Mexico City's Spring 2017 Theatre Season

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Mexico City churned out yet another extraordinary theatre season in spring of 2017. With well over 100 plays performed each week, no single theatregoer's bucket list could have been even remotely satisfied in terms of seeing all desirable plays. Because I showed up to multiple plays that were sold out, I was simultaneously encouraged (I want plays to sell out!) and disappointed (I hate to miss plays). Three such plays were at the end of their runs, and for the first time I felt tempted to start buying tickets through Ticketmaster rather than just show up early. Despite challenges, theatregoers had abundant reasons to feel satisfied because so many plays had so very much to offer, and some were simply extraordinary.

For me, *Cosas pequeñas y extraordinarias* topped the list of the season's finest plays. Daniela Arroio and Micaela Gramajo wrote the text together, co-directed the play, and acted in it as well. Although not autobiographical, it reflected the family backgrounds of both Arroio and Gramajo, both of whose parents had to flee their native countries (Brazil and Argentina) and took refuge in Mexico. Although ostensibly a children's play, performed early afternoons on weekends, and advertised as appropriate for children at least five years old, adults found it powerful as well. The story focused on eight-year-old Emma. The program listed three women actors, but only two performed. The three took turns from performance to performance in the various roles to allow Arroio and Gramajo to see the play from outside at times and make adjustments as directors. In a nutshell, the play showed how Emma's reporter parents found their lives in danger and suddenly had to take leave of their homeland with her. Emma then had to go through the painful process of adapting to a new language, a new climate, a new culture, and new friends. The title of the play refers to a small museum Emma created in her homeland, which featured small, extraordinary things she discovered,

catalogued, and placed in a small cardboard "museum"—things like matchbooks, keyrings, stamps, and photos. In her new country, she felt so angry and alienated that she refused to try to find anything positive, while bullying, troubles with a new language, and lack of friends exacerbated her situation. With the help of a talking cat (played marvelously by Sergio Solís), the overtures of another child (played charmingly by Arroio), and letters from her grandmother back home (read movingly by an audience member picked and recruited by Gramajo maybe 15 minutes before show time), she started to come out of her depression. In a magically beautiful scene, she became entranced upon seeing a mother whale and her offspring in the ocean and entered into the water (gorgeous blue fabric made to undulate like water). She had discovered that her new country also had extraordinary things. She emerged from the water with a starfish and founded a new "museum," which she filled with new treasures, each catalogued as they had been in her previous country. It was a feel-good, moving story for sure, showing how welcoming kindness and family support helped a child in need, but the play offered so much more. I've alluded to the outstanding acting and magical ocean scene, but it had other magical elements, starting with a pair of screens (perhaps six by ten feet each) onto which most of the "set" was projected from a document camera stage left. Mario Eduardo D'León did all the technical work for the screens, acted as the story's narrator, and sometimes entered into the action with the other characters. He would announce to the audience, "This is Emma's room," holding up a poster perhaps two feet by four. Then he would slide it under the camera and suddenly the theatrical space transformed. The screens created a variety of "sets," showed the letters written by Emma's grandmother, asked audience members to silence their cell phones, and in one scene served as a sort of shadow theatre onto which actors' shadows cast from behind. The screens moved from place to place on the stage, increasing the magic. I saw the play performed on the Teatro Galeón's extremely large stage, which this play utilized masterfully. It was the final performance of the play in that venue, after which the company took it on the road. I asked whether adapting the play to smaller spaces was an issue, and the response was that they had to make difficult adaptations, including using only one screen at times. Another beautiful element of the play was the original music composed by Jacobo Lieberman, who also created the sound track. Ana Bellido designed delightful costumes, created the two little museums, and fashioned the "sets" projected by the document camera. In addition, the program was one of the most effective I have

seen. In addition to information about the creators, it included notes about transitioning to a new country, encouragement and information on how to be welcoming to refugees, a short linguistic primer on the invented language of the new country in the play, and a blank museum catalogue page so children could start their own collections of small and extraordinary items. Furthermore, the UN Commission on Refugees sponsored a small picture book with activities and a short story on refugees which was distributed to children; thus, some of the play's messages could continue to resonate after the play. *Cosas pequeñas y extraordinarias* also offered many levels of thematic resonance, including, sadly, the issue of disappearances and violence against reporters, which are all too real in Mexico. This was the first of three plays I immediately considered a masterpiece.

