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POESÍA EN VOZ ALTA IN THE THEATRE OF MEXICO

by

RONI J. UNGER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1978

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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FOR MOLLIE A. UNGER

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C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

Chapter

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATRE IN MEXICO BEFORE WORLD WAR II 14

Indigenous Theatre: the Ancient Maya; Spanish-Dominated Theatre; Spanish-French Dominated Theatre; Independence; Movements and Dramatic Forms; Post-Revolutionary Theatre; Commercial-Theatre Groups; Experimental-Theatre Groups

3 MEXICO CITY IN THE 1950s 58

4 THE ORIGINS AND AIMS OF POESÍA EN VOZ ALTA 78

5 1956: THE FIRST AND SECOND PROGRAMS 92

6 1957: THE THIRD AND FOURTH PROGRAMS 146

7 1957-1959: THE FIFTH PROGRAM 205

8 1959: THE SIXTH PROGRAM 236

9 LAST STAGES: PROGRAMS SEVEN (1960) AND EIGHT (1963) 271

10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 308

APPENDIX A: Playbills 331

APPENDIX B: Scripts and Sketches 393

APPENDIX C: Clippings 501

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 503

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1	Egloga IV by Juan del Encina.	97
2	Farsa de la Casta Susaña by Diego Sánchez de Badajoz	106
3	"Wedding Scene" from Lope de Vega's Peribáñez.	109
4	The Virgin, the Sailor, and the Student by Frederico García Lorca	112
5	Chimera by Lorca.	114
6	"The Child and the Cat" scene, from Lorca's When Five Years Pass	115
7	The Canary by Georges Neveux	130
8	Oswald and Zenaida or The Asides by Jean Tardieu . . .	132
9	The Motor Show by Eugène Ionesco	133
10-11	Rappaccini's Daughter by Octavio Paz, designed by Leonora Carrington.	136-37
12	Calderón's King Belshazzar's Feast at the Teatro Moderno	155
13-15	Scenes from El buen amor adapted from Juan Ruiz, the Archpriest of Hita's Libro de buen amor	161-63
16-18	Three plays by Elena Garro: Andarse por las ramas; Los pilares de doña Blanca; A Solid Home	186-88
19	The Quevedo adaptation, La vida airada. Designed by Soriano, directed by Mendoza	191
20-22	Outdoors, Indoors, and the Chorus backstage: Murder in the Cathedral by T. S. Eliot	220, 222, 225
23-24	The Maids by Jean Genet, directed by José Luis Ibáñez	250, 253
25-26	Soriano's set and costumes for Electra by Sophocles . .	285, 287
27-28	La moza de cántaro by Lope de Vega	299, 302

Cartoon

The Maids from Esto 238

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Poesía en Voz Alta is the name of an avant-garde theatre ensemble in Mexico that existed from 1956 through 1963. The theatre was founded by artists, such as the short-story writer Juan José Arreola, the poet Octavio Paz, and the painters Juan Soriano and Leonora Carrington. Sponsored principally by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, or the UNAM, the actors were mainly young students and beginning professionals. Eight "programs"[1] were produced, almost all for limited runs, and of unknown or unfamiliar plays and poetry, written by such authors as Juan del Encina, Juan Ruiz (the Archpriest of Hita), Francisco de Quevedo, Eugène Ionesco, Georges Neveux, Jean Tardieu, Jean Genet, Elena Garro, and Federico García Lorca. The theatre received both critical and public acclaim, and disdain, and was short-lived. Poesía en Voz Alta was the first company in Mexico to experiment with environmental staging. It developed directors, actors, and writers, and

[1] As the presentations were officially called, and numbered consecutively, by the company.

influenced contemporary Mexican theatre, yet very little has been written about it since its demise.

It is the purpose of this study to analyze Poesía en Voz Alta; to examine its origins, development, and disintegration; and to assess its place and influence in the theatre of Mexico.

The study is based on the philosophy that theatre is a reflection not only of the nature, ideals, training, and background of its participants (actors, directors, scenic designers, authors) and its audience, but also of societal and governmental influence. The historical approach of this study rests on this belief.

The basic source materials were both written matter and oral testimony. The written matter included historical and critical theatre texts and general histories; over two dozen different newspapers and periodicals; several unpublished studies; and such primary source materials as scripts, playbills, sketches, and virtually hundreds of photos from scrapbook collections.[1] The oral testimony mainly consisted of approximately one hundred interviews with participants and observers of Poesía en Voz Alta, as well as other theatre practitioners who were

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[1]The largest, most complete photo collections belong to Juan Soriano and José Luis Ibáñez, followed by Juan José Gurrola, Nancy Cárdenas, and Tara Parra.

active before, during, and/or after the company's life, in order to provide greater perspective on the character and influence of Poesía en Voz Alta.[1]

Chapter 2 examines aspects of Mexico's theatre history before World War II to give background for understanding why and how Poesía en Voz Alta came about. Germán Arciniegas's Latin America: A Cultural History proved to be invaluable as a general history of Latin America. Octavio Paz's The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico contributed a penetrating analysis and interpretation of the Mexican in relation to historical events. Willis Knapp Jones's Behind Spanish American Footlights provided an historical survey of the drama and theatre of the Continent.[2] Other sources used were: Roberto Núñez y Domínquez (El Diablo's) Descorriendo el telón: Quarenta años de teatro en México, a chronicle of Mexico's theatre events from 1910-50; the August 1938 edition of Theatre Arts Monthly, a compilation of articles on Mexico's theatre, written by the country's own practitioners, as is El Teatro en México, a trilingual issue in Spanish, English, and German, edited by

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[1]This investigator conducted the interviews privately in Mexico City; all exceptions will be so specified. The majority of Poesía en Voz Alta's participants were interviewed; the omission of living participants was caused by unknown whereabouts, or unavailability for other reasons.

[2]Trans. Joan MacLean (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966; 1st British ed., London: Barrie & Rockliff: Cresset Press, 1969); trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, 1961; London: Evergreen Books, 1961); (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1966).

Carlos Solórzano for the journal, Artes de México; Antonio Magaña-Esquivel's Medio siglo de teatro mexicano, 1900/1960, a helpful index on Mexico's theatre people and theatre events; and Hilma Helene Ollila's unpublished M.A. thesis, "The Mexican Theatre of the Twentieth Century," along with John B. Nomland's Teatro Mexicano Contemporáneo: 1900-1950, which give intensive treatments of the drama, theatre genres, and theatre companies of Mexico.[1]

Starting with Chapter 3, "Mexico City in the 1950s," on the climate of the society and the types of plays and theatre activities that emerged, newspapers and periodicals came into major use. The chapter also employed interviews, works cited previously, and the following sources: the two volumes of El Teatro en México, primarily photo compilations of productions; and Solórzano's Testimonios Teatrales de México, a collection of Solórzano's reviews and commentaries on world theatre from 1960 through 1970, with background on Mexico's University theatre.[2]

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[1](Madrid: Rollán, 1956); vol. 22; no. 123 (1969); (Mexico: Departmento de Literatura del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes [hereafter referred to as the INBA], 1964); Columbia University, 1947; trans. from the unpublished manuscript in English by Paloma Gorostiza de Zozaya and Luis Reyes de la Maza (Mexico: Departamento de Literatura del INBA, 1967). Some important studies were omitted here, but are listed in the Bibliography.

[2]Celestino Gorostiza, ed., 1 (Mexico: INBA, 1958) and Wilberto Cantón and Dagoberto Guillaumin, eds., 2 (Mexico: INBA, 1964); (Mexico: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UNAM, 1974).

Chapter 4, "The Origins and Aims of Poesía en Voz Alta," drew evidence from playbills, manifestoes, and especially the oral testimony of the company's founders, participants, and observers who were present at the formative meetings or early rehearsals.[1]

In Chapters 5 through 9, devoted to the practices of Poesía en Voz Alta, and touching upon its influence on Mexico's theatre today, a greater variety of primary sources were employed than in Chapter 4. These materials were scripts, production photos, designs, playbills and their accompanying written commentaries, and interviews.[2] Secondary

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[1]The chapter's account on Poesía en Voz Alta's controversial inception rested heavily on interviews with these sources. The data was rigorously scrutinized and tested in several ways which included conducting, where possible, widely spaced multiple interviews to check and recheck the original information, and employing written materials and the interviews of others to help verify aspects of the testimonies.

[2]Photos and other materials directly pertinent to the discussion are in the text of the study. Copies of playbills, original scripts, and unidentifiable published writings from scrapbook collections, are in the appendices.

Most of the original scripts were carbon copies on onion-skin paper, with pencil notations. The scripts are now badly faded, and sections of their photocopies lack clarity and the notations. A select group of them is being provided as a sample; some to provide sketches and not readily accessible plays.

Descriptions of the Poesía en Voz Alta productions were fundamentally based on photos and sketches; oral interviews and written materials were supplementary. The most important group of sketches were those by Juan Soriano, exhibited for sale at the Galería Juan Martín (Mexico City) which I attended on 30 November 1977, and all references to "Gallery sketches" are to these. Color transparencies of the designs are included in my personal scrapbook collection, which also contains other sketches, scripts, photos, and primary-source materials than are presented as examples in this study.

sources included interviews with observers, written reviews and commentaries from newspapers and periodicals,[1] and the forenamed texts. One of these texts, Artes de México, contains color photos of Poesía en Voz Alta's Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Programs. These programs were the only ones photographed with color film, and Artes de México may be the only publication to contain examples of all three programs.[2]

Finally, Chapter 10 presents a summary of my assessments of Poesía en Voz Alta and its influence on Mexico's contemporary scene. The chapter utilizes my personal observations and investigations of theatre rehearsals and productions in Mexico since 1971.

The most lucid, infomative, and important interviews were given by the original members, especially Juan José Arreola, Octavio Paz, Juan Soriano, Héctor Mendoza, José Luis Ibáñez, Juan José Gurrola, Antonio Alatorre, and Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras. All those named participated in at least one program; some were observers of others. Almost all gave multiple interviews, most of them recorded on tape and conducted in person.[3]

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[1]Each of the Chapters, 5 through 9, covers one or two programs. These chapters will be treated as five separate units with regard to reviews. The complete footnote form will be used to cite a review for the first time, but thereafter, only the author's name will be noted, unless there is need for additional facts of publication.

[2]The company's principal photographers, Ricardo Salazar (employed by the UNAM) and Rodrigo Moya, filmed in black and white. All interviewed participants neither own nor know of any extant color photos of the first-five programs, and a few spoke of the Solórzano volume regarding the final three.

[3]There were also several brief supplementary interviews by telephone, and one letter (dated 5 August 1975) from Soriano in Rome. Soriano, who now resides in Paris, was reinterviewed during a visit to Mexico City, 5 December 1975.

Despite the passage of some two decades, the memories of these participants about verifiable data proved largely accurate when scrutinized and tested. These sources were "biased" because of their personal interests in the group. Yet, with the exception of one or two who permitted personal disputes to color his (their) testimony of who was responsible for what, the participants maintained relative objectivity in conveying the facts.

Curiously, many reviewers were even less objective than sources who could be expected to show bias; many reviews, even less informative and reliable than retrospective oral testimonies. And it was very difficult to assess the impact of reviews on, and evaluate their worth to the theatre for a few reasons. One reason related to the time lapse between a program's opening and the appearance of its review. This was very often weeks later, at times shortly prior to its scheduled close, and in at least four instances, the reviews appeared post-mortem.[1] Nor was it always possible to identify a specific critic with a given publication. Thus, it was difficult to determine his influence, based on the publication's circulation and kind of readership. There were theatre critics, among them María Luisa Mendoza, Wilberto Cantón, and Raúl Leiva, who occasionally freelanced; there were also instances when a critic reviewed a program

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[1]The four reviews, three of the Sixth Program by Magaña-Esquivel, Lya Engel, and an unnamed critic in Siempre, and one of the Eighth (by Wilberto Cantón) are discussed later.

more than once and for different publications. To complicate matters, reviewers sometimes omitted signing their names, or used initials--particularly misleading when the same reviewer had already covered the program in another publication that carried his full name[1]--or assumed pseudonyms. The pseudonyms that I have discovered are "Falstaff," belonging to a still unidentified critic; "Bill Llano," also unidentified, but whose name sounds out the Spanish word villano, "villain"; "María Sabines" for Nancy Cárdenas; and "Jorge del Olmo," chosen by the poet and Director of the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department, Jaime García Terrés, when he wished to mask his identity, but which was occasionally adopted later by Juan García Ponce, writing alone or in conjunction with José Luis Ibáñez.[2]

It was not easy to determine precisely which critics were most influential. Armando de María y Campos, María Luisa Mendoza, Salvador Novo, José de la Colina, and Jaime García Terrés were considered intelligent

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[1]For example, Fausto Castillo reviewed the Sixth Program twice. He used his initials in the Diario de la Tarde and, later, his name in "México en la Cultura." Fortunately, both publications belong to the main newspaper, Novedades, and a comparison of the writing styles and opinions expressed in the two reviews showed the writers to be one and the same.

[2]"Falstaff" reviewed the Third Program, "Llano" the Second, "Sabines," which Cárdenas acknowledged when interviewed on 12 September 1977, the Eighth, and "del Olmo," who reviewed the Second Program, was clearly García Terrés. José Luis Ibáñez, interviewed 9 January 1978, spoke about the use of the del Olmo name.

observers of theatre.[1] But Novo rarely reviewed theatre. And the latter two critics, under whatever name, hardly qualified as unbiased observers because both wrote for the journal, Universidad de México, often called the Revista de la Universidad or Revista de la UNAM, under the direction of the Cultural Diffusion Department. Still, few--if any--reviews avoided bias. And, again, some of the more descriptive, analytical, and objective critiques on the group came from the categorically prejudiced sources. The unprejudiced sources were more prone to take one of two other tacks. Less commonly, they bypassed the production to argue at length an interpretation of a play or its literary merits, as though they were writing dramatic criticism or a book review which omitted any account of the play. More commonly, they crammed their reviews full of conclusions sometimes bereft of supportive data.[2] Instead, these reviews provided varying combinations of the following: names of actors, directors, selections, and authors; audience descriptions; sections of Poesía en Voz Alta's written commentaries quoted verbatim; and lots of value judgments. For all these reasons, it may be more valid to listen to what the theatre critics, cited

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[1]The playwrights Rodolfo Usigli and Carlos Solórzano were highly respected, active men of the theatre, but they wrote criticism only sporadically. During the Poesía en Voz Alta years, Usigli was in Norway in a diplomatic post; and Solórzano was mainly writing plays and serving as Artistic Director of the UNAM's University Theatre.

[2]Not always unintentionally. Some reviewers believed--and still do--that details of a play and production risked satiating the potential theatregoer's curiosity.

in this study, have said, as expressions of their personal views which also reveal much about the nature of Mexico's society of that time, rather than to consider them as strong influences on box-office receipts.[1]

Nonetheless, if we were to evaluate the news organs themselves in their circulation, comprehensiveness, and writing quality during the 1950s and 1960s the newspaper, Novedades, would be rated first, Excelsior second.[2] Each published a Sunday cultural supplement, the respective "México en la Cultura" and "Diorama de la Cultura,"[3] as well as a brief, daily except Sunday, afternoon edition, Diario de la Tarde (of Novedades) and Últimas Noticias (of Excelsior), the latter with a first and second edition.[4] Other important newspapers were: (1) El Universal, also having a condensed, afternoon news release, El Universal Gráfico; these papers rarely spoke on theatre. (2) El Nacional, the government-owned paper, which after mid-1956, published reviews each Sunday in its cultural supplement.

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[1]This applies to reviews, and not to brief, scandalous notices which will accompany Poesía en Voz Alta and will propel ticket sales.

[2]The reverse is true for the 1970s. Ratings provided by Ibáñez, January 1978, Héctor Mendoza, 13 August 1974, and others. All references to Ibáñez are to José Luis, and not Juan Ibáñez who will be called by his full name.

[3]Future references to the Novedades and Excelsior "supplements" are to these, unless specified as otherwise.

[4]The Diario de la Tarde began in 1958, after Poesía en Voz Alta had finished four programs.

Spanish-titled newspapers and periodicals referred to in this study are from Mexico City, unless specified as elsewhere.

Three respectable tabloids that specialized in popular entertainments were the Sunday El Redondel, a more comprehensive version of the Sunday Claridades whose coverage of the performing arts was less generous to theatre than El Redondel's, and the more popular daily, Cine Mundial. In the late 1950s, Cine Mundial, or "Film World,"[1] specialized in cinema and sports, but paid attention to theatre; by the more politically conscious, "radical" 1960s, it gave itself up to film chit-chat, sports, and lots of seductive photos of starlets and attractive girls.[2] The daily Esto sold well among the many fans of sports and entertainment; its two sections, A and B, covered each of the respective fields. Other tabloids worth mentioning are the daily El Día and the Sunday Éxito; both started as quality papers but late in the life of Poesía en Voz Alta.[3]

As for periodicals, the weekly Siempre led in circulation, sharing its quality--its writers--with two weeklies which followed it in sales, Hoy and Mañana. Three magazines bent on world and social events also

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[1]All translations that appear in the study are mine, with exceptions so noted.

[2]The changed climate of the 1960s caused several other publications to change in focus, though not necessarily to Cine Mundial's focal points, and change--mostly shrink--in size, scope, and frequency of output. Some of them eliminated theatre reviews.

[3]El Día began in June of 1962 and Éxito, February of 1959. The daily La Prensa, which carried blurbs but no reviews of theatre, will be cited only because of its popular appeal; its subjects were scandal, murders and mutilations, sports, and rundowns on television, film, and radio programs and personalities.

[4]Ibáñez interview, January 1978.

drew readership. These were the weekly Impacto, whose leftist leaning, apparent in even its theatre reviews, was tempered, ironically, by the 1960s; the lesser known La Nación, giving temperate rundowns on urban and rural problems of Mexico and other current events, and which, like Hoy, became a bi-monthly rather than weekly publication by the 1960s; and the curiously short-lived Política, starting late, in May of 1960, a highly literate, outspoken, bi-monthly journal, with little mass appeal. Finally, there was the Universidad de México, an intelligent, well-handled, influential cultural journal. Published monthly by Mexico's largest university, the Universidad de México circulated among students, faculty, and Mexico's intelligentsia in general, many of whom were, or had been once, affiliated with the journal or the University.[1]

The study revealed many contradictions in conceptual, and especially "factual" written data. The most significant contradictions and errors are cited in footnotes.

The discussion of Poesía en Voz Alta follows a combined thematic and chronological pattern. Following the sequence of time was essential because of changes in personnel, literary materials, and presentations. Only the scenographical concept remained constant to the end; it was by then the one identifying feature of Poesía en Voz Alta.

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[1]The less important but popular weekly tabloid-magazine, El Figaro, somewhere in between the qualities of the papers Esto and La Prensa, was also used in the study.

Given its limitations, this study will, it is hoped, offer some insight into what gives theatre life, and what takes it away, for the benefit of the theatre to come. In any event, the study makes known the story of this unique, fascinating Mexican theatre enterprise.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATRE IN MEXICO BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Written histories reveal the story of Mexico as that of a people who have continued, right up to the present day, to search out and try to recover their individual and common identities after centuries of domination, repression, exploitation, and imposition by other cultures, political and social systems, and even another's native tongue.[1] The story of Mexico's theatre reflects the history of the country, but the story has not been described from this point of view.

My purpose in this chapter is to provide an historical frame of reference for post-World War II developments in the theatre of Mexico of which Poesía en Voz Alta was a part. Roughly four hundred years of evolving theatrical developments can be classified according to nationalistic features and tendencies, and can be grouped into the following phases: (1) an indigenous theatre; (2) a Spanish-dominated theatre

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[1]See, e.g., Arciniegas, especially p. xxv; Paz, Labyrinth; Henry Bramford Parkes, A History of Mexico, 3d ed., rev. and enl. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966); Sir Nicholas Cheetham, Mexico: A Short History (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970).

with decreasingly-apparent vestiges of the indigenous theatre as the process of colonization advances, and with some later impotent overtures to nationalism; (3) a Spanish-French dominated theatre with more frequent and less impotent nationalistic gestures, combined with increasing exposure to--and hence reflection of--other lands; and, (4) a post-Revolutionary theatre with emphasis on experimentation, social rehabilitation, and strengthening of national awareness.

Indigenous Theatre: the Ancient Maya

The ancient Maya in the Yucatan produced the earliest-known indigenous theatre in Mexico. This theatre existed centuries before the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in 1519. At least two overlapping theatrical genres can be perceived, one for the religious purpose of glorifying deities, and the other a secular one for glorifying man.[1] More than likely, the Mayans made no distinction between the genres, since they viewed religion as an integral part of their secular lives; similarly, their "art and workday world were intermixed."[2]

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[1]That there were four genres has been contended by Maxine Klein, "Theatre of the Ancient Maya," Educational Theatre Journal 23 (October 1971):272, in agreement with Marcial Armas Laras, El Renacimiento de la Danu Guatemalteca (Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografia e Historia de Gutemala, 1964), p. 44. I am viewing the genres as "at least two" to acknowledge their position, but grouping together their three genres that were all of religious bent and stressed dance: dance alone, dance with singing, and dance with recitation.

[2]Klein, p. 269.

Both kinds of performances were spectacles, performed by trained actors in masks. The spectacles employed pantomimic dances, accompanied by incantations and percussion sounds, elements of zoomorphism, and realistic and imaginative decorations and caricature. Both kinds of theatre were performed in the open air in natural and artificial settings--the jungle habitat of the Mayans, and with flowers, plumes, birds, and rabbits placed on the arches of the entrance to a temple or on its atria. Both types of performances served artistic and entertaining ends, and were useful for appeasing the gods.[1]

The ritual or religious theatre stressed the dance, while the "dance-play" or secular theatre stressed the spoken word, and evidence suggests that the latter may have been based on written dramas or comedies.[2] The ritual theatre glorified the Mexican deities; the dance-play "celebrated the beauty of the Mayan world, the achievements of its culture, and the fineness of its race."[3]

Paradoxically--a word much used in the Occidental world, but paradoxes inhere in the Mayan civilization--it was the spoken dramas, apparently nonreligious and mainly nonpedagogical vehicles of art

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[1]Ibid., pp. 272-75 and Ollila, pp. 3-4.

[2]Ollila, p. 3, conjectures that the written plays developed from the ritual theatre; Klein, p. 272, holds that the forms coexisted. More recent archaeological findings add weight to Klein's position. But it is risky to conclude that all written plays were secular in nature, based entirely on Xapoj Tun, commonly known as Rabinal, the only play extant.

[3]Klein, p. 275.

and entertainment, using Rabinal as the norm, which ranked above the ritual or religious form. Or so it seems, because the spoken dramas were presented at only very special occasions, for special religious and secular events.[1] The Maya may have credited survival to the actions of men, perhaps abetted by the actions of gods, or the Maya may have simply favored the kind of theatre which emphasized art and poetic, eloquent language, as the spoken dramas did, without making distinctions between the secular and religious forces at all.[2]

Another example of Mayan paradox is that all theatrical performances given as part of a ceremony required sexual abstention from the participating actors; yet, the ceremony often culminated in a massive "adulterous orgy."[3] Of course, abstention and indulgence, like reality and imagination, natural and artificial, and secular and religious activities, though seemingly expressing contradictory attributes, are in harmony with nature. It is this unity in duality, the essence of which is found in the ancient theatre of the Maya, that Poesía en Voz Alta will later attempt to reunite after so many centuries.

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[1]Ibid., p. 272.

[2]The interrelatedness of the secular and religious forces is illustrated in the poetic Popul Vuh, "Bible" of the Quiche Maya. See the section on the creation of man in Arciniegas, pp. 23-24.

[3]Klein, p. 275.

Spanish-Dominated Theatre

Spain not only brought orange seeds, wheat, some animals, and Catholicism to Mexico during the age of exploration and conquest,[1] but the need to destroy the "unity" they found. And, thus, the theatre entered its second phase and was tooled for conversion. To eradicate the Indian sense of community and identity, the Spaniards destroyed the Indian plays.[2] They retained the Indians' use of spectacle, aspects of his tradition, and often his language in part or entirety, for incorporation within the Spaniards' own theatrical vehicles of conversion. The monk Motolinía, for instance, staged mystery plays in Indian languages in Nueva España ("New Spain"); he contended that five million Indians were baptized between 1524 and 1536 because of the plays.[3] The conversion, however, was incomplete, for remnants of Mayan and other Indian methods of weaving, making murals and frescoes, beliefs in magic, and the languages remain today.

To sever the intermingling of religious and secular traits, the Council of Trent in 1585 began censoring the performances of dances and other entertainments in the temples, and religious plays were scrutinized

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[1]By this time, warring tribes had left desolation and only remnants of the ancient cities remained. The seats of culture and grandeur shifted from the Mayan to the Aztecan cities, to especially Tenochtitlán which was renamed, Mexico City. How the change came about remains unknown, as Arciniegas notes on p. 35. Therefore, "Indian" plays refer to Aztecan, Mayan, and other tribal plays.

[2]Klein, p. 273. [3]Arciniegas, p. 145.

by Church leaders before they could be publicly performed in the Spanish architecturally-influenced playhouses. By the end of the century, the secular theatre began to flourish and the religious to decline.[1]

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries abounded in Spanish dramatic and architectural forms. The most popular dramatic forms were the loas and fábulas.[2] The dominant literary theme of the period was history, and Spanish writers predominated. But there were Mexicans writing historical chronicles, like Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara who authored Historia de la guerras civiles del Peru (History of the Civil Wars in Peru), and also prolific poets and playwrights, like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Juan Ruiz Alarcón.

Some two hundred years of Spanish conditioning had changed Mexico. She now had three faces. One face was new, produced by the fusion of Indian and Spanish elements. Mestizo was the classification given to offspring of Indian and Spanish unions; a new Mexican type of Spanish-Baroque style of architecture embodied Mayan and Aztecan prototypes.[3] The second face was the old, original face of the Indian, resistant to change. The muralist techniques used by the Aztecans and

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[1]Ollila, p. 9, referring to pp. xxi-xxiii of Rodolfo Usigli's prólogo to Francisco Monterde's Bibliografía del teatro en México (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1934).

[2]The loa is a play prologue, either in monologue or dramatic sketch form, often with music and singing; the fábula is a fable or myth.

[3]Arciniegas, pp. 179-92 passim, 197.

Mayans, which were carried over into the twentieth century by painters such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, illustrate this phenomenon; this resiliency led one historian to call the techniques "natural to that country which the colony could not eradicate, though it could change its course."[1] And finally, the third face combined Indian and Spaniard, with the latter predominant. The Indian heritage remained, but it was barely visible, and was often so linked to the Spanish component as to be indistinguishable. It was the third face that Mexico's theatre and drama most frequently displayed.

Of course, for theatre to recover its national identity (a tendency which will grow strongest in the twentieth century), the indigenous elements must first be perceived and isolated from the foreign. In Mexico, the process will be complicated by the progressive onslaught of alien concepts through the years, concurrently with the desire to find a national identity. Literally, there will be disagreeing identities. The following paragraph illustrates the results of some efforts at discernment.

The Mexican dramatist Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, whose plays were to influence Molière and Corneille, had been credited to Spain because most of his plays were written for Spanish audiences. He was reclassified Mexican in 1913 by the Dominican cultural historian, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, and even Spanish contempories of Alarcón's have

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[1]Ibid., p. 221.

commented on his uniquely Mexican qualities.[1] The basic reasons given are that his plays convey a subtle and subdued tone, the comic element is handled with discretion and moderation, epigrammatic formulas abound, and treatments of some traditional Spanish notions (like the relationship between the family and aged servants) are absent. Similar attributes have been applied to the earliest Mexican play extant in Spanish today and first presented in 1578, Juan Pérez Ramírez's pastoral comedy Desposorio espiritual entre el Pastor Pedro y la Iglesia Mexicana (Spiritual Betrothal of Pastor Pedro to the Mexican Church).[2] Grandeza Mexicana (The Grandeur of Mexico) by the Spanish poet, Bernardo de Balbuena who settled and wrote in Mexico, has been said to show the combined influence of both countries, but the express influence of Mexico, insofar as the lyrical poem "is not a tropical, ardent poetry, as it has been called now and again," insists Alfonso Reyes, one of Mexico's foremost poets and intellectuals of the twentieth century, "but rather it is urbane, polished, and even geometrical."[3] Similar adjectives will later be evoked for Poesía en Voz Alta, evoked at a time when the Spanish style of production--flamboyant, imposing, and heavy in design--will have permeated and virtually entrenched

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[1]Ollila, p. 9, and Jones, p. 469, n. 21, cite writings on Alarcón's Mexicanism by Carlos González Peña, Genaro Fernández Macgregor, and Antonio Magaña-Esquivel.

[2]Ollila, pp. 9-10, and Jones, p. 469.

[3]Alfonso Reyes, quoted in Arciniegas, p. 176.

Mexico's theatre. Despite the adjectives, Poesía en Voz Alta will be lambasted for being more Spanish, more European, than Mexican.

Of the dramatists of the seventeenth century who will be remembered into the twentieth, there is the aforementioned Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Primarily a lyrical poet, she wrote a few loas, autos, and cloak and sword plays, the latter resulting in her being classified as a successor to the Spanish playwright, Lope de Vega. Her plays reveal a lyrical ability, and philosophical or mystical tendencies reminiscent of the ancient Maya. For a presentation in the vice-regal palace, she selected loas which were nationalistic, and protested the fate of the Indian.[1] Like the ancient theatre of the Maya, and perhaps that of the Aztec, and certainly that of Poesía en Voz Alta to come, the theatre of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz served aesthetic, entertaining, religious, and practical ends.

Spanish-French Dominated Theatre

Though Spain wielded the greatest influence in Mexico during this period, other foreign influences were felt. Years of exploration had introduced the Spanish Conquistador to other European, Asian, and African cultures, and he carried these to Mexico. Non-Spanish cultures also came to Mexico via competing religious sects from disparate European lands; each sect tried to convert the Indian to its own

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[1]Ollila, pp. 9-10, referring to Usigli's prólogo, pp. xxvii-xxxii.

particular shade of Catholicism.[1] But toward the end of the eighteenth century, Spain's major competitor was France, the country which Mexico will heartily endorse, emotionally, politically, socially, and theatrically.

The entrance of France onto Mexican soil was neither sudden nor accidental. As early as the mid-1500s, France had vied with Spain and Portugal over the division of land of the Conquered New World, but at that time, her sights had been fixed on Brazil. The Renaissance and humanism with its scientific curiosity, zeal to explore, discover, and search for the truth broadened her vision, and the "savage" Indians of Spanish America became of special interest to the French. Also (and still before the Enlightenment), the Bourbons ascended to the Spanish throne; they, "with their fondness for everything French [helped to] cut through blind alleys."[2]

Another factor which fortified the French influence was that the Mexicans wanted it. The French endeared themselves to the Mexicans, who viewed them as comrades; indeed, so much so, that paradoxically, in later years, after Mexico's independence had come about, they called for the French to rule them. Why Mexico endorsed France can be answered by the Essais of Montaigne and Candide of Voltaire. Both

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[1]The bulk of this discussion is based on Arciniegas, pp. 143-92, 101, 338.

[2]Ibid., p. 232.

works single out the Conquistador, not the Indian, as the true savage. In addition, the articulation of ideas of freedom and the free man in France, even before the French Revolution, had magnetism for the Mexicans who feared even conceiving such thoughts.[1]

The new ideas travelled slowly in Mexico (knowledge of Descartes arrived a century later). Usually such ideas were carried by professors at the University, which had opened its doors to religious, philosophical study in 1551 or 1553.[2] One of the reasons that the machinery of the Inquisition was set up to silence all potential offenders, was to prevent the seeds of these ideas from taking root in the minds of the Indians and Mestizos, and blossoming into revolution.

To insure that the new ideas would not be carried by dramatic or theatrical vehicles in the Spanish way, actors were imported from Spain, Spanish sainetes (one-act farcical sketches, often focusing on domestic life), tondillas (humorous musical interludes), seguidillas (merry dances and tunes), and comedias (light dramas and comedies) were staged, and efforts by Mexico's playwrights and impresarios were opposed,[3] excepting puppet theatre, as presented by and for poor Mexicans on the outskirts of the city, and selected Mexican plays in the city proper. These plays

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[1]A contemporary play which focuses on the Spanish rule, an Indian's dreams of freedom, and the efforts of the Inquisition to purge him of them, is Luisa Josefina Hernández's La fiesta del Mulatto (The Mulatto's Orgy).

[2]Parkes, p. 112, specifies 1551; Arciniegas, p. 151, lists 1553.

[3]Ollila, pp. 11-12.

included innocuous heroic tragedies and comedies, the latter replete with fantastic elements (ghosts, devils, storms, and the like), follas, or variety-show spectacles with comic acts, music, and dancing, and operas such as Partenope by the priest, Manuel Zumaya.[1]

If the Spanish Inquisition deterred some efforts toward nationalism, the new ideas and the supposed-cameraderie of the French impelled others on. The Gazette of Mexico, the Mercury of Mexico, and other journals and organs of news began giving space to Aztecan myths and heroes, though the Viceroy promptly stepped in to quash such news.[2] Less is known about the nature and number of nationalistic or revolutionary dramas that might have been written during this time even without hope of production, for plays in general were subjects for destruction.[3] However, the thirst for freedom and the desire for separation from the Spanish oppressor were indestructible; they swelled under the pressure of the Inquisition, and spurred on the revolution of independence of 1810. After some fifteen years of revolution, Mexico and its theatre took longer strides toward nationalism with more discernible attempts to create a thematically and characteristically nationalistic theatre.[4] Unfortunately,

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[1]Luis Sandi, "The Story Retold: Chronicle of the Theatre in Mexico," Theatre Arts Monthly 22:613; Ollila, p. 12, citing Usigli's México en el teatro (Mexico: Imprenta Mundial, 1932), pp. 55-65.

[2]Arciniegas, p. 295.

[3]Ollila, p. 12, citing Usigli's México en el teatro, pp. 55-65.

[4]Ollila, p. 13.

Mexico walked gingerly on the fresh terrain, leaving only superficial imprints which would later be covered in part by the steps of others.

Independence

Mexico's independence complicated the search for a national identity. Based on the long Spanish conditioning with Spanish dramatic and theatrical models, Mexico's theatre persisted in reflecting her mentor.[1] It retained Spanish features. Mexican dramas contained Mexican popular types, customs, and vestiges of the Indian languages (the Aztecan, Nahuatl being the most widespread one), but written in the sainete and other Spanish forms. Mexican actors exchanged their Spanish teacher of acting for another one, like Andrés Prieto, a pupil of Isabel Máiquez, the reformer of Spanish declamation, who arrived in Mexico in 1826. Mexico's first Asociación de Actores, founded nearly a century later, in 1902, based its statutes on the Spanish one.[2]

The search for identity went on, but was hindered by the Mexicans' fear of finding only the Spanish within. And this created the dichotomy of whether to cling to the wombs of others ("It protects us but also

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[1]French models will become more pervasive in the late nineteenth century, after France invades Mexico.

[2]Ollila, p. 13, citing Usigli's prólogo, pp. 1-liii, and Arciniegas, p. 189; Sandi, p. 617; Luis Reyes de la Maza, Cien años de teatro en México [1810-1910], SEP/Setentas, no. 61 (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1972), p. 143.

oppresses us, hides us but also disfigures us"[1]), or to sever the cords and make off along unfamiliar, unpaved roads. Mexico continued to waver between these choices.

The struggle was further compounded by the political turmoil, strife, and general instability that characterized the nineteenth century. The century witnessed "the short-lived monarchy of Iturbide, the military anarchy and caudillismo of Santa Anna until his death in 1855, the loss of Texas, the liberal reform movement and the promulgation of the Constitution of 1857 which guaranteed civil rights, the French invasion in 1862 and the rule of Maximilian, the restoration of the republic under Juárez in 1866, and then Díaz."[2]

The theatre reflected the dichotomous pull by presenting many escapist forms of theatre to the tension-ridden populace. Though many of these forms housed national elements, such as Mexican types and social conventions, both the forms and much of the substance came from elsewhere. Unfortunate for Mexico's goal of identity, as the country's exposure to foreign cultures increased, the number of predominantly alien theatre offerings multiplied, and this diverted Mexico from her course. Hence, further into the century, attempts multiplied to "mexicanize" the copious foreign forms. Popular types and customs were added to

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[1]Paz, Labyrinth, p. 194. Also see pp. 10-11 in this text which analyses and interprets the dichotomy.

