

Latin American Theatre Today: A 1992 Conference in Kansas

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A conference celebrating the study and performance of Latin American theatre was sponsored by the University of Kansas in Lawrence from 28 April to 2 May of 1992. The primary objective of the conference was to study growth and change during the ten years since the time of our 1982 conference. The four days were devoted to intensive and in-depth scrutiny of four topic areas: history, gender, genre and performance. A keynote speaker each day set the stage for papers and discussions in each area. Panels of Latin American playwrights discussed each topic from their personal perspectives. Finally, as a corollary to the academic and scholarly presentations, the conference offered live theatre performances, nearly 20 in all.

In addition to the four keynote addresses, the 250 participants could choose from 100 papers, including a special presentation on Chicano theatre by Jorge Huerta. The distinguished constellation of playwrights in attendance included José Triana, Roberto Ramos-Perea, Carlos Otero, Luisa Josefina Hernández, Sabina Berman, Marco Antonio de la Parra, Naum Alves de Souza, Diana Raznovich, Guillermo Schmidhuber, Matías Montes Huidobro, Emilio Carballido and Egon Wolff.

The performance groups included several from outside the country who came to Lawrence in spite of overwhelming diplomatic and logistical problems: Ana Correa and Augusto Casafranca of Yuyachkani (Peru) presented their moving version of *Adiós, Ayacucho* based on a short story by Julio Ortega that recounts violence and oppression of the disadvantaged in Peru. Teatro Esquina Latina (Cali) staged *Homenaje a Leo*, a dynamic and stylized piece of corporal movement that interprets the vanguardist poetry of León de Greiff. Teatro Huella Latina (Dominican Republic) offered two pieces, one a mime selection, the other a monologue of an actress in the final moments before the curtain goes up (Miguel Vicario's *El camerino*). Other presentations included Triana's *Night of the Assassins* (from Notre Dame University), Wolff's *Flores de papel* (Teatro

Hispano, Houston), and a fascinating rendition of Antonio Skármeta's *Burning Patience*, presented by the University of Kansas Theatre Department as a radio scripted play. Some groups made heroic efforts to come to Lawrence to participate in the conference, including the Rainbow Theatre (San Francisco) with Jairo Aníbal Niño's *La madriguera*; Los Comediantes (Georgia) with Buenaventura's *La maestra de escuela*; and Ohio University's Spanish program with Luis Rafael Sánchez's *La farsa del amor comprado*. Two one-woman shows by Anna Maria Speight and Mónica Rúffolo of Spain completed the program.

The conference was supported by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States Universities. Even so, an event of this magnitude would not have been possible without the involvement and support of various administrative units at the University of Kansas, most notably our colleagues in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Department of Theatre. The conference could not have come off as we envisioned it without the superb coordination of Rosalea Postma-Carttar or the tireless efforts of the following individuals: Víctor Bogado, Ana Chouciño, Roger Colom, Mark Hernández, Brenda Krebs, Irma López, Javier Martínez, Nieves Martínez, Manuel Medina, Iani Moreno, Angel Rivera, Laurietz Seda and Julie Winkler.

In the pages that follow, we are publishing the presentations by the four keynote speakers, one of them in a much expanded and later version, plus an original monologue by José Triana which he himself presented in a reading at the time of the conference. The small piece by Sandra Messinger Cypess captures, we think, the confusion and chaos of 100 hours of non-stop activities, while at the same time reflecting the excitement and enthusiasm of a very receptive and appreciative group of participants who came to Lawrence from 15 countries and 30 states. The conference was a time for seeing friends and a time for fun, but it was primarily a time for consideration of serious issues in the life of the Latin American theatre.

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