The season's second masterpiece was *El convivio del difunto*, written and directed by Martín Zapata and peformed by six members of Mexico's Compañía Nacional de Teatro. It featured compelling characters, impeccable acting, a set designed by Alejandro Luna, and exceptionally clever dialogue (including many repetitions with hilarious variations), and a brilliant variation on the rather common Mexican theme of dancing with death. Set entirely in the living room of an upper class couple, the play began with the somber announcement from a visiting physician (played by Gastón Melo)

Cosas pequeñas y extraordinarias. Photo: Nicholas Sheets.

that the man of the house, Mauricio, had died. But he then added that in a most curious development, despite his death, Mauricio continued talking and his body continued functioning. He announced that he would need to leave to prepare the death certificate, that he had left the deceased in his bed, reading, and that he had not informed Mauricio of his unusual medical condition. Astonished, Mauricio's wife, Leonor, had many questions about the condition, how long it would last, what to do, etc. The doctor simply said that he had never seen anything like it, that he had no idea how things would play out, and recommended treating the deceased well. Leonor immediately invited dear friends, a married couple, over to face this unprecedented situation. Played hilariously by Arturo Beristain, Mauricio appeared in his pajamas, and after a dazzling scene in which people tried to avoid telling him he was deceased, the truth tumbled out. Mauricio reacted unexpectedly—he decided to live whatever "life" he had left with abandon, dancing and singing flamboyantly to his favorite music, eating and drinking sumptuously, and spouting philosophical rants. His wife and the visiting husband latched on to a theory propagated by the maid, that perhaps the deceased had something left to do or learn before his death could become complete. In panic, and wanting to liberate the living corpse, the husband confessed that he had been in a long-term affair with Mauricio's wife. Rather than consummate the death, the result of this confession was that Mauricio and the physician confessed that they had staged everything, Mauricio ordered his wife and her lover forever out of the house, where the maid and doctor had started to pursue romance, and a budding relationship between Mauricio and the wife of his dismissed "friend" started forming. This contemporary play was a rarity in modern times in that it maintained the unities of time and space. *El convivio del difunto* turned out to be a delicious variation on Mexican masks, on finding life through death, or through theatre, on the dangers of infidelity, and the hope of true love.

¡Silencio, Romeo! constituted the season's third clear masterpiece for me. As the title suggests, this was a version of *Romeo and Juliet*, but Mexico's deaf theatre company, Seña y Verbo, performed it in an absolutely unique way. Carlos Corona adapted and directed the play, which used two translations. Alberto Lomnitz first translated it from English into Spanish; then the play's two deaf actors and Elihú Zárate translated it from Spanish into Mexican Sign Language. Both translations were used throughout the play. All parts were played by two deaf actors (Eduardo Domínguez and Roberto De Loera, both incredibly expressive veterans of many successful

El convivio del difunto. Photo: Sergio Carreón Ireta.

plays) and two hearing actors. The hearing actors both voiced and signed all of their lines, and also provided, with an occasional intervention from a pair of musicians, Spanish voice/translation from the side of the stage to the signs of the deaf actors. The result was mesmerizing and often lent further expression and meaning to the emotions and thoughts of the characters. I offer two examples. First, at one point Juliet mentioned that she was willing to abandon her surname to pursue her relationship with Romeo. As she voiced this, she gave the sign for Capulet and then threw it away as if tossing it into the garbage. Second, when the deaf actors signed the equivalent of "escúchame," they pointed at their interlocutor's eyes, and then at their own. This added further meaning to the frequent references to the eyes in the play. This level of expressivity was multiplied many times over, adding an extra dimension to a play that has been staged so many times that it could run the risk of becoming routine. Several other factors helped make this version of the classic stay far from routine. First, a short frame story at the beginning of the play showed a pair of janitors cleaning up backstage at a theater in which *Romeo and Juliet* was being performed. The man was deaf, while the woman could hear. As they discovered each other, the chasm between their two worlds started to break down, setting the stage for the main play. Second, the staging was genius; Alejandra Escobedo designed the set and