[2]Ollila, p. 19. Porfirio Díaz was dictator in 1877.

new amenable forms, such as the Spanish zarzuela, or musical-comedies based on allegory, folklore, or myth; opera (so popular during the 1800s that the years were dubbed the "century of opera"[1]) was frequently presented along with a sketch containing nationalistic elements and themes; and hundreds of foreign plays in French, Italian, and English were translated and given Mexican adaptations.[2]

Among the other overtures to cultural nationalism and development was the National government's proposal in 1831 to establish academies of dance, music, and verse, even though only the dance academy came about.[3] And while the government's motive for renovating Teatro Provisional o los Gallos in 1841 was to provide a dignified reception for an Italian opera company, this gesture resulted in the move to develop more theatres to supplement the extant Coliseo Nuevo (later renamed Teatro Principal). The year, 1841, also marked the inauguration of the Teatro de Nuevo México playing a Mexican drama. The theatre was built specifically in response to the needs of the romantic movement which also sparked the construction of others.[4]

Movements and Dramatic Forms

The inception of the romantic movement in Mexico is usually given as 1838, concurrent with the production of Ignacio Rodríguez Galván's

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[1]Sandi, p. 614. [2]Ollila, pp. 14, 23. [3]Sandi, p. 617.

[4]Reyes de la Maza, pp. 24-25, 9, 14; also see pp. 7-50.

play about the Mexican Conspiracy of 1566, Muñoz, visitador de México (Muñoz, Visitor from Mexico). The spread of romanticism was helped by the rivalry of two organizations of actors and dramatists, La Académia de San Juan de Letrán and the Liceo Hidalgo.[1] Romanticism provided a new idealistic and inspirational vision with a magical, dreamlike quality. Its cry of freedom was also Mexico's and its use of historical events, actual and legendary, encouraged Mexico in its basic quest.

Romanticism accommodated Mexico's goals and past heritage. It shared traits with a glorious part of Mexico's past, the theatre of the ancient Maya. Both theatres revelled in rich, visual spectacles with especially lavish costuming and set locales. The plays stressed the unity of duality, and depicted historical events which celebrated the achievements of man.

Mexico produced two types of romantic drama, one of nationalistic, and the other of exotic interpretation, as exemplified by the plays of Rodríguez Galván and Fernando Calderón y Beltrán, respectively. The reputed motivation of the "exotic" school was to avoid political repercussions by turning to exotic lands.[2] In temperament, Mexico's romanticism had "more impatience, melancholy, disillusionment about the outside

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[1]Ollila, p. 15; Jones, pp. 477, and 479, n. 38 citing Antonio Magaña-Esquivel in Magaña-Esquivel and Ruth S. Lamb's Breve historia del teatro mexicano (Mexico: Studium, 1958), pp. 66-67.

[2]Ollila, p. 17 and Arciniegas, p. 314.

world, and desire for freedom than existed in other countries."[1] And in tone, it was more subdued, as may be seen in Fernando Calderón's A ninguna de las tres (None of the Three), a play about a French suitor who rejects three girls, and which satirizes the extravagances of European romanticism.

Even though romanticism generated originality and bolstered the nation's drive to find its roots, it did not offer social programs. Promises of such programs came during the Díaz regime with realism. In vision and language, realism was shorter-sighted and less poetic than romanticism, but compensated with a firmer footing in objective observation and representation. Realism was no stranger to Mexico; it had coexisted with romanticism in the Mayan theatre, but now both forms were trying to lead separate lives. Unsuccessfully perhaps, for the teatro de costumbres which aimed to get spectators to identify with the problems of its characters most often housed these realistic problems in romantic plays.[2]

Nevertheless, Arciniegas offers an explanation for the concurrent interest in the forms, while intimating why in Mexico they will tend to blend:

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[1]Jones, p. 479, n. 38, citing Magaña-Esquivel and Lamb's Breve historia, pp. 66-67.

[2]Carlos Solórzano discusses the teatro de costumbres in El Teatro Latinoamericano en el Siglo XX, Colección Pormaca, no. 10 (Mexico: Pormaca, 1964), pp. 14, 48. Ollila, p. 56, contends that realism grew out of the costumbrista movement as it had in Spain; Solórzano, p. 48 of the above study, dates the entrance of the movement as 1908, after realism. Semantics may enter here. More than likely, realism entered, turned into costumbrista, and then evolved into a different realistic form.

> Romanticism and Realism were two different ways of expressing the same political attitude in the same period. Realism portrayed the vices of society; Romanticism spun the ideals for reform. Mexico will oscillate between its romantic, poetic dreams and its ironic sense of reality. The Indian and Spanish elements fuse in the two attitudes and the result is dualism, a chiaroscuro of internal struggle.[1]

Barely had realism gotten under way than modernism appeared. Stemming from Latin America around 1888, the publication date of Azul by the Nicaraguan poet, Rubén Darío, the spirit of the movement came from France and the French poets. Modernismo's entrance into Mexico was untimely on all counts: the movement grew out of a negation of the confinement, banality, and conformity of the realist-naturalist school,[2] a conclusion Mexico had not yet reached. It bore a startling resemblance to the tarnished image of romanticism in that it was idealistic, emphasized self-discovery, and had a poetic tone. It sought individual expression and identity to be achieved through an absorption of a universal culture, whereas Mexico was devoted to finding its own identity and to eliminating those foreign influences which had fragmentized it. Even modernism's enticing attack on nearly every tenet of Castilian literature fell on deaf ears. Though the movement proposed to digest European cultures only in order to move on from there,[3] modernism enlisted few Mexicans into its ranks, other than such poets as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Amado Nervo. The modernists were deprecated for "aping France," accused of

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[1]Arciniegas, p. 337. [2]Ollila, p. 91.

[3]Arciniegas, pp. 463-64.

"escapism," and of being "meditative" and "denunciatory."[1] Such criticism would again be heard when Poesía en Voz Alta was born. Víctor Manuel Díez Barroso, however, was one of the very few dramatists of the early-twentieth century to absorb this aesthetic.[2] Also, modifications of modernism appear in some post-modernist plays in verse. These plays attempt to idealize historical themes about the Conquest, Cuauhtémoc and other Mexican heroes, and the fusion of the races, in a more realistic vision of the world.[3] Yet, so strong were the prevalent negative attitudes toward modernism that even attempts to fuse elements of modernism with realism went largely unnoticed in Mexico.

The above does not imply that modernism had no effect at all on Mexico or its theatre. But particularly in the theatre, its impact was delayed for several decades. The passage of time brought with it mainly symbolist and surrealist guises which made it barely recognizable and infrequently credited as originally modernist. The cause of this delay may relate to its form; it arrived in Mexico as poetry, unlike realism and romanticism which had come as pre-packaged dramas. Hence modernism had to wait for its poets to write plays or gain administrative theatre

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[1]Ibid., p. 481.

[2]His three-act play, Entre cuentos (Between Stories), for example, is a drama of the middle class; but its tone and style are atypical of social realism, and the play has been considered strongly modernist. See Nomland, p. 197.

[3]Ollila, pp. 91-92.

positions which gave them a say in the choice of presentations. Among the most influential poet-dramatists who followed modernist aesthetics (and also played important roles in the political life of Mexico[1]) are Alfonso Reyes and Octavio Paz, the latter to become one of the literary directors of Poesía en Voz Alta.

Despite the pulsating intellectual activity of the century, by the turn of it, while theatre construction and renovation continues to move rapidly, few of the new ideas are articulated across the footlights, at least in "serious," as opposed to "frivolous" forms,[2] and by Mexican, rather than "foreign" dramatists. The mid-nineteenth century trend of foreign plays and light entertainment persists through the end of Mexico's Revolution of 1910 and several years beyond 1917. The impresarios remain mostly Spaniards; they present the successes of Madrid, import the Spanish companies of María Guerrero, Catalina Bárcena, and Díaz Artigas,[3] other foreign companies (from France, Italy, and the United States[4] primarily), and stage frivolous, mostly hybrid theatre forms aimed

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[1]Arciniegas, pp. 485-520, clarifies the interrelationship between the political and cultural lives of Latin America, wherein the poets and writers in general often wield as much, or more, political might than the actual politicians.

[2]Both terms are used by Jones, p. 491, and Nomland, Chap. IV, on the teatro frívolo, pp. 127-82.

[3]Ollila, p. 24.

[4]Mexico's exposure to the United States increased owing to the Mexican War, 1846-48, and to later capital investments in Mexico. See Arciniegas, p. 496.

at the lower classes. The mood of the period is conservative, and whether he is of Spanish, Mexican, or "other" nationality, the impresario expresses inordinate caution about investing in speculative notions and continues to doubt the box-office value of Mexican plays in which even Mexican actors do not wish to perform.[1]

With theatre earmarked for diversion and commercial consumption, playhouses were constructed to accommodate massive crowds (excepting a handful of smaller homes for some of the frivolous forms), and to complement the traditional staging (using the conventional proscenium arch and opening) of opera, operetta, dance, and the teatro frívolo, a form likened to vaudeville and burlesque. The teatro frívolo, with its improvisational quality and flexible, simple staging needs, had grown popular, branched off into constituent forms, and acquired richer nationalist substance. While the eyes of the upper classes scanned mainly European capitals for diversions to export,[2] those of the lower classes stayed riveted to home. Consequently, the bulk of nationalist sentiments were housed in the frivolous forms.

Included in this group were the zarzuelas and the Spanish género chico, a genre of one-act sketches, some of them miniature zarzuelas

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[1]Ollila, p. 24; also, Celestino Gorostiza, "25 años de experimentos," El Teatro en México 1:31.

[2]Solórzano, in Teatro Latinoamericano, p. II, explains this preference for European products as owing to the generally European parentage and educational systems of the upper classes.

and others with varying proportions of verbal humor, slapstick, satire, music, and social and political themes which took such forms as the sainete and tonadilla.[1] There were also the carpas, a name which, originally referred to the portable, canvas, circus-type tents that offered continuous programs of dancers, acrobats, singers, and comics throughout most of the day, but was later applied to the foregoing type of program in either portable or permanent theatres;[2] the acuáticos whose sketches, often presented in the carpas, resembled the Commedia dell'Arte, except that instead of a final blackout, each scene culminated with its most obnoxious character getting ducked in water;[3] and the revista política, or simply, the revista,[4] which was a tabloid of farcical, satirical scenes reviewing the politics and politicians of the moment, employing mixtures of native costumes, regional dances, colorful city types, and typical Mexican characters.[5] The revista, originating from the género chico, and sometimes credited with generating the birth of the carpa,[6] was the

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[1]This definition is a composite of those given by Reyes de la Maza, p. 146, Jones, p. 492, and by Nomland, p. 133, whose definition is the broadest of the three.

[2]Nomland, p. 172. Also, see Miguel Covarrubias, "Slapstick and Venon: Politics, Tent Shows and Comedians," Theatre Arts Monthly 22: 593, for a description of those carpas which played in tents.

[3]Jones, p. 491.

[4]The revista usually refers to the revista política, but can also include the later revistas which emphasized humor or folklore over politics. Nonetheless, Nomland, pp. 145-70, prefers the terms revista política and revista humorística, while Ollila, "Mexican Theatre," p. 39, lumps them all together under revista lírica.

[5]Covarrubias, p. 587. [6]Ollila, p. 39.

most politically daring of the forms (and hence, subjected to censorship by the authorities and often closed).[1] For this reason and because the form flourished during the first-two decades of the twentieth century, the revista seemed an outgrowth of the Revolution, when it actually had been popular in Spain since 1857.[2]

It is clear that within the wide-range of targeted subjects, the "frivolous theatre" omitted any thought-provoking treatment of the human condition; the shows were all outer-directed, designed to establish rapport with the man-on-the-street, to act as an escape valve.[3] The theatre historian, Luis Reyes de la Maza, attesting to the popularity of the frivolous forms, notes that by the end of 1902, five theatres in the capital presented the género chico exclusively. These were the Principal, the Riva Palacio, the María Guerrero (also called "María Tepeche"), the Apolo, and the Teatro Guillermo Prieto. The 1800-seater, Teatro Lírico, which opened on 7 August 1907 with a dramatic production starring the Spanish actor, José Vico--whose origins alone should have guaranteed a

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[1]Between 1930 and 1940, a specially-appointed government group of inspectors came to preview all shows. This undoubtedly contributed to the revista's decline, for by 1946, it had just about been phased out. See Nomland, p. 154 (citing Armando de María y Campos, Presencias del teatro [Mexico: Botas, 1937], p. 170) and 169.

[2]Nomland, pp. 145-46, rectified this common contention offered by, e.g., Ollila, p. 39, and Covarrubias, p. 587.

See Nomland's pp. 127-31 for a discussion of another popular form, the monólogo (monologue), treating patriotism, love, or moral and social affairs, and designed to exhibit an actor's emotional range.

[3]Nomland, p. 178.

crowd--soon changed its policy to popular offerings instead. And in 1910, as part of the civic ceremonies to commemorate 100 years of Independence, over two dozen thematically related (Spanish) zarzúelas were presented, plus a few original dramas, operas, and operettas (some of which were based on classical works), as riders on the bill.[1]

The upper classes avoided serious subjects, too. They snubbed the varieties of slapsticks and revues, and enjoyed foreign performers, companies, and works, giving only token acknowledgement to Mexican contributors. The 1903 opening of the Teatro Arbeú, proclaimed as the "teatro oficial" (replacing the defunct Teatro Nacional), was inaugurated with an Italian opera, and later featured musical works by Italian companies (1910), Italian operas and performers (1911 and 1913), the Spanish-operetta company of Carmen Causade (1914), operas by [n.b.] Mexican singers (1915), some zarzuelas (1917), dancers like Russia's Anna Pavlova (1919), and other similar programs.[2]

Such patterns of theatre purely for entertainment and designed for two distinct groups, the upper and lower classes (as the middle classes, still rather insignificant in number, had not yet influenced its direction) were hardly unique to Mexico; they were common to Italy and Spain, among other European nations. And such patterns continued to evolve for

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[1]Reyes de la Maza, pp. 154-55, 157-58.

[2]Ibid., p. 146, and Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, pp. 15-19.

years to come. In any event, there was little opportunity for the Mexican playwright to develop.

This became evident during the onset of the twentieth century, when efforts to showcase national dramas were made. The intent by Virginia Fábregas, Mexico's first lady of the theatre, to give Mexican plays a hearing at her Teatro Virginia Fábregas (now the Salon Fru-Fru, formerly the Teatro Mexicano and before that, the Teatro Renacimiento) was basically thwarted by the paucity of such works. Her repertoire of dramatists did feature such Mexicans, however, as Marcelino Davalos, José Joaquín Gamboa, and Federico Gamboa, along with such French and Spanish writers as Benevente, Álvarez Quinteros, Hervieu, Lavedan, and Donnay.[1]

Post-Revolutionary Theatre

The next phase in the theatrical evolution of Mexico commenced after the Mexican Revolution of 1910, approximately one hundred years after the Revolution for independence from Spain.[2] It was a phase marked by reflection and inventory-taking of nationalist progress, and as a result, the attempt to reverse gears and redo the century. Just as the early

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[1]Ollila, pp. 24-25.

[2]The Revolutions will be dubbed the Second and First, respectively, although sporadic uprisings preceded and succeeded both major, organized revolts. The study will adhere to "post-revolutionary theatre" in customary usage, meaning after the Second Revolution.

efforts to nationalize the drama showed lingering vestiges of the Spanish presence, the Second Revolution, with its increase of aliens from disparate lands, showed vestiges of a broader spectrum of the world. Thus the original dichotomy was compounded still more.[1] "It is unanimously agreed that Mexico should express its personality in the theatre, but it is difficult to determine in what it consists."[2] Mexico came to define herself in multiple ways, nationalist efforts followed accordingly, and critics remained in the forefront to denounce the ways.

Nevertheless, the Mexican Revolution of 1910 yielded hope, inspiration, and a zeal to reform and educate. Critics began to deride the lack of seriousness in the zarzuelas and comic reviews that continued to hold the public's patronage, long after the seven tense, uncertain, revolutionary years;[3] the educational budget reached a new high, and the University of Mexico was remodelled.[4]

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[1]See, e.g., Paz, Labyrinth, pp. 146-47, 172-73; also Manuel Lopéz de la Parra on the unfulfilled goals of the Revolution today, "La revolución Mexicana: Un proceso todavía pendiente," Excelsior, 21 November 1976, supp., pp. 4-5.

[2]Ollila, p. 52, citing Ermilo Abreu Gómez, "Preguntas a Celestino Gorostiza," Letras de México 4 (1943):4.

[3]In the inimitable, caustic words of Salvador Novo, playwright, critic, and champion of experimental theatre, the burning of Teatro Principal in 1931 was insufficient cause for tears; in over thirty years of existence, it only did zarzuelas anyway. ("Spellbound Stages," Theatre Arts Monthly 22:572.)

[4]Arciniegas, pp. 493-502.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the spirit of nationalism soared, as in the days of the Maya, as in the days of Poesía en Voz Alta. It was a vital period in which the visual arts excelled and the Mexican dramaturgy expanded.[1] "Commercial" and "experimental" theatre groups came into being as outlets. Mexican plays were written in traditional modes (primarily sentimental realism) by writers affiliated with the commercial groups. Contemporary, mostly avant-garde foreign plays by such writers as Cocteau, Pirandello, and Lorca were presented by experimental groups;[2] their membership included a great number of artists and poets influenced by modernist aesthetics, by world theatre and world events.[3] The experimental groups aimed to expand the horizons of Mexico's writers and audiences by exposing them to innovative production trends--which the commercial groups tended to neglect--and innovative dramatic forms. Even though many of the new foreign plays dealt with issues and problems closely attuned to Mexico's, such as values in a changing world, and the search for a new vision of the world and of man's place in it, and the

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[1]Parkes, p. 416, and Carlos Solórzano, "The Postwar Theatre of Mexico," Artes de México, p. 51; also see Arciniegas, pp. 222, 494-96.

[2]Ollila, pp. 24-25, and Nomland, p. 251, e.g., offer these categorical distinctions. However, overlapping materials were not uncommon, and otherwise atypical groups also appeared. In this study, the classifications will mean, among other things, that one group favored Mexican, and the other, foreign plays.

[3]The Russian Revolution of 1910 and World War I of 1914 put Mexico in touch with the avant-garde trends in the world; see, e.g., Solórzano, Teatro Latinoamericano, p. 53.

commercial groups were also influenced by abroad, it was the experimental ones that were denounced as escapist and anti-nationalistic.[1]

Commercial-Theatre Groups

The commercial-theatre groups were more prominent than the experimental ones during the first-half of this period. Playwrights sought to create a national theatre, out of concern for the future of Mexican dramaturgy (and surely for their own works as well), but disbanded when the public failed to respond to their efforts, and government support was not forthcoming to carry most along.[2] Between 1926 and 1934, however, 134 original Mexican plays were performed,[3] and largely through the efforts of the commercial-theatre groups.

The Teatro Municipal, founded in 1923 by the actress, María Tereza Montoya, was typical of the groups in that its repertoire of Mexican plays focused on the social problems, presumably shared alike by middle and

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[1]The "commercial" El Grupo de los Siete was an exception; it, too, was denounced. However, it was an atypical group that was categorized "commercial" because the foreign avant-garde influenced the writing of the company's plays, and new staging approaches were slighted. The company is discussed on pp. 43-44 below.

The following cultural developments and changes were also seen during the 1920s and 1930s: Theatre imports continued to prosper; new theatres were built for the ever popular frivolous forms; adaptations of translated foreign works flooded the market; the revista became more daring and socially constructive; cultural reciprocity gained; and there was a new recognition of Latin American poets and artists. (For select examples, see Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, pp. 305-72 passim, 235, 191, 18, 457-73 passim; Ollila, pp. 28, 40.)

[2]Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 212; Jones, p. 491. Government subsidy was geared to rural theatre formation, for the worker and the lower classes.

[3]Jones, p. 491.

upper class audiences. It produced social comedies, such as the English-titled Up to Date by Federico Sodi, and thesis plays, such as La caída de las flores (The Fall of the Flowers) by Julio Jiménez Rueda who, as newly-appointed secretary of Mexico City's municipal government, had used his influence to attain a subsidy for the company.[1]

Jiménez Rueda was also instrumental in the founding of the Unión de Autores Dramáticos, or UAD (today called the Unión Nacional de Autores) the same year, along with the dramatists Francisco Monterde, Ricardo Parada León, Rafael M. Saavedra, Mario Montes, and Eugenia Torres. Its object was to provide a center in which lectures about world drama and sample readings from translated plays could be publicly aired, but in practice it leaned toward reading and discussing plays by its own members. However, it stimulated the reopening of the defunct Society of Authors which scheduled a season of dramatic offerings; between July 1925 and January 1926, 100 performances of 400 different plays were given, 32 of which were premieres. Among the debuts was Víctor Manuel Díez Barroso's Véncete a ti mismo (Control Yourself), inspired by Luigi Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (Six Characters in Search of of an Author).[2] Véncete a ti mismo features a play-reading within the play in which the characters' lives parallel those of the actors, a violent ending, and other traits similar to Pirandello's play.

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[1]Ollila, pp. 78, 26; Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 20.

[2]Ollila, pp. 26-27; Jones, p. 491.

Pirandello's explorations into the workings of the mind were fascinating groups in Mexico, as were Shaw's social drama, Russia's drama for the masses, Lenormand's experiments with psychology, and the Germans' handling of the abstract.[1] Around 1925,[2] a group of seven dramatists--Francisco Monterde, José Joaquín Gamboa, Víctor Manuel Díez Barroso, Carlos Noriega Hope, Ricardo Parada León, and Carlos and Lázaro Lozano García--attuned to the happenings in the world, and disgruntled with the quality of Mexico plays churned out for the professional stage, united in an effort to introduce the public to unknown, innovative, and excellent foreign dramatists by means of the dramatists' own works.[3] But this elitist branch of the Comedia Mexicana (a loosely-formed umbrella organization from which the company of 1929-36 took its name) was short-lived.[4] El Grupo de los Siete was promptly dubbed Los Pirandellos

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[1]Jones, pp. 498-99.

[2]There is disagreement about the date. E.g., Jones, p. 493, and Nomland, p. 240, cite 1926. Armando de María y Campos, "The Mexican Theater Uniting Two Centuries," Artes de México, p. 51, states the Fall of 1925; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 30, dates the group's first season as from July 1925 to January 1926.

[3]Jones, p. 493, suggests that foreign plays were planned. But the authors wound up staging their own plays instead at the Virginia Fábregas Theatre. Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 30-31, lists their repertoire.

[4]According to María y Campos, "Two Centuries," p. 51, the company disbanded the following Spring.

As for passing on company names, this is not uncommon in Mexico, provided that the orignal nameholder has disappeared, and despite such additional confusion for scholars. This happened with Poesía en Voz Alta as well. Nomland, pp. 234-35 and 251, discusses both Comedia Mexicanas; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 39-42, and Jones, pp. 488-89, the later group.

because of its interest in Pirandello's theatre; the members were called "seven authors in search of an actor, and [others] accused them of being more Spanish than Mexican."[1]

To be considered anything other than Mexican was to receive the kiss of death, and yet less overtly-foreign influenced plays did not draw. Toward the final years of its existence, in an effort to survive, the company changed policy from a concentration on Mexican authors and an occasional foreign play like the Čapek Brothers' RUR, to the production of more foreign plays.[2] But the public failed to respond. And when the company reorganized and reopened in 1938 at the Teatro Ideal with only Mexican plays, the public still stayed away.[3]

Nor did the public respond to the Teatro de Ahora.[4] Instead of problem plays, sentimental, romantic, and melodramatic works, and intellectual exercises, this group presented "revolutionary" theatre--a political theatre of ideas--at the Hidalgo Theatre in 1932. The Theatre

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[1]María y Campos, "Two Centuries," p. 51; Jones, p. 493, is quoted.

[2]Jones, p. 496, and Ollila, p. 27.

[3]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 41.

[4]Sandi, p. 620.

Disinterest in theatre was, and still is, hardly unusual. The "masses" gave allegiance to the teatro frívolo, and while a "few [unnamed] intellectuals" tried to "lift theatre out of its stagnation," wrote Covarrubias, p. 595, they "failed to shake the apathy of the bourgeoisie who could support a theatre, but who unfortunately go rarely and then only for social stimulation regardless of the merits of the play or the performance."

of Today had both an experimental and a commercial thrust. It experimented as a theatre in Mexico influenced by Germans and Erwin Piscator; its plays focused on theme not technique. It aimed at attracting the lower classes by incorporating popular "mexicanisms" into the plays, and using lower class characters and pertinent themes.[1] It performed in a commercial theatre and its founders, the playwrights Mauricio Magdaleno and Juan Bustillo Oro, staged their own works, including their adaptation of Ben Jonson's Volpone, called Tiburón (Shark).[2]

The Teatro de Ahora was not the first group to attempt to educate the masses in Mexico, but the first to try by using indigenous serious-dramatic forms, and on inciteful, political affairs. The government, for instance, in the 1920s had subsidized regional theatres presenting folklore motives for the Indian populations; the plays were morally and politically didactic,[3] and often were programmed with original compositions and dances (reminiscent of the Spanish-conversion vehicles of earlier years). A puppet theatre, also with educational aims, had been functioning with govemment support since 1929, the same year that

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[1]Ollila, pp. 28, 114-15; see p. 129 for some popular "mexicanisms."

[2]Nomland, pp. 270-74. Magdaleno contributed Panuco 137, an indictment of American capitalism/imperialism, which depicts the exploitation of land and workers by oil companies and Emiliano Zapata which focuses on the leader's final years and betrayal; Bustillo Oro wrote Los que vuelven (Those Who Return), a play about exploited Mexican migrant workers in the United States.

[3]In this sense, meaning about the political leaders, about government operations, and so forth.

witnessed the opening of the writer, Amalia de Castillo Ledón's Recreaciones Populares, sponsored by the Secretariat of Public Education.[1] Castillo Ledón, who had been the first President of the Comedia Mexicana, organized popular (including puppet) theatre and comedy for performances in various locales--schools, plazas, agrarian communities, workers' clubs, and penal institutions--and also held playwriting contests for workers.[2]

One of the more interesting (and less written about) ventures of the 1920s was an attempt to create a "new theatrical art" with "exclusively national elements and themes developing from Mexican life."[3] El Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago (The Mexican Theatre of the Bat) of 1924 was an offshoot of the Teatro Sintético of 1923 (the same year that the Teatro Municipal began) which was created by Rafael M. Saavedra, Carlos González, and Francisco Domínguez to enhance the beauty of the revue by using folkloric elements.[4]

Inspired by the Russian Chauve-Souris of Nikita Balieff, which the poet Luis Quintanilla had seen in New York, and taking its name in

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[1]Ollila, pp. 43, 45; Sandi, p. 623.

[2]Nomland, p. 237; Ollila, p. 45; Sandi, p. 620.

[3]Luis Quintanilla's written document on the company, reprinted in Luis MarioSchneider's study, El Estridentismo o Una Literatura de la Estrategia, Estudios Literarios, no. 5 (Mexico: INBA, Departmento de Literatura, [1970]), pp. 226-27, no. 20.

[4]Sandi, p. 620.

translation, the Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago, unlike most companies at the time, was concerned with developing Mexico's cultural life through literature as well as the plastic arts. It was comprised of artists: Quintanilla, the artistic director of the group, was influenced by Alfonso Reyes and Apollinaire; González, the scenic designer was a painter with an extensive knowledge of the customs and apparel of the ancient tribal Indians; and Domínguez, the musical director, was also a composer.[1]

With multiple sponsorship, the company opened at the Teatro Olimpia on 7 September 1924, in a lavish production using a forty-man orchestra. Although Quintanilla had prepared the spectator for the company and its production, the critics were sharply divided in their responses, and soon the group dissolved.[2]

Experimental-Theatre Groups

The experimental-theatre groups were concerned with the plastic elements of production and unification too, although their literary interest

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[1]Schneider, pp. 226-27, n. 20 (Quintanilla document), and 107. The company is classified as "commercial" only because it used Mexican materials. As a sidenote, the backgrounds and roles of the forementioned artists parallel those of Paz, Soriano and Gutiérrez Heras from Poesía en Voz Alta.

[2]Quintanilla furnishes the nature of the show--a game--and the role of the spectator in it: "Spectators have returned to be children, and the actors, toys. THE MEXICAN THEATRE OF THE 'MURCIÉLAGO' IS A TOYSTORE FOR THE SOUL." (Schneider, pp. 226-27, n. 20.) Quintanilla could be writing about Poesía en Voz Alta. The critical reception of the Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago, discussed by Schneider, pp. 107-8, is similar to Poesía en Voz Alta's too.

resided in world theatre, not Mexican. Like Quintanilla, many of the directors of these groups were poets of the vanguard who had been classified as "Contemporáneos" because of their simple and didactic, abstract works.[1] The Teatro de Ulises of 1928, named "Ulises" "because curiosity rather than the quest for the Golden Fleece motivated Ulysses,"[2] was the first such movement to deign to introduce the Mexican public--a select group at first--to universal themes and world playwrights. And as a byproduct, it opened up new avenues for the Mexican playwright.[3] For Celestino Gorostiza, one of the group's directors, the Teatro de Ulises began because Mexico lacked a vanguard theatre; the country needed men abreast of the happenings in the world, and who had the urge to import novelties to their country:

> That is, people a bit snobbish, but responsible and cultured. It needed young people, with the impetus and audacity of youth; but with an audacity and impetuosity governed by curiosity, by anxieties of the spiritual type, and by eagerness to know and to do.[4]

Motivated by a prime mover of cultural development, Antonieta Rivas Mercado, the Teatro de Ulises was led by Gorostiza, Julio Jiménez

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[1]Ibid., p. 183. The "Contemporáneos" included Quintanilla (considered the most extreme in his use of form), Salvador Novo, Carlos Pellicer, Jaime Torres Bodet, José Gorostiza, and Xavier Villaurrutia.

[2]Salvador Novo, "The Metamorphosis of Ulysses," Artes de México, p. 60.

[3]The poet, Xavier Villaurrutia, for one, credits the Teatro de Ulises for inspiring him to write plays. See, "Hope and Curiosity: Experimental Theatre: As a Source," Theatre Arts Monthly 22:607-9.

[4]P. 31.

Rueda, Salvador Novo, and Xavier Villaurrutia (the latter who, along with Gilberto Owens, had founded the Ulises literary review one year earlier, from which the theatre movement had sprung)[1] and assisted in set design by the painters Julio Castellanos, Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Agustín Lazo, and Roberto Montenegro. During its two years of life, the group translated and presented the first Mexican productions of Eugene O'Neill (Welded), Lord Dunsany (The Glittering Gate), Jean Cocteau (Orphée), Claude-Roger Marx (Simili), Charles Vildrac (Le Pelérin; The Pilgrim), and H. R. Lenormand (Le temps est un songe; Time is a Dream).[2]

Despite the group's initial success with the intelligentsia, the critics promptly nicknamed it "The Group of Snobs," and the public viewed the experiment as only an effort to showcase foreign plays.[3] With the death of Rivas Mercado, the Teatro de Ulises ended. The writers returned to their former professions, and launched a new literary review, Contemporáneos.

But the group which had inspired writers, trained actors (amateurs who went on to professional careers, and the director-writers themselves

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[1]Sandi, p. 620. Salvador Novo, "Metamorphosis," p. 60, however, omits the name of Jiménez Rueda, and adds those of Gilberto Owen and Jorge Cuesta.

[2]Villaurrutia, p. 607, and Jones, p. 496.

[3]Jones, p. 496. Gorostiza, p. 31, says that the group "so perfectly provoked the expected reactions of indignation and tumult that the only remedy for it was to disappear."

who had acted in some plays), and influenced scenic design, provoked successors. Escolares del Teatro was formed in 1931 by the director Julio Bracho, aided by the painter Carlos González of the Teatro Mexicano del Murciélago, on a small government subsidy and with similar aims.[1] It differed from the Teatro de Ulises in three ways: the director's role as the interpreter and unifying force of the production was emphasized and based mainly on the theories of Gordon Craig; the director refrained from acting; and plays were by foreign and Mexican dramatists of a certain mode. Hence, August Strindberg's Den starkare (The Stronger) and John Millington Synge's Riders to the Sea were produced along with another poetic one-act play, Proteo, inspired from the Greek legend, by Francisco Monterde.[2]

A year later, 1932, Celestino Gorositiza obtained govemment funds, and with Villaurrutia and Lazo, picked up where the Teatro de Ulises and the Escolares del Teatro had left off. The Teatro de Orientación, named after the small room called "Orientación" which the Secretariat of Public Education had provided previously for the Escolares del Teatro and now for this group, purposed to acquaint the public with world theatre--"to prolong the tradition and repertoire of the Teatro Ulises."[3] The Teatro de Orientación was more ambitious than its predecessors. After initially aiming for a select-minority audience, it later looked for a more diverse

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[1]Ollila, p. 30, and Nomland, p. 251.

[2]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 63.

[3]Ollila, p. 30; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 69.

one and got it. The company's final two seasons were held at the Teatro Hidalgo, a large commercial theatre. The Orientación, unlike the Ulises, employed actors with up-and-coming names, such as Rodolfo Landa, Carlos Riquelme, Eugenia Rocabruna, and the two actresses who had begun with the Ulises, Isabela Corona and Clementina Otero. Ensemble playing was stressed, however, and not the star system.[1] There was more use of Mexican talent because of the group's desire to develop directors and designers in accordance with world-wide trends. Although Agustín Lazo, who, like Juan Soriano of Poesía en Voz Alta, was noted for the plasticity of his designs, remained the company's principal scenic designer, the painters Carlos González, Rufino Tamayo, Gabriel Fernández Ledesma, Antonio Ruiz, and Julio Prieto worked in the theatre.[2] The Teatro de Orientación staged a broader range of plays from the world theatre, without limiting itself to the contemporary.[3] For instance, during its first two seasons, from July to December of 1932, and from February of the following year,[4] the company's repertoire featured plays by O'Neill,

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[1]Jones, p. 620. [2]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 79-80.

[3]As a result, it opened up the field to translators; Bracho, Lazo, Jiménez Rueda, Villaurrutia, Gorostiza, Novo, and Cuesta translated plays for the group. Because the company sought to develop talent and was open to all types of plays, participants were inspired to test their abilities in unfamiliar theatre areas, such as playwriting. The director, Bracho wrote two plays; Lazo, the scenic designer, wrote three. (Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 69-70, 62; Nomland, pp. 69-70.)

[4]The length of the second season's run is unspecified by Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 69, Ollila, p. 31, or others.

Cocteau, Pellerin, Molière, Chekhov, Synge, Romains, Shakespeare, Gogol, and Shaw. In the third and fourth seasons, from October to November of 1933, and August to September of 1934, foreign plays still occupied the boards, but new Mexican plays were also presented. The Teatro de Orientación staged Villaurrutia's Parece mentira (Incredible as it Seems) and ¿En qué piensas? (What Are You Thinking About?), two compact, intellectual works, strongly influenced by Pirandello; Gorostiza's La escuela de amor (School of Love) and Ser o no ser (To Be or Not To Be), the former a development of the Don Juan theme, the latter, of Dr. Faustus, both based on intellectual rather than social conflicts; Carlos Díaz Dufoo, Jr.'s El barco (The Boat), a one-act philosophical piece on death; and Alfonso Reyes's Ifigenia cruel (Cruel Ifigenia), a brilliant dramatic poem based on the Greek legend, the only play written by the distinguished poet.[1]

The Teatro de Orientación ended when the govemment withdrew its funding, even though a fifth season had been planned.[2] This season did take place finally in 1938 at the Palacio de Bellas Artes (inaugurated in 1934) when Gorostiza was named director of its Department of Fine

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[1]See Ibid., pp. 69-80, and Ibid., pp. 31-32, respectively, for the full repertoire of plays, though the authors fail to concur in some production dates.

[2]Nomland, p. 257.

Arts.[1] The postponed fifth season revealed changes in personnel and format. Gorostiza did not directly participate, perhaps because of his new administrative position at Bellas Artes. The company was now headed by Villaurrutia, Julio Bracho, and Rodolfo Usigli, though the latter took no specific, directorial part in this program.[2] Separate casts and directors replaced the ensemble in the plays. These were Massimo Bontempelli's Minnie la candida (Candid Minnie), translated by Villaurrutia and Lazo, with the former directing and the latter designing it, and Jean Giraudoux's Amphitryon 38, translated and directed by Bracho, and designed by Ruiz. The company received mixed reviews, its former enthusiasm was seen as faded, and it was unable to offer any new Mexican plays.[3]

There is much validity to Villaurrutia's assessment that the experimental groups which arose after 1934 "lacked the scope and curiosity of

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[1]Ollila, p. 32; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 81. All references to Bellas Artes are to the Palace of Bellas Artes, housing one enormous, excellent theatre, conference and exposition rooms, and at that time, one cultural department which, for nearly a decade after 1946, included the theatre school, La Escuela de Arte Dramático, later renamed, Escuela de Arte Teatral.

[2]In 1939, Usigli directed his translation of S. N. Berman's comedy Biography at the Hidalgo Theatre. It was called a Teatro de Orientación production, but had little in common with the company's mode of operations. (Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 71.)

