

# LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE REVIEW

*a Journal devoted to  
the Theatre and Drama  
of Spanish and Portuguese  
America*

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## Abstracts

### **Fernando de Ita, "La danza de la pirámide: Historia, exaltación y crítica de las nuevas tendencias del teatro en México."**

The most recent developments in Mexican theatre have their roots not only in innovative dramaturgy by the *Contemporáneos* and by Usigli but also in radical staging and performance experiments realized by Japanese director Seki Sano and by the late 1950s group Poesía en Voz Alta, as well as in the 1980s shift from a regional to cosmopolitan dramaturgy. The most significant directions in recent Mexican theatre include Vicente Leñero's "hyperealism"; the elaboration of an Artaudian style total theatre by directors Mendoza, Gurrola and Margulis and their followers; Nicolás Núñez's paratheatrical *Teatro Participativo*, shaped by Jerzy Grotowski's and Eugenio Barba's concepts of the Third Theatre and the performer, and the *Teatro Personal* elaborated by young theatre workers whose mass media formation has been more cinematographic than theatrical. The 1990s could bring the golden age of Mexican theatre, because Mexico's young theatre workers now act autonomously to accomplish what the country's cultural institutions can or will not do.

### **Bonnie H. Reynolds, "Violence and the Sacred in a Den of Thieves."**

In Roberto Ramos-Perea's dramatic works, which have developed within the second cycle of what has been called "New Puerto Rican Dramaturgy," violence plays a major role. The author's stance in respect to violence is a paradoxical one since, despite the fact that violence is a major staging device, the critical point of view that Ramos-Perea communicates is one of antiviolence. A closer look at his play, *Cueva de ladrones (Revolución en el Paraíso)* illuminates the author's position concerning violence and helps to clarify the perspective from which violence enters his theatrical world. Ramos-Perea's approach to violence in this play closely corresponds to René Girards' observations in *Violence and the Sacred*. The latter distinguishes between sacrificial, essentially positive violence, and harmful violence saying that the beneficial variety benefits the primitive community by keeping under

control the violent tendencies among individuals of the group and thus prevents the disintegration of the society. However, once the obscurity of the system is transcended, violence breeds negative results and destroys the society in question. In *Cueva de ladrones*, sacrificial violence, as the foundation of the Reverend Agustín Mojica's tyranny, maintains the order until the intrusion into the closed rural society of a San Juan reporter initiates a process which reveals the impure, negative nature of the violence used to maintain the societal order and points to the society's inevitable disintegration.

### **Beatriz Seibel, "Teatralidad popular en Argentina: Coexistencia de múltiples manifestaciones."**

Theatricality may be understood as the union of dance, word and music in variable combinations. Popular theatricality in Argentina, and in other Latin American countries, has diverse cultural origins, including both the European medieval and Renaissance popular spectacles described by Bakhtin and the theatrical traditions of America's indigenous cultures. Argentina's diverse popular theatrical forms constitute the response of culturally excluded groups to the dominant system's art forms and ideology. Manifestations of Argentina's popular theatricality include 1) *fiestas* and ceremonies of indigenous, religious and folkloric origins; 2) theatrical representations of itinerant companies, the *circo criollo*, radiodrama and puppetry and 3) theatrical representations, both live and through the mass media, which draw their audiences from the popular sectors.

### **Roberto Previdi Froelich, "Víctimas y victimarios: Cómplices del discursos del poder en *Una noche con el Sr. Magnus e hijos* de Ricardo Monti."**

In Ricardo Monti's esthetics, one notes the use of the grotesque as an ideological element, and the mask is the grotesque visual element of bourgeois ideology. On an ideological plane, of *Una noche* the idea of good vs. evil is obscured behind ambiguous and ambivalent characterization which permeates the various levels of discourse in the play. Metatheatre is another important element in *Una noche* which emphasizes the other characters' ritual complicity in the representation of a hierarchy of power whose head is Magnus. The play includes the ritual function of a chorus that demonstrates the eternal repetition of human exploitation in which we are all accomplices to a certain degree. Premiered in 1970, *Una noche* is a subtle but sharp criticism of the institutionalization of repressive power. (In Spanish) (DJC: RPF)

### **Jacqueline Eyring Bixler, "Language in/as Action in Egon Wolff's *Háblame de Laura*."**

In Egon Wolff's latest play, dialogue is virtually the only activity performed by the characters, and as such, the primary source of dramatic tension and interest. Language functions not only as sole activity, but also as a substitute for tangible, significant action and as the means of conveying a bizarre couple's unfulfilled wish for a concrete change in their situation. Words fill the void of their dreary lives while at the same time underscoring that very same existential emptiness. Although both mother and son use language to convince one another of the validity of their discourse, those same words subvert any possible credibility, for it is impossible for either them or the audience to distinguish fact from fiction, game from reality. Speech-act theory, however, sheds light on this cryptic and complex play by revealing the role of language as both content and form, activity and object, and by suggesting what can be *done* with words alone. Furthermore, by focussing on the use and mis-use of language in this play, we come to appreciate language's potential as a means of reshaping reality and as an instrument of power and authority. (JEB)