props. Elements of the initial backdrop took on further significance during the main play. A window became a stage upon a stage for the prince or for Romeo's cousin to appear. A chest housed props for various scenes, but also provided a place for Romeo to hide. A table, rotated and tipped up, became the friar's pulpit. Most importantly, two of the doors dis-attached from the backdrop and were wheeled around the stage to represent any number of spaces by the way they were configured, or whether the top and or bottom of the dutch doors were open or closed. Thus, these doors provided abbey cells and offices, bedrooms, the apothecary, and even the all-important balcony. Third, the live music performed by Sebastián Lavaniegos and Luz Olvera would have been worth the price of admission—their acoustic guitar, flute, percussion, and vocals set a beautiful, stately tone. Fourth, reducing the number of actors to four required clever costuming (designed by Fernanda García) and great versatility from the actors, each of whom played multiple roles. Though they changed roles often, De Loera's performance as Romeo and Valeria Fabbri's as Juliet were deeply moving. The other hearing actor, Daniel Ortiz, was masterful and great fun in the many roles he played. One final note to show the thoughtfulness of this remarkable, beautiful version of Shakespeare's play: just before taking his own life, deaf Romeo pathetically voiced his only words in the entire play—those of the play's title, "¡Silencio, Romeo!" Every aspect of this play came together in moving, surprising, glorious beauty.

Don Quijote had a prominent presence on Mexican stages this season. Dale Wasserman's 1964 musical has enjoyed a robust run as *El hombre de La Mancha* at the venerable Teatro de los Insurgentes with its Rivera murals on the façade. This version, directed by Mauricio García Lozano, premiered in October of 2016, normally played seven times per week between Thursday and Sunday and went on the road to various parts of Mexico from Monday to Wednesday. Its run ended in August 2017 with 350 performances. Despite all the performances in a fairly large venue, the first time I went it was sold out. I learned that I missed an unusual performance, as it catered to Mexico City's deaf community, with actors adding Mexican Sign Language to parts of the performance. Benny Ibarra (best known as a singer) headlined the cast as Cervantes/Quijote, with Guadalupe Lancho (a Spanish actress) as Aldonza, Carlos Corona (best known as a director, he directed not only *¡Silencio, Romeo!*, but also three other plays during this season) as Sancho Panza and Cervantes' sidekick, and 20 other actors filled out the excellent cast. Reviews on Ibarra have been strong, but in the performance I eventu-

¡*Silencio, Romeo!* Photo: Nicholas Sheets.

ally did see, he took ill, and Alberto Lomnitz (best known as a director, but also deeply involved in numerous other theatre projects, such as translating *Romeo and Juliet*, and recently starting a stint as the Coordinador Nacional de Teatro for the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes) stepped away from his usual role as Gobernador-Ventero and into the role of Cervantes/Quijote. And he did so superbly. Although his voice was not operatic, I never heard him miss a note, his rendition of the "Sueño imposible" was intensely moving, and his acting matched his singing. Corona was outstanding, bringing a bit of Cantinflas-esque flair to Sancho. Seventeen musicians provided live music. The set designed by Jorge Ballina was brilliant, with multiple features that converted from circumstances of captivity into the scenarios painted by Cervantes. Floorboards lifted to create various minimalist structures, and thus, the set mirrored one of the major themes of the play, the power to transform through theatre—both characters and set became something new through the play's metatheatre. In the windmill-tilting scene, an actor spun two long ladders. Horses for the dynamic duo were formed by the bodies of several actors, who tumbled out of those roles at the end of the scene. Audience members had to play a role in completing the suggestions,

and thus became co-creators. The play communicated beautifully and movingly the power of theatre and seeing things with new eyes to transform life.