[3]Ibid., p. 70; Nomland, p. 258; Ollila, pp. 32-33.

the pioneer groups."[1] In fact, until the end of the 1940s--the beginning of the post-revolutionary years--there was very little theatre activity. But whatever the merit of the "experimental" ventures of the mid-thirties through forties, they did bring some vigor to an essentially lifeless theatrical ambient. Such groups included Villaurrutia's company, Grupo Teatral del Sindicato de Electricistas (1938), which presented eight one-act plays, three of them by Villaurrutia, before disbanding; Indice, formed by the playwright-director, José Attolini in 1936 to present foreign works, by Strindberg and O'Neill, for example, and to create a new theatre form; and Escuela Teatral in which Femando Wagner, who along with Usigli and Villaurrutia, was later to teach theatre to several members of Poesía en Voz Alta, directed four plays.[2] The groups of the forties included: El Proa (1942) with the director, José de Aceves, neither a playwright nor a participant in the earlier groups; it presented six seasons of foreign and native plays, some of which had been done previously by the Ulises, the Orientación, and the commercial groups. El Teatro de México (1943) formed by the writers Xavier Villaurrutia, Miguel N. Lira, Concepción Sada, María Luisa Ocampo, and Celestino Gorostiza, and

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[1]P. 608. By this time, experimental and commercial group characteristics had merged, and the former classifications no longer applied. "Experimental" and "commercial" took on customary meanings, and referred to the predominant interest of a group, on artistic excellence or financial success.

[2]Ollila, pp. 149, 33; Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 573. The Poesía en Voz Alta members included Juan José Arreola, Héctor Mendoza, and Nancy Cárdenas.

the painters Julio Castellanos and Julio Prieto; it presented mainly the plays of its own writers. La Linterna Mágica (1946) leaned toward Mexican plays; the group was under the direction of the actor-director, José Ignacio Retes, and employed guest scenographers, one of them, the young painter Juan Soriano, later to join Poesía en Voz Alta, who designed Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's El tejedor de Segovia (The Weaver of Segovia). El Teatro de Arte Moderno (1947), created by Jerbert Darien (director) and Lola Bravo (actress) aimed at presenting more recent and bolder works, namedly Jean-Paul Sartre's La putain respectueuse (The Respectful Prostitute). And Teatro de las Artes (1941) and Teatro de la Reforma (1948), both directed by the eminent Seki Sano who has been credited with introducing Stanislavsky's and Meyerhold's techniques to Mexico.[1]

The theatre movements and groups of the twentieth century through the post-revolutionary years reflected societal changes. When Mexico was involved in the series of revolutions from 1910-40, the initial seven years of this period were the most uncertain; the theatre reflected this uncertainty by flooding the market with zarzuelas and other popular revues for its diversion-seeking audiences. Plays by Mexican authors were also

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[1]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 82-89; Nomland, p. 280.
On another level, the Teatro Infantil of 1942 offered lavish spectacles of foreign and native plays for children, as did the puppet theatre, called Teatro Guiñol. And the Teatro Estudiantil Autónomo was organized by the director Xavier Rojas in 1947 to bring student productions of varied types of popular and dramatic forms to the people by staging them in diverse locales. (See Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 108-11, 104, 82-87. Also Nomland, pp. 17-72; and El Teatro en México 1:61-82 for pertinent articles and production photos.)

produced, but none was considered "a substantial contribution to the Mexican theatre."[1]

From the early twenties through the middle thirties, however, Mexico became more active and productive: art flourished, plays expanded into a diversity of forms, and playwrights founded companies, such as El Grupo de los Siete and El Teatro de Ulises, to present their own and others' works. In 1929, the National University of Mexico, ultimately to boast a thriving theatre department, was granted autonomy (freedom from government control), and became known as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. There followed a near-decade of stagnation caused by the draining effects of Mexico's own revolutions and the economic lapses brought on by the Depression in the United States and World War II; by theatre's competitors, the radio and film industries' improvement in quality and gain in popularity; and by the inability of the theatre pioneers of the 1920s and 1930s to create an innovative theatre generation to succeed them.[2] They produced and developed writers, actors, and scenic designers, but not directors.[3] Theatres, therefore, presented second-run plays

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[1]María y Campos, "Two Centuries," p. 51.

[2]See Arciniegas. pp. 506-7; Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 520; Ollila, p. 49.

To show exactly what caused Mexico's stagnation is of course impossible. Theatre elsewhere was apparently experiencing similar ills. Then, in the 1950s, there was a reversal, with the theatres of Mexico, the United States, and many other parts of the world, showing vitality, originality, and productivity. World-wide events and trends were reflected in individual societies which, in turn, were reflected in their theatres.

[3]There was a pattern whereby directors of one group moved on to direct other groups. See pp. 41-55 passim, above.

in lackluster productions; theatre groups were imitative rather than imaginative, bringing little freshness to the theatre scene. The terrain of theatre was, in a word, the "desert."[1] Revitalization came in the 1950s.

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[1]The word used by Octavio Paz in the interview of 28 August 1972.

CHAPTER 3

MEXICO CITY IN THE 1950s

The post-revolutionary years in Mexico saw a renewed period of cultural activity, particularly in education and the arts. Jaime Torres Bodet, the poet and former director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, became Secretary of Public Education and increased the number of available educational facilities in Mexico. The student population at the UNAM had doubled from 1940-54, and on its 400th anniversary in 1953, the University moved to spacious University City in the southern part of Mexico City. The Department of Fine Arts became the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (the National Institute of Fine Arts) or the INBA in 1947, and was designed to develop and train artists.[1] By the mid-1950s, the INBA along with the younger UNAM were the two most powerful cultural institutions in Mexico.[2]

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[1]Arciniegas, p. 497; Howard F. Cline, Mexico: Revolution to Evolution, 1940-1960 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962; reprint ed., 1963), p. 206; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 118-19.

The INBA was originally directly responsible to the Secretary of Public Education, until the creation of the intermediary position of Subsecretary of Cultural Affairs during these active years.

[2]Miguel Guardia, "Teatro en México," reviewing the Second Program of Poesía en Voz Alta, Novedades, 12 August 1956, supp., p. 5.

Generally in Mexico during this period, the abundant stream of plays produced was in the styles of "realism" and "naturalism," with nonrealistic modes incorporating "symbolistic," "expressionistic," "surrealistic," and other poetic techniques growing stronger toward the middle of the fifties. Some of the realistic plays, however, were strongly "influenced by Broadway," said Octavio Paz, and hence dealt with topics found often exclusively abroad.[1]

The playwrights of the realistic school included Héctor Mendoza; the nonrealistic school included Juan José Arreola--both of whom would later become involved with Poesía en Voz Alta.[2] Mendoza's first play, Los ahogados (The Drowned Ones) depicts railroad workers living in misery on wagon trails, in abandoned wagons adapted as houses; the play won first prize in the Fiestas de Primavera contest sponsored by the Federal District Department in 1952, when Mendoza was twenty years old.[3] Next, Mendoza's Las cosas simples (The Simple Things), probably closer to the costumbristic than realistic school, is a three-act play which contains a dream-like interlude and is set in a student environment. It is concerned with such youthful preoccupations as puppy-love,

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[1]Interview, 2 September 1974.
In this discussion, "realistic" plays will generally include the realistic and naturalistic modes, despite their differences.

[2]Russell C. Ewing, ed., Six Faces of Mexico (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1966), p. 307; Solórzano, "Postwar Theatre," p. 70.

[3]Mendoza interview, 1974; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 149.

contrivances to cheat on exams, and other "simple things," and employs Mexican colloquialisms and slang in speech. Presented by the National Union of Authors, Las cosas simples earned the coveted "Juan Ruiz de Alarcón" award of the Agrupación de Críticos in 1953; it has been performed throughout Mexico over one thousand times and has been suggested as representative of the best Mexican plays.[1] Juan José Arreola, the former actor and acting student of Jouvet, Dullin, and Barrault in France, and then acclaimed writer of short stories and ironical fables, achieved fame as a playwright with his award-winning and only-produced play, La hora de todos (Everyone's Hour).[2] Written for a theatre contest in 1955, La hora de todos, subtitled Juguete cómico en un acto, or "Comic toy in an act," has been described by its author as an "auto sacramental of loathsomeness and death."[3] Set in New York, and telling the story of the industrial magnate, Harrison Fish, the play is based on a true event, employs expressionistic elements, and shows the influence of Kafka.[4]

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[1]Jones, p. 511.

[2]Until the 1971 publication of Arreola's one-act "circus farce," Tercera llamada ¡tercera! o Empezamos sin usted (Last Call, Last, or We're Starting Without You), which refers to the starting of a performance, it was thought that La hora de todos was Arreola's first and only play. (See, e.g., Solórzano, Teatro Latinoamericano, p. 180.) Believed to have been written in the late 1940s or early 1950s, Tercera llamada . . . was influenced by French and Italian avant-gardists.

[3]Quoted in Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 139.

[4]Solórzano, Teatro Latinoamericano, pp. 180-81; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 139; Antonio Alatorre interview, 11 September 1976.

To meet the demands of the burgeoning theatre activity, additional theatrical spaces came into use after 1949. The trend was toward small salons and pocket theatres, but one noteworthy exception was the Teatro de los Insurgentes, a large, muralled, excellent, commercial house which opened in 1953. And around the same time, a project, under the direction of the Secretary of Public Education got underway in Chapultapec Park with the construction of an 18,000 seat National Auditorium. This project would expand into the development of an important cultural complex behind the Auditorium, called La Unidad Artística y Cultural del Bosque, originally comprised of three small theatres--the Teatro del Granero, Bosque, and Orientación--and a theatre school, the INBA's Escuela de Arte Teatral, which was relocated from Bellas Artes and inaugurated in 1955.[1] Also after 1950, the National Union of Authors started annual theatre seasons of Mexican plays.[2] Among the most successful the UNA showcased were Las cosas simples and Luis G. Basurto's Cada quien su vida (To Each

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[1]During these years, only the theatre school was directly responsible to the INBA; the Unity was not, though like the INBA, it was under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Public Education. Since then, other facilities, such as a dance academy and its theatre, the Teatro de la Danza, have been added to the property which is today under the INBA's control. The director, Javier Rojas, interviewed by phone, 4 February 1978, unravelled the threads of confusion surrounding the project and its facilities. The early work of Rojas in the theatre-in-the-round inspired the creation of the 206-seat, arena theatre, Teatro del Granero, which Rojas also inaugurated; the Teatro del Bosque opened in 1957, the Orientación, in 1958. (Also see Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 99-131 passim; Mayo Antonio Sánchez, "Un Gran Realización: La Unidad del Bosque," Bellas Artes, no. 3 (April 1956), pp. 54-56.)

[2]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 145.

His Own). Cada quien su vida is set in a barroom where a sampling of Mexico City's inhabitants are gathered to celebrate New Year's Eve. The play has been defined as "melodramatic realism" because the characters represent archetypes of virtue and vice.[1]

Scenographic art developed in the 1950s. First, the designers of realism; the most prominent practitioners were Julio Prieto and Antonio López Mancera. Later, the "freely creative design in which the scenic environment may become an autonomous reality."[2] Juan Soriano, influential in the still unborn Poesía en Voz Alta, was included in this group.[3]

It was during this same period that the young poet Jaime García Terrés took charge of the University's Cultural Diffusion Department (1953), and later, of the journal, Universidad de México (1955). Carlos Fuentes and Emmanuel Carballo, a beginning novelist and poet, respectively, founded the Revista Mexicana de Literatura (1955) with an explosive first issue that contained the highly-criticized political poem, El cántaro roto (The Broken Jug) by Octavio Paz.[4] Five years earlier, Paz had become famous with the publication of his study, The Labyrinth of Solitude. It was in these same years that Fernando Benítez, Gastón

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[1]Solórzano, "Postwar Theatre," p. 72.

[2]Ibid., p. 73. [3]Ibid.

[4]The commotion caused by the poem was referred to by Paz, interviewed 1974, and by Andrés Henestrosa, "Reseña Literatura: 1955," Bellas Artes, no. 1 (January 1956), p. 37. The poem appears in issue no. 1 (September-October 1955), pp. 1-5.

García Cantú, Miguel Prieto, and Vicento Rojo launched another revista, México en la Cultura, becoming the Novedades cultural supplement, and that Playboy magazine was banned from sale in Mexico. The ban symbolized the period's approach to nudity, sex, and just about everything that was seen as not constructive to domestic and social affairs. Juan Rulfo published his collection of short stories under the title of one of them, El llano en llamas (The Blazing Field), followed by the famed novel, Pedro Páramo. And James Dean, Elvis Presley, and rock-and-roll swept the country as volcanically as in the United States.[1]

There was blooming prosperity in the fifties in Mexico, peaking by the mid-fifties when Poesía en Voz Alta was born,[2] and the theatre came to reflect this condition. The turning point for theatre was 1948, the year that Seki Sano's Teatro de la Reforma began.[3] Private producers began to import French and American plays by such authors as Sartre, O'Neill, and Miller; and Spanish theatrical families who had monopolized the boards with melodramas, imports from Spain, and Alfonso Paso's

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[1]"Inventario, los cincuentas," Excelsior, 4 August 1974, supp., p. 16.

[2]This can be illustrated by the following magazine-article titles, from Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature 20 (March 1955-February 1957): "Mexico, waking up after a long siesta." (Scholastic); "Economic recovery in Mexico." (America); "Everything up." (Time); "Return of confidence." (Time).

[3]Dated and linked to Sano by Luisa Josefina Hernández, interviewed 5 August 1974, and Carlos Fuentes, 27 July 1971, e.g.

Spanish boulevard plays, began to recede in prominence.[1] But in 1949, Sano's production of Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire brought the middle class into the theatre.[2]

It was not until the middle fifties, however, that the changes took hold,[3] mainly owing to the institutional efforts of the INBA and the UNAM. Until then, a kind of theatrical "desert" prevailed. In the entertainment section of any newspaper, for every three or more full pages of film advertisements, a half-column to half-page was devoted to theatre ads. The fear of the early fifties that newly born television might endanger the cinema's life posed no threat to theatre which was so limited at the time.

Among the sparse theatre showings were Mexican plays. The most successful ones were realistic. El niño y la niebla (The Boy and the Mist), a psychological drama about a mother who instigates her son to kill his father, was starring Isabela Corona at the Teatro Caracol in 1951; shortly thereafter, another psychological drama but set in a brothel, inspired by Bernard Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession but probing the sexual problems of the male in Mexican society, Jano es una muchacha

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[1]Luisa Josefina Hernández interview.

[2]Sano was so credited during interviews with, e.g., ibid., Ibáñez, 29 July 1971, Mendoza, 26 August 1971, and Carlos Fernández, 20 January 1976. The production is advertised in Novedades, 5 July 1949, sec. 3, p. 5.

[3]In the 1954 prólogo to Núñez y Domínguez's Cuarenta años, p. 11, Tomás Borras wrote that the book will "not expressly state, but [show] through example," that the "endosmosis between Mexico and Spain continues."

(Janus is a Girl), was presented to acclaim.[1] Both plays were written by an important Mexican dramatist of the twentieth century, Rodolfo Usigli, who has repeatedly acknowledged the influence of Bernard Shaw.[2] Concurrent with El niño y la niebla was La culta dama (The Cultured Lady) by Salvador Novo. Novo directed his satire on women in high society for Bellas Artes, with scenography provided by the most popular designer of the period, Julio Prieto. In the same year, and also produced at Bellas Artes, was Sergio Magaña's Los signos del zodíaco (The Signs of the Zodiac), a study of tortured beings living in a poor section of Mexico.[3]

Social realism (with an occasional naturalistic play) was the mode, which was not different from what was being produced in England and the United States. All Mexican playwrights seemed to favor it. Villaurrutia's poetic Pirandellian puzzles gave way to the three-act realistic play, El pobre Barba Azul (Poor Blue Beard), a light satire on love in which the central character, Samuel, is closer to the legend of Don Juan than to that of Blue Beard.[4] The young Emilio Carballido, who would later change his style, wrote the domestic comedy, Rosalba y los llaveros (Rosalba

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[1]Ad in Novedades, 3 September 1951, sec. 3, p. 7; "Inventario," p. 16.

[2]Rodolfo Usigli interview, 10 August 1974.

[3]Ad in Novedades, 2 September 1951, sec. 3, p. 8; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 136.

[4]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 74.

and the Keepers of the Keys) which contrasts provincials with Mexico City residents. The play premiered at Bellas Artes in 1950.

Imported and indigenous realistic plays coexisted. Where possible, both were performed by the important "names" of the moment. In 1953, while Usigli's La función de despedida (The Farewell Performance), about an aging actress's attempt to create a life, a reality, off stage, was playing at the Ideal with María Tereza Montoya in the key role, the Sala Molière was showing Tennessee Williams's The Glass Menagerie, directed by Dagoberto de Cervantes. Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman had a 15 April opening at Bellas Artes with Virginia Manzano and Alfredo Gómez de la Vega in the leading roles, and Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, a 30 April reopening, this time at the Sala Chopin, but still under Sano's direction; it starred Wolf Ruvinskis, María Douglas, and Ignacio Retes, all established names.[1] The names of plays and players were apparently most significant to the public, and newspaper ads often omitted the names of playwright and director.[2]

The INBA was instrumental in bringing realistic plays from the United States to Mexico, and developing sets, costumes, and relevant production

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[1]Ads in Novedades, 15 April 1953, sec. 1, p. 24, and 30 April 1953, sec. 1, p. 25.

[2]As examples, The Bad Seed starring Rita Macedo at the New Fábregas Theatre was advertised in Novedades, 1 November 1955, sec. 1, p. 17, without reference to either director or playwright; to find the author (Marc-Gilbert Sauvajon) of the much-advertised play, Escandalo nocturno (probably Les enfants d'Edouard, or Dear Charles as its English adaptation is called), it was necessary to consult several reviews.

materials to accommodate them, as the basic picture-framed, relatively empty stage of the Spanish "realistic" production style was inappropriate. The most important plays from Broadway were cast in Mexico with recognized names, and the majority played at Bellas Artes which tended to cater to the upper-middle and upper classes. These were high-budget productions. To overwhelm the general audience and critics, the Bellas Artes stage offered realistic over-cluttering.[1]

Bellas Artes productions constituted only one aspect of the INBA's operations. Theatres were rented in diverse locales; students were trained for the theatre at the Escuela de Arte Teatral. The INBA exposed the public to a varied repertoire of classical and modern theatre. It employed foreign and native directors, such as André Moreau, Fernando Wagner, Seki Sano, Salvador Novo, and Xavier Villaurrutia, not only to stage plays, which ranged from Shakespeare and Spanish plays of the Golden Age to contemporary drama, many by Mexicans and Americans, but to teach courses at the school.[2] Students often gained practical theatre experience working under their teachers. It was the INBA which premiered Rosalba y los llaveros, catapulting the playwright, Emilio Carballido to fame; it also produced Sergio Magaña's Los signos del zodíaco and Moctezuma II, and

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[1]Juan José Gurrola interview, 16 July 1974; see production photos on scattered pages of El Teatro en México 1.

[2]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 99-103.

other plays by such Mexican authors as Rodolfo Usigli, Rafael Solana, and Luisa Josefina Hernández.[1]

To develop Mexican playwrights and other theatre practitioners, and provide theatre aficionados, less attuned to Bellas Artes visits, with insights into world-theatre trends, the INBA adopted several measures, among them the sponsoring of a season of international theatre. The season took place in January and February of 1950, with the plays performed in their native tongues. Mexico was represented by several plays; Rosalba y los llaveros was among them. Sartre's Les mains sales (The Dirty Hands) from France, Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes and Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones from the U.S.A., and Emlyn Williams's Trespass from England were among the plays from abroad. Mexican regional amateur-theatre contests were initiated in 1953, and some groups staged new Mexican plays.[2] By 1956, there were awards for best actor, actress, group, direction, and play. In the same year, the Teatro Mexicano was founded to employ professional actors in new, unstaged Mexican works.[3]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 99-103 and 118-31.

[2]In 1955, the group from Puebla won first prize with Arreola's La hora de todos.

[3]Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 614; Magaña-Esquivel Medio siglo, pp. 124-26; "Impulso al Teatro en 1956: Se Organizan ya las Temporadas de Teatro Mayor, Infantil y Popular," Bellas Artes, no. 2 (February 1956), p. 41.

Theatre artists synthesized techniques and methods used by others, without conscious deviation from the originals. There were small ensemble "groups" from time to time, but no repertory companies. The nineteenth century independent theatres of Europe (among them Antoine's Théâtre Libre and Otto Brahm's Freie Bühne) may have revolutionized production styles for the then-avant-garde realistic and naturalistic plays, but such contributions had been absorbed by Mexico's long-forgotten theatre companies of the 1920s and 1930s. Effects of such movements came again to Mexico in the 1950s through the U.S.A. Reminders of the Moscow Art Theatre were found in Seki Sano's commercial productions.

Repertory returned to Mexico in the 1950s; it came from abroad. The INBA sponsored occasional foreign repertory companies, such as Louis Jouvet's which performed at Bellas Artes as early as 1944; in April of 1956, the company of Madeleine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault played for Bellas Artes audiences, and strongly influenced Héctor Mendoza, the director of Poesía en Voz Alta.[1] The Barrault company changed plays often during its two-week stay at Bellas Artes with a repertoire that included Marivaux's Les fausses confidences (The False Confessions), Jacques Prévert's Baptiste, and Molière's Amphitryon and Les fourberies de Scapin (The Tricks of Scapin). Reviewers were lavish in their praise. To quote one: "Jouvet made Molière Spanish, and Barrault made Marivaux

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[1]Núñez y Domínguez, Cuarenta años, p. 589; Mendoza acknowledged the influence when interviewed, 1974.

and Molière Italian [in the Commedia dell'Arte style]. . . . Antoine worked to make it [theatre] real. Barrault . . . goes on to make it marvelous."[1]

At the UNAM, theatre activity followed the INBA pattern, but was more limited because of its budget and facilities. Unlike the INBA, the autonomous University was neither totally supported by government funds nor designed as an exclusively cultural institution. Funding for cultural projects came from the Cultural Diffusion Department of the University, then under the direction of Horacio Labastida,[2] and the budget was small. In 1952, the playwright Carlos Solórzano founded the University Theatre to produce classical and modern works, even though the University had no campus and its facilities were overcrowded. As a result, the University Theatre moved its productions outdoors, and into metropolitan theatres. Operational expenses were borne equally by the Cultural Diffusion Department and private patronage.

The University Theatre was the same as the INBA's professional theatre operations insofar as it was play-oriented, used a fluid rather than a permanent company, and chose directors, scenic designers, and actors in relation to each play's needs. Theatres were rented for the runs of productions. The participants were "professionals," though not "stars,"

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[1]Robert Kemp, "Monstruo Sagrado que Produce Escalofríos: Jean-Louis Barrault," Bellas Artes, no. 3, pp. 38-39. Another superb review is by Armando de María y Campos, "Temporada Francesa de Renaud-Barrault: Inauguración con Marivaux y Molière," Novedades, 18 April 1956, sec. 1, p. 16.

[2]Solórzano, Testimonios, p. 13.

which deviated from Solórzano's original intention to mix professional and amateur actors.[1] For its first year, the University Theatre presented The Lady's Not for Burning by Christopher Fry, translated by the renowned Spanish poet, León Felipe, and Solórzano's Doña Beatriz, an historical auto sacramental. These plays were followed by Felipe's adaptation of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, retitled No es cordero que es cordera (It is Not A Ram That Is Ewe), Camus's Les justes (The Just Assassins), Beckett's Fin de partie (Endgame), Carballido's La hebra de oro (The Golden Thread), and many others during its ten-year life.[2] Solórzano preferred plays in nonrealistic modes, and especially foreign ones. After the first-two years, and for several years more, the Teatro Universitario increased its annual two productions to three and four, in large measure due to the newly elected Rector Nabor Carrillo and the Secretary of the UNAM, Efrén del Pozo.[3] Their concern for the development of University theatre will later be of value in the creation of Poesía en Voz Alta.

For students interested in theatre careers, the UNAM structured a theatre major in the early 1950s. It was a supplement to the INBA's program

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[1]Ibid., pp. 13-14; Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 156-57.

[2]Magaña-Equivel, Medio siglo, p. 156; Solórzano, Testimonios, pp. 13-14; Solórzano, notes in playbill to the University Student Theatre production of O'Neill's The Great God Brown, October 1954, property of Nancy Cárdenas.

[3]Solórzano, Testimonios, pp. 13-14.

since it was involved more with literary study, and less with practical applications. Practical training was provided by the Teatro Estudiantil Universitario (University Student Theatre) which was created in late 1953.[1] Solórzano rationalized the separation of amateurs from professionals: "a theatre group of amateurs who were university students learning theatre by practical means, could be considered to be out of the jurisdiction of the Union's demands."[2] Union demands such as a mandated number of union technicians at fixed salaries, and fixed ticket prices, would have made the group's free-admission policy impossible and reduced the size of its audience.

The University Student Theatre received some funds from the Cultural Diffusion Department, by this time under García Terrés. The Theatre was a joint creation by Solórzano and Héctor Mendoza, the twenty-one year old former student of Spanish literature at the UNAM

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[1]The date is based on an evaluation of such data as the October 1954 playbill to The Great God Brown, a production which did not inaugurate the University Student Theatre; interviews with Mendoza (1974) and Cárdenas (20 July 1974), two citations of 1953 by Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 155, and Juan Tover, "El Teatro Universitario," El Teatro en México 2:94, and one of 1954 by Raúl González Roig, "El Teatro en la Universidad," Excelsior, 12 October 1958, supp., p. 1. The González Roig article is flawed: Poesía en Voz Alta was never part of the University Student Theatre, as the writer claims, and Juan José Gurrola's name has been substituted for Juan José Arreola's--not an uncommon error, the reverse of which has occurred too.

[2]Solórzano, Testimonios, p. 15.

who had gained recognition with his play, Las cosas simples.[1] Mendoza was named "coordinator," although his background was mainly literary. He had studied acting, however, at the INBA's theatre school, and in 1952 he had appeared in Paul Claudel's free-verse play, L'annonce fait à Marie (The Tidings Brought to Mary). This took place at Bellas Artes under the direction of Mendoza's teacher, Enrique Ruelas.[2]

The University Student Theatre was an umbrella organization containing individual theatre workshops which were connected to the Faculties or Schools, such as Architecture, Law, Medicine, and the Humanities. Actors and student-directors worked in their own workshops. José Luis Ibáñez, the then-theatre major, later a member of Poesía en Voz Alta, directed the theatre workshop of the Humanities in Molière's Tartuffe in 1955. Theatre faculty directed too. For example, Allan Lewis of the United States, who taught theatre history at the UNAM, directed the theatre group of the Humanities in O'Neill's The Great God Brown and Irwin Shaw's Bury the Dead. Mendoza circulated among the workshops, directing Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza's Las costumbres de

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[1]Ibid., p. 15. It ought to be mentioned that Mexico's developing culture drew largely from youth. García Terrés was only a few years older than Mendoza, and the writers and critics, Fuentes, Carballido, de la Colina, García Ponce, Hernández, and Vicente Melo were close in age. Arreola, Soriano, and Paz, in their mid-to-late thirties, were the elders of the "intellectual" group of writers and practicing artists.

[2]Mendoza interview, 1974.

antaño o la pesadilla (The Old Ways, or the Nightmare), for the School of Architecture.[1]

University Theatre and Student Theatre activities were overshadowed by commercial productions of foreign plays. Educated theatregoers were attracted to Arthur Miller's The Crucible, directed by Seki Sano in 1956 and starring the very popular actor, Ignacio López Tarso; to Jean Anouilh's Medea, Pirandello's Henry IV, Williams's Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and O'Neill's Anna Christie, starring Silvia Pinal, Wolf Ruvinskis, and Felipe Montoya.[2]

And the theatre of Mexico continued to offer "vaudeville, comedies, and plays with the Hermanas [Anita and Isabel] Blanch," "zarzuelas," and "stereotypes, Spanish in tone."[3] Realism had not replaced the popular reviews nor the imports from Spain, such as Con la vida del otro (With His Life).[4] Anita Blanch of the Blanch Sisters continued to merit

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[1]The play is usually called simply, La pesadilla.

Another group worth mentioning is Teatro en Coapa (1955). It was launched at the University feeder school, the National Preparatory School, no. 5, by the playwright-director-teacher, Héctor Azar. Both Azar and Teatro en Coapa have places in the story of Poesía en Voz Alta.

[2]"Cartelera Teatral," Bellas Artes, no. 1, p. 3.

[3]Interviews with Cárdenas, 1974; Leonora Carrington, New York, 8 June 1974; Ulalume [González de León] by telephone, 12 August 1974.

The Blanch Sisters, famous since the 1930s, performed Spanish sainetes and Spanish sentimental comedies, especially. In the 1950s although Anita was performing alone, the team name lingered on.

[4]Juan de Montan, "Teatro," Hoy, 12 July 1952, p. 63, reviews the play and production.

top billing in a host of plays throughout these years, among them, Adolfo Torrado's Mama nos quita los novios (Mama Took Our Boyfriend Away) at the Ideal Theatre in 1951 and Carmen Montejo's Mujeres calumniades (Slandering Women) in 1955. Spanish plays and productions, represented by playwrights like the romanticist, José Zorilla, whose Don Juan Tenorio was given three different, simultaneously running productions, and Guillén de Castro, author of Las mocedades del Cid (The Youthful Exploits of the Cid), ran concurrently with such plays of doubtful quality as El caso de la mujer asesinadita (The Case of the Murdered Lady), and La Familia Smith (The Smith Family).[1] In his review of El caso de la mujer asesinadita, Miguel Guardia wrote: "In few words, an inconsistent comedy thanks to which the cinema-going public can see some of its favorite actors closeup. . . . In one phrase: a lot of noise and little substance."[2] An advertisement for La Familia Smith, in its 357 and 358 performances on 14 November 1954, read: "Father, Mother, Children, and dear little Maids... boom!"[3]

In Bellas Artes productions, sets, costumes, and other elements of production were considered significant. Other producers and directors

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[1]Novedades, 2 September 1951, sec. 3, p. 8; 1 November 1955, sec. 1, p. 17; 1 November 1953, sec. 3, p. 5 and supp., p. 5.

[2]"El Teatro en México: Panorama," Novedades, 1 November 1953, supp., p. 5.

[3]Novedades, 12 November 1954, sec. 3, p. 6.

"weren't concerned with costumes," according to Nancy Cárdenas, "Realistic theatre got contemporary dress; Spanish theatre got rented costumes; theatre was a traditional institution; the productions all looked alike." "Before Poesía en Voz Alta," recalled Juan José Gurrola, "all productions were staged with a door, and a wall, and [on] a certain type of stage, in a certain type of room." To Luisa Josefina Hernández, the Spanish production style, for plays in general, "had rather bare scenes. They used three walls and the furniture of their [the play members'] own houses. I have a very faint rememberance that I always saw the same sofa, the same chairs everywhere." "In the Spanish theatre," Héctor Mendoza explained, "actors would recite. It was cliché acting; it was false. The staging was unimaginative and basically realistic." "The productions almost always used recorded music and records," related the concert composer, Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras. "They had live musicians and orchestra pits, but these were usually [reserved] for cheap revues or opera."[1]

For the most part then, with the exceptions noted in my discussion, the theatre of Mexico in the early 1950s adopted the star system, and used unimaginative settings, recorded music, and rented, borrowed or bought its costumes, for both the foreign and native, and mainly melodramatic and realistic plays produced.

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[1]Interviews with Cárdenas, 1974; Gurrola, 1974; Hernández; Mendoza, 1974; Gutiérrez Heras, 9 September 1976.

And then along came Poesía en Voz Alta--"to quiet down the stage and let the word come through;"[1] to use inventive, uncomplicated settings and luxurious fabrics in basic-designer costumes; to stage both unperformed and little known plays; and to revolt against realism, tradition, the star system, recorded music, and contemporary Mexican theatre practices in general.

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[1]Gurrola interview, 1974.

CHAPTER 4

THE ORIGINS AND AIMS OF POESÍA EN VOZ ALTA

Exactly how Poesía en Voz Alta came about is subject to dispute. There are several stories told, and different people are credited with its conception. One of the stories goes like this:

> The idea of Poesía en Voz Alta was born one night, during a certain gathering in the home of Dr. Efrén del Pozo, General Secretary of the University. Each one of the invited guests, just playing, began to perform scenes from Spanish and French farces to amuse themselves. They did it so well that Dr. del Pozo began to organize the show. The result was Poesía en Voz Alta, the most commented about and perhaps the only authentic experimental theatre in Mexico.[1]

A variation of this story tells of Jaime García Terrés attending a party in early March of 1956, hearing Juan José Arreola read poetry to musical accompaniment, and discussing with Arreola the feasibility of diffusing culture to the public in this form.[2]

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[1]"Otro Programa de 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" review of the Second Program, Excelsior, 3 August 1956, sec. 2, p. 7.

[2]Jaime García Terrés telephone interview, 28 August 1972.

Both accounts are plausible: Del Pozo and García Terrés were known supporters of literary and theatrical development, the former able to suggest cultural programs for the University, the latter, able to fund them. Gatherings like those described above were not uncommon in Mexico among intellectuals. Saturday evenings might be devoted to poetry recitals around the piano, or to singing Spanish and Portuguese songs of the Renaissance, as at the home of the Spanish-literary scholars, Antonio and Margit Alatorre.[1]

There are still other accounts. Several appear valid and are related by "reliable" sources, but taken together, clash on some points, owing to either faulty recollections or current disagreements among the prominent personalities involved. Since documentation comes primarily from oral history, the true story of Poesía en Voz Alta's conception may remain difficult to trace. But it is the early phases that shed light on the company's potential strengths and weaknesses, as well as on the guiding personalities and talents.[2]

It was indisputably Juan José Arreola who inspired the idea to devise a University-sponsored cultural project of poetry recitals. Arreola was reputed to be a poetry connoisseur, who reveled in the word;[3] he declaimed

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[1]Antonio Alatorre interview, 1976.

[2]See p. 5, n. 1 above for a note on documentation.

[3]Interviews with Alatorre, 1976 and Paz, 1974.

poetry as a pastime, and initiated cultural and literary projects.[1] Poetry recitations, especially by the authors, had been a developing vogue of the mid-1950s in Mexico City; shortly before Poesía en Voz Alta was conceived, the INBA began Viernes Poéticos ("Poetic Fridays"), a weekly series of poetry recitals by Mexican and foreign poets of their own works.[2] Then, too, such a choice of project could meet the Cultural Diffusion Department's specifications, these that Arreola recalled: it could incorporate "young people"; show the desired newness through a fresh staging approach--a theatricalization of verse perhaps, as Benjamin Orozco, the Department's subdirector suggested, and maybe closely styled to what Arreola then proposed, a teatro de cámara ("chamber theatre") of sorts, with poetry recitals or some short, poetic pieces; and it could be done "quickly, easily, and economically."[3] As an added attractive feature,

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[1]In interviews, Alatorre, 1976, and Gutiérrez Heras, both spoke about Arreola's talent for launching cultural projects. As one of several examples, they referred to Arreola's conversion of a room in his home into a publishing house, replete with printing press, for the literary review, Libros del Unicornio. The review, which began after Poesía en Voz Alta did, favored works by unknowns; del Pozo assisted Arreola on it. Arreola would also found the Casa del Lago in Chapultapec Park as a cultural center, dependent on the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department, in 1959; he would set its wheels into motion, and then, characteristically (according to Alatorre and Gutiérrez Heras) leave its further development to others.

[2]"Una Idea de Insospechados Frutos: Viernes Poéticos," Bellas Artes, no. 5 (January-February 1957), p. 35. This article credits the INBA's recital series for inspiring the birth of Poesía en Voz Alta which is unfortunately described with some error.

[3]Arreola, interviewed 29 July 1974. In this context, poetry is not confined to poems; it refers to imaginative verse in different forms.

this kind of project would not lack in new materials, for the Cultural Diffusion Department's director, García Terrés, could call upon his fellow poets and writers for that.

The idea for the project may have germinated from del Pozo or García Terrés, or from the two others so mutually credited, Orozco and Emmanuel Carballo, the essayist, poet, and co-editor of the Revista Mexicana de Literatura, who was also on the Department's staff. In view of their respective University functions, the planning and budgeting operations would be handled by the office of García Terrés, with Orozco and Carballo in charge of implementation.

With such a project in mind, García Terrés, assisted by Orozco and Carballo, called a meeting of numerous artists and poets, to share thoughts and contribute talents to it. The place was the Teatro Trianón, a newly constructed pocket theatre, centrally located on Genova Street in the elegant "Pink Zone" of Mexico City. The Teatro Trianón, later renamed the Can-Can Cafe when it became a cabaret, was supposed to house the project on a once-weekly basis. By so programming it, costs would be kept down while the Cultural Diffusion Department fulfilled its raison d'être, and the project would neither interfere with the theatre's regular operational schedule of six days a week, nor that of any working performers chosen for the project.

Only a handful of the invited came to the meeting, but enough to get the project underway. Arreola was there, as were the painter Juan Soriano,

the playwright and beginning director, Héctor Mendoza, as well as a few more.[1] It was during this very first meeting that Arreola baptized the still-to-be-formed company, "Poetry Aloud"; he planned to have actors, most of them professionals, as had been used for the Teatro Universitario, to diffuse--to "scream out," in his words--classical Spanish poetry.[2]

Early ensuing meetings, held at the office of García Terrés, were devoted to ironing out major facets of the project, and not yet to selecting materials. An almost full gamut of changes occurred in the original planning, ranging from where the project would be staged and by whom performed, to how many different projects, or "programs," as they came to be called, would be University-financed and what kind would they be.

