

relatively simple concept while those of *La señorita de Tacna* offered no assistance for a much more difficult work. One wonders, too, to what extent the success and the audience's acceptance and enjoyment of the work were predicated on the note or lack thereof in the case of *La señorita*.

Los buenos manejos opens in a typical colonial town with its predictably stratified society. Colonial life and the townspeople's roles are delineated so rigidly that many of the characters even lack names: *dos sobrinas cursis, la borracha, una tía*, etc. The story line is simple, typical of seventeenth and eighteenth-century drama, and almost cliché (but intentionally so). Three prostitutes arrive in the town to discover that this is just the town and life they have been looking for, so they decide to set up business here. At the same time the local priest, motivated by the prospect of easy riches, resolves to convert the town into a resting place for religious pilgrims. From the beginning our sympathies are with the prostitutes who are merely trying "to earn a living" and against the priest and the rest of the colonial hierarchy who are profiteering by exploiting the less fortunate. The town fathers vote to clean up the town and rid it of its undesirable element, but the prostitutes opt to stay and fight for their profession and for the right to work, as they call it. Thus, we are presented with something of an ironic social revolution with the "idealistic" worker class represented by the prostitutes. Meanwhile, of course, in the style of the eighteenth-century comedy of manners, the town gallant, who in reality is penniless, devises a variety of complicated schemes to replace his long lost fortune and relieve others of theirs.

In the end, in an *almost* baroque reversal of values, the dandy remains penniless, and the prostitutes are not only allowed to stay but are exalted by the town. We say *almost* baroque reversal of values because ultimately and in spite of the program's announcement that the work is a "sátira musical de malas costumbres," there can be little doubt that good still prevails, not evil. It is merely a question of recognizing that the "good" does not necessarily rest in the upper social classes as it did in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century dramas. The prostitutes are never presented as truly bad women but rather as fun-loving, spirited women who are merely trying to make a living and who see to it that the abusive, stuffy town fathers receive their due. The use of prostitutes as representatives of the less fortunate social classes gives the work a subtle feminist flavor as was particularly highlighted in a charming song about all the things a *mujer decente* ought not to do—which is just about everything.

We found the second act far superior to the first since it was here that the satire clearly surfaced. The first act left one a little uncomfortable, wondering if the authors could possibly be serious about presenting such an out-dated form with such archaic values. In the second act it finally became apparent that the work was satirizing not only life in the Mexican colonial town but the entire body of theatrical works which exalted and perpetuated that way of life. Unlike the traditional dramatic work which concludes with order restored and things returned to what they were before the start of the play, *Los buenos manejos* ends with the social strata turned topsy-turvy and the prostitutes at the top of that hierarchy—an interesting thought.

MOCTEZUMA II

The major production of the season, in terms of cast, size, costumes, and flourish, was Sergio Magaña's *Moctezuma II*, which preceded *Los buenos manejos* at the Bosque. Directed by José Solé, the production included more than fifty characters, exotic costumes and settings. Heralded as a "tragedia en dos actos y un prólogo," the work used much of the classic Greek machinery such as the chorus, omens from the gods portending the final downfall, etc. The play is a re-examination of the character of Moctezuma and his psychology and succeeds in presenting the Aztec leader in very human terms. He is frightened by the old women (the chorus) who foretell his tragedy and is clearly perplexed as to which attitude to assume with the Spaniards. Particularly highlighted in the play are the internal plots and intrigues which surrounded him and contributed as much to his defeat as the Spanish presence. As the playwright himself has noted in regard to his study of Moctezuma, "Sin embargo, jamás intenté revivirlo y hacerlo de cartoncillo. Me interesaba mostrar su aspecto más humano y comprender por qué reaccionó de determinada manera ante las circunstancias. El es uno de los monarcas más brillantes que ha tenido México desde hace 500 años y así lo digo en mi obra."⁷

Presumably *Moctezuma II* was more than moderately successful with the Mexican audiences since it ran for more than two hundred performances. The night we saw it, however, (one of the last performances) the theatre was nearly empty, and there were as many if not more people on stage than in the audience. For us, the work was flawed by the unwieldy length of the prologue and first act—more than an hour and a half—indeed an excessively long period to maintain audience interest. One wonders too how successful the production would have been outside of Mexico before an audience with less familiarity with the more obscure Indian leaders and the details of the Conquest. The production, however, was lively and colorful.

In summary, the Mexican professional stage this season offered something for nearly every taste—from the classics to the latest innovations in theme and technique. This variety is doubtlessly a credit to the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) and the Instituto Mexicano de Seguridad Social (IMSS) since, if we are to judge by the sparseness of the audiences we observed, the public itself was definitely not supporting many of the works. Hopefully, the spectators were more abundant during the earlier part of the season.

Interestingly, the common trait demonstrated by a number of the presentations was a self-consciousness within the work of the theatre's role as theatre. If we are to draw a conclusion based on this rather small selection, it would appear that theatre no longer strives to present itself as life but rather recognizes itself as art, literature, repetition, mask. Whether this common denominator is characteristic of contemporary theatre in general or merely a reflection of the taste of those in control of the INBA and the IMSS would be a provocative point of departure for a future study.

Notes

1. Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978).
2. We use the word potential because clearly there is no betrayal on Molina's part.
3. Quotations are taken from Manuel Puig, *Bajo un manto de estrellas y El beso de la mujer araña* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1983), p. 139.
4. See "The Usual and Some Better Shows: Peruvian Theater in 1981," *Latin American Theatre Review*, 15/2 (Spring 1982), 59-63.
5. See C. Lucía Garavito, "La señorita de Tacna o la escritura de una lectura," *Latin American Theatre Review*, 16/1 (Fall 1982), 3-14, which focuses on the work as a process of reading.
6. Mario Vargas Llosa, *La señorita de Tacna* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1981), p. 76.
7. Quoted in the *Excelsior*, martes, el 24 de mayo de 1983.

Teatro Hispánico en California State, Los Angeles

Roberto D'Amico será el coreógrafo del VII Taller de Teatro Hispánico del Teatro Universitario en Español de California State University, Los Angeles. Este Taller tomará lugar durante el trimestre de invierno de 1984, y enfocará movimiento escénico, poesía, canto y danza. Dirigirá este Taller la directora teatral, coreógrafa y actriz Magdalena Gutierrez con la participación en escenografía, iluminación y producción de los profesores Gigi Gaucher-Schultz, Alfredo Morales y Maris U. Ubans. Como en ocasiones anteriores, se podrá participar sea como actor o en los aspectos técnicos del montaje: escenografía, iluminación, sonido, vestuario, maquillaje, publicidad, fotografía y boletería.

El Teatro Universitario ha sido seleccionado nuevamente para recibir el Premio César de la Asociación Teatral Panamericana y asimismo que algunos de los actores y técnicos de la producción de mayo pasado, *Las torres y el viento*, han sido escogidos para recibir reconocimiento en esas categorías. Los premios se otorgaron el 11 de noviembre de 1983.