Mónica Hoth and Claudio Valdés Kuri wrote the other Quijote-centered play, *Quijote: vencedor de sí mismo*, and Valdés Kuri directed it. Fernando Huerta embodied Quijote admirably. Compelling armor designed by Ximena Fernández featured a mishmash of materials secured onto or incorporated into the fabric of what he wore, including rows of keys and bottle caps, several ties and gloves, shin protectors, and so forth. It seemed to reflect that his 400 years had touched many walks of life. Huerta acted alone in the first act, displaying remarkable physical talent in various scenes, including one in which he appeared to be strung up by his foot, and others that required acrobatic talents. In several scenes, he pulled spectators from the audience and skillfully managed them almost like puppets to take his story forward, by dubbing him a knight and telling one of the side stories of the novel. While most of the first act was compelling, mixing narration and representation felicitously, the second act became heavily didactic as Quijote dialogued with an actress, encouraged the audience to be like him, and finally vowed to break free from Cervantes to write his own story. Nonetheless, Don Quijote continues to resonate in Mexico.

Jaime Chabaud wrote and Alberto Lomnitz directed *Niños chocolate*, a beautiful but haunting play that focuses on child labor in the cacao industry

Niños chocolate. Photo: Jesús Cornejo.

in western Africa. The play portrays three children, each of whom came into slavery in a different way: one purchased, one tricked, and the last stolen. Roughly fifteen adolescent spectators were invited to sit on cacao bags at the edge of the stage, where they were put to work in several scenes. In one, they were directed to separate the bad beans from the good, while in another they had to transport the bags around the stage. The taskmasters didn't frighten the youngsters, but they were insistent, giving them a taste of the work children really do in Africa. The plot involved a failed escape attempt, followed by a successful escape arranged by a journalist who later mysteriously disappeared, echoing once again Mexico's sad reality of disappearing journalists. Marisol Castillo, Fabrina Melón, and Teté Espinosa played the children. Melón also played a taskmaster, while Alejandro Morales played the journalist. The excellent acting included heartrending singing, great corporal skill, strong interactions with the young audience members, the communication of horrific injustices, and a rich combination of narration and representation. The set, designed by Edyta Rzewuska, contributed dynamically to the performance, with thick foliage in the background, a small mountain of cacao bags that suggested the magnitude of the work, pallets that transformed for different contexts mid stage, the façade of a work hut, and cacao bean bags/chairs around the stage. Patricia Gutiérrez designed the lighting, which included small flashlights that were provided to all the spectators on the cacao bags, who were encouraged to shine them at different things, including the actors' faces, throughout the play. The effect suggested thick jungle undergrowth, with a charming randomness to what the young technicians did with their lights. Finally, Leonardo Soqui composed evocative original music based on African instruments, rhythms, and melodies, which Eduardo Castellanos and Guillermo Siliceo performed on a ledge some ten feet above the work hut. Their performance was riveting and deserving of recognition in and of itself, much of it evoking a deep African feel with instruments I had never seen. The play ended with a moving scene in which the escaped child, now grown up and studying in Australia, met the daughter of the very journalist who had liberated her. The daughter observed: "Eres lo único que queda de mi padre." After the formal play, an actress announced that although most chocolate sold in Mexico is grown in Mexico and without child labor, Mexico City alone has over a million "niños chocolate" under the age of 14 working in any number of ways, and she pled with audience members to do all they could to combat the practice.

Vine a Rusia porque me dijeron que acá vivía un tal Antón Chéjov. Photo: Nicholas Sheets.