The Caballito Theatre on Rosales Street, which had housed the Teatro Universitario production of Camus's The Just Assassins in the past,[3] was now to lodge the weekly project; for reasons unknown, the University decided to rent the actress Marilú Elízaga's Caballito Theatre when her company was not performing. Then, Arreola had considered employing two celebrities to narrate the selections, namely Ignacio López Tarso and María Douglas. But López Tarso declined, and Douglas, very much in

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[1]Cited in interviews with Ibáñez, January 1978, and Soriano, 1977.

[2]Interview. This point is uncontroversial.

[3]"Cartelera Teatral," Bellas Artes, no. 1, p. 3.

demand at the moment, may not have been contacted at all.[1] Therefore, Héctor Mendoza, charged with casting, selected students and beginning professionals, because they seemed more likely to support such a venture than the "stars." He chose Juan José Gurrola, the student of architecture who had made his acting debut in Mendoza's production of La pesadilla, and Enrique Stopen, a law student at the UNAM whom Mendoza had seen in a University Student Theatre production of Claude André Puget's Les jours heureux (The Happy Days). Also Rosenda Monteros, first contacted by Juan Soriano who himself was contacted personally by García Terrés to furnish any needed background settings and costumes; Monteros, newly graduated from the acting school of the Asociación National de Actores, had appeared in one or two minor productions and one major work, the INBA's production of Lope de Vega's Fuenteovejuna (The Sheep Well), directed by Alvaro Custodio.[2] Finally, Nancy Cárdenas, the theatre student at the UNAM who had acted in the staging by her classmate, José Luis Ibáñez, of Molière's Tartuffe, and had substituted for an injured

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[1]The original intent to hire two famous names was mentioned during interviews with Mendoza, 27 July 1972, and Ibáñez, 17 January 1972. Mendoza also said that he was instructed to telephone López Tarso only, and that he suspected the idea of using celebrities was dropped once López Tarso declined.

[2]The ANDA is the union for actors of radio, television, theatre, and cinema; its acting school is geared toward working in these industries. Monteros was unique in this respect; all of Poesía en Voz Alta's other original participants with theatre studies were trained at the INBA's and/or the UNAM's schools.

Rosenda Monteros in The Sheep Well;[1] José Luis Ibáñez, chosen by Mendoza for assistant director, put Cárdenas in touch with Mendoza.[2] For narrating the selections two up-and-coming actors were brought in to substitute for López Tarso and Douglas. They were Carlos Fernández and Tara Parra, both of whom had begun to accumulate acting credits and fine reviews. Parra's work was well-known to Mendoza; she had acted in his play, Las cosas simples.[3]

The original plans called for one program, not two as some participants have asserted. Poesía en Voz Alta was to be an experiment, box-office success was irrelevant as the Cultural Diffusion Department had funds earmarked for cultural projects, and no thought was given to the future.[4] Arreola, as literary director, was to select and coordinate the materials for one program; Soriano would furnish set and costume designs; and both would assist Mendoza on performer selection.

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[1]See, "El Impresionante Teatro de Lope de Vega: Fuenteovejuna," Bellas Artes, no. 3, p. 1; note that Eduardo MacGregor, to join the company for the Second Program, is cited in the cast.

[2]Ibáñez was in charge of lighting as well.

[3]Before Poesía en Voz Alta, Tara Parra was called either Tara MacNair (her second surname), as in Villaurrutia's El pobre Barba Azul, or Tara, as in Las cosas simples and the play in which she worked with Rosenda Monteros, María Luisa Algarra's Casandra o la llave sin puerta (Cassandra, or the Doorless Key).

[4]Had this been pictured as a sustained project, practicing artists might not have joined the group. As a temporary venture, their work would not be jeopardized.

With the entrance of Octavio Paz, the project altered. Invited by García Terrés to contribute surrealistic poetry to it, once the project had begun to take shape, Paz attended the meetings accompanied by the surrealistic painter, Leonora Carrington.[1]

From the start, Paz voiced objection to the project's central idea--poetry recitals--finding it "academic" and "boring," in his own words.[2] "If poets cannot read their poetry, if actors are to be used, then let's do imaginative theatre. What is theatre but an incamation of words in bodies! . . ."Let's make theatre, not only of situations, not only of ideas, but of language."[3]

Everyday, commonplace language was the stuff of the realistic theatre, which both Paz and Arreola disliked. Imaginary language was to be the substance of Poesía en Voz Alta; there was no disagreement on that. But whereas Arreola favored its embodiment in classical Spanish poetry (in a theatrical form), Paz thought it ludicrous to reject plays and so impose limits on an experimental project. Dada theatre was his suggestion, but the plays were unavailable in translation, if at all, and time

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[1]Heated controversy surrounds the question of when Paz joined Poesía en Voz Alta, and related to that, in what capacity--observer, consultant, prospective contributor to Arreola's program, or literary director of his own. My evaluation of the data stands firmly on this following report.

[2]Interviewed 1974.

[3]Ibid., 1972 and 1974. This furthered Orozco's idea of theatricalizing poetry; see p. 80 above.

was short. Someone proposed that the company write its own plays, as the commercial and experimental groups of the 1920s and 1930s, and the more-recent amateur groups had done. This, Paz insists, elicited his announcement to do just that: to write a play for Poesía en Voz Alta.[1] It was to be La hija de Rappaccini (Rappaccini's Daughter), based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's short-story by that name, Paz's first and only play.[2]

The meetings generated interest and other writers attended, including the Spanish poet León Felipe, Diego de Mesa, also from Spain and the son of the poet, Enrique de Mesa, and two young, relatively unknowns, Juan García Ponce and Carlos Fuentes, now both prolific, multi-published authors.[3] But the views of Arreola and Paz on the program's content were irreconcilable. The solution was to have two programs, one by Arreola, one by Paz, and each allotted a one-month run at the Caballito Theatre.

The preceding paragraphs have clarified how Poesía en Voz Alta came about. But why did it come about? There is nothing puzzling about the Cultural Diffusion Department's objective. But the founding directors,

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[1]Paz, interviewed 1972 and 1974. Carrington, Mendoza (1974), and Ibáñez (8 April 1972 in New York) similarly accounted for the play's birth.

[2]The play, originally a poem in monologue form, was indisputably written for the company in 1956 and published in the Revista Mexicana de Literatura, no. 7 (September-October 1956), pp. 3-26. All later publications of the text are revised editions.

[3]Fuentes, recently Mexico's Ambassador to France, was then Carballo's co-editor of the Revista Mexicana de Literatura.

with the exception of Mendoza, who was looking for a career in the professional theatre, were practicing, successful artists without theatre ambitions, little--if any--theatre experience, and little, if any, interest in theatre at all. Arreola had dabbled in acting, and studied acting in Mexico and France. Yet after 1945, he had withdrawn from the theatre to pursue a literary career; he had written one produced play, but his reputation rested on his novels and short stories. Paz had no background in writing for the theatre. Juan Soriano was, as José Luis Ibáñez called him, "the painter that Mexico had been waiting for,"[1] having helped to paint sets in Guadalajara, Mexico, when he was ten or twelve years of age, and having designed the sets and costumes, upon occasion, for Ballet companies and nonprofessional theatre groups until around 1947.[2] And Leonora Carrington was a famed, prize-winning painter from England, who had lived in France and belonged to the surrealist movement.[3]

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[1]Interview, 27 September 1976.

[2]Soriano letter. Soriano designed Retes's production of El tejador de Segovia for La Linterna Mágica, the group from the Electrician's Union; see p. 55 above. Soriano designed the ballet, El pájaro y las doncellas (The Bird and the Maidens), for a company unnamed in his list of designer credits, in the playbill to his exhibit, "Juan Soriano y el teatro," held at the Galería de la Casa del Lago, 12 May-16 June 1963.

[3]Carrington interview. In the notes on the background of "The Animators," in the playbill to the Second Program, Appendix A, p. 346, Carrington's work is described as "approximating the style of Bosch, the elder Brueghel, Grunewald, and William Blake," and André Breton is quoted as saying that "since 1940, it is the work most filled with modern marvelousness that I know, the whole of it impregnated with occult light." (According to Mendoza, 8 August 1977, the unsigned "Los Animadores" was probably

The founders were unconnected to the theatre, but connected to one another. They were a group of friends. All had traveled to Europe and kept abreast of the Continent's painting and literature. They shared a disinterest in zarzuelas and social realism, causing at least Paz to bemoan the lack of a critical, discerning eye and attitude toward Mexican society, while the others were simply bored with them.[1] For Arreola, Poesía en Voz Alta was an opportunity to have fun through theatrical means, and only that; for Paz, it was his way of saying "no" to what was happening in Mexico's contemporary art--to "rebel against nonimagination," as he termed it--and for the "spirit of contradiction."[2] As for Carrington, it was "to have fun"; Soriano's reasons remain unspoken (although Paz saw an unconscious rebelliousness there).[3] What is certain is that these

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written by Emmanuel Carballo or another person working in the Cultural Diffusion Department.) But closer to the time of these formative meetings, Carrington's exhibit at the Galería de Arte Mexicano was reviewed; her work was called "stupendous," "considered by the critics astonishing and extraordinary; work which reveals disquietude without limits and incomparable execution." ("Guía de Exposiciones," Bellas Artes, no. 3., p. 2.)

[1]Interviews with Paz, 1974, and Carrington. During the company's life span, it never presented social realism. However, some elements reminiscent of the frivolous forms and their production styles crept into Poesía en Voz Alta.

[2]Arreola interview, and supported by his written commentary to the First Program. Paz interview, 1974. In retrospective appraisal, Paz added that theatre can have a political implication. It need not preach social ideas, but can bring about change by saying "no" to events.

[3]Carrington interview; Paz, 1974. Many have spoken about Soriano's "quiet rebelliousness," "strength," and "freedom." These qualities are also suggested in Margarita García Flores's interview from Paris, "Juan Soriano: No Quiero Ser Pintor," Novedades, 21 November 1976, supp., "La Onda," p. 20.

artists had a restless, artistic need for expression, and that seems to be the centrifugal force which impelled them to this venture. As Juan José Gurrola succinctly put it: "They couldn't stop themselves from doing it."[1] They wanted to create a form from spontaneous group expression, to see what would happen, what would result.[2] And the times were right for getting it started. There was a prospering economy, with bursting energies and monies slotted for educational, cultural, and physical development and growth. There were new avenues, new opportunities for youth; a dissenting body of closely knit, literate, capable individuals, ahead of their times and unable to fit into the mold of society at large, and terribly bored and impatient; and there were members of this group occupying key positions of authority, with purse-string control who offered to finance the creative expression of their talented, dynamic friends.

There was therefore no need--no desire--to program Poesía en Voz Alta in advance. The material, the literary selections, were predetermined; after that, it evolved almost naturally. "We wanted to stress the importance of language and poetry in the theatre," said Paz, but the objectives were "made up" as the group went along. "Our principal intention," wrote Juan Soriano, "was to serve the poet."[3]

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[1]Interview, 1974.

[2]Rosenda Monteros explained, in an interview on 29 July 1974, that it would have been presumptuous for these artists to emulate the Commedia dell'Arte, for example. In all probability, they would not have succeeded. And they were creators, not copiers.

[3]Paz, 1974; Soriano, 1975.

The company's membership was chosen almost at random. It was friends calling friends, asking them to join the fun.[1] Arreola called Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras who had also studied in Paris, had had his Divertimiento para Piano y Orquesta performed by Mexico's Symphony Orchestra in 1947 at the age of twenty, and had composed the musical score for Arreola's play in 1955. Arreola asked him to write music for the selections, to use live musicians if he so desired--to come and freely create.[2] Arreola urged Carballo to contact the literary scholars, Antonio and his wife, Margit Frank Alatorre of the singing Alatorre family, because the family's songs had to be heard "by the world."[3] These friends were so attuned to one another, it appears, that years later they voiced no rifts of intention in the interviews conducted with them. They wanted to enjoy themselves through language. Gurrola said: "There wasn't a decision to

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[1]For this reason, Gutierréz Heras felt that it was a misnomer calling Poesía en Voz Alta a company. "It was a group of friends; Arreola's friends, Paz's friends." (Interview.) Others will say this too, but derogatorily.

[2]Ibid. Also see "Los Animadores," Playbill 2, Appendix A, p. 346. Gutiérrez Heras is listed in the Dictionary of Contemporary Music, ed. John Vitton (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1974), pp. 71-72.

[3]Alatorre interview, 1976. Also, Gutiérrez Heras interview.
The young couple, Antonio and Margit Frank Alatorre were contributing editors of the Revista Mexicana de Literatura, and he, the editor of the Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica. Both were (and are) on the faculty of the prestigious doctoral college, El Colegio de México; her area of specialization was folk poetry of the Renaissance, his, Spanish humanism and, in his words, "the Greek and Latin influence on Spanish literature." Antonio directed his wife, brother Enrique and his wife in the four-member singing group.

change anything, or an attitude toward changing anything. It was just a playground for grownups on a heavy, intellectual level. That made it possible for this thing to happen."[1] Thus the company began with nothing more to its credit than enthusiasm, and talent.

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[1]Interview, 1974.

CHAPTER 5

1956: THE FIRST AND SECOND PROGRAMS

The same year that the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in London produced John Osborne's naturalistic play, Look Back in Anger, Poesía en Voz Alta made its Mexican debut. The warm Caballito Theatre with its 198 seats and square stage had once been a stable, and then a garage attached to a home. The theatre renovation was completed shortly before Poesía en Voz Alta was conceived; it included red velvet upholstery and an enormous mural of a horse in the back, remindful of the site's original use, and painted coincidentally by Juan Soriano,[1] but the renovation retained the colonial patio outside. The company debuted after Sauvajon's Escandalo nocturno[2] had played at the Caballito under Salvador Novo's direction and starred the owner of the theatre, Marilú Elízaga.[3] Elsewhere in Mexico City, Lope de Vega's The Sheep Well, with a cast of

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[1]Soriano interview, 1977; also, Gallery sketches.

[2]See p. 66, no. 2 above for a note on the title.

[3]See Armando de María y Campos, "Inauguración de la Temporada 1956 con Escandalo Nocturno por [sic] Marilú Elízaga," Novedades. 24 January 1956, sec. 2, p. 15.

over fifty, had just closed at the open-air theatre, Plaza Federico Gamboa at Chimalistac, as had Jean Giraudoux's Pour Lucrèce (Duel of Angels), in a lavish, big-budgeted production, directed by Celestino Gorostiza at Bellas Artes.[1]

The company opened on Tuesday, 19 June 1956 at 9:00 p.m., with two performances scheduled for 26 June, 3 July, and 10 July.[2] In the same period, Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream at the New Fábregas Theatre, with a cast of over 100 artists, including Tara Parra and Carlos Fernández of Poesía en Voz Alta, and an orchestra of more than thirty was soon to open; and Arthur Miller's The Crucible, directed by Seki Sano, planned a 20 July opening at Bellas Artes with a cast including Ignacio López Tarso.[3] López Tarso had refused to join the Poesía en Voz Alta venture.

The selections for the First Program were of Spanish legacy and were written by poets. The Second Program consisted of three translated French plays and one play by a Mexican poet adapted from a short story by Hawthorne. Arreola, the literary director of the First Program, acted

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[1]Novedades, 16 March 1956, sec. 1, p. 20, and 17 April 1956, sec. 1, p. 21. "Impresionante Teatro," p. 1; Armando de María y Campos, "Por Lucrecia," Novedades, 17 June 1956, sec. 3, p. 4, on the costly extravaganza.

[2]Novedades, 17 June 1956, sec. 3, p. 9. The bottom of the advertisement notes that Paz's play will open on 2 July, and give two performances on 24 and 31 July, and 7 August. These dates changed, first to 17 July for the opening, then to the 31st, and additional plays were added to the program's content.

[3]Novedades, 1 July 1956, sec. 3, p. 8, and 15 July 1956, sec. 3, p. 8.

in it as well; Paz, the literary director of the Second, contributed his adaptation and translated the French plays.

The First Program contained works of Medieval, Renaissance, and contemporary authors. It opened with the Egloga IV (Eclogue IV) by Juan del Encina which was about the birth of Christ and closed with a scene, entitled by the company El niño y el gato ("The Child and the Cat") from Lorca's Así que pasen cinco años (When Five Years Pass) which dealt with death. The theme of the seven plays[1] and the "interlude"-concert of about twenty Renaissance songs of less than one minute each, could be called the cycle of life as revealed through Spanish history.

The Second Program consisted of contemporary works by French absurdist or poetic avant-garde playwrights. Le canari (The Canary) by Georges Neveux, Oswald et Zenaïde ou les apartés (Oswald and Zenaida, or the Asides) by Jean Tardieu, and Le salon de l'automobile (The Motor Show) by Eugène Ionesco, and the adaptation of Rappaccini's Daughter by Paz. The plays all deal with the theme of love.

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[1] Arreola, Alatorre (1976), and particularly Gutiérrez Heras, prefer to call them poems. They argue that the selections are static or nearly bereft of dramatic action, wholly without active plots, and with little communication of dialogue. They point out that some of the Lorca "plays" even have annotations that are integral to the works, and in theatre, as opposed to film, the annotations must be read. The "villain" critic, Bill Llano agrees. In his review of the Second Program, whose selections are more clearly plays than those of the First, Llano states: "Poesía en Voz Alta is not theatre in verse, but verses theatricalized." ("Poesía en Voz Alta," Impacto, 22 August 1956, n.p.) Nevertheless, I am categorizing the works in question as plays and plays-in-verse, acknowledging that they have special characteristics and that some plays have more theatricality than others.

Both programs stress the word and the game of theatre, and employ short plays or scenes which illuminate the human condition.[1]

First Program

Juan José Arreola wrote the commentary to the First Program. It read:

> We need to come to an understanding, ladies and gentlemen: we are not doing theatre in the more-and-more anomalous sense of the word. We have deliberately opted for the most difficult solution: that of playing the ancient and clean game of theatre fairly. This means that we are not going to fool anyone, that we lucidly renounce the majority of technical means which pervert and complicate the contemporary theatre. Far from being new, the formula adopted by us is as remote as the origin of Western theatre itself: the hagiographical and sacramental auto and mystery plays, the profane farce which prospered in the Commedia dell'Arte of Italy, and the Spanish paso. To this we should add the example that some modern attempts, supported by traditional criteria, have given us, as in the realizations of Ghéon and Chancerel. In the Spanish tongue, no one has been so concerned with reanimating the true spirit of theatre as García Lorca. That is why we are paying homage to him and performing his plays along with those of the classics; for with his personal voice, he picks from and modulates a lyrical heritage filled with popular-folk sap.
>
> These reasons clearly explain the composition of our initial program. The glory of being the acknowledged founder of the Spanish theatre belongs to Juan del Encina. We purposely chose the most primitive and crude of his Eglogas, the most static one, saturated with religious spirit, in which the characters barely endeavor to initiate dialogue, confining themselves instead to declaiming their octo-syllabic arias. Written more than 450 years back, it is a magnificent example of verbal might that reaches us, full of grace and freshness. In a certain way, we were unfair to del Encina, because the profane course that he inaugurated reaches its perfection in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz. La Farsa de Santa Susaña, written some fifty year later, is truly "theatre" in the full,

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[1]When queried about the inclusion of so few Mexican plays, the interviewees responded in unanimity. Mexican playwrights were writing realistic, three-acters, not one-act plays in verse or poetic in mood.

authentic sense of the word. Conceived as an apologue of virtue, it is enriched by the sharpness and wisdom of popular-folk spirit which courses through the dialogue in a wide, healthy flow. The "Wedding Curtain" from Peribáñez,[1] gives an upright picture which depicts one of the most illustrious passages in the dramatic language of Lope.

From the musical treasury of classical Spain, as valuable as it is unknown, Antonio Alatorre and his group of singers have selected compositions which attempt to awaken the public's love to an artistic legacy which also belongs to us. We ought to proudly point out that "Los Alatorre" are not professional singers, but are uniting with us out of their being devoted aficionados and faithful practitioners of a perfect and consummate art which, for the first time, transcends this circle of friendship and family.

For the plays which form García Lorca's Short Theatre,[2] we have followed the criterion that undoubtedly governed the composition of these poignant and poetic "improvisations." In fact, we have limited ourselves to also improvising them on stage, plainly facing the problem of their enigmatic nakedness, of their rich and complex latent forces, which unobtrusively combine diverse procedures, going from Lope de Rueda to Franz Kafka.

Sincerely, ladies and gentlemen, we believe it is possible to come to an understanding if you also renounce your usual state of being expert and ambitious spectators, and enter into the game with sufficient candor. Together, we will be able to recover the lost spirit of the theatre which, on the final count, is no more than ancient, recondite, and amusing poetry: poetry aloud.[3]

The Egloga IV which opened the First Program is a medieval pastoral play-in-verse. It takes place at Christ's burial place. The play's four characters, Josef, Magdalena, Lucas, and Cleofás, recount how the Redeemer appeared before them, prior to the entrance of the Angel who credits their stories of the Resurrection. [See Figure 1, p. 97.] There

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[1]This refers to the opening scene of the play, called "Telón de Bodas" by Arreola.

[2]The Teatro Breve, or Short Theatre, does not include Así que pasen cinco años. But since only one scene from the longer work was presented, Arreola did not distinguish it apart from the other three brief plays.

[3]See Playbill 1, Appendix A, pp. 332-39.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 1. Egloga IV by Juan del Encina. (Left to right are: Arreola, Gurrola, Parra, Fernández, and Monteros.)

is little movement, and the old Spanish was purposely retained for the production.[1] The Egloga IV played about ten to fifteen minutes, the running time for all the plays of this program. The second play was La farsa de Santa Susaña (Farce of Saint Susannah) from Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's Recopilación en metro (Collection in Verse). This piece was retitled Farsa de la Casta Susaña (Farce of Chaste Susannah) for unstated reasons.[2] But perhaps it was to emphasize the "game" spirit of Poesía en Voz Alta, by toying with the notion of Susannah's chastity, rather than her sainthood. In the play, Susannah, the image of chastity, is beset by two elderly men who have eyed her as she entered a fountain to bathe. She calls for God's help and an angel, Daniel, comes to protect her. He punishes the elders for their lechery and false accusations about Susannah, and prepares the way for her ascendancy to sainthood. Such are the consequences of good and evil in this morality play. The third piece deals with "correct" behavior for man and wife. It is the opening scene of Lope de Vega's Peribáñez, officially titled Escena de la boda, "Wedding Scene,"

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[1]A few phonetic changes were made, and in other programs, some selections were shortened. But words were never altered. Language was so sacred that the directors of the First Program adamantly refused repeated suggestions to substitute a familiar Mexican expression for the slang expression, unique to Spain, of cuca (meaning a child's penis) in Lorca's "The Child and the Cat" scene. The directors argued that the audience would understand the word in context. (Tarra Parra interview, 7 October 1976.)

[2]This unanswered question is brought up by Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 158. To Mendoza (July 1972), Arreola, and Ibáñez (17 July 1973), someone nicknamed the selection and it stuck.

in the program, and begins after the marriage vows. The campesino (peasant) Peribáñez, the embodiment of masculine virtues, "like a bull resting on the grass before a fight or before making love," has wed the beautiful Casilda, the embodiment of feminine virtues, and the resultant celebration takes place. Arreola chose the scene because it was first-class verse from the great theatre of the Golden Century,[2] and with it concluded the first third of the First Program.

The four selections from Lorca's surrealist period which, together with the "intermission" Renaissance songs, completed the program were La doncella, el marinero y el estudiante (The Virgin, the Sailor, and the Student), El paseo de Buster Keaton (Buster Keaton's Promenade), Quimera (Chimera), and "The Child and the Cat" scene from When Five Years Pass. These pieces were the poet's attempt "to rid himself of all the restrictions of dramatic conventions and achieve in the theatre the complete freedom of a poet."[3] The characters are embroiled in webs of fantasy and reality, and struggle to extricate themselves. Arreola believed that Lorca's Short Theatre entered magnificently into the game of the modem theatre.[4]

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[1]Ibáñez interview, 1971. [2]Arreola interview.

[3]Frederick Lumley, Trends in 20th Century Drama: A Survey Since Ibsen and Shaw, rev. ed. (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1960), p. 110. Affinities exist between Lorca's attempt and that of Poesía en Voz Alta. One unnamed reviewer in "Semana Teatral: Tres Experimentos," Excelsior, 15 July 1956, supp., p. 4, wrote that the First Program "removes the arbitrary frontier between poetry and plays."

[4]Arreola interview; also, see commentary, p. 95-96 above.
The discussion on Lorca's plays will be resumed once the company's

In choice of plays, casting, method of rehearsal, and production style, the company steered its own course. It might have been safer and more representative to produce Lorca's Bodas de sangre (Blood Wedding) or La casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba) than his Short Theatre and the scene from When Five Years Pass, as Mexican--perhaps world--premieres.[1] The casting of Daniel, in Farsa de la Casta Susaña, as a female (Rosenda Monteros), the coupling of the elfinlike and famed Arreola with the young, relatively unknown Carlos Fernández as the elder lechers, the choice of the extremely tall, Nancy Cárdenas as Susannah, were clearly unorthodox. In fact, the allocating of a broad range of different roles to fledgling actors while the versatile literary director, Arreola, was cast as priest, lecher, and jester, was adventurous.

Rehearsals, too, were unorthodox. The critic José de la Colina wrote: "It was beautiful to see that unusual workshop atmosphere in the rehearsals. And that eagerness to ignore the topical subjects, to begin at the beginning: to discover the theatre, in sum. . . . it seems that

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mode of operation and basic production elements are covered. This is to coordinate the plays and their stagings, and give a better idea of what Poesía en Voz Alta was all about.

[1]Antonio Alatorre called the world premiere of the Short Theatre "probable," based on some published data he had found. (Interview, 1976.) The critic, A.A., almost certainly the poet Alejandro Aviles, credited the world premiere of When Five Years Pass to Poesía en Voz Alta. (Review of First Program, "Poesía en Voz Alta," La Nación, 1 July 1956, p. 18.)

they have managed to form an amorous democracy . . . "[1] This workshop atmosphere was furthered by the almost-constant presence of León Felipe and Diego de Mesa, and the frequent visits by such other literary figures as Octavio Paz, Jaime García Terrés, Carlos Fuentes, Juan García Ponce, and María Luisa Mendoza, several of whom would readily voice their opinions.[2] For the young performers, such visitors acted as a stimulus and helped them to broaden their knowledge of literature and the arts.[3]

The approach to the staging of the First Program was also atypical. Magical, poetic, and lyrical elements were stressed. Mendoza's enthusiastic group of players were directed to discover naivete and the hidden magic in all things, to play on stage "like wise children."[4] At the time, the designer, Soriano, constantly present at rehearsals, sketeched

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[1]"Teatro: Poesía Viva," Universidad de México 10 (July 1956):29-30.

[2]Said Juan Soriano: "Everyone was a literary director. They would spend a whole day arguing about a comma [a pause]. They were intolerable, and I would let it go on because it was so amusing." (Interview, 1977.).

[3]Cárdenas, 1974, Gurrola, 13 August 1971 and 1974, Ibáñez, January 1972 and July 1973, Monteros, Parra, 18 July 1974. Enrique Stopen, 20 September 1976, and others from the Second Program, spoke lengthily about their exposure to culture and the world of ideas in Poesía en Voz Alta which exercised enormous influence on their development. The literary background of these youngsters had been mainly confined to plays by Ben Jonson, Molière, and from the Spanish Golden Age. The majority had never read Lorca nor even Paz. Several also credited Mendoza, their contemporary, as a major influence. Mendoza took them to see theatre productions, and to social gatherings where ideas were exchanged, and familiar classical and modern music was played.

[4]Mendoza interview, 1974.

as Mendoza directed, and unleashed his imagination. Another painter, Héctor Xavier, designed the background for the Renaissance songs. Xavier's approach differed radically from Soriano's. Xavier sketched at home; his sketches were researched and adhered to the Medieval and standard-Court attire of the Renaissance period.

Soriano's set was abstract. Bluish gray curtains,[1] forming a cyclorama, rather than the stark conventional black curtains, draped the identically colored small stage. The unencumbered and unobtrusive setting confirmed the intent to strip away nonessentials from theatre production. It did not detract from the poetry and, at the same time, accommodated the diversity of selections in the program in a practical way. The cyclorama became the standard for all programs by Poesía en Voz Alta. Scenery and properties were kept to a minimum. It was considered undesirable to create the illusion of reality. No front curtain was used; microphones, to support the voices of both singers and actors, were in evidence; and actors doubled as stagehands, changing props such as a tree, or turning, or reassembling different combinations of the painted rectangular and square-shaped wooden blocks which represented chairs, parts of houses, and other elements, in full view of the audience.[2]

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[1]Color given by Parra, 1974, Ibáñez, July 1973, and Cárdenas, 1974; confirmed by Gallery sketches.

[2]Soriano photo collection; also see Figure 1, p. 97 above.

In contrast to the bare, economical settings, costumes were simple, functional, and yet elegant, and minutely detailed. They were made of uncommon fabrics and materials of quality, tailored by Mexico's finest craftsmen, and hence, very expensive.[1] Soriano was guided by the belief that a desired mood or idea could be conveyed or destroyed in theatre by the minutest deviation in detail, or type or quality of fabric.[2] And this usually translated into the costliest goods and services.

For the First Program, Soriano dressed the actors in uniforms (including dance slippers) the color of the cyclorama and stage floor. They were an integral part of the stage environment. Men wore collarless shirts and trousers; women wore leotards and dance tights made of the same fabric, with red circles painted around their breasts, red points at the nipples, and red triangles below the navel. This was rather daring for the Mexico of the 1950s. These basic costumes were then modified by other clothing elements, like a skirt, a shirt, or a cape, and ornaments and accessories, particularly a wide assortment of head and neck pieces, which often added

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[1]From the start, the costliness of the costumes was recognized, as by Fernando Jiménez, in his review of the First Program, in his column, "Portaleando," El Sol (Guadalajara), 14 September 1956, p. 2.

Also, when asked why the University should come to cry lack of funds for later programs of Poesía en Voz Alta, when box-office receipts kept increasing, Juan García Ponce replied: "Juan Soriano's costumes kept getting more expensive." (Interview, 21 August 1974.) Later evidence will support this.

[2]Soriano interview, 1977.

touches of high color, while often suggesting a complete change of wear. But always, some parts of the basic uniform were visible. [1]

Soriano stressed the uniform, in combination with collars, scarves, shawls, shirts, and skirts, in the Lorca plays, and headwear in Peribáñez, as later discussed. Capes and cloaks were mostly emphasized in the Egloga IV and Farsa de la Casta Susaña. Guided perhaps by Arreola's intimation that the Egloga IV was a "primitive" form of the other play, [2] Soriano designed an unfitted, sacklike dress with back wings, made of dull, coarse cloth, for the Angel in the Egloga IV; the other characters wore unusual drapings of fabric which conveyed crudely made capes, cloaks, and skirts. In contrast, the similar kinds of costumes for Farsa de la Casta Susaña showed greatly refined styling, patterned fabrics, and more solid colored, polished fabrics too.

The costuming for the First Program also illustrated Soriano's tendency, later demonstrated in other ways, to combine indigenous and foreign materials. The indigenous materials were so common, plentiful, and inexpensive, the foreign materials the exact opposite in these respects, that both kinds were generally bypassed for theatre use. In Farsa de la Casta Susaña, the beards of the elderly men were yards of serpentina, a zig-zag, ropelike thread (normally sewn or pasted onto ponchos and capes for adornment) which was tied around the ears and hung freely.

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[1] See Figure 4, p. 112 below. [2] See commentary, pp. 95-96 above.

[See Figure 2, p. 106.] Nylon was used by Soriano, who may have introduced the material into Mexico's theatre costuming.[1] From royal blue, sheer nylon, Soriano fashioned a transparent skirt for Monteros to wear as Magdalena in the Egloga IV, and a veil for Cárdenas as Susannah in Farsa de la Casta Susaña. The veil was patterned with either painted- or pasted-on tiny golden stars, and Cárdenas estimated its length as ten yards.[2] Soriano also used the very same material, but decorated with minuscule golden circles, each around a golden center dot, for the flowing shift worn by Monteros, playing the Cat in the Lorca scene, "The Child and the Cat."[3] This shift was styled after the dresses of the 1920s Charleston Era.[4] Its hemline was notched, and the sides were cut into deep points which jutted out. The choice of nylon aided the characterization of a cat, for when Monteros moved, the shift swayed sensually, and the points flapped to convey the impression of fur.[5]

The untitled, "incidental" music composed by Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras for the First Program was based on classical pieces, inspired by

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[1]Cárdenas interview, 1974. [2]Ibid.

[3]Soriano interview, 1977; photos and Gallery sketches.

[4]Soriano interview, 1977.

[5]The effect over the uniform can be seen in a photo accompanying the program's review, "Un Bravo Experimento: 'Poesía en Voz Alta,' Si Es Teatro Experimental," Esto, 12 July 1956, p. 4. For Soriano's sketch of the dress, see the review by Raúl Leiva, "Poesía en Voz Alta," Novedades, 1 July 1956, supp., p. 6.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas)

Fig. 2. Farsa de la Casta Susaña by Diego Sánchez de Badajoz. (From left to right are Cárdenas, Monteros, Parra, Arreola, and a closeup of Gurrola's serpentina beard.)

the Renaissance. The music was written for trombone, trumpet, oboe, double-bass, percussions, and viola, six instrumental parts because the Caballito Theatre was without an orchestra pit, and six musicians behind the cyclorama was all the theatre could hold.[1] Gutiérrez Heras envisioned the First Program much like Stravinsky's L'histoire du soldat; he sought to use his music for different purposes: performers could sing to it (as in the Renaissance songs and the Peribáñez scene in which the actors simu- the vocal score as it was sung by the Alatorre family backstage[2]), they could dance or move to it (as in Buster Keaton's Promenade), or speak to it. The music was also used for effect, as in the overture "The Child and the Cat," or to comment on the action, as in Farsa de la Casta Susaña in which the music conjured up images of a fox hunt. The "Wedding Scene" from Peribáñez, employing trumpet, drum-roll, and a light, gay, Pied-Piper marching tune, with vocal accompaniment, joyfully completed the first third of the Program.[3]

The staging of the "Wedding Scene" differed from its preceding two selections, the Egloga IV and Farsa de la Casta Susaña. The set was designed as a tableau or still-composition. A huge curtain was strung across the stage; on it was Soriano's brushwork of a kissing bull and cow,

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[1]Gutiérrez Heras interview.

[2]The Alatorre family also lent their voices to the Egloga IV, to give the piece animation.

