre in a Midwest Industrial City," *Latin American Theatre Review* 7/1 (Fall 1973), 43-48.

5. Los Angeles' *El Heraldo de México* (September 16, 1924), announced the arrival of La Compañía Hispano-Mexicana de Zarzuela y Variedades F. Díaz de León from three seasons of performances in New York and a tour that included Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and other points. San Antonio's *La Prensa* (January 1, 1924), noted the following about the company's performances in Detroit: "No obstante la crueldad del invierno los hispano-americanos concurren diariamente a las funciones que ofrece la Compañía Díaz de León, ya que muy rara vez se presenta la oportunidad a esas colonias de presenciar espectáculos en que se representan sus costumbres y en que toman parte actores de su misma raza." A complete itinerary of Spain's Compañía María Guerrero y Fernando Díaz de Mendoza was published in San Antonio's *La Prensa* (November 21, 1926). It included the following: January 5 and 6, Jerusaleum Temple, New Orleans; January 8, Houston Auditorium; January 9, Municipal Auditorium, San Antonio; January 12, Grand Theatre, Douglas; January 14, Shrine Temple, Phoenix; January 15, San Bernardino Auditorium; the week of January 16, Mason Opera House, Los Angeles; the week of January 23, Columbia Theatre, San Francisco; then from San Francisco to San Diego, El Paso, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Canton, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York. Virginia Fábregas' many tours often extended to the outer reaches of the Spanish-speaking world, not just North America. *La Prensa* (December 1, 1926), supplied the following itinerary: San Antonio, El Paso, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philipines, Spain, Canary Islands, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Mexico.

6. One former member of the Fábregas company was Agustín Molinari, who died in the United States in 1934 and was succeeded on the stage here by his children, Raquel, Juan and Agustín, all of whom took part in a benefit performance to raise funds for his grave stone on October 15, 1934, at the Teatro Hidalgo in Los Angeles (*La Opinión,* October 10, 1934). Bernardo Fougá, noted as a member of the Fábregas company in Puerto Rico in 1921 by Emilio

J. Pasarell, *Orígenes y desarrollo de la afición teatral en Puerto Rico—Siglo XX* (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1967), p. 45, became an important director on the San Antonio stage and during the Depression was responsible for conducting charitable performances there at the head of the Club Dramático of the Inmaculado Corazón de María church. It is important to note that the plays produced were the same secular plays of his professional career: *El talento de mi mujer,* by Antonio Paso and Francisco Pacheco (*La Prensa,* February 23, 1932); *Papá Le Bonnard,* by Jean Alcord (*La Prensa,* July 24, 1932); *El juramento de la primorosa* (*La Prensa,* October 23, 1932); *La mujer adúltera* (*La Prensa,* December 1, 1932); *El Orgullo de Albacete,* by Joaquín Abati and Antonio Paso (*La Prensa,* January 29, 1933); etc. This was also true of Manuel Cotera, who first came to San Antonio in 1916 with the María Martínez company. By 1921 he had formed his own Compañía Cómico Lírico Dramático in the Alamo City (*La Prensa,* January 16, 1921) and for more than ten years continued to perform throughout central Texas. During the Depression he too directed charitable performances on a regular basis.

7. In Southwestern newspapers there are occasional references to formalized theatrical circuits like "el circuito Hipodrome" (*Hispano Americano,* San Francisco, April 1919); "el circuito Chatagua" that contracted Los Hermanos Llera, a vaudeville singing act for 125 performances across the United States (*La Prensa,* San Antonio, December 10, 1925); "el circuito Interstate" (*La Prensa,* October 3, 1924); and New York agent Walter O. Lindsay who booked the Compañía María Guerrero from New York to Los Angeles and back via New Orleans and the Southwest as a trial run for other national tours by Hispanic companies that he would manage (*La Prensa,* November 21, 1926).

8. For instance, singer-actress Nelly Fernández toured throughout Canada and the United States with other Mexican acts. For a time she was under contract to the Pantages vaudeville circuit for as much as $1,000 per month (*La Opinión,* August 8, 1933).

9. San Antonio's most important house was the Teatro Nacional built in 1917 and owned by Sam Lucchese, also owner of the Zendejas. Other San Antonio theatres were the Aurora, Texas, Obrero, Azteca, Hidalgo, Zaragoza, Princess, Unión, Amigos del Pueblo, Salón Casino, Beethoven Hall, Majestic, Municipal Auditorium, Progreso, Palace, Teatro Salón San Fernando, Juárez, State.