The cast of *Vine a Rusia porque me dijeron que acá vivía un tal Antón Chéjov*, recent graduates of UNAM's Centro Universitario del Teatro, collaborated to write the play, directed by Luis Ángel Gómez. I saw the final performance of the play at the Teatro La Gruta in the Centro Cultural Helénico, but another run was being planned for that summer in the Teatro Benito Juárez. In this play, five friends struggled to stay warm in a Chekhovian setting—a structure represented by a circular platform a few inches off the floor and a door through which frigid air blew relentlessly. The five nursed a fire for heat and warm water by feeding it classical books, agonizing over the loss of each book and repeating favorite lines from some of them. They seemed paralyzed, unable to do anything of significance. Finally one of the characters impetuously bolted out the door into the forbidding elements. The others, one by one, followed, all embarking on a wild journey across many geographies and elements, hoping eventually to enter Russia to interview Chekhov. On the way they endured plenty and had to show great courage. Eventually they ended up back in the original structure, but they felt that everything had changed because they had acted and felt empowered. The aforementioned door was actually on wheels, and was moved around a track surrounding the platform, so each stop represented a new locale, fleshed out by the minds of spectators. In the first scene we saw characters

bolt out of the house into the wilderness; in the next, with the door in a different position, we saw what happened to the characters from the wilderness side. In one particularly memorable scene, the characters had to leap into the unknown, whereby the door became a symbol of risk and courage. The play featured excellent acting, a constant flow of tones, memorable illumination, wonderful images, and the exploration of deep existential questions.

Instrucciones para jugar de memoria and *Nostalgia de cosas pequeñas* also required a cerebral commitment from spectators. *Instrucciones* was written by Camila Villegas and included actors Antón Araiza and Pedro Mira, directed by David Jiménez Sánchez. The plot was nonlinear—the two actors played aging friends who seemed stuck in an undefined space, talking in loops about several things, including the absence of a dear friend, the eroding of their memories, and their decline toward inevitable death. Several leit motifs became symbols, such as their yearly trip to the Grand Prix races, an echo of the loop they seemed to be in and a potent symbol to them because of the way race car tires were constantly wearing down, like their lives. The first half of the play seemed completely disjointed and inexplicable, and then I started to see patterns in the way the friends interacted, and by the end it reminded me of how readers have to put together the pieces of *Pedro Páramo*. Another potent element of the play was the repeated use of the song "Proud Mary," which seemed a strong contrast to the inevitability of death in the play, since it "keeps on churning." *Instrucciones* offered a profound look at the nature of life, death, and memory on a minimalist set, performed by a pair of excellent actors.

Ángel Luna wrote and directed four actors in a similarly challenging play called *La nostalgia de las pequeñas cosas* at the Teatro Carretera 45. Through repetitive yet varied routines, its characters explored issues of memory, nostalgia, lost items, love, and the significance of these things in life. I counted 20 different scenes. In each one, the actors announced a theme or title for the scene, placed four wide benches into a new configuration, and then entered into plays within the play. The award-winning text, dense and philosophically laden, jumped from one scenario and theme to another, often with a rapid-fire delivery. The play had strong visual power due to the benches, costumes, and choreography. The actors wore colored clothing, mostly in bright red, with highlights in turquoise and yellow, suggesting childhood play or a circus, and play they did, but while delivering deep philosophical musings and inquiries. Not only did the benches add visual interest to the play through their multiple configurations within a small space,

La nostalgia de las pequeñas cosas. Photo: Nicholas Sheets.

and with the audience on all sides, but they created platforms on which the actors performed, making it so they were below, above, or at the eye level of the spectator. Finally, the actors configured themselves with even more variety than the benches, with energetic and synergistic choreography that required excellent timing and group work. In addition to these visual merits, the play featured lovely music composed and performed via soundtrack by the playwright himself. *La nostalgia de las pequeñas cosas* looked light and cheery at first blush, but in retrospect it was a ponderous, thought-provoking play, and one of its most important truths was that theatre helps us frame and approach profound human truths.