[3]Gutiérrez Heras interview. The tape-recorded selections are in my personal collection.

presumably symbolizing the newlyweds,[1] which was painted beneath cut-outs for the actors' heads and upper chests. The actors wore individually styled headwear in solid gray, gold, green, and blue tones, some trimmed in green, red, or black.[2] The actors declaimed, spoke, and sang out playfully, while only partially exposed. [See Figure 3, p. 109.] This idea, according to Arreola, came from a French piece he had seen in Paris.[3]

The Alatorre family, who "sang as though they were in your house,"[4] added to the program's spirit of "play." In the same way that the risqué jolted the morality play, Farsa de la Casta Susaña,[5] the spirit of fun and contradiction ran through the performance. Any preconceived audience notion that an interlude of Renaissance songs meant pomp, "culture," and seriousness was promptly undermined by Juan José Arreola. The curly-headed, deliciously flamboyant Arreola, who introduced the selections with a poem by León Felipe about a Rip Van Winkle figure who had slept through the century, was costumed as a court jester or minstrel.[6] The costuming of Margit Frank, Yolanda Iris, Enrique, and Antonio Alatorre,

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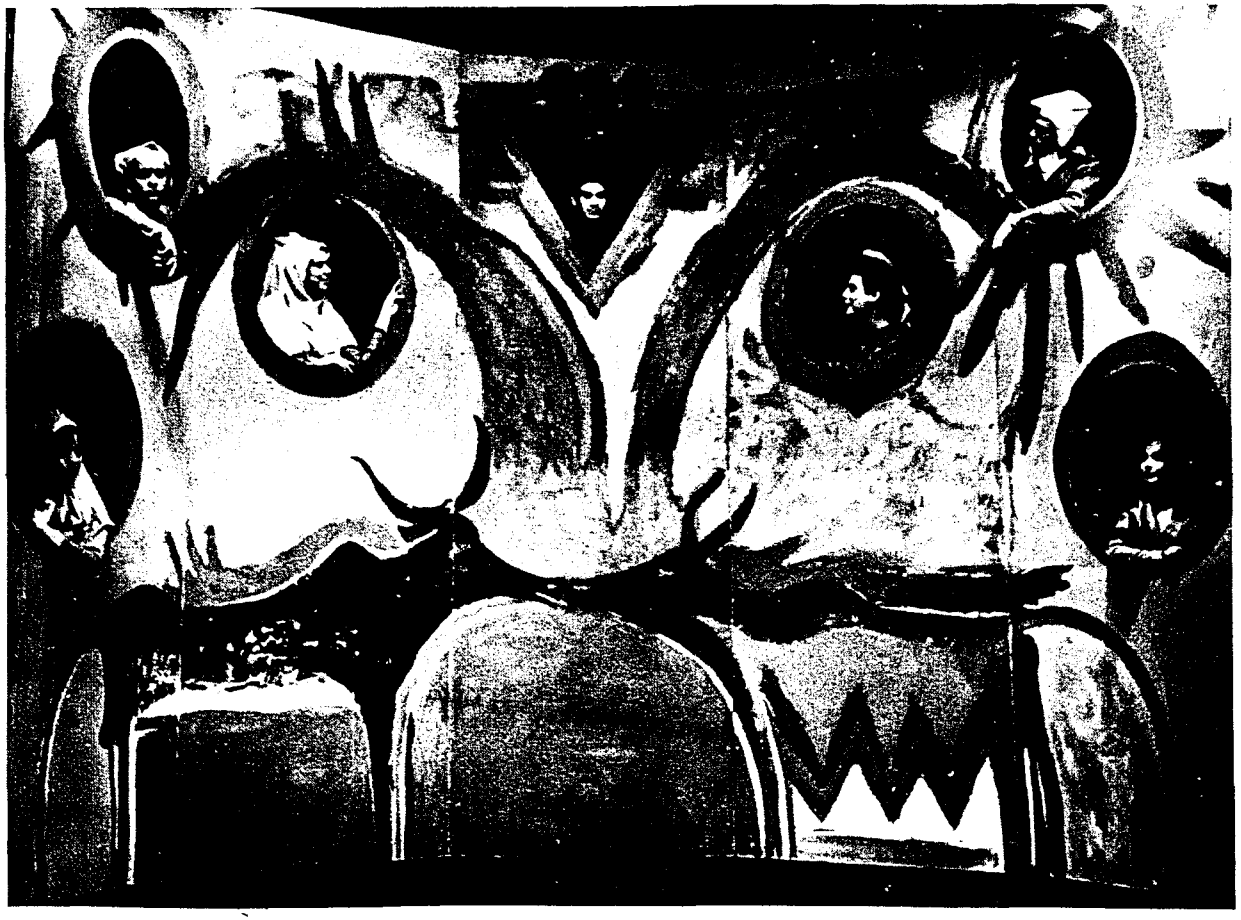
[1]As inferred from Ibáñez's description of Peribáñez as a "bull" and Casilda's counterpart; interview, 1971.

[2]Gallery sketches. [3]Interview.

[4]So put by Emmanuel Carballo, interviewed 14 August 1974.

[5]And as the secular joined with the religious in the ancient Indian theatres.

[6]For photos, see "Bravo Experimento," and Leiva's review of the First Program in Novedades.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 3. "Wedding Scene" from Lope de Vega's Peribáñez, photographed after Dantés (center) replaced Arreola.

bedecked in sumptuous velvet gowns (jackets and tights for the men), hats, and veils, and accompanied by the similarly costumed female harpist, María Cristina Flores Alatorre,[1] was deemed to be serious, although inner talk held that the revealing male tights made it seem anything but that.[2] But any solemnity that might have resulted was soon undermined as their rich, harmonious voices lent themselves to such lyrics as the conclusion of Pedro Fernández's song about cuckolds:

> In order not to be cuckolded
> If your wife goes to urinate
> Go together with her.
> Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo.[3]

Frederico García Lorca's sketches brought a change of mood. They were playful but tinged with melancholy; they were both fascinating and disturbing, with a bitter-sweet loveliness and charm. Accompanied by wistful musical strains in waltz tempo, the Repunzel-like tale, The Virgin, the Sailor, and the Student began the closing section. The main actors were

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[1]She was acquired from the Symphony Orchestra to reinforce the bass sound and add to the spectacle, and was only coincidentally named Alatorre. (Antonio Alatorre interview, 20 February 1978.)

[2]Carrington, Soriano, 1977, and Alatorre himself, 1976, on whom the criticism mainly focused, referred to Xavier's designs. Carrington recalled that León Felipe had strongly objected to the tights; Soriano thought them ludicrous, especially for dignified "professors" to wear, and added that he and Octavio Paz had jokingly nicknamed Antonio Alatorre, "Monsieur [Georges] Pitoëff," which was a play-on-words, referring to both the theatre director-actor (for Alatorre had directed the interlude) and to pito, a slang expression for the male organ; and Alatorre laughingly remarked that he had been commended on his endowment.

[3]Spontaneously translated by Alatorre, 1976. Another sample selection is in the playbill, Appendix A, p. 337.

the pixieish Tara Parra who, like the other actors, appeared in most of the plays, Enrique Stopen, the law student, and Carlos Fernández (referred to as Mexico's Gérard Philipe because of his astonishing resemblance to the French actor[1]) who, like Parra, had prior acting credits. Nancy Cárdenas, the theatre student, played the Old Woman; the voice of Rosenda Monteros, the recent acting school graduate and actress in The Sheep Well, was heard offstage as the Mother.

Juan Soriano's setting again utilized only basic elements in space. The cyclorama curtain was outlined in paint to suggest a house and window; a wooden box upon which Parra stood suggested a balcony. When the Student and Sailor removed the willing Virgin from her guarded balcony, the balcony was withdrawn. [See Figure 4, p. 112.]

The improvisational quality of the first piece was heightened by Arreola who read Lorca's descriptions and notes to it as well as to the next piece, Buster Keaton's Promenade. Clearly influenced by silent film, the almost nonverbal Buster Keaton's Promenade presented a Keaton who peddled through vast expanses of land on his one-dimensional bicycle, and who related to human beings and wildlife with alternating tenderness and cruelty. The staging of this piece, too, had no fixed scenery, and with only the suggestion of a bicycle, Carlos Fernández as Keaton pantomimed

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[1]The "Poor Man's Gérard Philipe," to Elena Poniatowska, because of Fernández's concern for the underdog, expressed in her interview, "Carlos Fernández: El Gérard Philipe de los Pobres," Novedades, 4 August 1957, sec. 2, 2nd pt., pp. 9-10.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 4. The Virgin, the Sailor, and the Student by Federico García Lorca, showing Cárdenas, Stopen, and Parra. Cárdenas's sarape was white with black and brown trim; Stopen's hat was gray, as was Parra's skirt which had a red sash. Fernández, not shown in the photo, wore only the uniform.

the action, transforming the play into ballet.[1] The stylized movements were accompanied by music and influenced by jazz, which Gutiérrez Heras likened to French modern music.

In Chimera, the father, Enrique, played by Fernández, disentangled himself from his capriciously demanding family and embarked on a "business trip." Soriano's setting indicated a house with a window as background; gold (Enrique's two suitcases), green (the Old Man's hat trim), deep pink (the Wife's shawl), and pale pink (the little Girl's hair ribbons, ruffled collar, and skirt) were the contrasting colors chosen for the scene.[2] [See Figure 5, p. 114.] There was no music, and for Enrique's departure the stage was darkened, lit only by the candle held by a child. The child, played by Juan José Gurrola, wore a gray and white blouse, with a garland of flowers around his head. He was accompanied by a cat, played by Rosenda Monteros, whose leotard uniform, showing clearly through the nylon shift, and bright red hat with two painted hollows of gold, suggesting at once cat ears and a girlish bow, made the animal unmistakably female to everyone but the innocent child.[3] [See Figure 6, p. 115.]

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[1]The playbill lists the other actors who appeared in minor roles. See "Bravo Experimento," for photos of this play, unfortunately not showing the pantomimed bicycling, and of the other Lorca plays which were taken, coincidentally, when Héctor Mendoza substituted for Fernández.

[2]Photos (Soriano and Parra); Gallery sketches; script sketches (in Appendix B, pp. 432 and 435).

[3]The Spanish title of the scene, El niño y el gato, masculinizes both characters. In the scene, the boy comes to discover that the cat is female.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 5. Chimera by Federico García Lorca, with Monteros (left) and Parra.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 6. "The Child and the Cat" scene from Lorca's When Five Years Pass.

The final scene, "The Child and the Cat," tells the eternal story of man's rebellion against death; in this case, a child's. Both characters are dead; neither one is aware of it. In this sombre, mysterious environment, made more so by a slow waltz tempo of wistful dissonance, reminiscent of Erik Satie's pieces, they learn the truth together.

Surrounded by three-act realistic and naturalistic plays, and a smattering of French rewrites of ancient Greek myths, Spanish classics, and Shakespearean plays given conceptually traditional productions, but laid out as extravaganzas to lure Mexico's elite, Poesía en Voz Alta conducted its Program with gears in reverse. A large sector of its audience was drawn from the same body, but its small-intelligentsia component, including actors and film producers and directors.[1] Opening night, for instance, was attended by the film producers, Gregorio Wallerstein and Pancho Cabrera, and such infrequent theatregoing art and literary figures as the painter Rufino Tamayo, the novelist Juan Rulfo, and the poet Alfonso Reyes.[2] Many in the audience returned to see the Program several times,[3] and awaited the opening of the Second Program, already in rehearsal

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[1]The company would later attract the University student body.

[2]For these and other celebrated names, see Juan Tomás, "Septimo Cielo: El éxito de las sesiones de 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" a review of the First and Second Programs, El Redondel, 12 August 1956, sec. 3, p. 3; Raúl Leiva, Novedades; "Fascinante Espectáculo de Nuestra Universidad," Excelsior, 17 June 1956, sec. C, p. 24.

[3]Mentioned by, e.g., Alatorre, 1976, Gutiérrez Heras, Gurrola, 1974, and Parra, 1974.

at the time, even though the admission charge of twelve pesos was generally higher than for other plays. Contacts at the University became necessary to obtain tickets for the once-a-week program because seats were sold out in advance--a unique phenomenon in Mexico's theatre of the 1950s.[1] And despite the risqué costumes and lyrics from some of the Renaissance songs, and the jesting about Sainthood and Chastity, the company was spared official censorship.[2] This might be attributed to the sponsorship by the University which made governmental interference unlikely.

Poesía en Voz Alta was a box-office success; the run of the First Program was extended, and it reopened after the run of the Second, again to filled houses. The University was delighted, not only with the audience reception, but also with the critical reception.

For the Universidad de México, José de la Colina wrote:

> To us, that first night of "Poesía en Voz Alta" in the Caballito Theatre seemed like the first step of a revolutionary movement. Here is an audacious group that is going to rescue theatre from the hands of the negotiators in order to return it to its creators. If the earth is for he who works it, the theatre is for the artists. It's about, then, a few artists--some of whom have never been acquainted with the stage--who have come to revive the spirit of theatre in Mexico. . . .
>
> The spirit of the theatre is the verb. That is why all good theatre is poetry aloud. Because the essential vehicle of the verb in theatre is the human voice. The jester who hurled poetry to the air, who converted it into a medium of communication, is one of the creators of theatre comprehended in all its breadth. In the autos and mystery

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[1]Arreola interview. Also the Tomás review, and newspaper advertisements in Novedades and Excelsior of June and July 1956 note sold-out dates.

[2]After other programs, however, individuals try to silence the group in other ways and for other reasons.

> plays of the Middle Ages, in the farses, pasos and entreméses, everything revolves around the verb: the shallow stage, the schematic action, and the very tone of the recitation looked primarily to make the poet's word stand out. The appearance of a jester in Poesía en Voz Alta does not seem to us, therefore, just another element of representation, but a symbol. Nor does it cease to be significant that the painters Héctor Xavier and Juan Soriano have succeeded in reducing the scenic elements to the limit.
>
> The criterion for creating this spectacle has been to bring the theatre to its nakedness, to its essence which--we repeat--is the verb. They abandoned the pompous conception, inherited from the romantics, that limits the word to the edge of the stage, as well as to sensational thunderclaps and the ingenious lighting games. . . . The result is a thrilling purity. It is as if it had called upon our hidden childhood; and childhood needs only a light suggestion to hurl itself into dream.[1]

After the First Program, the playwright Sergio Magaña came to praise the University for Poesía en Voz Alta and the Teatro Universitario.[2] One critic, who listed names of participants and selections, wrote that the First Program's "show is probably the most admirable that has been presented in Mexico in the past years"; another called the program "brilliant" and lauded the group's "originality"; and Magaña-Equivel called the "show," with its texts and simple staging, "an example of excellence."[3] Then, too, there was Alejandro Moreno Ling's appraisal. He cited the plasticity of Juan Soriano's designs, which aided and complemented the direction of Héctor Mendoza, and he regarded the music not as background,

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[1]"Poesía Viva," pp. 29-30.

[2]"Teatro," Mañana, 30 June 1956, p. 3.

[3]"'Poesía en Voz Alta,' Mañana," Excelsior, 25 July 1956, sec. B., p. 1; "Brilliante Recital de Poesía en Voz Alta en el Teatro Caballito," Novedades, 28 June 1956, sec. 2, p. 1; "Poesía en Voz Alta en el Caballito," El Nacional, 29 June 1956, p. 9.

but as "one more actor that is added to the success."[1] Other critics who praised the production were Fernando Jiménez, Manuel Calvillo, and Salvador Novo.[2]

An acknowledged amateurism was balanced by other attributes for José de la Colina: "What these representations lack in professionalism--behind which a legion of mediocre and petrified minds often hide--was made up by love and enthusiasm."[3] Gutiérrez Heras stated that the amateurism was only in the acting, and even this added to the overall charm of the production. On the other hand, the director-playwright, Salvador Novo thought that the group had the best acting talents in Mexico, and Gurrola was singled out as a potential great.[4]

The recognized star of the First Program, its "soul" to the critic from Excelsior,[5] was Juan José Arreola. He was influential in starting the company, had conceived of its name, generated enthusiasm about it, chosen the selections, designed the format, and acted in the program.

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[1]"Poesía en Voz Alta," La Nación, 10 February 1957, p. 24. This review was written after the program reopened.

[2]"Portaleando"; "Poesía en Voz Alta," Revista Mexicana de Literatura, no. 7 (September - October 1956), pp. 104-6, a critique on the company and its first-two programs; the column "Cartas a Un Amigo," Hoy, 7 July 1956, pp. 16-18. Actually, all reviewers hailed the quality of the program.

[3]"Poesía Viva," p. 30.

[4]Gutiérrez Heras interview; Novo, Hoy, 7 July 1956.

[5]"Semana Teatral: Tres Experimentos."

He possessed that captivating charisma which in Mexico is called angel.[1] During the performance of 26 June a prolonged power failure threatened to close the show, or at the very least, to break the mood. Arreola appeared on stage with lit candles and mesmerized the audience with his rendition of a poem by the Mexican modernist, López Velarde until the lights went on and the performance resumed.[2]

The select audience, the classical-Spanish songs and poetry, and the surrealist fragments presented without updating or Mexicanizing the language, did result in the inevitable criticism of "snob."[3] First it was a whisper, but it became more audible by the time of the Second Program, and was screamed out against the later ones, along with such derogatory terms as "communist," "fag," etc. To counterbalance such prophetic assessments, the poet-critic Raúl Leiva wrote that the First Program served a social function; it was without "sterile demogogic boasting," and its poetry might influence perceptions of art and illuminate the

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[1]Most of the already-cited reviews speak lengthily about Arreola's attributes and "histrionic talents," so called by another reviewer, Consuelo Colón, in his column "Por las Rutas del Arte," El Universal Gráfico, 18 July 1956, p. 8.

[2]A. A., and "Brillante Recital." These two reviews verfified the above incident that Gurrola relayed to me in 1974. Gurrola added that it was "absolutely amazing" the way that Arreola handled the crisis, and Gurrola recalled watching a spellbound audience throughout the reading.

[3]The word "snob" appears in the otherwise favorable anonymous review of the First Program, "Bravo Experimento."

Mexican condition.[1] In a later review, he noted that the students at the UNAM had lined up in advance, and to the surprise of many, had understood and warmly welcomed all parts of the program.

> It has almost become commonplace to say that the young university students are not enthusiastic over art, dedicated as they are, in the great majority, to rendering their devotion to sports. This time it was clearly demonstrated in the Medical Auditorium of C.U. [Ciudad Universitaria, or University City] that this mode of thinking is completely erroneous.[2]

Second Program

Whereas the First Program had reflected Arreola's personality and preference for Spanish literature, the Second Program reflected Paz's preference for the French. There were other changes besides the literary material. Leonora Carrington was invited to do the set and costumes for Paz's play, and Héctor Xavier left the group.[3] But perhaps because Juan Soriano had remained, somehow the Second Program bore strong resemblances to the First.[4]

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[1]Novedades.

[2]"Poesía en Voz Alta en la Universidad," Últimas Noticias, 2nd ed., 1 September 1956, p. 10. The program was shown a few times at the Medical Auditorium of the UNAM. An advance notice of this "extraordinary show," which, Guillermo Hewett continues, filled the Caballito Theatre at each performance and received the highest critical praises, is in "Presencia Universitaria," El Universal, 3 August 1956, sec. 1, p. 7.

[3]Although there was dissatisfaction with the Alatorre costumes, the consensus held that Xavier left because Paz favored more fanciful designs, and Xavier's were ostensibly realistic.

[4]See Playbill 2, Appendix A, pp. 340-47.

Different actors were brought in at the request of Paz. Paz preferred to cast to type. The husky-voiced Nancy Cárdenas was offered the role of the old servant, Isabel, in Paz's play. In Arreola's First Program, neither her voice quality nor height seemed to matter and she had been cast in several roles. Tara Parra, Rosenda Monteros, and Carlos Fernández remained in the group, but Paz overruled Mendoza's decision to use these actors in a variety of parts. Gurrola and Stopen were not asked to participate in the program; Cárdenas eventually declined, believing the part was not suited for her, and was replaced by the elderly actress, Ana María Hernández.

Among the other new actors were Héctor Godoy, Manola Saavedra, Eduardo MacGregor, who like Héctor Mendoza, had substituted for Carlos Fernández during one performance of the First Program, and María Luisa Elío. Most were used in one role as opposed to the several, the ensemble played in the First Program. They were not students. They were young, with the exception of Hernández, and generally neophytes.[1] Juan José Arreola, no longer literary director, did stay on, however, as a performing artist.

The Second Program opened at the Caballito Theatre on 31 July, delayed from the announced opening for the 17th. Octavio Paz used unknown or little known works; Arreola had balanced the unknown and known in

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[1] Hernández had some acting credits and Godoy had been performing professionally in the theatre since the early 1950s.

the First Program. But as in the First Program, there were only one-act plays in the Second, and the original concept of the theatre as a game--a game of words--remained intact.[1] Carlos Fuentes wrote the commentary to this program:

> The second program of Poesía en Voz Alta completes and affirms the aim of the first. The theatre returns to being recreation, mystery, clean fun, free endeavor. These programs do not lay any claim to revolutionary originality. They simply manage to place us at the starting point--the archetypal freshness--of all great theatre, rooted in the word, the live nucleus of imagination and desire, memory and foresight. In this way, they break with conformity and vulgarity. They restore and proclaim the essence of artistic creation: reality is not something given; it needs to be discovered and recreated in the imagination. And reality is total: dream and vigilance, life and death, the visible half and the hidden half comprising it.
>
> This night's plays say this clearly. Their common theme is love, four diverse faces revealed by the imaginative word. In The Asides[2] by Jean Tardieu, its tiny flame shines candid, tender and eternal in the midst of a parody on the ready-made phrases of romanticism. In The Canary by Georges Neveux, love becomes painful: nature impedes it, erecting a blind barrier between the lovers. In The Motor Show by Eugène Ionesco, a joyful love clears the way across the machine-age jungle and the advertiser's slogans, reducing them to the absurd and gaining salvation in the humor. And in Rappaccini's Daughter by Octavio Paz, love confronts itself--its other face. It establishes the struggle between the requirements of total, red-hot love, and those of the everyday love; between the love which transcends the world and is sufficient unto itself, and the love that must depend on the world, share of and nourish itself from nature, recreate itself within the finite.
>
> The short theatre of Tardieu, Neveux, and Ionesco dresses its contemporary themes (that means, permanent themes) in the

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[1] In his letter, Juan Soriano relates an incident which denotes the company's valuation of the word: During a rehearsal of the Second Program, attended by León Felipe, the poet "furiously" interrupted the actress María Luisa Elío because she "had not respected a slight pause" designated in the text of Paz's play.

[2] This is a shortened title for Oswald and Zenaida, or the Asides.

The Tardieu and Neveux plays have not been translated into English up to the present date, to this investigator's knowledge. However, in this study they will be called by their English equivalents, to avoid introducing a third language into the discussion of the Poesía en Voz Alta plays.

> ancient forms of the paso, entremés, and farce. The one by Paz--first full-length play and first Mexican one that this group is staging--begins to point toward a new direction for our theatrical literature, which is usually anecdotal, by wedding its theme and strictly human subject-matter with a language of conflict, tight images and lyrical contrast, deeply rooted in the tensions, conscience, and solar formula of the Mexican man and landscape.
>
> The theatre that we are about to see, a product of common enthusiasm, of team-work, without "stars," the product of an authentic university workshop, is truly a theatre of the people. It is based on the great language, and this could never have been possible without a pueblo--a community involved in worthwhile work, collectivity with dimensions--which, from beginning to end, discharges it [the great language] up to the hands of the creative spirit. We are used to the sordid, metropolitan language of the small bourgois theatre: theatre for the masses--for the community, bereft of attributes, worth only the arithmetic sum of its individuals--in which the word is orderly, sterile, from beginning to end. Language carried to its highest expression becomes the original, common and communicable language. The language in which everyone can recognize himself and recognize others. This is, has been, and will be the primary purpose of theatre. This is what gives it its liberating and unifying function.
>
> The actors and directors of this university group, in giving life to that function from the vibrant realm of the furnished stage, offer, with modesty, with dedication, a national and human service.[1]

The three avant-gardists, Neveux, Tardieu, and Ionesco, whose plays comprised the first half of the Second Program, had never been published in Mexico. Mexico knew of Neveux through the presentation of one play, Plainte contre inconnu,[2] or Complaint Against the Unknown in its literal translation; Ionesco and Tardieu were virtually unknown. Neither author wrote in the popular realistic mode which might have catapulted him

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[1]See Playbill 2, Appendix A, p. 342.

[2]Ibáñez interview, 16 June 1974; also, Juan García Ponce's review of the Fourth Program, with a critique on the first three, "Poesía en Voz Alta," Universidad de México 11 (August 1957):29.

international fame. But the cosmopolitan Paz, with his strong ties to the French surrealists, had access to such plays. Displeased with the "inferior quality of translations" in Mexico, he decided to translate the plays himself.[1]

To familiarize the public with these avant-gardists as well as provide background for Paz's play, the playbill carried a statement on "The Authors," unsigned but almost certainly written by Paz.[2] The concluding paragraph on Paz's play read:

> The work by Octavio Paz had been a long monologue. But a monologue that tended to disembogue into dialogue; that is why it should not seem strange that now he is interested in the theatre. Rappaccini's Daughter is his first theatrical venture. Based on a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne (who, in turn, utilized an old tale, a common procedure for all authors of all epochs), the piece by the Mexican poet takes in some of the concerns of his poetry: love and reality, the conflict between the survival instinct and the amorous impulse that is totally unleashed. The theatre is disguise, but crystal disguise; its mission is not to hide, but to make the human condition more transparent.[3]

The three plays, The Canary, Oswald and Zenaida, or the Asides, and The Motor Show, are short one-acters containing two or three characters. They have simple plots, centering on love, an exaggerated form of humor, and rest heavily on language, rather than situation or character.

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[1]This was said by Paz, interviewed in 1974.

[2]According to Mendoza, interviewed 8 August 1977, and this investigator's analysis of the selection's content and style.

[3]"Los Autores," Playbill 2, Appendix A, p. 345. In few words, the selection describes Neveux's works as having "humor and lyricism, irony and tenderness, and verbal constructions at once aerial and austere." Tardieu's language, as "direct and simple while the tension and complexity of what he is trying to say grows," and his works, as having "analogies with music." Ionesco's theatre is explained through the writings of the critic Jacques Lemarchand and Ionesco himself.

In The Canary, the most lyrical of the three, love develops between a recluse who is content to see the world through his window, and a woman who habitually and tardily races for a taxi to take her to the station, but inevitably misses the train. The woman is impelled to flight, for she has a canary instead of a heart. The outcome is predictable: to wed the lady (and hence, tie her down), the man recommends a doctor-friend for a cure; the lady falls in love with the doctor, and the forsaken man ends with the caged canary. Persuaded by the canary ("You are right. If you have wings, it's for flying."[1]), he releases the bird and articulates his newly learned lesson: "When a woman has a canary in place of a heart, it's best to let it be."

The other two plays have fairy-tale happy endings, and no abandoned wooers. In The Asides, the couple is already engaged; in The Motor Show, man meets woman, falls in love, plans to marry, and live happily ever after. The Asides, set in a bourgeois salon in 1830, observes a young pair as they struggle to abide by the social mores which govern the unwed, and to withhold the "truth" from each other that their parents will not consent to the union. The father, in deux ex machina fashion, resolves the conflict. He confesses that he had contrived the situation to test the couple's love; now satisfied, he announces gleefully that they may wed. The Asides parodies romanticism and the stage convention of asides by

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[1]Translated from the Spanish text, El canario, whose script is in Appendix B, pp. 446-55.

exaggeration. Every three or four words of dialogue is followed by several sentences of asides.

The Motor Show uses more violent imagery and disconcerting dialogue. It satirizes the daily ceremony of buying and selling; cars are confused with humans. A man comes to purchase a car; he prefers one that is both male and female. He falls in love with a female who is also a car (she has a strong motor), and after the hard-sell nonsensical chatter, further compounded by farmyard noises, he calmly decides to wed the car/girl; he will provide the male component of the vehicle.

The music for the Second Program, like the First, was written for a small number of musicians, performing live. For the Second Program, Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras chose the flute, clarinet, cello, harp, and viola to convey delicate, airy, lilting sounds often suggested by the theme of love. But whereas live music was heard in the First Program, although after the first night it was played by members of the musician's union for theatre who replaced members of Mexico's Symphony Orchestra, as mandated by law, recorded music was heard in the Second Program. The change was sudden, and made after the compositions had been scored.[1]

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[1]Gutiérrez Heras dismissed economic concerns for this turn of events. He insisted there were ample funds. He faulted instead Mexico's value system which, in his opinion, placed the worth of music at the bottom of its rating scale. (Interview.)

As for the replacement of musicians in the First Program, this did not effect the harpist accompanying the Alatorres as guest artist.

Neither The Motor Show nor The Asides was accompanied by music. But for The Canary, whose text specified that the Man play the flute at the opening, and that the Woman's baggage later bursts out in song, Gutiérrez Heras wrote a few musical bars for the instrument, and other music for the soprano, Margit Frank Alatorre, who sang the baggage's lyrics offstage. Rappaccini's Daughter illustrates another use of his music. Héctor Mendoza had planned an unexpected "silent" period of several seconds; it was designed to play with the audience by falsely building tension and expectation about a climatic moment which was not to come. The audience saw a closed curtain on the window to the house, watched it being slowly drawn apart, and light come filtering through. End of scene. Like Juan Soriano, Gutiérrez Heras was present for rehearsals. When he witnessed this silent moment, he wrote a very brief harpsical cut to reinforce the impression.[1]

Juan Soriano retained the cyclorama, drop curtain, and two-dimensional setting for the French plays. With the exception of The Motor Show, in which the mechanized characters almost mandated identical costuming, Soriano's designs for the Program were more individualized, and costlier, than for the First. In The Canary, the drop curtain served

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[1]Ibid. Gutiérrez Heras reflectively recalled that under ideal conditions he would have written a chamber opera for Paz's play; that was the way he envisioned it performed. Because the Orient had inspired both Paz and Hawthorne, Gutiérrez Heras imbued his music with mystical strains, especially for one dreamy sequence where the actors moved as though performing in a Japanese Nō play.

as the facade of two houses. Two long, narrow panels were cut out from the curtain's center, where plaid drapery was hung. These were the doors. To the right and left of each, a window was cut out; the plaid drapery was now used as window curtains, one of them drawn together, the other one, apart. [See Figure 7, p. 130.] Soriano dressed Héctor Godoy in gray slacks, shirt, ascot, and vest, the latter made from an unfinished, coarsely grained, woven cotton in gray with red striping. Rosenda Monteros was in gloves, a gray-brimmed hat, and a yellow dress worn beneath a burnt-orange colored raincoat with yellow piping.[1] The raincoat was made of oilcloth, as uncommon a material as nylon was for theatre costumes in Mexico then.[2] Props included two large gray bags, a flute, and a birdcage.[3] For The Asides, in which the actors, Tara Parra and Carlos Castaño, behaved like agitated marionettes,[4] the costuming was detailed and romantic. Tara Parra's full-skirted dress, for instance, was done in childlike colors of baby blue and pink, but with touches of

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[1]Gallery sketches; Héctor Godoy interview, 17 September 1976.

[2]Rosenda Monteros believed that Soriano was the first to use oilcloth for Mexico's theatre costumes. (Interview.)

[3]Whether or not a canary was used in the production is disputable. Recollections have been too vague to confirm either that the canary was "imaginary" (Godoy's contention, when interviewed), or it "was a small tin bird that flew adorned with a yellow ribbon, and made the spectators laugh." (García Ponce, p. 29.)

[4]On 26 August 1972, Mendoza explained the concept behind the mechanical movements: "We were mocking theatre, [the acting style commonly associated with] the grandiose Spanish theatre."



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 7. Rosenda Monteros and Héctor Godoy in Georges Neveux's The Canary.

fiery violets and reds; her dress sleeves were in white, the color of her raised bonnet too.[1] [See Figure 8, p. 132.]

In The Motor Show, Soriano arranged elemental forms in space and, with the help of Mendoza, included the actors as one of the forms.[2] The plasticity of Soriano's other designs showed expressionist influence, or more accurately, Pre-Columbian influence with sophistication, as Mendoza called the style.[3] Paint and wood were the prime materials. The tie, jacket-pockets, and pant-cuffs of the Customer were of paint, as were the Salesman's lapels and the Woman's patterned stockings. The set pieces were carved, painted, planks of wood; there was a bench, for a car seat, and some immense stand-up caricatures, representing various car models, and which brought to mind the stand-up paper cut-outs of children's books, but in an exaggerated form. [See Figure 9, p. 133.]

The greatest deviation from the First Program in design, materials, casting, and method of rehearsal was in Rappaccini's Daughter, the second half of the Second Program. Most of the critical attention given to the

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[1]Gallery sketches; Parra interview, 20 September 1976.

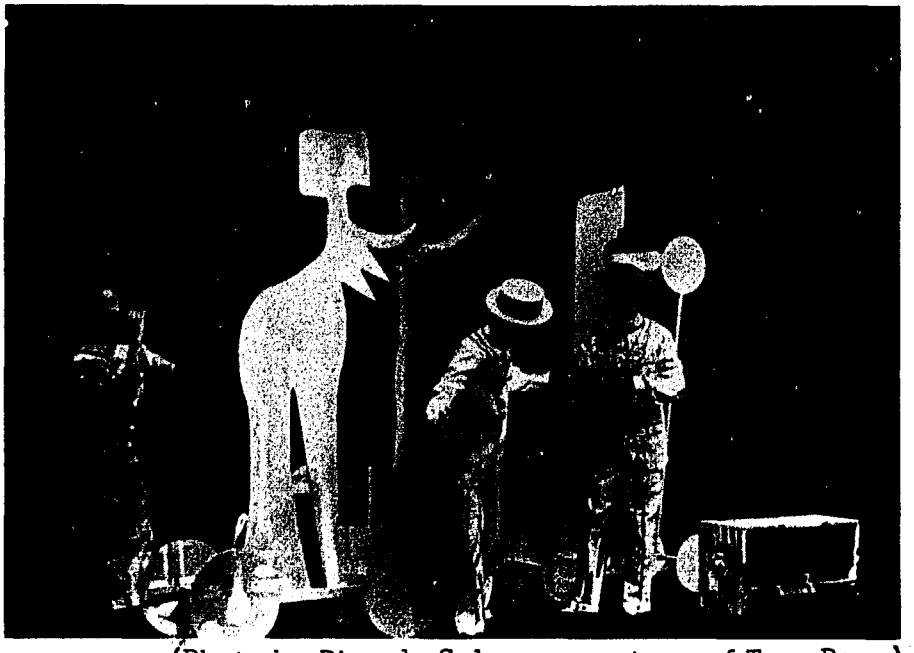
[2]This raises the question of how much say Soriano had in the direction of the actors, a question which will get different responses much later on. It is undeniable that the young, relatively inexperienced Mendoza often followed Soriano's line and suggestions, and that the theatrical form (sets, costumes, and use of space) at times delineated an acting style. But conversations with many participants, among them Cárdenas, 1974, Gurrola, 5 July 1972, Monteros, and Soriano who, in 1977, cited cases of Mendoza's influence on his designs, suggest a strong unity of operations, with much sharing of ideas.

[3]Interview, 1974.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 8. Jean Tardieu's Oswald and Zenaida, or the Asides with Parra and Castaño. Note the positioning of the actors' hands.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 9. Parra is the woman, Arreola, the salesman, and MacGregor, the customer, in Eugène Ionesco's The Motor Show. Here, Parra is representing a car horn; Mendoza, interviewed in 1974, credited the idea to Soriano.

Second Program was directed toward this play and its production. Paz followed the plot line of Hawthorne's short-story, but his conception differed. Influenced by his stay in the Orient, in the Mexican Foreign Service, Paz saw Rappaccini's Daughter as a Japanese Nō play.[1] He had wanted to make a statement about humanity and the universe--that "everything consists of good and bad." And the boy in Paz's play "fails, because he fears love."[2]

The play is divided into nine scenes with a prologue and epilogue. The Messenger, María Luisa Elío, narrates the myth, positing Paz's philosophy on the unity of fragments[3] from the very start. "My name is not important," she begins. "Nor is my origin. I really have no name, nor sex, nor age, nor land. Man or woman; young child or old man; yesterday or tomorrow; north or south; the two genders, the three times, the four ages, and the four cardinal points converge in me and in me they dissolve. My soul is transparent. . . ." At the end, the Messenger re-echoes Paz's position on time, whereby "yesterday and tomorrow do not exist. Everything is today, everything is here, present. What has passed is passing still."[4]

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[1]Paz interview, 1974. [2]Ibid.

[3]This philosophy characteristically courses through most of the writings by Paz. See, for example, the issue devoted to Paz of Books Abroad 46 (Autumn 1972), and its Selected Bibliography on pp. 611-14.

[4]Translation mine.