### **R. A. Kerr, "Buried Treasure: The Theatre of Constancio Suárez."**

Although nothing is known of the life and career of the late nineteenth-century Mexican dramatist Constancio S. Suárez, his plays, which were recently discovered by Emilio Carballido, offer interesting insights on the development of Mexican theatre. Suárez's biblical

melodramas and Romantic comedies and tragedies, published between 1897 and 1902, provide evidence of a substantial body of third-generation Romantic theater in Mexico, yet also include elements that transcend typical Romantic stereotypes. The most interesting and unusual of the plays, the comic-fantastic *Fandango de los muertos*, includes mummies, cadavers and skeletons as characters, and provides a uniquely Mexican perspective on the celebration of a traditional Catholic feast. The rediscovery of Suárez's plays introduces a modern public to a talented *teatro popular* dramatist who shows remarkable technical skills and versatility in creating a diverse collection of short dramatic pieces.

### Judith A. Weiss, "Teyocoyani and the Nicaraguan Popular Theatre."

Teyocoyani was one of the first popular theatre groups formed after the 1979 triumph of the Sandinista revolution. From the outset, its mandate was a multiple one: to sponsor grassroots development workshops throughout its area of activity, developing an ongoing relationship with diverse constituencies, from miners to agricultural workers; to promote cultural retrieval and expression throughout its constituencies; to produce full-length works for local and national presentations, on subjects drawn from the communities, and to develop as a model of economic self-sufficiency.

### Robert J. Morris, "The Theatre of Grégor Díaz."

The production of Grégor Díaz epitomizes the best of contemporary Peruvian theatre that speaks for the rights of the proletariat and against the injustices of abusive social, political, and economic powers.

During the twenty years that he has written for the Peruvian stage, Díaz has composed ten plays. While some of his first works are long, with several acts, his more recent creations are comparatively brief, one-act pieces. All, however, are generally characterized by their structural diversity, the variety of their story and character delineations, the author's imaginative stage craft, and their insightful views of the reality of the urban lower working class.

Predicated principally on Díaz's disdain for the capitalist forces that have fostered class division during the past two decades, these plays are an urgent call for a united, proletariat refusal to be manipulated by society's power brokers, including religious and governmental institutions.

### María Mercedes de Velasco, "La proyección teatral de la masacre de las bananeras."

The two works analyzed in this article both have as a historical referent the same far-reaching repercussions of Colombian labor struggles. Both works denounce the abuses of the military and the violations of human rights. *Soldados*, by Carlos J. Reyes, is situated precisely in the historical moment in which the events occur, thus providing an analysis of the contradictions as lived out by soldiers and workers who find themselves confronted by a war of fratricide. The soldiers, socially disoriented due to the alienation created by military training, will forever remain the social outcasts into which they have been converted, they will never return to the countryside, nor in the cities will they find a place to call their own. Jairo A. Niño, in *El sol subterráneo*, utilizes past historical events as a backdrop for the tragedies of the present. This work has the structure of a Greek tragedy and recreates the deforming effects of violence. The three protagonists within this work decode and subvert the language of the military, thereby destroying it with their own hands and changing the roles of victim and torturer. (In Spanish) (MMV: BLK)

### Isis Quinteros, "Gabriela: Personaje dramático, personaje teatral."

*Gabriela*, by Jorge Marchant Lazcono, dramatizes the life of the Chilean Laureate poet Gabriela Mistral from her childhood until her death (1889-1957). The drama, structured as narrative theater, presents a sequence of dramatic moments in Gabriela's life in which the common denominator is the experience of loss and death. The production, which was the

result of a collective project, incorporated visual, musical and choreographic elements, transforming a schematic text into an "espectáculo teatral." (In Spanish) (IQ)

**Daniel Zalacaín, "Dinámica dramática en *Omar y los demás* de Franklin Domínguez."**

This highly symbolic drama utilizes its languages of expression in order to create spaces where multiple transformative processes take place. The scenic space (discourse, lighting, sound, decor) originates and functions as a sign which evokes in the audience's mind other dramatic spaces: interior, mythic and historic. The multiplex character of the play makes it possible for the message to be transmitted poetically from different spaces and dimensions, forming simultaneously a network of signs and signifiers which support the theatrical linkage. The scenic space produces an image of deformation, chaos, suffering and violence which relates both to a mimetic space of the outside reality as well as to the abstract one of an interior reality. The mythic space unfolds interwoven to the scenic and interior spaces, and it is filled with the mythological image projected by Omar, a god-man figure who portrays an unfulfilled modern Prometheus.