Ángel Luna acted in another play, also in the Foro of Carretera 45 Cultural Center, so entertaining and creative that spectators could be forgiven for not taking seriously the weighty philosophical issues it posited. Richard Viqueira wrote and directed *Monster Truck*, a play that has had several runs since 2012 in different theaters, usually with Viqueira in the cast. This season he was preparing another play, so another actor replaced him. Based on an actual incident that happened in Mexico City, *Monster Truck* portrayed the fatal crash of a passenger bus and an elephant that had escaped from a circus. Billed as an opera, the vocal performances of this play were its most outstanding traits. In her entrance as the elephant (no elephant suit!—just black shirt and pants with white boots), Gina Martí belted out a piercing, haunting

rendition of a song in Swahili. Ubaldo Faco played the engine of the bus and stole the show not only with the incredible variety of sounds he produced, much of it in a beat box style, but also in the range of his dialogues, his imitation of the sounds of a bus engine, and his singing. As the bus driver, Luna was no slouch in his singing and acting. A few chairs configured in different ways for different scenes, along with yellow "precaución" tape were the play's only set—it depended on the audience to fill in all detail; the closest any visual element came to being realistic was the plate that the driver used to represent the steering wheel. Although the music and absurd situation dominated, the text included meditations on the nature of crashes as a form of encounter, on encounters as a form of crashes, on love as an encounter (and a crash), on the physics of two objects meeting, and on the inevitability of death (another encounter). The play's title came from the engine wistfully wishing he were in a Monster Truck. Lasting only 42 minutes, *Monster Truck* was an astonishing work of art, unlike any play I've ever seen.

Descriptions of several plays indicated content having to do with the issue of violence against women. One such play, *Infierno Barba Azul*, echoed the content of the French folktale by Charles Perrault, with a text collectively created by the Puño de Tierra theater company and the production directed by Fernando Bonilla. It highlighted many angles of the institutionalized abuse of women, showing how men are programmed from a very young age to expect it, how women are taught to put up with it, how places of employment empower men and take power from women, how govern-

Monster Truck. Photo: Nicholas Sheets.

ment institutions exacerbate things, and how even death seems to conspire against women. Actors performed the play on the second floor of the Barba Azul nightclub (or cabaret, or dive), an establishment which clearly had its heyday many decades ago. On the main floor, it still has a stage for live music, where clients can pay women to dance with them, according to information I found online. Historical information suggested that in the past men could arrange for more than just dancing. The walls sported images of voluptuous women. I thought it immensely ironic, but also shocking, that this play, which condemned the abuse of women, was performed in an establishment so associated with celebrating and treating women as objects. Upon entry, spectators encountered the actors sitting on stage in street clothes. Before them on the floor were three white outlines as if from murder scenes. The actors informally told stories of abuse they had seen or experienced in the days prior to the performance and then changed into glitzy clothes and took on their characters. Through a combination of narration and representation, the play told the story of three women who were mudered and the investigations that ensued. The testimonies varied, but in each case men were in control and women suffered. Four of the five actors played a variety of roles for the various cases. Several scenes and characters stand out. Juan Carlos Medellín played an official who investigated the murders, but it was clear that he wasn't entirely committed or competent. One noteworthy aspect of these investigations was that he could interview the deceased women, but their memories of events had faded, while their suffering as a result remained bright. Another noteworthy scene involved a social worker, played by Daniela Arroio, taking information for a report from the victim of an attack. The worker unwittingly opened wounds, assured maximum awkwardness, and showed no human empathy. In another, a male police officer sought a gynecological exam from a rape victim, further humiliating and dehumanizing her. The characters described or showed other variations on the theme, including forced prostitution, use of technology to bully and intimidate, and kidnapping. All of these scenes and testimonies were strong in and of themselves, but one more dimension made the play even stronger: Bonilla, sporting a blue-tinted beard, sat at a microphone at the front of the stage and occasionally read texts from the legend, or barked out directions to the actors. His actions showed how even theatre can depersonalize and abuse women, as the director talked over the women, referred to them as numbers, and gave harsh directions after which he expected immediate obedience. In a suggestion of hope at the end of the play, the women rebelled