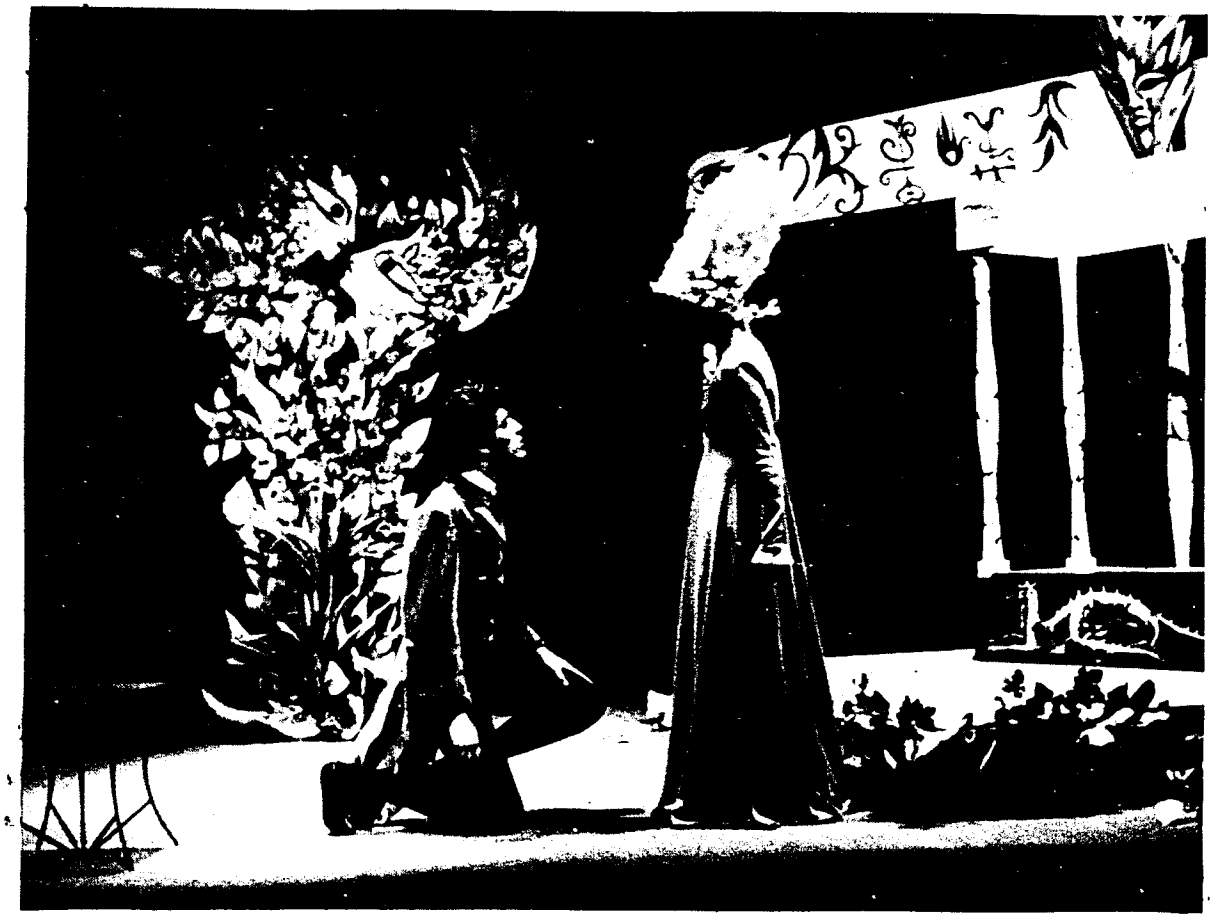
For this poetic, abstract, philosophical play, Leonora Carrington designed an exquisitely delicate surrealistic set. In it, a wooden platform, decorated with flowers and painted animals, suggested the girl's bed and bedroom; an elevated, wooden, painted frame, the boy's windowed quarters; and leaves and flowers combined to suggest the bark of a tree in the garden. Two of the tree branches formed the heads of the lovers, their painted profiles set within them. [See Figures 10 and 11, pp. 136 and 137.] The scenic space was adorned, and to the critic José de la Colina, "the cutglass and plants impede[d] the action." "In the First Program," he continued, "everything was cleaner, clearer, more evident."[1]

Both the set and lush costumes were redone several times. Carrington sketched at home; her ideas sprang directly from the text and not from Mendoza's direction, and apparently the surrealist painter gave little thought to the functionalism of the designs. The towering, weighty hat of flowers for Manola Saavedra as the daughter, Beatriz, had been remade, but still persisted in sliding back from her head, forcing the actress to concentrate more on balancing the hat than on playing her role; the same hat mandated a last-minute change of blocking, for in rehearsals, the hat was invariably knocked off the actress's head at the start of the kissing scene.[2]

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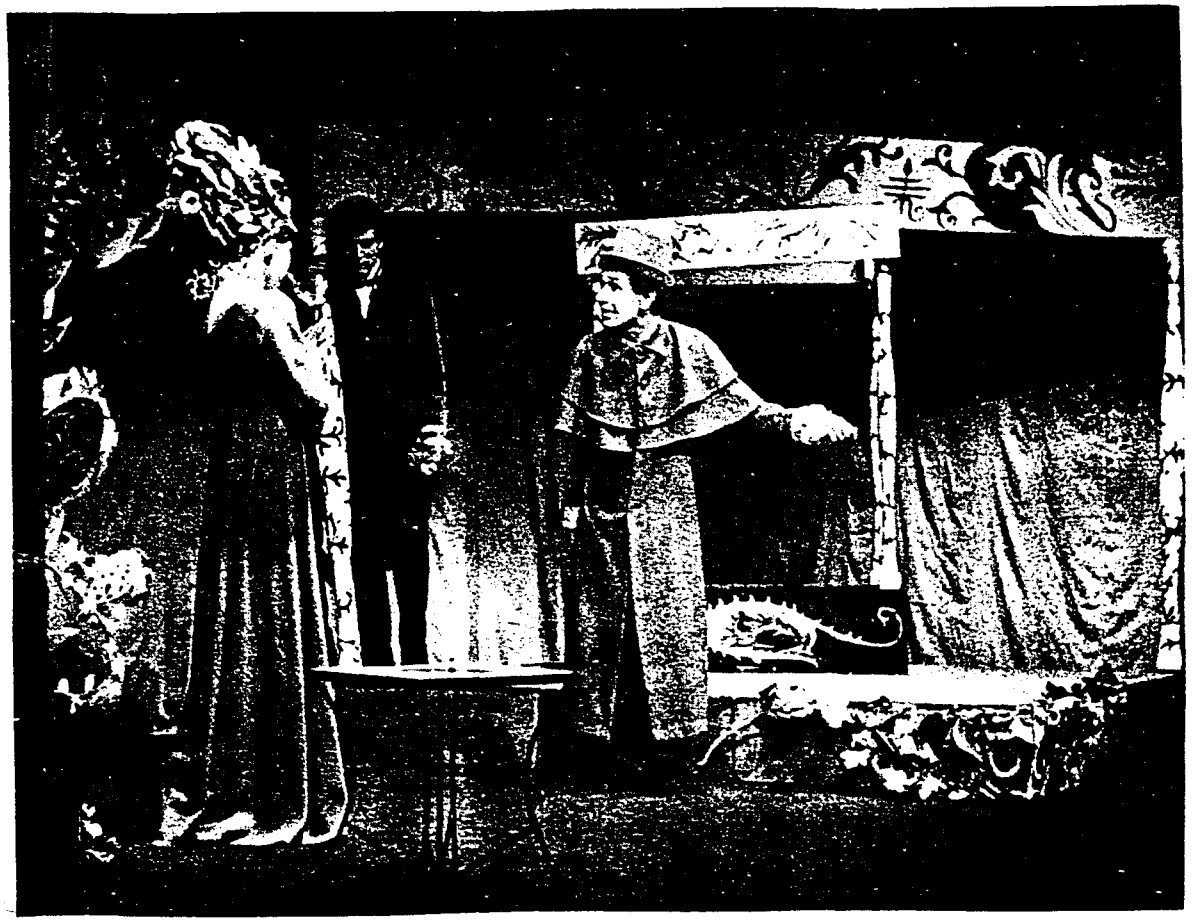
[1]"Carta a Juan José Arreola," Universidad de México 10 (August 1956):25-26.

[2]Carrington interview; Mendoza interviews, 21 August 1973 and August 1977; Soriano interview, 1977.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 10. Octavio Paz's Rappaccini's Daughter designed by Leonora Carrington.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 11. Saavedra, Fernández, and Arreola in Paz's Rappaccini's Daughter.

And Paz, himself, felt that Carrington's designs were "too extraordinary and would detract from the play."[1]

The actors were mostly new, relatively inexperienced, and decidedly unfamiliar with Poesía en Voz Alta's directorial approach to plays. Paz had envisioned a "film-starlet" look for some characters in his play,[2] and for the first time, reviewers singled out players, finding some inadequate for their challenging roles.[3] Lack of time did not help. Mendoza, waiting for Carrington's initial designs, had postponed rehearsal of this play until last; and then with changes, the rehearsals became hurried. The playwright-critics, Wilberto Cantón and Luis G. Basurto, both writing for

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[1]Carrington relayed this criticism; interview.

[2]Mendoza interview, 1973.

[3]This only applied to the newcomers, and particularly to Manola Saavedra and María Luisa Elío. Some reviewers highly commended Saavedra and Elío; one of them, de la Colina ("Carta a Juan José Arreola"), was very much taken by Saavedra's ability to shed real tears, and another, Tomás, praised Elío's diction, voice, and general delivery. Other reviewers and some interviewees thought differently. They tended to judge Saavedra as too inexperienced to play Beatriz, and the Spaniard Elío as miscast in the Messenger role because, unlike Tomás, they found her (Spain) accented diction distracting, and her gestures too pronounced--both qualities "out-of-place" in the play. The majority of reviewers from the larger papers found unevenness in the ensemble. For varied appraisals of the acting, see Luis G. Basurto, "Primers Fila: 'La Hija de Rappacini' [sic], de Octavio Paz," Excelsior, 5 August 1956, sec. C, p. 14; Wilberto Cantón, "Semana Teatral: Octavio Paz al Teatro," Excelsior, 12 August 1956, supp., p. 2; Miguel Guardia, "Teatro en México," Novedades, 12 August 1956, supp., p. 5; "María Luisa Elío en 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" Excelsior, 6 August 1956, sec. B, p. 1; María Luisa Mendoza, "Poésia en Voz Alta ... Una Brisa Limpia y Amable (Brisa Poética)," Cine Mundial, 6 August 1956, p. 12; Alejandro Moreno Ling, "Poesía en Voz Alta," La Nación, 2 September 1956, p. 27.

the second-largest daily, Excelsior, praised the play and especially its poetic language. Cantón, for example, said that "the words have a magnificence that our dramatists rarely attain." But the critic for the magazine, Mañana, thought the play would be better to read.[1] Juan Tomás, for the Sunday paper, El Redondel, would have liked the fifty to sixty minute work "trimmed a little." And Octavio Paz professed with mock tears that "nobody liked my play," and faulted it as being "too abstract," ill-suited for the Mexican audience of the 1950s.[2] Juan García Ponce's retrospective appraisal is revealing:

> The production of this work did not correspond to the marvelous language and to the exquisitely poetic situations of the work. In truth, one could not say that the scenery, or the costumes, or the direction, or the music, or the acting was bad. Each one of the elements was sufficiently good when judged separately, but they did not relate to each other. In general, it was a good concept that did not attain fruition.[3]

Box-office receipts for the Second Program were about equal to those for the First.[4] This was largely accountable to curiosity about the company, generated by the First Program's success, and because it was the program designed by the esteemed, dynamic Octavio Paz, in which he

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[1]"Teatro: Poesía en Voz Alta," 18 August 1956, p. 108.

[2]Interview, 1974. [3]P. 30.

[4]Mendoza interview, August 1977, and García Ponce, 1974. Tomás mentions that performances are sold-out in advance; the Excelsior advertisement, appearing the second week of the run, 7 August 1956, sec. A, p. 21, carries a "sold-out" notice for the day's two performances; the critic for Mañana, whose review of 18 August 1956 was late in the run, states that the company "is filling the house each Tuesday."

also made his debut as a dramatist. "The incorporation of Octavio Paz into theatrical activities in Mexico," began Wilberto Cantón, "is an important ephemeris for our scenic movement. [He is an] excellent poet, distinguished thinker, and magnificent prose writer . . ." The nature of the audience remained the same.[1] More readers were made aware of Poesía en Voz Alta's existence because more publications started to review the company after its Second Program opened.[2]

María Luisa Mendoza in Cine Mundel and the unnamed critic in Excelsior were two who appraised the Second Program as unqualifiedly excellent.[3] But many reviewers cited "flaws," most of them minute, and there were reservations expressed. The critical reception was overall

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[1]Among the select public for the Second Program was José Gaos, the Spanish philosopher and disciple of José Ortega y Gasset. Gaos sat next to Antonio Alatorre on opening night. (Alatorre interview, 1976.)

[2]These were Siempre, Cine Mundel, Impacto, and El Redondel, the latter covering both programs at once. However, three publications that had recognized the First Program, ignored the Second. This was hardly significant in the cases of Últimas Noticias, whose mother publication, Excelsior, had published three program reviews, and of Esto, which habitually bypassed theatre coverage. The omission in the weekly Hoy, specifically Novo's column, "Cartas a un Amigo," was surprising. Even though the column dealt in informal chat on Mexico's theatre people and theatre activity, and was unconcemed with theatre reviews, Novo had written up the First Program. His only mention of Poesía en Voz Alta now--that the company was renting Elízaga's Caballito Theatre on Tuesdays--appeared on p. 18 of the 25 August 1956 issue.

[3]"Otro Programa de 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" Excelsior, 3 August 1956, sec. B, pp. 7 and 9.

less satisfactory for the Second Program.[1] A few critics hailed the versatility of Poesía en Voz Alta and revelled in the French sketches especially.[2] But to Magaña-Esquivel's way of thinking, even though Poesía en Voz Alta had again excellently reached its goal, which to this critic was to present a unique theatre style and not "a certain type of play," the choice of texts for the Second Program showed "a concern for novelty."[3] Herein was the new element added to Poesía en Voz Alta's body of reviews: the relationship between Poesía en Voz Alta and mass society; the usefulness of art. There were two other similar but far less subtle criticisms, one lambasting, and the other delicately chiding the company for ignoring its mission to serve society. The critic who adopted the pseudonym, Bill Llano was mute about the program itself in the socialist-oriented Impacto, but made an argument for Poesía en Voz Alta symbolizing "the resurrection of the

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[1]Box-office receipts were apparently unaffected by the reviews. The bulk of the viewers were "friends of Paz's and Arreola's," as Gutiérrez Heras termed them in his interview, an unlikely group to be swayed by reviews. Then, many reviews did appear weeks after the program premiered, and the more important news organs--Novedades, Excelsior, Siempre ("Espectáculos," 15 August 1956, pp. 48-50)--wrote favorably about it. The Novedades review, discussed on p. 142 below, had negative criticism related to the worth of artistic, poetic plays. This audience of artists and intellectuals would, at best, discount such remarks.

[2]There was, for instance, even one writer who referred to the opening-night audience's show of enthusiasm for mainly these plays. (See the note, "Poesía en Voz Alta," in the bulletin, Gaceta de la Universidad, 6 August 1956, p. 3.)

[3]"Segundo Programa de 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" El Nacional, 12 August 1956, supp., p. 9.

'literary salon'" in the royal court. He wrote that Poesía en Voz Alta was "an intellectual refinement, a minority game that merits applause because it represents an effort and points out an artistic attitude, but which will never carry to the people. And what show, in the century in which we live, is worth anything if it doesn't carry to the people?" He advised the man who considered himself of "flesh and blood" to stay away from the show, "for life, tremendous in itself, the most marvelous show you can find, is everywhere except in the mental gyrations of the idle intelligent ones."

Miguel Guardia, for Novedades, the most respected newspaper, praised the program but faulted the sponsor:

> The UNAM and the INBA . . . are the country's two strongest, most capable, and most responsible cultural institutions; and they are more obligated--even though it is also acceptable to sometimes just amuse [italics mine] the audience--to fulfill the important task of diffusing ideas.

He went on to suggest that the company should turn to "plays engaged in any ideological direction," and hinted that the UNAM's importance to the cultural life of Mexico might be reduced if such a change in approach did not take place.[1]

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[1]Why the First Program was spared from such remarks is speculative. Guardia alludes to one possible explanation, that allowances were made for one program, two at most, that would "just amuse." Two other explanations, not necessarily unrelated, are noteworthy. One, that unlike the Spanish texts of the First Program, there was complete unfamiliarity with the kinds of plays in the Second; they were very little understood and, hence, rejected. (Monteros and Parra, 1974.) The other, that the intelligentsia allowed itself to freely enter into the game spirit of the First Program, but by the Second, began to intellectualize its joyful emotional response. This broke the "spell," and anger ensued. (Mendoza, 1973.)

As though in response to the Guardias and Llanos of Mexico, there appeared a subtle, temperate critique on Poesía en Voz Alta in the Revista Mexicana de Literatura. Written by Manuel Calvillo for critics and public alike, the critique sought to put Poesía en Voz Alta in its proper perspective. Calvillo restated the company's intent, to recreate poetry without any preconceived notions or imposed limits and, after exemplifying claims about Poesía en Voz Alta, asked for less critical superlatives, "less suppositions" about the group, with instead more acceptance of what it was trying to do, and acceptance of "its only inalienable end," the "enjoyment of it."[1]

Undaunted, Poesía en Voz Alta proceeded with plans to present both programs in repertory at the University City, in Guadalajara, and to reopen at the Caballito Theatre in the late Fall of 1956.[2] There was general belief that the programs would attract audiences and be met with enthusiasm. The company had already begun consideration of a possible third program, believing that the University would fund it. But problems began to develop, and particularly because of Guadalajara.

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[1]Pp. 104-6.

[2]Evidence is conclusive that the First Program played at the University City (playbill, property of Gurrola; Leiva in Últimas Noticias), in Guadalajara (Jiménez review), and reopened at the Caballito (Moreno Ling review, 10 February 1957). Evidence is less conclusive about the Second Program, since written reviews are absent and memories vague. Guadalajara is supported by a poster (property of Cárdenas), and the oral testimonies of Paz (1972) and Mendoza (August 1972; August 1977); the University City and Caballito reopening by the above oral testimonies alone.

Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras, disillusioned because of the company's judgment that taped music for both programs would be all right in Guadalajara,[1] took advantage of an opportunity to go to Europe. For the Third Program, he contacted another composer, Leonardo Velázquez, to take over his job.[2]

Second, the company played to empty houses in Guadalajara. Poor publicity might have been a cause, but lack of interest left many vacant seats in the enormous Degollado Theatre.

> We Tapatios [people from Guadalajara] complained about the lack of high-quality shows in our city. We sighed when reading the announcements from the twenty or thirty theatres that constantly function in the Capital of the Republic; we commented sadly that the work of the great soloists or the best companies did not include Guadalajara in their itineraries. For when, by chance, someone dared to stage a particular work in the Degollado, or in the experimental theatres that we have, no one goes, and the second day we have to lock it up, as the losses are copious.
>
> This is what occurred with that marvel of good taste, Poesía en Voz Alta. . . .
>
> We believe that the Mexican theatre has very rarely managed to assemble such propriety, such magnificent direction, such extraordinary acting, all wrapped up in an ambience of such good taste as in this Poesía en Voz Alta, planned, realized, directed, and lived by a group of young people, some of whom are from Jalisco [Arreola, Soriano, and Alatorre].
>
> The tragedy was that in the function on Wednesday afternoon, there were eighty people in the entire theatre, not even two lunet rows, and at night, scarcely half of the theatre was filled. Upstairs, completely vacant. And this occurred in a population of one half million inhabitants, who, besides, boast of culture.[3]

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[1]Gutiérrez Heras dismissed economic concerns for this event too. He said that several nonparticipants were even budgeted into the Guadalajara trip. Music, simply, was not important. "They wouldn't say, 'we're not taking the actors to Guadalajara,'" he added. (Interview.)

[2]Ibid. [3]Jiménez.

Third, Leonora Carrington had completed her work, did not consider joining the tour, and made no plans to work with the company again.

Fourth, the charismatic actress, Rosenda Monteros left for other stage and screen roles, once the Caballito run was through. The young, delicately featured Pina Pellicer, a former history student at the UNAM, the niece of the renowned poet, Carlos Pellicer, and who later achieved international recognition working with Marlon Brando in the film, One-Eyed Jacks, replaced Monteros in the company.[1]

Finally, and most importantly, Juan José Arreola severed his affiliation with Poesía en Voz Alta. The actor and acting teacher at the theatre school of Bellas Artes, Raúl Dantés, replaced Arreola for the reopening at the Caballito Theatre.[2]

Still, the intelligentsia had supported Poesía en Voz Alta through both programs. And with the exception of a reviewer or two who saw only "snob" appeal, several who spotted acting flaws, and a few who wished that Paz's play had been shortened, concretized, or its staging changed, the two programs had been critical and, excluding Guadalajara, box-office, successes. So, the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department agreed to fund two more programs: The Third and the Fourth.

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[1]See, e.g., Elena Poniatowska's interview, "Pina Pellicer: La Vida es un Delito Máximo, según la actriz," Novedades, 9 November 1963, sec. 1, p. 21.

[2]Moreno Ling review, 10 February 1957. Half of the actors recall harmonious-working relationships in Guadalajara; the other half, explosive arguments between Paz and Arreola. In any event, Arreola left because of conflicts with Paz, as confirmed by them both. (Arreola interview; Paz, 1974.)

CHAPTER 6

1957: THE THIRD AND FOURTH PROGRAMS

The Third and Fourth Programs were presented on a daily basis at the independent Teatro Moderno, a departure from the once-weekly showings at the University-connected Caballito.[1] The move and daily performances made the programs more available to the public. Perhaps the company wanted to demonstrate that it could attract not only the elite and the University students who had flocked to the Medical Auditorium of the UNAM, but the general public as well.[2]

The Teatro Moderno was conveniently located at Marsella 23, off the main Reforma Avenue in Colonia Juárez, and close to the Caballito. It was a new theatre, only two years old,[3] with thirty-four seats more

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[1]Instead of two performances, once a week, the Third Program was given once on Wednesdays through Fridays, the Fourth, Mondays through Fridays, and both programs played twice on Saturdays and Sundays.

[2]Héctor Mendoza, 1971, explained that the company had decided to present daily showings, but the Caballito Theatre was unavailable full-time.

Opinions conflict on whether the UNAM or private donors covered the added costs of daily theatre rental for the Third Program. My evaluation of the data suggests that it was the UNAM; private sponsorship came with the Fourth Program.

[3]The Teatro Moderno opened in 1955 with a production of Tennessee Williams's Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. See "Cartelera Teatral," Bellas Artes, no. 1, p. 3.

than the 298-seat Caballito, but it lacked the Caballito's warmth and charm.

Octavio Paz was responsible for the contents of both programs. Additional recommendations were made by Juan Soriano, the writer Diego de Mesa, and Héctor Mendoza. Poesía en Voz Alta remained a cooperative venture. Difficulties plagued the group and delayed the opening of the Third Program. The Third and Fourth Programs were intended to open six weeks apart, exactly like the First and Second. They did, but nearly eight months elapsed before the Third Program opened. The time was consumed by the group's tours, its reopening at the Caballito, and by Paz's three-month trip to New York. The Third Program finally did open on 1 May and played through 9 June 1957;[1] the Fourth on 19 July, originally scheduled for only a fifteen-day run because of limited funds, but ultimately playing another nine days, through 11 August.[2]

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[1]Newspaper advertisements concur on the Third Program's closing date; see, e.g., Novedades, 9 June 1957, sec. 3, p. 9. But for the opening date, confirmed as officially 1 May, disagreements appear in print. Novedades correctly gives 1 May in its edition of 25 April 1957, sec. 1, p. 25; later, the newspaper changes the date to 29 April for its issues of 26 April 1957, sec. 1, p. 27 and 29 April 1957, sec. 1, p. 20. Then, Antonio Magaña-Esquivel sets the opening date as 24 April in his review of the Program "Teatro: Estrenos y Reposiciones en Abril," El Nacional, 26 May 1957, supp., p. 13. More than likely, the program had several openings, each directed to a different group because the theatre was unable to accommodate them all at once. Such is not uncommon; it happened with Héctor Mendoza's production of Euripides's Rhesus in 1974, except that in this case, the opening announcements specified a particular group, such as "critics," and "general public," while those for Poesía en Voz Alta did not.

[2]The fifteen-day run is noted in several newspaper ads and in Luis Vicent's review of the Fourth Program, "Teatro," Mañana, 3 August 1957, p.56; Vicent also cites the budgetary reason. For a reference to the verified closing date, see Novedades, 11 August 1957, sec. 3, p. 7.

For the Third Program, Octavio Paz wanted to present Ramón María del Valle-Inclán's Los cuemos de don Friolera (Sir Trifle's Homs), a kind of farcical satire on honor--"against machismo, against the Spanish caballero."[1] But when gentle, outside pressure tactics ("'You will be attacked if you present this play,'" mimicked Paz) failed to dissuade Paz from staging the Spanish dramatist's play (I don't care about attacks," Paz recalled retorting), the University intervened directly and refused permission for the play, requesting "social, constructive art" instead.[2]

Five Nō plays by Yukio Mishima were considered by Paz for the Fourth Program. The plays had been translated into English by the Japanese scholar, Donald Keene, who gave them to Paz while he was in New York. One of these plays, Kantan, was being prepared for the Program when the University decided against it.[3] Paz also considered e. e. cummings's Santa Claus, even though he believed that it was

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[1]Octavio Paz interview, 1974. José de la Colina, in his review of the Second Program, "Carta a Juan José Arreola," Universidad de México 10 (August 1956): 26, mentions that he is given to understand that a Valle-Inclán esperpento play (a term which refers to a kind of play, means "absurdity," suggests a wildly distorted mirror, and would describe the above-cited play) is being considered for the company's next program, as well as some other plays by Ionesco and Lorca, and one by León Felipe.

[2]Paz, 1974. Soriano, 1977, was another who spoke of this.

[3]For reference to Kantan, see María Luisa Mendoza's interview with Paz and commentary on the Third Program, "Poesía del siglo XIV y prosa de los veintes: Triunfan sobre melodramas, adulterios y crimenes," Novedades, 19 May 1957, supp., p. 8.

Three years later, Mishima's Nō theatre was introduced to Mexico. See El Universal Gráfico, 20 April 1960, p. 11.

difficult to translate, and some plays by Frank O'Hara which he had obtained in New York, but the University did not respond affirmatively.[1]

Juan Soriano finally suggested Pedro Calderón de la Barca's auto sacramental, La cena del Rey Baltasar (King Belshazzar's Feast) for the Third Program and Paz agreed.[2] To balance this solemn, spiritual-morality play, Paz decided on selections from a joyful, terrestrial-morality book of verse, Libro de buen amor (The Book of Good Love) by another Spaniard, the Archpriest of Hita, Juan Ruiz who is often likened to his English contemporary Chaucer. Diego de Mesa and Héctor Mendoza chose and arranged fourteen of the book's selections for the stage, and retitled the pieces, El buen amor (The Good Love).[3]

Poesía en Voz Alta had been criticized for its unsubstantial literary materials and not its style of production. The University seconded the choice of the Spanish classics, but it had not counted on the inventively staged El buen amor which would deviate from Poesía en Voz Alta's prior style. As a result, the University authorities, vulnerable to public criticism, reduced the group's budget to a token sponsorship because of the furor caused by the program. After the Fourth Program, the University completely disinherited its offspring, Poesía en Voz Alta, which prompted

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[1]Paz interview, 1974. [2]Ibid.

[3]After the program had played over a month, El Universal Gráfico, 4 June 1957, p. 13, printed the following comically erroneous ad: La casa del Rey Baltasar ["King Belshazzar's House"] and El Buen Humor ["The Good Humor"].

Octavio Paz to philosophize with resigned good humor: "It's like being in life without a father."[1]

The general design of these two programs differed from the "poetry aloud" conception of the first two. The Third and Fourth Programs contained some plays, written especially for the theatre, such as Calderón's King Belshazzar's Feast and three one-acters by an unknown Mexican writer, Elena Garro. Each program centered on the work of one playwright and one poet. The poetry was adapted into a play and presented as a musical spectacle. Thus a variation of the music-hall style of El buen amor was carried over in the adaptation by Paz and Mendoza of Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas's baroque poetry, titled La vida airada (The Carefree, Swinging Life). In both programs, poetry was sung to, danced to and pantomimed to, rather than recited, and the programs also contained complete one-act poetic or verse plays, rather than parts of plays.[2] The "word" remained central, and the poet's original language, however archaic, remained sacred and unchanged. But the visual elements of production were stressed more for these programs--elevated to about the same level as the word for the play-adaptations--to help convey the meaning and sense of the poet's work.[3]

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[1]José Luis Ibáñez, interviewed 11 October 1976, relayed Paz's unforgettable reaction to the severance of aid. It meant that the group would have to prove that it could do it alone.
See Playbills 3 and 4, Appendix A, pp. 348-63.

[2]Interviews with Alatorre, 1976, and Gutiérrez Heras.

[3]To Wilberto Cantón in "Poesía en Voz Alta," a review of the Third Program in his column, "Semana Teatral," Excelsior, 19 May 1957, supp., p. 2, the "dazzling" visual elements served to "divert more from, than concentrate on the poets," and the playwright-critic bemoaned that the company was no longer inclined to "underline merely literary values."

The Third and Fourth Programs also revealed personnel changes. The technical staff had grown, and continued to grow between these two programs; it now included makeup artists, tailors, shoemakers, set technicians, and a sound man. Live presentation of original music, by Leonardo Velázquez, returned in the Third Program; the cello, percussions, clarinet, and guitar were used for both Calderón's play and the Archpriest's poetry. Only sound effects and Richard Lemus's drum were heard in the Fourth Program as Velázquez was unable to remain with the company, and was not replaced.[1]

The original seven-member acting ensemble expanded to eleven by the Third and to twelve by the Fourth Program, which further raised production costs. Juan José Gurrola and Enrique Stopen were recalled for the Third and Fourth; the casts were filled out by young, little experienced, resonantly voiced, and physically lovely actors.[2]

For the very first time, the materials, the play-adaptations and Calderón's King Belshazzar's Feast, were shortened. Octavio Paz, the editor of Calderón's play, dispensed with some dialogue and sections of lengthy monologues which he considered too verbose and ornate.[3]

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[1]Leonardo Velázquez, interviewed by telephone, 17 September 1976, insisted that he had been hired for the Third Program only. After it he planned to leave for San Francisco, California, where he would study for two years.

[2]Throughout its life, Poesía en Voz Alta showed a marked preference for actors with such characteristics.

[3]Paz interview, 1974; also Mendoza, "Poesía del Siglo XIV," quoted Paz as saying that he trimmed down several "lovely but theological speeches" because they "definitely would not have fully reached the public." Ibáñez, interviewed September 1976, explained that the speeches were difficult to follow and Paz tried to make it "easier for the actors" who were untrained in speaking verse.

Third Program

In Calderón's baroque, allegorical play, the wealthy king, played by Carlos Castaño, arrogantly defies the prophet Daniel, played by Juan de Saro, and challenges the will of God. There are the allegorical characters of Vanity (María Luisa Elío), Idolatry (Rosa María Saviñón), Thought (Juan José Gurrola), and Death (Carlos Fernández), plus the Statue (Enrique Stopen) and the Joker (José Luis Pumar).[1] King Belshazzar's Feast is reminiscent of Everyman, except that in Calderón's play, the central character, forewarned, has not yet fallen, and brazenness replaces the humility and fear found in Everyman.

Octavio Paz wrote:

> True to its aims, the group, Poesía en Voz Alta, now turns to our classics in its third program. Tradition and novelty: two faces of the same coin. In effect, a classic is an author who keeps his powers of surprise, contagion, and novelty intact. A classic is a young author. Likewise, it is a model, I mean, something that inspires us and nourishes us; something, also, that shows us a part of our own selves and invites us to evince it in works. Living classics and not immobile idols; poetry which tolerates, even reclaims, the interpretation and collaboration of the modern authors:
>
> If any man should hear it, and if he knows how to play
> He can fix it if he so desires
> So that it goes from hand to hand to whoever should
> request it,
> As fleece of the ladies that is taken by whoever can.
>
> Each generation looks for its classics, perhaps it would be more exact to say: to rediscover and reinvent them. In the first program, the primitive Spaniards and García Lorca; today, Calderón and the Archpriest of Hita. The reunion of names in appearance so distinct is not accidental. In the poetry of the fourteenth century, as in the baroque century, the word possesses such fullness that, unavoidably, it brings us to repeat it aloud, to communicate and convert it into what it really is: an object of participation. And

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[1]Saviñón, de Saro, and Pumar were three of the five new, young actors added to the group; the others were Pina Pellicer and Ulalume.

this is, neither more nor less, the theatre: participation of actors and public in the living word. As in the sacred mysteries, the theatre is representation, participation, and repartition of the human word.

The auto sacramental of Calderón that Poesía en Voz Alta is presenting today is a kind of monologue. Everything happens in the conscience of the king. Idolatry, Vanity, the mad Thought and Death itself are only fragments of his being, reflections that create and erase his soul. More than real beings, they are persons in the original sense of the word: masks, representations. But masks of our selves, masks that make the invisible struggle take form. The only character who does not belong to the fantasmal world of the conscience is Daniel, the prophet. Daniel: the voice of God. Engrossed in his own monologue and in the interminable argument which he conducts with himself. Belshazzar does not hear that voice. This play by Calderón is also the drama of sacred love, mystery of the conscience that does not achieve leaving itself. Torn between the love of God, and the love of self and its ghosts, Belshazzar selects his own nothingness and rushes toward it.

Before the rational world of Calderón--sharp as a syllogism, labyrinthlike as a work of lunar engineering--is the direct, terrestrial, and savory language of Juan Ruiz. If Calderón's auto is a monologue, The Book of Good Love is a chorus, in which the lunatics of "crazy love," married ladies and lasses, monks and gentlemen, lackeys and procurers, allegorical characters and monsters, speak, sing, dance, quarrel, pray, eat, fast, thrive, and fall in love. Also, the animals of the classical fable--rabbits and rats, lions and asses--participate in the chorus; and as befitting a world so crazy and lively, the words they sing could be no other than those of the moral. The mirror-word of Calderón is here the body-word, wine-word, and dance-word. Communal dance in the public square, dance of bodies that interlock, and entwine, and laugh in the embrace. The mad love is good love. A wise book, in which man recognizes himself in his totality, and not in a fragment of his being: soul and body and blood and reason and madness. Book of Common Sense which is not the same as good judgment or sanity. Common sense: felt by all, what we are all feeling; and also the community of human feelings and thoughts: love, sorrow, death, sin, gluttony, jealousy, and joy. Poesía en Voz Alta has loosened a few pages of this admirable book; and with that lack of respect, with that audacity which is proof of authentic and violent love, Héctor Mendoza has made those poems dance and sing upon a stage. Pantomime, carpa, and "music-hall" festival, farce, circus, and saraband, the spectacle that he is presenting is the reverse of the Calderónian medal: before the monologue, the popular chorus; before the labyrinthine language, the language which is water,

> bread, and wine; before the sacred love, the mad love. Man is made of all these elements--and of others.[1]

To add to Paz's interpretation of the play, adhere to the Program's aim, and convey the staging concept of turning the auto sacramental into "a stage mass, a rite,"[2] the actor--man--became a basic scenic element. Juan Soriano's unobtrusive set was made of solar-colored (gold) corduroy or velvet curtains covering the stage. Props were a golden goblet whose side projections resembled sun rays, and a special kind of Mexican crate, the huacale, for boxes; the huacales were covered in the same gold fabric throughout most of the play, and later, shown only undraped for the earthy El buen amor. The costumes were tunics in black, bone, grays, and browns; no two were identical in shade and frontal design.[3] [See Figure 12, p. 155.] The cosmic quality of the piece and its staging concept were furthered by Mendoza's choreographic direction of the actors; slow and fluid movements were emphasized. Daniel was cast as a boyish-young, rather than old man, and Richard Lemus's drum, marking off the intervention of Divine Justice, along with Velázquez's background music, which had an Oriental and jazz flavor, made the piece seem more contemporary.

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[1]Playbill 3, Appendix A, p. 350.

[2]Paz, quoted by Mendoza, "Poesía del Siglo XIV." Also relayed by Héctor Mendoza (1973).

[3]Gallery sketches.



(Courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 12. Calderón's King Belshazzar's Feast at the Teatro Moderno, 1957. (From left to right are Stopen, Saviñón, Elío, Pumar, Gurrola, Castaño, Fernández, and de Saro.)

King Belshazzar's Feast fared better with most critics than obser-ers, although reservations were expressed by the majority. "Jorge del Olmo," Antonio Magana-Esquivel, Alejandro Moreno Ling, María Luisa Mendoza, Juan García Ponce, and Angel de las Barcenas praised the play chosen and its interesting production.[1] The critic for Siempre thought the written play was "very boring," but commended Poesía en Voz Alta's unique interpretation--its effort to "exhume Calderón."[2] Two other positive reviews which were among the Third Program's increased number of critical writings and assessments[3] had similar, tactfully worded qualifications: King Belshazzar's Feast "makes many people yawn"; King Belshazzar's Feast was "a bit boring."[4] Blunt, one-worded appraisals were given by

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[1][Probably García Terrés] "Poesía en Voz Alta," Universidad de Mexíco 11 (May 1957):28 and 32; "Estrenos y Reposiciones en Abril"; "3er Programa de Poesía en Voz Alta," La Nación, 12 May 1957, p. 29; "Poesía del Siglo XIV"; "Poesía en Voz Alta," Universidad de México 11 (August 1957):30; "Comedias y Comediantes: Los Grupos Teatrales del Distrito Federal Iniciaron sus Actividades con Mucho Éxito," Claridades, 19 May 1957, p. 20.

Two totally favorable recommendations but not rightly discussions of both parts of the program which, for that reason, will only be cited here are: "Otros Espectáculos," Esto, 12 May 1957, sec. B, p. 1, and "Actuará Pina Pellicer," Excelsior, 7 May 1957, sec. B, p. 9.

[2]"Teatro," 15 May 1957, p. 48.

[3]For the first time, El Universal and Claridades reviewed Poesía en Voz Alta. There were three reviews and several mentions in Novedades, and two reviews in Hoy, for example. However, neither Llano nor any other critic for Impacto reviewed this program, and the publication will ignore Poesía en Voz Alta until the Fifth Program. Also Basurto for Excelsior did not review the program either, although Cantón did.