10. For instance, by its eighth performance, Adalberto Elías González' *Los Amores de Ramona* had attracted 15,000 people to the Teatro Mexico (*El Heraldo de México,* November 24, 1927).

11. For instance, *La Opinión* (August 12, 1933), reports, "De México se nos escribe diciendo que para el mes de septiembre próximo, se estrenará en uno de los teatros de aquella capital, una revista con libreto del autor teatral Esteban V. Escalante, muy conocido en nuestros círculos por haber vivido muchos años en Los Angeles. La revista, se asegura, tendrá como motivo la vida de los mexicanos en el estranjero teniendo un cuadro dedicado exclusivamente a Hollywood."

12. Miguel Arce, a journalist for *La Opinión,* whose novel *Ladrona* was also published by *La Opinión*'s publishing house and later adopted for the stage; Brígido Caro, journalist for *El Heraldo de México* and author of *La gloria de la raza, El niño Fidencio, Joaquín Murrieta* and *México y Estados Unidos* (according to Francisco Monterde, *Bibliografía del teatro en México,* México: Monografías Bibliográficas Mexicanas, 1933, p. 95, Caro was also author of *Heraclio Bernal o el Rey de los Bandidos* published in Alamos, México, 1894); Alfredo Bussón, who died in Los Angeles on December 18, 1929, was a journalist and author of *La vendetta* and the arrangements for two revistas, *Su Majestad Tiraklán* and *"Ya mi' anda;* Antonio Médiz Bolio is reported as having finished his play, *El sol de la humanidad,* in Los Angeles and presented it at the Teatro Novel, where his socialist drama, *La ola,* was also produced, according to *El Heraldo de México* (June 6 and June 22, 1920); according to *El Heraldo de México* (June 9, 1926), the Teatro Hidalgo was going to contract Jorge Loyo, a writer for Mexico City's *El Universal Ilustrado,* to write a series of *revistas;* José Gou Bourgell, a Spanish journalist and author of *El suicida, Virginidades* and *El crimen de la virtud;* Raúl Castell, who often collaborated with the famed Mexican composer, Ernesto González Jiménez, to write *revistas* such as *El mundo de Las pelonas, El Tenorio en California, En el país del Shimmy;* Max Cervantes, author of the drama, *El puñal del yaqui;* Arturo Chacel, author of *Se solicita un marido;* Juan N. Chavarrí, author of *Cuando ellas sean ellos;* Agustín Haro y T., editor of Los Angeles' *La Prensa* and author of *El proceso del mal humor* and *El gran recurso;* Margarita Robles, founder and director of a school for Mexicans in Los Angeles and author of *Corazón ciego;* Pezantes Ganoza, a Peruvian writer and author of *La sinfonía incompleta, Media noche,* and *El coyote;* Daniel L. Cosío, author of *El porqué de nuestras guerras;* Ramón Méndez del Río, also a Mexican journalist and author of *Los repatriados;* Antonio Helú, novelist, Hollywood screenwriter and author of *Los mexicanos se van, Esta noche me emborracho, La coartada, Los cuatro náufragos, La ciudad de los temblores* (with Jesús Segovia), *El gangster* and *El hambre que todo lo arreglaba* (Monterde, p. 180, notes that his play, *La comedia termina,* was published in Mexico in 1928); José Sandozequi and Hernán Sandozequi, father and son writing team for the Compañía Arte Moderno, were authors of many short works including *El mundo de las locas, Los sueños de Nerón, La aventura de María Elena, Llama un taxi, Espíritus de alquimia, Los Angeles en el infierno* and *El libro de oro de Hollywood;* María de Jesús Olazábal, also a journalist for *La Opinión* and author of *El presunto suicida;* Gustavo Solano, who

used the pen name "Conde Gris" in his newspaper columns and who was Guatemalan, was contracted in 1927 by the Teatro Principal to write one *revista* per week (*El Heraldo de México,* August 28, 1927) and by the Teatro Hidalgo in 1926 to provide a series of works "de ambiente local" (*El Heraldo de México,* September 2, 1926), was author of *México glorioso y trágico, La gran sorpresa, La casa de Birján, Al enfermo lo que pida, Las falsas apariencias* and many others; Daniel Venegas, known as "El Malcriado" in his newspaper columns, was author of *Nuestro egoísmo, Quién es el culpable* and *revistas* like *El con-su-la-do, El maldito jazz, Revista astronómica* and *El establo de Arizmendi* (in honor of the boxer Baby Arizmendi).