**Pedro Bravo-Elizondo, "El jefe de la familia."**

Alberto Blest Gana, a well-known Chilean novelist, wrote *El jefe de la familia*, which has been categorized as Chile's first *costumbrista* play. This article shows the close ties between this comedy and the society of its time. It studies the compromise between the text and its author's esthetic position, as he rejects European models and accents instead national values through use of *costumbrismo*. (In Spanish) (PBE: DJC)

**Pedro Bravo-Elizondo, "Sergio Arrau, el dramaturgo ignorado."**

Sergio Arrau Castillo (1928), Chilean dramatist, director and actor currently residing in Peru, has developed a substantial body of theatrical works which are being enjoyed in both the country of his birth and the country in which he presently lives. In Peru more than 100 of his works have been brought to life on the stage. In the interview which follows he has summarized for his public a number of his ideas about his own artistic development, the methodology of writing for the theatre, the role of the writer in Latin America, the significance of the various rewards he has received, his experiences in the theatre during the "Unidad Popular" regime in Chile and general impressions which he has about his art. (In Spanish) (PBE: BLK)



Dedicated with gratitude to Dr. John S. Brushwood

## With Gratitude

This issue of the *Latin American Theatre Review* is fondly dedicated to John S. Brushwood, friend and colleague at the University of Kansas for more than 20 years. It is hard to imagine the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Kansas without John Brushwood's guiding hand, but the time has come when he will retire from his regular duties. This issue of the *LATR* seems an appropriate place to acknowledge his true and faithful service to this journal. John's arrival at the University coincided with the publication of our first issue in the fall of 1967. Now, as we enter our 23rd year of publication, it is time to pay tribute to his involvement over the years in ensuring whatever quality and value the journal has come to enjoy.

Brushwood's involvement with the journal ranged from his accessibility to answer a quick question about procedures to a profound discussion of policies and objectives. On one occasion when I was away from the University he accepted full responsibility for an entire issue. He was always available to help to read a manuscript, to offer an evaluation, to help with a decision, to uphold standards. He has been unerringly accurate in his assessments, and if the journal has provided a service to the development of Latin American theatre studies in the United States as well as abroad, a large part of the credit goes to his guidance, his thoughtfulness, and his professional oversight.

Although we will replace John in his role as Associate Editor of the journal, we will never replace in our memories the service he has performed for all of us in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Kansas. As Roy A. Roberts Professor of Latin American literature, he guided the department and the faculty through some very difficult years to a position of eminence.

For your gentle and steady counsel, John, we say "mil gracias." May you enjoy your much-deserved freedom!

George Woodyard  
Editor



## TEATRO DE LA CAMPANA

### Sociedad sin fines de lucro

En Buenos Aires, en los últimos dos años, han desaparecido unas quince salas dedicadas al teatro de arte. En las más antiguas fue donde se inició la generación presente de artistas que ocupan los puestos de privilegio en el teatro de Argentina; y donde los jóvenes de hoy hicieron su aprendizaje para ocupar los puestos de importancia para mañana. Sin estas salas jamás existirá la posibilidad de experimentación artística para los futuros directores, dramaturgos y actores de este arte.

Los tiempos de la eficiencia y del practicismo barrieron con la mayoría de esos espacios; los pocos que han sobrevivido se vienen soportando en el juego de la oferta y la demanda con el dinero que viene del mundo del espectáculo o, aún peor, de la pornografía.

Y el Estado no ayuda tampoco. En el pasado nada se le podía pedir porque casi siempre tenía el rostro de un militar que llevaba su mano a la cartuchera cada vez que escuchaba la palabra "teatro." Cuando vino por fin el turno de la democracia, el teatro no tenía el hábito de pelear contra el Estado y, cuando fue a pedir de buenas maneras, le dijeron que no había dinero.

Entre las salas que aún, miraculosamente, quedan abiertas está el Teatro de la Campana. Creado a comienzos de 1987 en el mismo espacio físico que albergó, durante cuarenta años, al Teatro del Pueblo (el primer teatro independiente de Argentina y de América Latina), el Teatro de la Campana ha venido a representar una dedicación indómita al arte teatral.

Hasta este momento el Teatro de la Campana pudo subsistir porque se estructuró como una sociedad sin fines de lucro donde la mayor parte del trabajo se hace en forma voluntaria. En octubre de 1988 tuvo su primera crisis económica que sobrevivió gracias al esfuerzo de más de mil personas que aportaron una cuota mensual equivalente al costo de una localidad.

En enero de este año la supervivencia de la sala estaba asegurada. Pero no contábamos con la crisis económica que ocurrió en febrero y abril cuando en Argentina el peso se devaluó 600 por ciento. Quienes conducen el Teatro de la Campana, en su mayor parte cincuentones pasados, han atravesado etapas difíciles—y así no tienen miedo ni del gobierno militar, ni del trabajo duro que va a venir.

Pero la lucha contra los banqueros es una que no permite victoria. El Teatro de la Campana no quiere que la gente común tenga que soportar un aumento en el precio de una suscripción a un teatro. Sería como darle razón a los banqueros.

El precio de una suscripción mensual al Teatro de la Campana no alcanza al medio dólar. En Buenos Aires hay muchísimos espectadores que no disponen de esa cifra para comprar algo que no es necesario al alimento.

Hay quienes han titulado de nostálgicos del teatro independiente a los que no quieren que el Teatro de la Campana desaparezca, que muera para siempre. Estes idealistas del Teatro de la Campana responden que sí . . . Ha llegado el tiempo de ser nostálgico . . . Ha llegado el tiempo de luchar para lo ideal otra vez . . . Ha llegado el tiempo para unir la belleza con la resistencia.

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