and defied the director's authority. After the play, the actors did not face the audience or acknowledge applause, but returned to street clothes and started to take down props, perhaps suggesting that the topic was so grim that it seemed wrong to smile and take bows. I appreciated that the play's tone fluctuated often, at times completely serious, at times farsical, at times absurd; otherwise, it would have been harsh to watch. The lighting and sound technician did his job on the far end of the stage, visible to the audience. During the first part of the play he also created a highly artistic drawing, which the audience could see develop as it was projected on the ceiling. In fact, the actors often interacted with audience members, taking some onto the stage to dance, asking others to describe the accused during the investigation, and handing out popcorn. Sofía Álvarez Núñez and Valentina Sierra rounded out the excellent cast. *Infierno Barba Azul* was a powerful and stirring indictment of violence against women.

Paola Izquierdo wrote and performed another play that focused on the place of women in society, *De príncipes, princesas y otros bichos*. Roam León directed, Hazael Rivera played the keyboard, and Isaac Pérez played the violin. Izquierdo told me that the two acts of the play originally started as independent monologues. Given Izquierdo's background in musical, satirical performance, it was not surprising that this play satirized several characters from popular culture. In the first act, she pilloried the idea of princesses kissing frogs in search of princes, taking on the role of a princess/biologist who studied frogs and determining that all were terribly flawed. She referenced and ridiculed myriad Disney themes and songs, criticized her male-centered society, and ultimately rejected the system. In the second act, she took on the character of the Little Prince, but in the form of a Mexican street child, a picaro who survived by his wits and by telling stories. In the main story he told of the abuse of a little girl. The character referred to numerous wrongs inflicted on women and children in Mexico, from the femicides in Cd. Juárez to the horrors of border crossings and suicides, all with little notice from government, society, or school systems. Izquierdo delivered withering criticism with exceptionally clever language, some invented, some satirical, but always barbed. She acted marvelously, using a wide array of facial and corporal expressions, fast verbal delivery, various accents, and song. She had great chemistry with the musicians, who occasionally had comic interactions with her. Although the origins of this play reach back over a decade, Izquierdo has performed it in various forms over the years, constantly updating its content so that it continues to be highly relevant.

Finally, I would mention briefly a number of noteworthy plays that I either could not see or did not have the space on which to comment in this report. First, I was very sorry to miss *Bozal*, written and directed by Richard Viqueira, a science fiction play in which the characters, and many spectators, were airborne throughout the play. I also just missed the premiere of another Viqueira play, *Hérodes hoy*, which included the throwing of multiple extremely sharp knives. I could not get tickets to the final performances of *El corazón de materia*, written by José Ramón Enríquez, José María de Tavira, and director Luis de Tavira. In typical de Tavira form, the performances were four hours long with no intermission and the cast had many notable actors. The reviews of the play were widely divergent. UNAM's Carro de Comedias continued strong, this season featuring Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's classic *La verdad sospechosa* on Saturdays and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Los empeños de una casa* on Sundays, both performed in the shadows of the theaters bearing the playwrights' names. The atrium of the Biblioteca Nacional had an exhibition on the life and work of Leonora Carrington, timed to honor her on the 100th anniversary of her birth. On weekends the Caracola Producciones theater company performed a multimedia play, *Cuentos de abajo*, utilizing images from Carrington's surreal repertoire, much of which she created as a transplant to Mexico. Microtheatre continues to thrive—this year Teatro en Breve opened another venue, this time in Coyoacán, so now there are three different theaters in Mexico City in which spectators can take in up to eight short plays a night.

This season offered superb, abundant theatre. It featured comedy and drama, satire and seriousness, experiments and traditionalism, and homegrown plays and imported musical, classical, and contemporary plays. Content ranged from pure escapism to deep philosophy, from the culturally relevant to the boundaries of propriety. Budgets varied from shoestring to lavish. In sum, spectators in Mexico City continue to enjoy one of the most vibrant theatres in the world.

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Note

[1] A complete recorded performance of this play is available on YouTube, easily found by searching the play's title. The text has been published by Paso de Gato.