[4]Wilberto Cantón, "Semana Teatral"; Frasquita, "Las Comadres," Hoy, 18 May 1957, p. 77.

the observers, Luisa Josefina Hernández and Antonio Alatorre, and even by the participants, José Luis Ibáñez and Octavio Paz: it was "boring," period.[1]

There was discontent with the play which Paz described as pedantic and rhetorical; the mise en scène to Alatorre was "too small" and "somewhat grotesque" for the eloquent verse and openness of Calderón's play.[2] The movements were faulted as too slow, almost nonexistent, and Mendoza was loudly and lengthily blamed for having "dehumanized" the actors in order to preserve the "intellectual rigor of Calderón."[3] Many others criticized the actors for an inability to speak verse or act acceptably in a serious verse play: the critics included Luis Sánchez Zevada, Luisa Josefina Hernández, Alejandro Moreno Ling, María Luisa Mendoza, and especially Salvador Novo.[4] Even Paz himself admitted that like "all of Mexico's actors," the actors in Poesía en Voz Alta "do not know how to say classical verse."[5]

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[1]Interviews: Hernández; Alatorre, 1976; Ibáñez, September 1976; Paz, 1974.

One unnamed reviewer in his column "Puntos suspensivos," Cine Mundial, 28 Mayo 1957, p. 4, spoke about El buen amor, without a mention of Calderón's play. And Miguel Guardia's review, "Los Clásicos y los Anónimos," Novedades, 27 May 1957, supp., p. 8, only nodded his acceptance of the classical play and then moved on to discuss El buen amor.

[2]Paz, 1974; Alatorre, 1976.

[3]Luis Vicent, "Teatro," Mañana, 25 May 1957, p. 56.

[4]"Por nuestros teatros," El Redondel, 5 May 1957, p. 15; interview; "3er Programa"; "Poesía del Siglo XIV"; "Cartas a un amigo," Hoy, 25 May 1957, p. 23.

[5]Quoted by Mendoza in "Poesía del Siglo XIV."

With El buen amor, Paz had conceived a kind of moral, subversive revolt,[1] through humor and "gamesmanship" in the spirit of Paz, of Poesía en Voz Alta, and of the minstrels of the fourteenth century who voiced the Archpriest's verse. Whereas Calderón's play represents divine love, the monologue, the single "I," and the moralist concerned with the soul, as Jorge del Olmo explains Paz's interpretation, the Archpriest represents human love, the chorus, the "I" as reflected in contrasting angled mirrors, and the moralist concerned with reconciling morality with enjoyment of life.[2] The Archpriest's world is a madcap world, inhabited by animals, humans, and allegorical figures. The world is witty, charming, and erotic; the episodes about it are related in an Italian dialect.

To communicate the spirit of this world, Mendoza and Soriano decided to present fourteen selections from the Book as a review or revista. Mendoza had been influenced by Barrault, the Commedia dell'Arte, and his knowledge of the fourteenth-century theatre of Spain. But the music-hall style--not concept--of the spectacle was inspired by a production of Cranks. The play, a series of skits, by the British writer-dancer, John Cranko, had been presented just prior to this program.[3] El buen amor incorporated song,[4] dance, acrobatics, dialogue, and choral speaking,

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[1]Paz interview, 1974. [2]P. 32.

[3]Mendoza interview, August 1977. Referring to the influence of Cranks are Cantón, "Semana Teatral," and María Luisa Mendoza, "Poesía del Siglo XIV."

[4]Margit Frank Alatorre lent her voice to the First and Second Programs because the actors were averse to singing. By the Third Program, the same performers without any coaxing volunteered to sing. (Alatorre, 1976 and Gutiérrez Heras.)

accompanied by festive, yet "ironic" music which was influenced by the Spanish Renaissance of the sixteenth century.[1] If the Archpriest's language was unfamiliar to some, the production might clarify its meaning.[2]

The selections varied in theme, character, and setting. To accommodate them, Soriano used the cyclorama as background, uncovered Mexican crates as props, and uniforms--this time, all identical and resembling Chinese pajamas--for the barefooted actors. To indicate a different selection, the start of a new "game," the actors changed minor costume elements--signs and buttons, for instance--or carried on a contrasting hand-prop, and arranged their crates--also carried on--in the way they were needed.[3]

In one selection, shortened in title to "Guardarse de bever mucho vino blanco é tynto,"[4] a sermon on the evils of drinking much white and red wine, Carlos Fernández got progressively more intoxicated; "De las

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[1]Velázquez described the music. (Interview.)

[2]It is noteworthy, though perhaps inconsequential, that the difficult, double-entendred, and often archaic language of the Archpriest prompted the editor, Julio Cejador y Frauca, of the two volumes of Libro de buen amor, Clásicos Castellanos, nos. 14 and 17 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1963) to divide the space between text and notes on language.

All references to selections from Libro de buen amor are to these editions.

[3]Mendoza interview, 1972. Salvador Novo, 25 May 1957, p. 23, also speaks about the costuming and the crates.

[4]The original title is "De cómo el Amor castiga al Arçipreste que aya en sy buenas constunbres, é ssobre todo que se guarde de bever mucho vino blanco é tynto."

propiedades que las dueñas chicas han," the attributes of petite girls were sung about by three petite actresses (Tara Parra, Pina Pellicer, and Ulalume).[1] The opening scene, "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum," an invocation to God, was orchestrated by Héctor Mendoza, delivered solemnly, and contrasted with the proceeding scenes; in another, "Enssienplo de los dos perezosos, que querían cassar con una dueña," Tara Parra played a girl courted by two monstrous men, Juan de Saro and José Luis Pumar.[2] [See Figures 13 and 14 pp. 161-62.] In other scenes, actors spoke while standing on their heads, or tossed around a ball in rhythmic accompaniment to their dialogue. They played with words, they played with objects, and in the final scene, "De cómo clérigos é legos é flayres é monjas é duenãs é joglares salieron á reçebir á don Amor," they played that they were playing "instruments." The entire cast sang this poem of carnal love; each one mimed the playing of an instrument which was an object carved to resemble a specific sexual part of the human anatomy.[3] [See Figure 15, p. 163.]

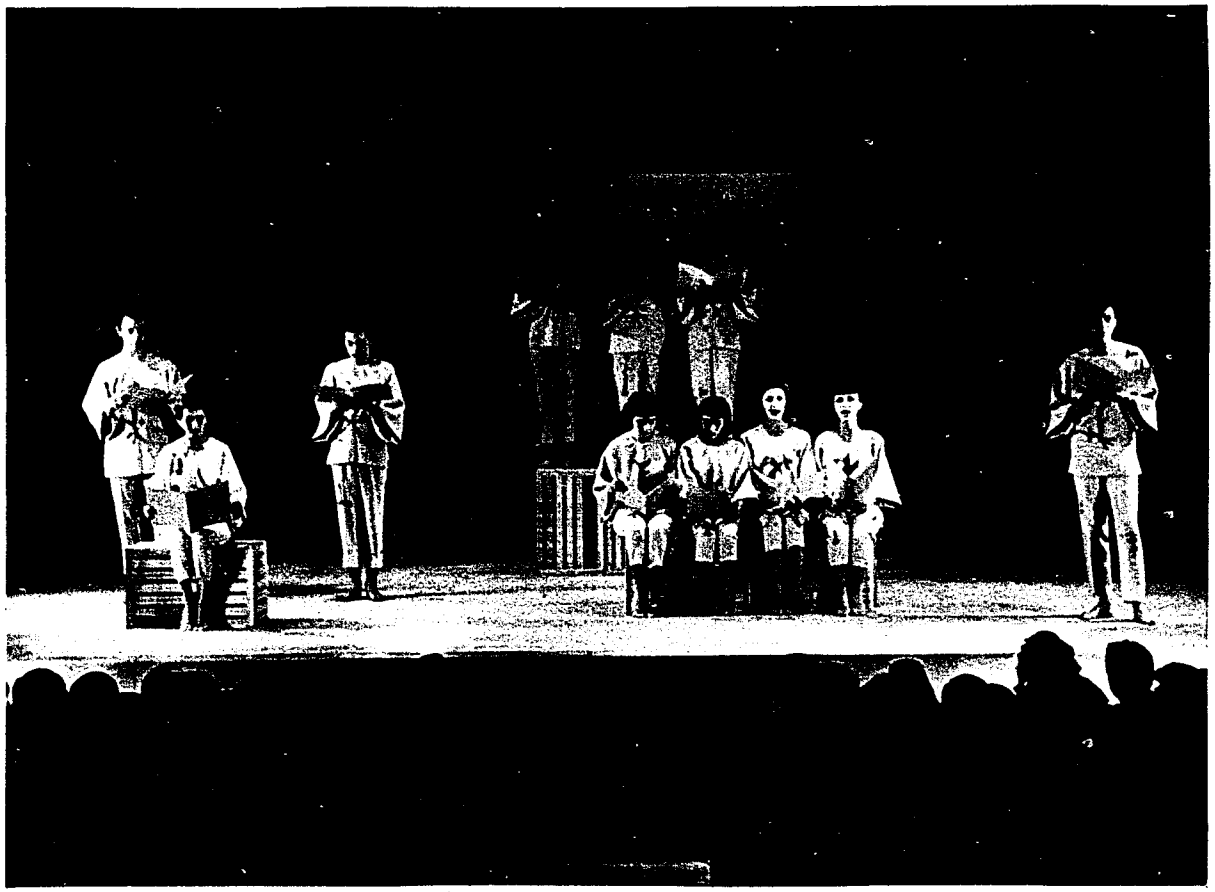
The critics were bored with the Calderón play, but at least Poesía en Voz Alta had reinterpreted a classic in a dignified way for the contemporary stage. With El buen amor, the results were different. The

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[1] Libro de buen amor, no. 14, pp. 195-210, and no. 17, pp. 252-54. A photo of the latter scene appears in Mendoza, "Poesía del Siglo XIV."

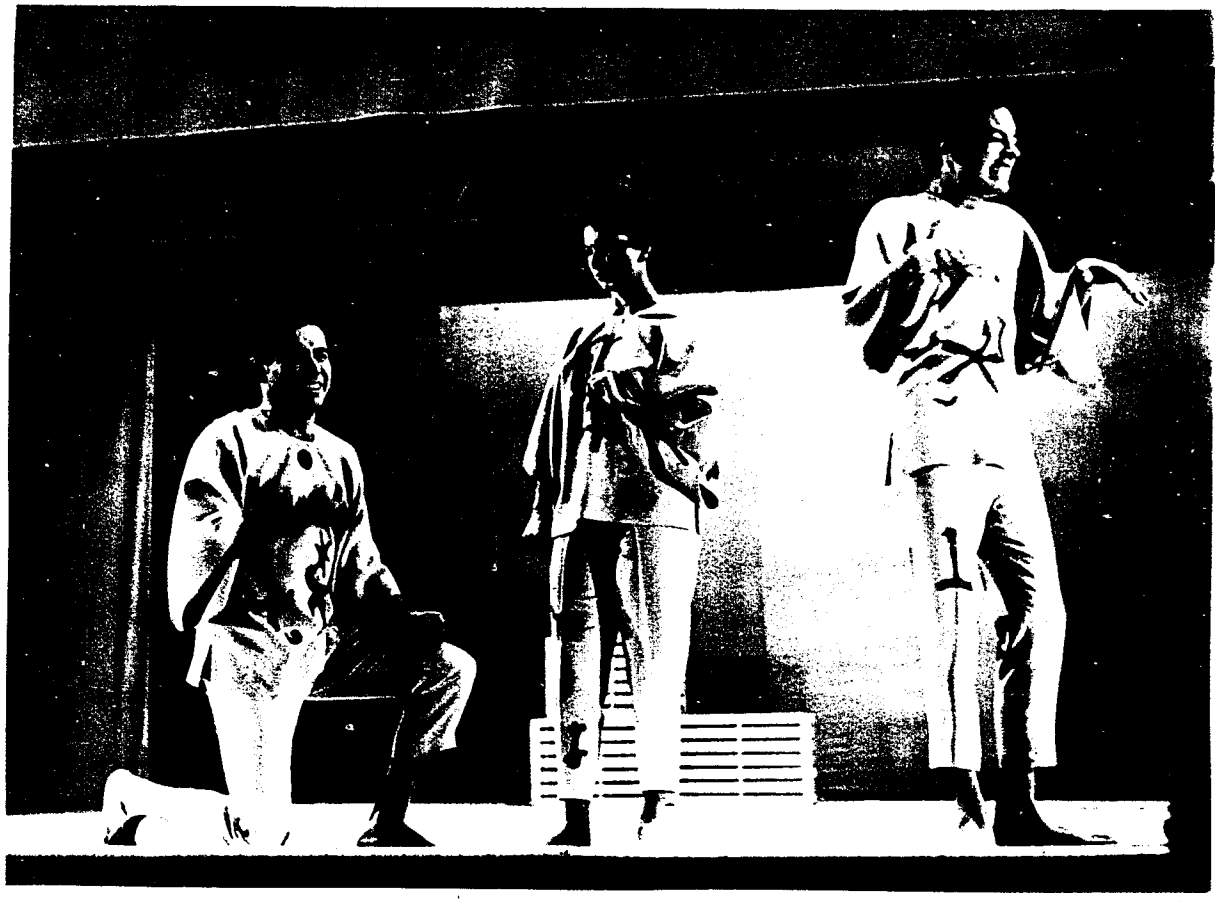
[2] Libro de buen amor, no. 14, pp. 1-6 and 172-77.

[3] Libro de buen amor, no. 17, pp. 132-70.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Juan Soriano)

Fig. 13. The opening scene of the Archpriest's El buen amor. (Left to right Castaño, Parra, de Saro; back, Stopen, Gurrola, Pumar; seated, Saviñón, Pellicer, Elío, Ulalume; Fernández.)



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 14. Tara Parra is courted by José Luis Pumar and Juan de Saro in El buen amor.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 15. The closing scene of El buen amor.

production, which Juan José Gurrola likened to Peter Brook's staging of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream,[1] was described as blasphemous, demonstrating a lack of respect for the classics,[2] and without that "proof of violent and authentic love," which Paz had argued for in his commentary.[3] No critic had commented about the mixing of Orient-influenced, contemporary jazz music with Calderón's Spanish, seventeeth-century play. But this was not the case of the Spanish, fourteenth-century El buen amor. One critic, who praised Mendoza's "irreverences," thought that the mixing of Mexican motifs--the huacales, the costuming elements--with Spanish poetry and music did not jell.[4] Another critic wished that Mendoza had updated the obsolete Spanish language of the Archpriest for the sake of "clarity," "simplicity," and a unified production style, though he acknowledged that the "purists" would have classified this as "blasphemy."[5] Two other critics viewed the visual elements as distractions. Cantón stated that the directors of Poesía en Voz Alta would

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[1]Gurrola was referring to Brook's production (first perfomed in 1970) which remained faithful to Shakespeare's words but incorporated acrobatics, plastic tubes used as toy musical instruments, and the like, into its staging design. (Interview, 1974.)

[2]Interviews: Paz, 1972 and 1974; Mendoza, 1973, and 1974; Gurrola, 1971 and 1974; Parra, 1974; Cárdenas, 1974; Ibáñez, 1971, and 8 November 1973 (New York); Alatorre, 1976, and many others.

[3]Said Paz with wry humor: "Being sacrilegious is the only way to love the classics. To read them anew, becoming emotionally involved, and considering them contemporaries. Classics, like women, ought to be treated with love and without respect." (As quoted by Mendoza, "Poesía del Siglo XIV.")

[4]Guardia, "Los Clásicos." [5]Vicent, 25 May 1957, p. 56.

do better to write their own "libretto," rather than "powder" down the work of the "poor Archpriest."[1] "Falstaff," acknowledging that Poesía en Voz Alta's form was probably historically correct and believing that the production "is not even directed toward the masses," said that it overtaxed the large majority who were unfamiliar with the classics, by demanding a "double and intense attention" as both "listener" and "viewer."[2]

Other critics did write that the production was conceived and staged brilliantly, capturing the world and poetry of the Archpriest. In fact, almost all written critical reviews were of this opinion, including those by Guardia, Falstaff, and Vicent. To Guardia, the mixture of Spanish and Mexican motifs "does not subtract an iota of merit from the entire work."[3] To Falstaff, appraising the production for the cultured minority now, the ensemble "knows how to say and sing verse," and has "precise movement and appropriate gesture." And Vicent, who had only negative impressions about Mendoza's direction of Calderón's play, and would have preferred the Archpriest's language updated, raved about El buen amor: "Mendoza's scenic conception is stupendous. Fourteen numbers, fourteen bulls-eyes. . . . The group of eleven artists who sing, dance, and recite the Archpriest's verses inundate the stage: they make grimaces, have a ball, and

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[1]"Semana Teatral."

[2]"Teatro Moderno: Repartición y Participación de la Palabra," El Universal, 26 May 1957, sec. 4, p. 6.

[3]"Los Clásicos."

live like those they are [portraying]--untamed people who relish life. . . ."[1] The critic for Cine Mundial found the production refreshing;[2] the critic for Siempre was enthralled by it. He wrote that during its forty-five minutes, "you never have occasion to remove your eyes from the stage or erase the smile from your lips; that is how agile, pleasant, and interesting it is."[3] "Mendoza reaches a high plane among Mexican directors," said Moreno Ling;[4] "El buen amor proves not only the possibilities of Poesía en Voz Alta, but the talent and dramatic aptitudes of the director Héctor Mendoza," wrote Magaña-Esquivel.[5]

No critic found fault with the performers in El buen amor. Luis Sánchez Zevada had cited acting and vocal problems in Calderón's play, but none when the group performed the Archpriest's poetry.[6] Salvador Novo had been irked by faulty articulation and misplaced accents in King Belshazzar's Feast; but when the actors spoke the even more difficult language of El buen amor, "here there was no problem with the syllables."[7] Novo was expressing common sentiments when he said: "The fresh imagination, the boldness, the good humor of those very likeable youngsters is the best tribute to, and most human resurrection of the Archpriest. . . ."[8]

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[1] 25 May 1957, p. 56. [2] "Puntos Suspensivos."

[3] 15 May 1957, p. 49. [4] "3er Programa."

[5] "Estrenos y Reposiciones en Abril." [6] "Por nuestros teatros," p. 15.

[7] 25 May 1957, p. 23. [8] Ibid.

Outrage and discontent over El buen amor were not voiced in most reviews, but appeared in oral commentaries first, and written editorials later. Frasquita, delighted with El buen amor, took note of the "blushing" and "exiting" during its presentation. And Jorge del Olmo dramatized the production's impact on opening night:

> As the final curtain was falling, between applause and "bravos," [and] a few livid faces, looking very ill.... While some remained in their seats, applauding enthusiastically, others shrugged their shoulders and rapidly left. Pause. The curtain opens once and once more... Flowers, enthusiasm... In the corridor, opinions are divided:
> --(Depreciatory) An ivory tower!
> --Pure aestheticism!
> --(Enraged) And to think that people have nothing to eat!
> --This is theatre!
> --Our classics! How dare they?
> --(Enthusiastic) They [the classical authors] would have loved it!
> --(Ironic) And those costumes!
> --(Almost lunging at him [the above speaker]) It is marvelous!
> --What bad taste! To use the Archpriest to make a musical comedy!
> --And why not?
> --Finally! A director with imagination![1]

Poesía en Voz Alta, a mostly artistic success if only partly accepted, was enjoying heavy box-office activity, but the attacks were continuing. No longer were they confined to word-of-mouth; they were centered on the funding source, the University, and more propitiously placed for wider readership, including the socially conscious groups, than were the theatre reviews. One such attack appeared in the column, "Picaporte" of Hoy magazine, by the novelist Luis Spota:

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[1]P. 28.

> The Poesía en Voz Alta series, in which some "intellectuals" show themselves off, is costing the University of Mexico a half-million pesos annually. But, curiously, the UNA[M] lacks the money to stock its libraries' vacant shelves.[1]

The director of the Cultural Diffusion Department, Jaime García Terrés, wrote a justification, restatement of intent, and biting retort to the critics of the production and of the UNAM's sponsorship:

> POESÍA EN VOZ ALTA
>
> The Third Program of Poesía en Voz Alta, recently opened, and supported as were the previous programs by this University, includes a spectacle woven with some parts of El libro de buen amor, by the Archpriest of Hita. It is not for me to judge the correctness or error of such an approach: various reasons, however, prompt my writing briefly about this.
>
> LIBERTY, FESTIVITY
>
> El buen amor (as the piece was entitled) consists of fourteen festive scenes, in which the words of the medieval verses fuse with pantomime and song. . . . The greatest amount of liberty, in sum, and the most festivity.
>
> TWO FACTIONS
>
> Opening night saw the public dividing themselves, immediately, into two opposite factions. There was, on one side, those who were applauding and were enthusiastic. And there was, on the other, those who would murmur or shout their protests, indignant before the boldness and, they said, the "frivolity" that they were enduring.
>
> THE PURPOSE
>
> This splitting of the spectators between two radical attitudes (I couldn't notice if there was any in-between attitude) wasn't accidental. This was our very purpose in presenting El buen amor. It was foreseen by us and its absence would have upset our calculations.
>
> TWO POSITIONS
>
> And thus it is that those attitudes define, respectively, two universal positions before a work of art: that of the man resolved to recognize . . . the permanent substance of poetry, of the man sensible to the validity and even to the necessity of a certain boldness that--in the words of Octavio Paz--"is proof of authentic and violent love." And, on the other hand . . . that of the slave blinded

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[1] 18 May 1957, p. 60.

> with prejudices (and perhaps also, that of the habitual circumspect who denies every fresh approach because he knows he himself is unable to enjoy it. . . .
> DEFINITION, ILLUMINATION
> . . . It interested me to define motives and to point out consequences, from my own personal point of view. But it is evident, of course, that every individual has the right to hold diverse opinions. Let all opinions be declared and defended with equal passion; if not--I fear--with the same justice.[1]

García Terrés failed to satisfy the reproaches. In an editorial in Novedades, Elvira Vargas gives support to the idea of the University Theatre or on-campus theatre for students, but rejects Poesía en Voz Alta: it "has nothing to do with students, first because it performs or has performed in the city in tiny theatres, or pocket theatres, where, naturally, only small groups of the so-called 'privileged or touched by the gods' attend, in the occupation of dedicating themselves to the poetic story, or more clearly and evidently, to verse."[2] Vargas insists that the University, because it "is democratic," has better means of spending money to diffuse culture than through an elitist theatre group that "only stage[s] classical poetry," avoids confronting modern problems, and whose staging is "so refined . . . that it is only swish and homosexual," than on, in short, "a half-dozen effeminates."[3]

Luis Spota reiterated his original contention in more biting terms:

> Strange things are happening among the geniuses of national literature. Juan José Arreola, who is an intelligent person, refused

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[1]From the column, "La Feria de Los Días," Universidad de México 11 (May 1957):3. Translated by Héctor Mendoza and Roni J. Unger.

[2]"Multicosas," 12 June 1957, sec. 1, p. 5. [3]Ibid.

> to participate in the Poesía en Voz Alta happening[1] which the algebraic poet, Jaime García Terrés, organizes with University money. This Poesía en Voz Alta which is amusing the promotor, García Terrés's friends, costs a half-million [pesos] a year.[2]

There was oral abuse as well, some of it heard even within the University walls.[3]

García Terrés, representing but one faction of the University, was unable to dissuade the authorities from appreciably reducing support. But he did not resign from his position, contrary to Luis Spota's stand, expressed in yet another swipe at the "pachanga" group.[4] The criticisms vexed the University; production costs of Poesía en Voz Alta had soared; the company had not only moved somewhat from its original perceived conception, but changed its manner of presentations and its theatre.[5] It

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[1]This is translated from the Spanish word, pachanga, uncommonly used here to describe a theatre group. It is referring to a disorganized elitist bunch only clowning around, as opposed to a serious theatre company. Hence, "happening," in its derogatory, distorted sense, comes closest to Spota's meaning.

[2]"Picaporte," Hoy, 8 June 1957, p. 40.

[3]Interviews with Mendoza, 1972, Paz, 1974, Ibáñez, July 1973, and others. To quote Paz, the members of the group were called "communists," "reactionaries," "homosexuals," "elitists," "foreign-minded," and "enemies of Mexico."

[4]"Picaporte," Hoy, 20 July 1957, p. 52. Spota, accepting this as fact, was disclosing that García Terrés resigned because of Poesía en Voz Alta's budget cuts, rather than a disagreement with the Rector, Nabor Carrillo, over atomic explosions. As Mendoza assessed (August 1977), it may be that García Terrés submitted his resignation, but it was turned down.

[5]Interviews with Mendoza, 1972, Paz, 1974, and Ibáñez, July 1973.

was, therefore, showing increased independence in all ways except financially. For the Fourth Program, the company sought donors, and incorporated itself as Poesía en Voz Alta, A.C. Said Paz: "I used to meet with rich people and announce: 'If you do not give money, Mexican culture will disappear.'"[1] Wrote Vicent: "Poesía en Voz Alta had to throw itself into the street to beg."[2] And one critic for Novedades, who noted that he had personally witnessed Juan Soriano "hustle through the streets of Mexico to get sponsors," filled an opening column of his glowing review with a reprint of the illustrious names and institutional sponsors that were listed in the playbill.[3]

Fourth Program

"Following the road that was outlined from the start," Diego de Mesa's commentary to the program read, "Poesía en Voz Alta--creative word spoken for all, ritual conjuration that produces the collective miracle, opening the liberating worlds of those who are officials and, at the same time, common people--joins in its fourth program a classical author with a new author: Quevedo with Elena Garro." It continued:

> They do not pretend to make comparisons nor to establish affinities--which always exist--but rather to simply continue giving the public the living word which belongs to the public, and to initiate the young poets into the rite, hoping that the miracle will not be interrupted.

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[1]Paz interview, 1974. [2]3 Agosto 1957, p. 56.

[3]"El [sic] Hogar Sólido: Éxito de Elena Garro en Poesía en Voz Alta; Demostró su Talento," Novedades, 21 July 1957, sec. 2, 2nd pt., p. 11. See the playbill, Appendix A, p. 361.

The stage game is clean, and above all, it is just that: a game. Only by stripping away can the essence of things be reached. And a Quevedo, without gorgets, without farthingales, without goatees, and without manes can be even more Quevedo, and is more "enamored dust" than when hidden in the erudite, or falsified archaeological representation. Futhermore, Quevedo, first Madridian poet, terrible moralist, is satirizing a society whose circumstances were very close to our own. A society which, barely established, corrupted the very vices of its formation. Madrid, during the reign of Philip III, was barely a stable city. Converted into a Court only a few years back, it had been the affluence of a copious immigration and had grown rapidly, bringing with it all that this implies: speculations over land and buildings, founding enterprises, accumulations of wealth, and that general desire to make fast money. Madrid, converted into a great city, has its newly rich and its searchers, its palatial nobility and its poor hidalgos, its gilded society and its underworld, not very different from what we know it to be today.

The Dances and the Entremés that have been chose and combined for Poesía en Voz Alta's program are going bereft of all academic garb that might be a barrier between the poet and the people to whom the magic word is directed. And by saying "people," I mean, everyone.

The farces by Elena Garro are essentially poetic and satiric theatre, a basic theatre, since poetry is basic, the rest being anecdote or episode. The nostalgic world of Elena Garro, the world she recuperates with her poetry, is above all that of childhood. She finds reality in the familiar games, in the refrains and proverbs she takes possession of it, strips it with a critical, spirit, and rebelling against all the conventionalisms that cover it, she comes upon the noble vestment, with a new form, in order to give it that way to everyone, to all those who have played, or who continue to play, "doña Blanca is covered...[1] without knowing that it was a game of illusion, for all those who have beaten around the bush in search of that liberty which only poetry can give.

In A Solid Home, the time of infancy, of remembrances, is a time that has never been, a purely poetic time: the time of the tomb. Its humor--slightly "black"--frees the dead characters--living individuals--from the prejudices which bound them in life, and its poetry opens those spaces towards the nostalgia of things never lived.[2]

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[1]The Mexican equivalent of "Ring Around the Rosy."

[2]Playbill 4, Appendix A, p. 358.

The Fourth Program spotlighted Elena Garro's plays. Two of them opened the program, one closed it, and the Quevedo adaptation was sandwiched in between. Garro's plays are nostalgic expressions of man's attempt to conquer solitude, seemingly influenced by Eugène Ionesco and Frederico García Lorca. The plots are simple; the characters live in closed, disconnected worlds; the dialogue is metaphorical although the plays themselves are not metaphors.

Andarse por las ramas (To Beat About the Bush), with strongly autobiographical overtones,[1] satirizes a family who argue during lunch. Titina (Tara Parra) interacts first with her husband, Don Fernando of 7:05 [p.m.] (José Luis Pumar) and her young son, Polito (Enrique Stopen) who sits with bib at the table and a Harlequin-cap of rattlesnakes at his feet. She then interacts with Lagartito (Carlos Castaño), the young dandy she encounters on the street in one of her phantasized moments of flight. Titina has rejected the rational, clock-run world of Don Fernando for the "lunar dimension," as her husband calls it. She flees to the bushes, and plays in her magical, fantasy world where stars are able to fall into bowls of soup and the moon, into a plate of lentils. At times, Polito joins her world for brief stays, as does Lagartito, but never Don Fernando. "To beat about the bush is to flee from the truth," he screams out to her. "The bushes are true," she calmly retorts. Lagartito, on the other hand,

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[1]Elena Garro was then wed to Octavio Paz. Garro was unavailable to comment on the autobiographical basis of the play. However, the interviewed participants of the company found this point undebatable.

craves for her world. While at play she lands in the bushes; Lagartito pleads: "Let me climb up to your bushes." "It's impossible," she replies knowingly. "Each one falls where he must fall."

Communication is impossible in Titina's world; it is permeated with solitude, loneliness, nostalgic longings, and longings for metaphysical things. There is no anger or articulated anguish; both have been replaced by gentleness, humor, play, and especially escape. "Elena plays," wrote one critic about the central characters in the first-two plays;[1] Andarse por las ramas is "like a charming, faithful portrait of Elena herself," said another critic, "always ready to flee toward her airy home, and withdraw from the clock, from the punctual, nutritious leek soup. She is the same exiled Titina whose kingdom is also not of this world, whose true motherland is the tall, sonorous solitude of the tree, sketched anywhere and at any time.[2]

Evasion, solitude, wistfulness, play, and a mature vision of the human condition coupled with fanciful, childhood dreams may also be seen in Los pilares de doña Blanca (The Pillars of Doña Blanca), originally subtitled La muralla (The Wall). Based on a Mexican nursery rhyme, the play centers on the Repunzel-like Doña Blanca (Tara Parra) who is locked in a tower by her husband, Rubi (Carlos Castaño), and surrounded by five

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[1]"Éxito de Elena Garro," p. 12.

[2]Margarita Michelena, "Teatro y Poesía: Poesía en Voz Alta: creación y revolución," Hoy, 17 August 1957, p. 59.

mythical wooers--the four Knights (Enrique Stopen, Juan Ibáñez, a new actor, Juan José Gurrola, and José Luis Pumar) and the Knight-Horse (Carlos Femández). Each of the four wooers hands over his heart which is set ablaze. Only the Knight-Horse kicks away at the tower, hoping to destroy it, and refuses to extend his heart. To receive it, she must enter it; there is no other way to find yourself, to see yourself. But this is impossible. The blaze rises, the tower crumbles, and Blanca and Rubi vanish. It is Rubi's voice which explains the events: "Everything was the reflection of a mirror. Now it has broken and now we are no more. Its splintered chips are reflecting other suns." The dream has ended, it was spun on the heart's desire, nourished by compliance and belief, and shattered by the Knight-Horse's refusal to participate.

The best received of Garro's three, poetic one-act plays was Un hogar sólido (A Solid Home).[1] This ironically titled (the characters find their "solid home" only after death), black-humored play is set in a family tomb where generations meet, reminisce, complain, and speak of the past while awaiting the Final Judgment. One character hopes to become a pine, another, the window that peers out on the world, another, the fingers of the Virgin who embroiders; one becomes the rain on the water, another, the wood in flames, another, the solid home--the stone slabs of her tomb.

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[1]Elena Garro had trained for dance and choreography; creative writing was included in her education at the UNAM. Known as a sensitive, intelligent, well-read woman, these three plays constituted her first venture into playwriting. In Mexico as well as abroad, Garro is rated one of the best writers of this genre.

Among the eight inhabitants of the tomb are Don Clemente (Juan José Gurrola) who repeatedly loses sight of his femur, which young Catita (Pina Pellicer), who longs to return to the world she never knew, uses as a bugle, and of his metacarpi, which prevents his shaking hands with the newly arrived; the grandmother Mama Jesusita (Tara Parra), who is condemned to be bedded until Final Judgment because her family thoughtlessly buried her in a nightgown; the foreigner Eva Extranjera (Ana Ofelia Murguía, another new additon to Poesía en Voz Alta), who lived for sounds and the sea; and Vicente Mejía (Carlos Castaño), clad as an officer of Benito Juárez and ready for "any occasion" (i.e., revolution).

There is no fear of death or of the Final Judgment in A Solid Home; on the contrary, death brings hope of finding the "thread" with which to construct the solid home. When Doña Gertrudis (Argentina Morales) sees the feet of the new arrival, Lidia (Manola Saavedra), she joyfully welcomes her: "What a pleasure that you've died so soon." The blue-faced Muni (Enrique Stopen) sought death through cyanide in despair over not finding the solid home of his childhood, but he is confident of finding it here; and Lidia is encouraged by this, for she acknowledges that she never found the thread of life either.

What is ever-present in this play of universal problems is Mexico. There are references to Mexican places, Chihuahua and the Mezcala River, to a famous person, Juárez, and to such organizations as the Association for the Blind. The characters are Mexican in their religious

beliefs, in the female preoccupation with home and clothes, in their formalities and courtesies, their gripes about the government, and in the belief that death is but another phase of life. "With the lance of her [Elena Garro's] A Solid Home," wrote an unidentified critic, "she slew the dragon of women's literature and [the literature] of some of the best men of letters and theatre."[1]

The works in the Fourth Program move from "play" over soup, to fantasy in a constricted tower, and before descending beneath the earth with A Solid Home, to La vida airada, a saucy, impudent, poetic satire, composed of five of Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas's works--three bailes, or dances, one diálogo, or dialogue, and one entremés, or interlude.[2] These selections by the seventeenth-century Spanish poet, which Héctor Mendoza set in a wax museum and then on a street and in a contemporary brothel when, in flashback, the characters return to earthy life, display one facet of Quevedo's Madrid.[3] It is a world inhabited by

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[1]"Éxito de Elena Garro," p. 12.

[2]Quevedo's output in verse is contained in Obras Completas de Quevedo, ed. Felicidad Buendía, vol. 2 (Madrid: Aguilar, 1960). The selections in the volume are grouped according to Quevedo's own categorical designations: Entremeses, Comedias (full-length plays), Bailes, and Diálogos.

[3]The city could have been the New York or New Orleans of 1957 to Luis Sánchez Zevada in "Espejo Mágico," El Redondel, 28 July 1957, sec. 2, p. 8; it could have been the Mexico City of 1957 to Armando de María y Campos, "El Cuarto Programa de Poesía en Voz Alta," Novedades, 30 July 1957, sec. 1, p. 21.

María y Campos failed to review the Third Program. He explains why in the above review: "a treasonable illness deprived me of knowing the third show."

prostitutes, procurers, and thieves--sordid figures of the underground--who, seemingly without cares, scheme, play, and enjoy.[1]

The baile, ironically titled "Los valientes y tomajonas" ("The Brave Ones [i.e., the pimps] and Whores"), is an introduction to the underground and an "overture" to La vida airada. The Maestro (Carlos Fernández), who begins and ends the piece, starts by philosophizing about life;

> Everything is eaten by time,
> The years chew everything,
> The courageous men do not last,
> They are very much worn by the hangman.
> Our lives are but a breath;
> But the policemen live much longer
> They go over one hundred breaths.

In the perspective of life's brevity and the irony of "courageous men" hung, the Maestro goes on to speak about certain prominent figures of this world whose death brought a quiet to it. One of them was Juan Redondo (Juan José Gurrola). We learn that Redondo, a bachelor, had an illegitimate daughter, named La Vaquería (Manola Saavedra), "a woman of good earnings." That Redondo was famed for killing his father, mother, and elder brother, and for turning two sisters into prostitutes. And that

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[1]The following discussion of the selections and their staging elements is purposely detailed so that the next topic, the critical reception of La vida airada, can be rightly perceived and more accurately judged. The language of these selections is significantly more difficult than the Archpriest's; Quevedo was even lesser known than he; and no analysis or synopsis of the texts was included in the playbill to facilitate comprehension. Insisted Héctor Mendoza, who spontaneously translated all dialogue in the first sketch, during his interview of 24 August 1976: "Quevedo is even difficult for me."

when he died, guitars became silent, and clubs where flamenco music played, became empty. Therefore, the Maestro explains, giving the rationale for this baile, so as not to lose track of his "tradition," which included a penchant for parties, dancing, jesting, and show, "the City has created a dance in his honor."[1]

On the Teatro Moderno stage, this opening portion of the sketch was illustrated by the male characters simulating death, either from a hangman's rope--the case of Perico de Soria (Carlos Castaño)--or in physical brawls, and then composing a montaged freeze. Their return to life was signaled by the Maestro's introductory end, and the prostitutes, present all the while, began uttering maxims that gave us a glimpse into the underworld's thoughts. For instance, "he who pays cash when loved is wise," was the opinion articulated by La Pironda (Rosa María Saviñón). After this brief meeting with the characters who would play major roles in other sketches, "Los valientes y tomajonas" was closed by the Maestro who told of a fight in a brothel and the fierce dancing that followed it. This stanza, choreographically staged, was accompanied by sounds of tango music.[2]

The dialogo, "Galán y Dama, II"[3] ("Ladies' Man and Lady, II") displays a very brief encounter between the Galán and the Dama, played by

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[1]Trans., Mendoza.