13. According to *El Heraldo de México* (April 29, 1927), this piece was a response to certain anti-Mexican statements made by President Calvin Coolidge.

14. Other plays by Eduardo Carillo, who came to Los Angeles in the early twenties as an actor in María Teresa Montoya's Company (*La Opinión,* August 8, 1933), are *Los hombres desnudos, Heraclio Bernal o el Rayo de Sinaloa, El zarco* and *Patria y honor;* his *revistas* and *zarzuelas* include *Los Angeles al día, Malditos sean los hombres, Su majestad la carne, Eva triunfadora* and *En las puertas del infierno.*

15. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, "El Teatro Libertad: Antecedents and Actuality," *Teatro Libertad* (Tucson: Teatro Libertad, 1978), p. xiv, reports on his interview of Marcos Glodel, a former actor, who remembered that his company, Cuadro México-España, would enter the audience after performances of this play to collect signatures on petitions to the governor of California for redress of the injustices perpetrated against Pompa. It seems that this was not an isolated practice; the Circo Escalante Hermanos Compañía de Baile y Variedades, that presented *zarzuela* and variety and circus acts, in March, 1927, in efforts to raise funds in Phoenix for the defense of Alfredo Grijalva, accused of murdering an American official, gave a benefit performance. See the Escalante broadside in the Manuel Gamio "Folkloric Materials" file of the Bancroft Collection. Regardless of the use of *El proceso de Aurelio Pompa,* or any other play, for raising defense funds, it is important to note that plays based on topics like the struggle of Aurelio Pompa were commodities that the Los Angeles audiences consumed for the human drama, relevance and even sensationalism that they promised. In fact, after Aurelio Pompa was executed—this too was incorporated into the play—Carrillo's play continued to be financially successful, so much so that a drama critic from *El Heraldo de México* (December 2, 1925), editorialized that the dead should be left to rest and that impresarios should not be so greedy for profits at the expense of the deceased: "La empresa del Hidalgo, sacrificando sus intereses pecuniarios, por humanidad y respeto a la raza, debe abstenerse de que el cuadro de artistas que allí actúa, represente "obras" como la que se refiere al infeliz mexicano que, aún en la tumba debe estar sufriendo cada vez que se ve caracterizado por uno de los faranduleros de la calle Main . . ."

16. Virginia Fábregas made arrangements to buy the rights of González' works, and she actually produced them, but it seems she never paid the author for his works. This led him to threaten to sue her for usurpation and for even ascribing his play, *Ramona,* to a fictitious Italian writer, Alfredo D. Cavaletti. See *La Opinión* (January 2, 1920).

17. The first version of his play, *Sangre yaqui,* opened at the Capitol Theatre, *El Heraldo de México* (October 22, 1926).

18. According to *El Heraldo de México* (October 27, 1927), *La degradación de los pobres* was translated into English by an American writer.

19. He also published a novel by the same title in 1923.

20. Monterde, *Bibliografía,* p. 163, shows that this play was published by the Sonora Printing Company in 1929.

21. See Armando María y Campos, *El teatro de género chico en la Revolución Mexicana* (México: Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1956), for a discussion and history of the *revista* as a genuine Mexican theatrical form. Especially interesting is his discussion of the *revista política* as a libretto that was written for social and political commentary during the Mexican Revolution, pp. 164-171. *Revistas* later degenerated into a loose format for comedy and musical performance in which the *pelado,* or underdog character, often improvised a substantial part of his role. Nevertheless, as a literary form, the *revista* was cultivated throughout the 1920's and 30's in Los Angeles, as it was in Mexico. Antonio Magaña Esquivel and Ruth S. Lamb, *Breve historia del teatro mexicano* (Mexico: Ediciones de Andrea, 1958), p. 99, also emphasize the importance of the authors of *revista* librettos.

22. *La Opinión* (June 13, 1932). The other side of the repatriation story, how the expatriates returning to Mexico fared in their homeland, was also dramatized in such works as Juan Bustillos Oro's three-act epic, *Los que vuelven* (*La Opinión,* February 27, 1932).

23. See John C. Miller, "Hispanic Theatre in New York, 1965-1977," *Revista Chicano-Riqueña,* 6/1 (Winter, 1978), pp. 40-59.

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