[2]Music notations are on the script of La vida airada.

[3]So titled by Quevedo, but called "Diálogo" by Poesía en Voz Alta. See Playbill 4, Appendix A, p. 360.

Juan José Gurrola and Manola Saavedra, respectively. His aim is to bed her without material payment but promises of free things--such as his soul and faith--instead. The blasé Dama's position, as she counters him, is best expressed in her oft-repeated refrain: "Money would be better." The "dialogue" was performed without music which was reserved for the "dances" alone.

There is a lesson on love and love affairs in the baile, "Los galeotes" ("The Galley Slaves"), expressed metaphorically through the sea, its sea-captains, and swimmers. The setting is a jail, where Juan Redondo is paying for "his sins": His "car took thirty maidens," as the Maestro terms the rapes. Then, too, "to seduce him, ten widows made rags of themselves; he impoverished thirty barbers: they [the women] left [pubic] hairs by leaps and bounds."[1] The action of the scene begins when the prostitutes, who have come to bid Redondo farewell, start to reminisce about their pasts and figuratively describe love. It ends when the men, Mostoles (Enrique Stopen) and Obregón (Juan Ibáñez), repeat in unison for the second time their deductive definition of love:

> Love is a swimmer
> Undressed and undresser.
> To love, then, is to swim
> To undress oneself and undress another.[2]

Mendoza cleverly utilized Quevedo's literary structure to stage the final segment of the piece. The above refrain came after metaphorical

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[1]Trans., Mendoza. [2]Ibid.

examples of love which the prostitutes, La Capona (Argentina Morales) and La Vaquería, delivered in unison too. "Lovers, mother, are like eggs: those passed through water are the tenderest," was one of them. Mendoza, whose production incorporated choral singing, choral speaking, and dancing to a calypso beat,[1] had Mostoles and Obregón almost musically back-up the women, by chiming, with deadpan, solemn expressions, "dum, di, di, dum, da, da, da," after each example was said.[2] This gave a comic, rhythmic sense to the section.

The sprightly entremés "El Caballero de la Tenaza" ("The Gentleman of the Claw"), with its double-entendres,[3] shows how the underground replenishes its stock--through its "children." This entremés of prostitutes and their ruffianly, potential clients, opens with two representative heads of household interacting on a street: The Madame, Doña Azuelo (Argentina Morales), is physically dragging, in true Commedia dell'Arte fashion, her snared, lecherous, but unwilling-as-client, Don Tenaza (Carlos Fernandez) to her brothel. Perturbed by his resistance, for she has only taken him by the arm, he snaps back at her:

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[1]The review in the column, "Ellos y Ellas," El Figaro, 11 August 1957, p. 16, speaks of the music and dancing.

[2]Mendoza interview, 1976; also see script in Appendix B, pp.484-87.

[3]Take, for example, the title. Literally, tenaza means "claw"; Don Tenaza has a claw hand to validate his name. Figuratively, tenaza refers to a grabber, a toucher; hence, explained Ibáñez (September 1976), the word is also a pun on the male sexual organ.

TENAZA: Then what would you take me by?
AZUELO: What? The money.
TENAZA: She mentioned the Devil!

The scene progresses in the following way. Tenaza, unable to free himself, changes his tack. He pleads pathetically: "I'm a foreigner and I miss my land." But to no avail. After much bartering, the characters ultimately arrive at the brothel, and the scene moves indoors for a demonstration on the effectiveness of Azuelo's and Tenaza's child-rearing techniques. We meet the respectful "girls" of the house and Tenaza's obedient boys, who both assemble upon being called.[1] But their examination is postponed until a comic dialogue on parenthood, another battle of the sexes, concludes: Tenaza grumbles about costs and responsibilities of fatherhood; Azuelo argues that women bear the greater brunt of the burden by undergoing nine dangerous months of pregnancy and then child-birth, all of which is made light of by Tenaza. To him, it amounts to nine months' worth of cravings and whims, of relaxing in bed, and then merely singing cradle songs. What brings the characters back to the matter at hand--the demonstration--is Azuelo's suggestion of dinner. Says Tenaza: "That language I don't understand," meaning "not if I must pay for it."[2]

In the demonstration, each parent alternately questions his wards; they respond as one, take a bow (or courtsey), and step back to let the

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[1]This section is open to interpretation. The boys may have been at the house or within close range of it.

[2]The first translation is mine, the second is Mendoza's.

other group take its turn. As expected, the drill proves that both groups have been thoroughly indoctrinated in their prospective, conflicting "trades." Their responses mean this: the girls demand material goods for their services, while the boys connive to get the services without sacrificing the goods. As in "Galán y Dama, II," the identical conflict goes unresolved in "El Caballero de la Tenaza."

The position of the underground men remains unchanged in the baile, "Las sonsaconas" ("The Enticers"). It is succinctly put by the character, Obregón: "To take my money and love me is to kill me not of love, but of hunger." A solution is finally found for the posed problem, even though its nature is different: how to snare the men, more importantly, their money, while the prostitutes are dancing with them. "Las sonsaconas," in which dance also refers to the sexual act, rectifies the mistaken notion that prostitute training may be accomplished in one course, and negates hasty assessment of such women as riffraff. The setting is a party where the women approach the men, and not vice-versa; there are couples dancing, and in the production the dancing was done to Afro-Cuban sounds. The prostitutes, cognizant of the need to "invent novelties"--new movements--of "good taste," because dancing--their trade--has become "much used," ponder from whom to learn them. As the prostitutes proceed to discount the "loonies" and other groups of men, Obregón interrupts to solve the dilemma: cosquillas, or tickles; they will unfailingly produce an infinite variety of new movements. The Maestro concludes "Las sonsaconas" and La vida airada with parodies in verse that begin like this: "Every man is conceived in original tickle," adding that there are different kinds of tickles and

different ticklish spots. When the Maestro ended, on the same note that he began La vida airada--that the world turned quiet once these people died--the audiences at the Teatro Moderno watched the characters return to stillness at their original places in the wax museum.

The game spirit ran through this program. From Poesía en Voz Alta's inception, short, one-act plays as designed by the author or arranged by the company, with simple plots and a focus on character had been presented. As in past programs, the Fourth Program demonstrated the company's fondness for novelty, for surprise. In the plays, the characters behave contrary to expectations. There is cynicism in Quevedo, and bitter-sweet or "black" humor in Garro, but neither author's characters are drawn as truly tortured or anguished, or cruel or depraved. There are no such stereotypes about prostitutes and procurers, nor generalizations about affairs of death and the dead. Whatever nostalgic recollections are expressed by some of Garro's characters are balanced by the purely materialistic concerns of Quevedo's.[1]

The set for the Fourth Program continued the company's design concept, but more severely whittled down to a cyclorama, wooden crates, and

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[1]Armando de María y Campos likens Garro's theatre--"a poetic game of evasion," he terms it--to Maeterlinck's theatre, in his review of the Fourth Program. The critic compares Maeterlinck's L'intérieur (Interior) to Garro's A Solid Home, to exemplify a major difference: In Interior, there are signs of an impending catastrophe, while in A Solid Home, a catastrophe is unexpected because the fall has already occurred, and the characters are reposeful in their solid home.

straight-backed wooden chairs. Several crates in a vertical pile represented Titina's tree, others, Polito's high chair, and single crates represented chairs around a nonexistent table in Andarse por las ramas. [See Figure 16, p. 186.] In a circular arrangement, the crates became Doña Blanca's tower in Los pilares de doña Blanca. [See Figure 17, p. 187.] Two horizontal crates, held together by a heavy linen fabric, were burial boxes in A Solid Home. [See Figure 18, p. 188.] There were no crates for Quevedo's La vida airada. Some sketches were played on a bare stage, and some with only chairs.[1] Other set pieces and properties were suggested through lighting effects and gestures. For example, a door was suggested by a light; a silver handbell, by a gesture.[2] Remarked an admiring Vicent about the imaginative use of so few elements: "They are the advantages that poverty brings."[3]

The lighting, uncredited in the playbill, was basic;[4] a spotlight was added to suggest the aforementioned door as well as the descension of Lidia's feet in A Solid Home. The acting was "conventionally realistic," as Mendoza phrased this presentational style,[5] but the costumes and makeup combined

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[1]Mendoza, 1973. See the photo in the review by the former critic for Excelsior, Wilberto Cantón, "Bitacora Teatral: Calidad y elevación en el Tercer [sic] Programa de 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" Cine Mundial, 7 August 1957, p. 15.

[2]Vicent, 3 August 1957, p. 57. [3]Ibid.

[4]The assistant director, José Luis Ibáñez, continued to operate the theatre's simple control boards.

[5]Interview, 5 September 1977. Wholly unrelated to Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theatre, the style was closer to the Spanish and French acting schools, Mendoza explained.



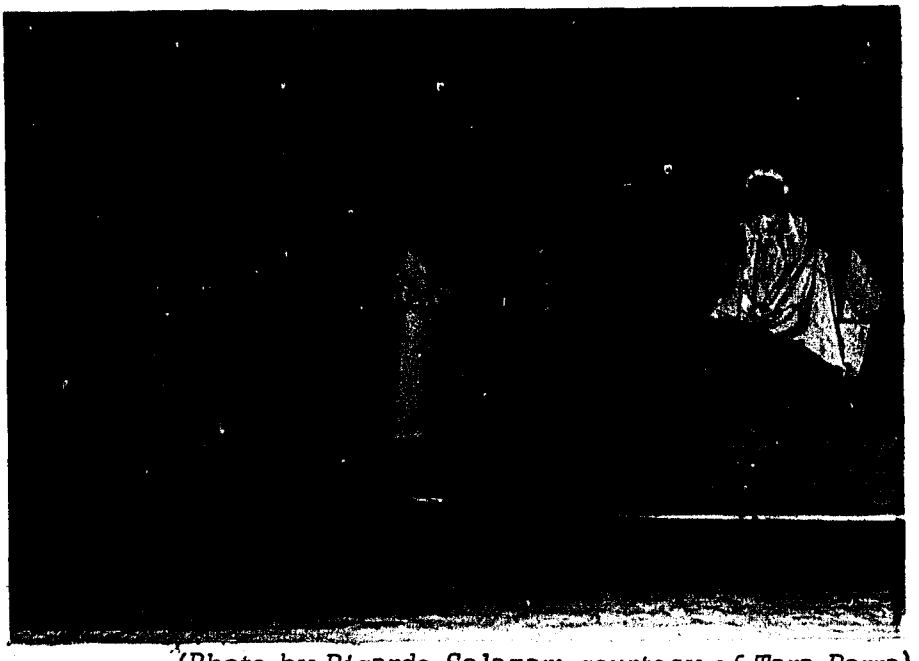
(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 16. Elena Garro's Andarse por las ramas with Stopen, Pumar at center, and Parra.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 17. The Oriental influence is detectable in this photo of Garro's Los pilares de doña Blanca, with Castaño and Parra at center. With the appearance of Rubi, Doña Blanca's husband, the four Knights (Stopen, Gurrola, Pumar, and Juan Ibáñez) crouch over the crates to symbolize their invisibility.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 18. This scene from Garro's A Solid Home parted with the text. Instead of only hearing the voice of Don Gregorio de la Huerta y Ramírez Puente deliver Lidia's eulogy, the living were brought onstage for the funeral services. Flanking Lidia (Saavedra), whose arms are crossed, are the funeral cortege (Fernández to her right; Juan Ibáñez and Saviñón, extreme left) and the preacher (Pumar, left of Saavedra). The rest, in the foreground, Castaño, Murguía seated, and Parra at right, are a few of Lidia's deceased relatives whom she will shortly join.

elements from realistic and nonrealistic styles. Contemporary dress and natural makeup were used in Garro's imaginative plays, save for the dead characters in A Solid Home. These characters wore costumes reflecting distinct historical periods of the nineteenteenth and twentieth centuries, in order to show the different generations assembled at the family tomb. As for makeup, Muni was blue faced, the others were pale, and Vicente Mejía and Mama Jesusita had heavy white and black facial outlines, intended to convey old age.[1]

Octavio Paz had originally envisioned actresses in lingerie in La vida airada.[2] In keeping with his "anti-archaeological interpretation of Quevedo,"[3] a Quevedo "without gorgets, without farthingales, without goatees, and without manes," as stated by Diego de Mesa in his commentary to the program, Juan Soriano identically outfitted the women in dresses, the men in slacks and shirts. The color scheme for both was two shades of brownish yellow, one of them, mustard, which blended into the brown-curtained cyclorama.[4] Individually came from the slightly varied hat designs.

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[1]Mendoza interviews, 1972 and August 1977.

[2]Paz spoke about this in 1972 and 1974. There were objections to the lingerie, voiced primarily by one of the actresses who feared it might harm her prospering television career. She was not without reason, given the ambience of Mexico in the 1950s.

[3]Paz interview, 1974.

[4]Interviews with Parra, 1974, and Mendoza, 1973.

The makeup paralleled the costumes. All men were mustached, but like the women, showed heavy black circles around the eyes, and blackened square-shaped lips. They were people of the night; then, too, they were dead. And the simple, yet grotesque makeup served at once to highlight their sordid look, and give the impression of skulls. All this, within the framework of a gay musical with tango, calypso, and Afro-Cuban rhythms, as well as choreographed movements, imbued Quevedo's seventeenth century satirical verses with the very blackest of black humor. [See Figure 19, p. 191.]

The Fourth Program was given a mixed reception, but only on the attributes of La vida airada whose texts, however, were discussed by none. Failure by Poesía en Voz Alta to either update Quevedo's language or explain the texts in some way resulted in some misconstruction of, or bafflement by, the risqué verses, as will be seen. And there may be much validity in José Luis Ibáñez's claim about the production: "Unless you had read Quevedo, it was like hearing Chinese; and then, to see actors playing and dancing made it all appear ludicrous."[1]

There were those who declared delight with Poesía en Voz Alta's fresh approach to Quevedo. Armando de María y Campos, Antonio Magaña-Esquivel, Juan García Ponce, Margarita Michelena, the poet and only occasional theatre reviewer, and the critic for El Figaro did.[2] Using

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[1]Interview, September 1977.

[2]"Cuarto Programa," p. 21; "Teatro: Estrenos en Julio," El Nacional, 25 August 1957, supp., p. 13; pp. 29-30, 32; pp. 58-59; "Ellos y Ellas."



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Tara Parra)

Fig. 19. The Quevedo adaptation, La vida airada. Designed by Soriano, directed by Mendoza.

harsh words, the latter critic defended the production style as befitting to an "immortal," whose forgotten works were "not rigid and pedantic, as some dummies think of the classics."[1] But some other reviewers expended few words on La vida airada, and outrage was expressed. Consuelo Colón's commendatory blurb of the program--"For exquisite tastes"--contained a note to this effect: "The show has been combated by many," interjecting that "the diffusion of the work in a medium which is drowning in prosaicism and materialism is truly admirable."[2]

At least a couple of critics did lash out at Poesía en Voz Alta for La vida airada, but far more, even in this opposing group, gave rather hesitant nods of approval and pointed out flaws, some in an almost gingerly, uneasy way. Like some complimentary oral comments about La vida airada, there was less exuberance about it in print, when compared to the Archpriest's El buen amor.[3] Overall, the body of reviews contained conceptual disagreements based on preconceived notions about Quevedo and how classics ought to be staged; dissatisfaction with the handling of production elements; displeasure with the specific choice of Quevedo texts and accusation about Poesía en Voz Alta's motive for choosing them. The angry critic in Siempre put it this way: In El buen amor, Mendoza carried

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[1]"Ellos y Ellas"; the italics are mine.

[2]"Por las Rutas del Arte," El Universal Gráfico, 26 July 1957, p. 8.

[3]These oral comments refer to my interviews with Hernández, García Ponce, 1974, and Alatorre, 1976.

the play "to the limit of the tolerable, as regards lack of respect for the classics; . . . " In La vida airada, Mendoza "has gone a bit too far; he has taken liberties and presumptuousness which are not always in the best of taste. . . . This limit has finally been exceeded and he is frankly operating on unlawful soil." And he blamed Mendoza, Soriano, and Paz for turning the verses into "a sort of two-penny opera."[1]

Two less fervidly voiced objections to the musical production style, but founded on bases other than a "lack of respect," emitted from Angel de las Barcenas and Alejandro Moreno Ling. Barcenas saw the form, with its "arbitrary and whimsical costuming," as consuming the verses; Moreno Ling appraised the style as right for the Archpriest's "mirthful," "ironic" verses, but wrong for those by the "more severe" moralist, Quevedo.[2] Moreno Ling nonetheless praised the staging of the work but, like Luis G. Basurto and Miguel Guardia who both endorsed La vida airada otherwise, found the dance segments defective.[3]

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[1]"Teatro," 7 August 1957, p. 51.

[2]"Comedias y Comediantes: Kitty de Hoyos, al Pasar a la Comedia no Olvida el Teatro Frívolo," Claridades, 4 August 1957, p. 20, part of which Barcenas devotes to Poesía en voz Alta; "IV Programa de Poesía en Voz Alta," La Nación, 28 July 1957, p. 31.

[3]In Moreno Ling's words, "of unnecessary length." ("IV Programa.") To Basurto, whose full reference to La vida airada ran short of a sentence, the production was successful, excluding the "discordant and tedious periods of dance." ("Teatro: Un hogar sólido," Excelsior, 27 July 1957, sec. B, p. 4.) And Miguel Guardia, somewhat more wordy than Basurto, qualified his assessment of the renovated Quevedo experiment as "interesting, and for the most part, well handled," by recording "somewhat excessive" episodes of mimicry or dance. ("Poesía en Voz Alta," Novedades, 4 August 1957, supp., p. 8.)

Neither Basurto nor Guardia "panned" or raved about the production style. Both faulted an element within it. Luis Vicent likewise. But Vicent, in an attempt to justify his feeling that the style worked better for El buen amor than La vida airada, touched on other reasons: "lack of scenic organization," and "maybe the basic adaptation was deficient."[1] Wilberto Cantón went further than Vicent. The irate playwright-critic, who had been critical of El buen amor, lambasted the company for La vida airada--Poesía en Voz Alta's "first serious stumble." Cantón accused the company of playing off the acknowledged "success" of El buen amor by choosing selections from Quevedo based on "high color," rather than "quality," without exemplifying what "quality" meant. He concluded that the matter was "aggravated because the direction, including Afro-Cuban rhythms and saucy movements, converted the play into a true 'pachanga,' without order, arrangement, or beauty."[2]

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[1] 3 August 1957, p. 57.

[2] "Calidad y Elevación." In this context, pachanga means a free-wheeling party or wild bash.

Salvador Novo's column, "Cartas a un amigo," Hoy, carried no review of the program. In the 10 August 1957 issue, p. 23, Novo made space to note that although he had been unable to attend the show, the critic, Elena Poniatowska, had spoken enthusiastically to him about Garro's plays. Quevedo was unmentioned in the column. In the following issue of 17 August, p. 24, Novo relayed his stroke of bad luck. He had gone to see the program the Sunday before; it had been cancelled due to an earthquake. Novo was referring to the devastating still-remembered earthquake of 1957 which unloosed the enormous Angel statue from its monument on Reforma Avenue and brought it toppling down.

With the sole exception of Angel de las Barcenas, who called "the other plays"--untitled, unauthored--"only very weak showings of today's theatrical literary 'snobbism'; hieroglyphic-symbolic literature in fashion, the mode, but without major value,"[1] superlative after superlative rang out for Garro. Critics hailed her entrance into theatre, noted her abundant talent for language and characterization, and her instinctual understanding of the theatre. Luis G. Basurto began his piece like this:

> In this little world of ours where literary values are so often ignored--when not openly despised--especially in the theatre, as if it were not the highest literary expression; in this confusion of values where the audacious and irresponsible are self-elected "geniuses," underestimating the literary form--because they are incapable of truly cultivating it--and a poetic quality which their own creativity can never reach, one should be very happy to have a dramatic poet like Elena Garro in our midst. In her first stage efforts, she has already distinguished herself as a true author--in the full masculine sense of the word--who possesses much keenness, Proustian sensibility, a clear instinct of the theatre medium, a colloquial and poetic dialogue, a blend of profundity and gentleness, and combines a very Mexican spirit within a universal one. And these appraisals are not exaggerated. Elena Garro lacks nothing essential, nothing innate. The technical faults that she might have are logical and she will overcome them.

Luis Vicent thanked Poesía en Voz Alta for introducing Elena Garro, "a writer who has something to say, much to say, and who knows how to say it the way none of our 'geniuses' do."[2]

The majority of critics preferred A Solid Home to Garro's other two plays. The critic for Siempre ranked A Solid Home at the apex, where the greatest plays from the modern poetic theatre of the world, not just

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[1] 4 August 1957. [2] 3 August 1957, p. 57.

Mexico, resided;[1] Cantón in Cine Mundial considered Andarse por las ramas and Los pilares de doña Blanca "dull and flat," "above all when compared to A Solid Home"; and Moreno Ling in La Nación remarked that when Garro referred directly to her thesis in Los pilares de doña Blanca, she weakened her "points of view."

Luis G. Basurto bemoaned the lack of an "adequate setting" and insufficient movement in A Solid Home. The critic for Siempre wished the the direction and scenography had been "less obstreperous."[3] All other reviewers wrote little about the staging, finding it either excellent or adequate.

The actors were also given some space. The three newcomers, Juan Ibáñez, later to become an important director in Mexico's theatre and cinema, Ana Ofelia Murguía, to become one of Mexico's finest actresses, and Argentina Morales, to dance and act with other theatre groups, received favorable mention, as did other players. The favorites were the "two consecrated artists... finally stars,"[4] Carlos Fernández and, especially Tara Parra. Fernández was repeatedly singled-out for his excellent portrayals of the sinister, Caballero de la Tenaza and the philosophical, Caballero Alazán in La vida airada and Los pilares de doña Blanca, respectively. Tara Parra, cast in the roles of Titina, Doña Blanca, and

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[1] 7 August 1957, p. 50. [2] "IV Programa."

[3] 7 August 1957, p. 51. [4] Ibid.

Mama Jesusita, the grandmother, in Garro's plays, and as a prostitute in Quevedo's, was called one of Mexico's best actors. Besides being a gifted actress, Parra possessed an impish, playful charm which helped to make her the critics' delight. Wrote Vicent: "That girl is a prodigy. A prodigy of rhythm, naturalness, joy, and pertness. At present, there is not a girl in Mexico capable of rivaling this exceptional artist."[1] Parra was elevated to stardom in this program, and there was a stream of newspaper notices on her impending trip to France.[2] During the Third Program, Parra had been offered a fellowship from the UNAM and the French Institute of Latin America to study in France with Jean Vilar and others at the Théâtre National Populaire; it was to take effect in September, right after the Fourth Program was to close.[3]

Héctor Mendoza was also leaving the company to study, but in New York with Gene Frankel and at Yale University on a Rockefeller grant.[4]

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[1]3 August 1957, p. 57.

[2]See, e.g., "Salió Hacía Paris Tara Parra," Excelsior, 13 September 1957, sec. B, p. 3, and "Becada a Francia," El Universal, 12 September 1957, sec. 1, p. 33.

[3]This was not impulsive; Tara Parra had been soliciting funds to study in France before joining the group. It was Hector Mendoza who had persuaded her to postpone the trip for awhile. The daily showings of the Third Program facilitated her work to be seen; she was offered a fellowship which she accepted on the mistaken belief that a leave-of-absence to improve her acting in France could only further her Mexican acting career. During oral and written interviews, Parra has spoken openly about the disappointingly cool reception that awaited her, when she returned to Mexico; see, for instance, Claudia Deschamps, "Tara Parra, Muchacha Mañanera: Portada," Mujeres: Expresión Femenina, 5 June 1961, p. 23.

[4]Mendoza, similarly, was offered a grant during the Third Program's run by a member of the Rockefeller Foundation, however, who had known Mendoza as a playwright grantee of the Centro Mexicano de Escritores. The Rockefeller grant was also to start at the beginning of the fiscal year, September, which enabled Mendoza, like Parra, to work in the Fourth Program.

Mendoza received positive comments for intelligent direction of the Fourth Program's plays, as did Juan Soriano, for the expressive and functional plasticity of his designs.[1] The opening-night audience was also proudly cited by one critic, who reeled off a listing of some of its more prominent names,[2] while it was reviewed--disdainfully--by two others. Luis Sánchez Zevada and the critic for Siempre started their discussions of the Fourth Program with lengthy, detailed, unflattering descriptions of the first-nighters.

Sánchez Zevada described what he called a "tutti-frutti" public as a wildly-coiffeured group with "phantom" looks that resembled "Dracula," with "dark, made-up eyes à la Pola Negri," and the "pale and melancholy faces of Japanese masks"; an avant-garde, "effeminate" bunch of "umbrella-carrying," "haughty-voiced," "snobbish" (and "obsolete") "existentialists."[3] The writer in Siempre berated the "dilettantes," the literary snobs who performed like "a poorly rehearsed claque," chiming in with "exaggerated, premeditated, and even ridiculous reactions," all unnecessary to elevate the stature of Garro's plays. "Her plays are excellent . . ."; "this type of audience was at the point of destroying the first function . . ."[4]

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[1]For instance, see Magaña-Esquivel, "Estrenos en Julio," and García Ponce, p. 32.

[2]"Éxito de Elena Garro," p. 11.

[3]"Espejo Mágico," p. 8. [4]7 August 1957, p. 50.

At a time when the theatre of Mexico was playing family-oriented light comedies, such musicals as Bells are Ringing starring Silvia Pinal, and other entertainments competing for audiences with Euripides's Hippolytus and Pirandello's Henry IV;[1] at a time when O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night was considered risqué because it contained the word pinche (the equivalent of the adjectives, damned, or the British "bloody") and which caused audiences to beat hasty, and noisy retreats through exit doors; when three years later, in 1960, a reproduction of a nude statue on the program of Frank Wedekind's Frühlings Erwachen (Spring's Awakening), directed by Poesía en Voz Alta's Juan José Gurrola in an independent effort, provoked organized attempts to close the play because of pornography,[2] any reference to homosexuality or aberration of the accepted, socially beneficial norm, had shock value, and was either censored or brutally jeered. In this context, the written descriptions of the opening-night spectators attending Poesía en Voz Alta's Fourth Program was tantamount to a Requiem for the group.

That the commercially oriented group of theatre critics voted Elena Garro's A Solid Home the best Mexican play of 1957, and Héctor Mendoza

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[1]The year, 1957, welcomed a boom in theatre activity and an improvement in its quality. Luis Vicent, "Teatro: El balance de 1957," Mañana, 11 January 1958, pp. 54-55 cites and discusses the nominees for the theatre awards, as well as the year's other offerings.

[2]During her interview in 1974, Nancy Cárdenas spoke lengthily about the adverse reactions to both plays. Cárdenas had worked as an actress in O'Neill's play, and as director of publicity and public relations for Wedekind's.

was nominated as the year's best director, as were Carlos Fernández and Tara Parra for best young actor and young actress, respectively, had little meaning for Poesía en Voz Alta. The Fourth Program had completed the run on August 11, 1957; the awards were announced in February of 1958, long after its close.[1]

Yet, the Fourth Program fared better than expected, in box-office receipts. Nightly, the theatre was about half-full.[2] Even though the theatre had been closed on account of the earthquake and the death of Manola Saavedra's father,[3] the program's extended run more than compensated for these lost days. And Poesía en Voz Alta, the supposedly elitist delight, could in no way sustain nearly a month of daily showings by such a minuscule crowd. Not that the "masses" helped by coming. Previously averted, they were again forewarned--by a member of the company's own acting troupe--that Poesía en Voz Alta was ignoring their needs. In an interview, Carlos Fernández was quoted as saying that

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[1]For a listing of the candidates, see Vicent, "Teatro: Lo Mejor en el Teatro," Mañana, 11 January 1958, p. 55; the tabulated votes and declared winners--one of whom was Rosenda Monteros, who had acted in the first-two programs of Poesía en Voz Alta--are supplied by Vicent, "Teatro: El 17 el reparto de premios," Mañana, 15 February 1958, p. 54.

[2]This is according to Gurrola, 1971, Mendoza, 1972 and September 1977, Stopen, and Parra, 1974.

[3]Ibáñez and Mendoza interviews, September 1977.

Saavedra, like the others in Poesía en Voz Alta, had no understudy; as Lidia in A Solid Home, her very first word is "Papa," which she cries out upon reuniting with her father in the tomb. The evening's performance was cancelled out of respect for Saavedra and presumably, for fear that the play's macabre situation would break the actress's control.

Héctor Azar's Teatro en Coapa was a similar experimental group, but one which "has managed to reach the people who cannot even pay two pesos to go to the movies."[1] Instead, the intellectual audience mixed with greater numbers of students, the general middle-class public, and "curious people, too."[2]

After the Fourth Program, the University severed its connection to Poesía en Voz Alta. Yet, a fifth program was planned, in the face of many uncertainties. Funding was the primary obstacle, but there were others. Mendoza, the director, and Parra, the leading actress, were departing for abroad; many actors were actively looking elsewhere for employment.[3]

Granted that earlier, after Poesía en Voz Alta's first two programs, Tara Parra and Juan José Gurrola had performed in León Felipe's multi-scened poetic play, based on eight tales and stories by others, collectively

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[1]Poniatowska, "El Gérard Philipe de los Pobres," p. 10.
Teatro en Coapa had been similarly involved in presenting classical pieces and poems as well as adaptations, but to nonpaying audiences and as performed by high school students. See, e.g., Julio Sapietsa, "Teatro en Acción: Fue Recibido con Entusiasmo 'El Teatro en Coapa,'" El Universal Gráfico, 8 August 1956, p. 6 and 13, and Magaña-Equivel, Medio siglo, p. 156. The playwright-director, Azar, later to be accused of aping the Poesía en Voz Alta style, was also later to become a powerful voice at the University.

[2]Paz interview, 1974.

[3]Theoretically, the actors were obligated to Poesía en Voz Alta only during rehearsals and performances because they were paid per show, and contracted per program. But in practice, this "group of friends" tended to function otherwise, especially up until the departures of Mendoza and Parra, and the cut-off of University funds.

titled El Juglarón (The Minstrel). But the dramatic collage idea, with tales from the past and present linked together by the Minstrel, with the actors playing multiple roles, made El Juglarón seem like a subsidiary enterprise of Poesía en Voz Alta's. Besides which, it may well have been written for Poesía en Voz Alta.[1] El Juglarón was presented at the Teatro Moderno, later to house Poesía en Voz Alta, and was staged by the Spanish actor-director, Edmundo Barbero. The program notes indicated that the play's underlying "game" intent was first introduced in Mexico by El Teatro Universitario and Poesía en Voz Alta.[2]

But once the Fourth Program had closed, more actors sought outside employment, and some also began to test their abilities in other theatre fields, particularly in directing. Carlos Fernández was cast in a realistic play with romantic overtones by Wilberto Cantón, Nocturno a Rosario (A Nocturne to Rosario); by December he was director of Georg Büchner's tragedy of a lower-class man, Woyzeck, with the University Student

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[1]It was, according to Mendoza, interviewed September 1977.

[2]Felipe penned the notes; p. 3 of playbill (property Parra). By crediting Solórzano's El Teatro Universitario, Felipe presumably refers to the literary material, such as his own adaptation of Twelfth Night, called No es cordero que as cordera, rather than to any professed aim or production style.

El Juglarón, in which Ulalume worked with Gurrola and Parra, and joined them next in Poesía en Voz Alta, amassed critical acclaim. See, e.g., Guardia, "El Teatro en México: El Juglarón de León Felipe," Novedades, 17 February 1957, supp., p. 5.

Theatre. It played at the Teatro del Globo; two other Poesía en Voz Alta actors, Enrique Stopen and José Luis Pumar, were in the cast.[1]

Immediately after the Fourth Program, Juan José Gurrola also inaugurated his directing career with William Saroyan's The Beautiful People. Saroyan's vision of faith in man and society, which opened the season for the University Student Theatre, demonstrated that Gurrola possessed "a clear sense of the scenic dimension and a notable facility for serving the chosen text . . . The faithful and precise tone and rhythm of his direction declared an undeniable knowledge of theatre resources."[2] After his return to Poesía en Voz Alta for the Fifth Program, Gurrola directed Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth for the University Student Theatre; the production had a positive impact on the critics.[3] Then, soon after rejoining the Fifth Program's reopening in 1959, Gurrola went on to direct two tragicomedies, reminiscent of Ionesco, by Héctor Azar at the Caballito Theatre. From what was written about his direction of La appassionata (The Passionate Woman) and El alfarero (The Potter), the influence of Poesía en Voz

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[1]Reviewing Fernández acting in Nocturno a Rosario is Vicent, "Teatro," Mañana, 5 October 1957, pp. 70-71, and his direction of Woyzeck is García Ponce, "Woyzeck," Universidad de México 12 (January 1958):27-28.

[2]García Ponce, "La Hermosa Gente," Universidad de México 11 (November 1957):27-28.

[3]See, e.g., Tomás, "Septimo Cielo," Claridades, 3 August 1958, p. 13; Vicent, "Bendito seas Thornton Wilder," Mañana, 16 August 1958, pp. 52-53; Magaña-Esquivel, "Teatro: Estrenos Recientes," El Nacional, 10 August 1958, supp., p. 12.

Alta is evident: "In the former, as background music he used a speeded-up recording of 'La Traviata.' . . . the critic in [Mexico's] Excelsior had just described Gurrola's direction as 'antitheatre,'" and this pleased him. He wanted to create something new.[1] He was twenty-four years old--Mendoza's age when he joined Poesía en Voz Alta.

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[1]S. Meisler, "Theatre in Mexico," Nation 189 (September 1959):160.

An extensive list of critical accolades appeared in print. See, e.g., Deschamps, "Desde Primera Fila: 'La Appassionata' y 'El Alfarero,'" Excelsior, 18 June 1959, sec. B, p. 5; the two separate reviews by Guardia and Castillo; jointly titled "Héctor Azar + J.J. Gurrola = Éxito...Los Jóvenes Devuelven su Dignidad a la Escena," Novedadas, 21 June 1959, supp., p. 8.

CHAPTER 7

1957-1959: THE FIFTH PROGRAM

Before Mendoza left, his assistant, José Luis Ibáñez, was selected to direct the Fifth Program. The choice by Octavio Paz was T. S. Eliot's verse drama, Murder in the Cathedral. It was the first time that the company had opted to present a single, full-length play. For this reason, the unique and practical idea of a numbered program was now unnecessary; the presentation could have been simply called by the name of that play.

Why was Murder in the Cathedral chosen? Octavio Paz's original response was to call the play a "concession." "There was no money. It was hard to get. The UNAM and everyone else with funds feared criticism. And Mendoza was leaving." In a later interview, Paz retracted the word "concession," saying that he "liked" the play, although in truth, he preferred presenting shorter, more "subversive" ones.[1] The choice, however, was doubtless appropriate, as would have been some plays also considered auto sacramentales.[2] Appropriate, because the sponsor was the Jornadas de Arte Religioso, a religious organization that desired to include theatre

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[1]Paz interviews, 1972 and 1974.

[2]Ibáñez interview, 12 September 1977.

in its festival and which contracted the playwright-critic, Jorge Ibargüengoitia to negotiate with the group on a suitable play. In the playbill, Ibargüengoitia is credited as "coordinator."

Murder in the Cathedral, translated by Jorge Hernández Campos and revised by Paz,[1] was the company's first original English-language play. The play incorporates many traits favored by the company. It is concise, in verse, and highly theatrical. Its structure is a series of episodes, almost like a group of one-act plays. Characters and dramatic elements are varied in Eliot's play; there is a chorus of Canterbury women, public addresses by Becket's assassins, and a sermon addressed to the audience in the Interlude. The sermon and the concluding public addresses transform playhouse observers into participants. Murder in the Cathedral, probably more than any other play of Poesía en Voz Alta's, demonstrates Paz's theoretical contention as stated in the Third Program's commentary--that theatre is "an object of participation."

Eliot's play is also a modern auto sacramental; Poesía en Voz Alta had chosen morality plays and religious materials for former programs. The past and present are united in this vehicle, much like earlier groupings of plays. There are still other parallels, such as La farsa de la Casta

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[1] Hernández Campos was credited as translator in the later playbills too. Paz, 1974, acknowledged that he revised the translation--"he enriched it," said the actress, Ketty Valdés, 22 September 1977. Explained Ibáñez, September 1977, the first version was a composite by Hernández Campos and an unnamed, foreign source. Paz reworked particularly flat sections of it, but refused playbill credit.

Susaña, in the First Program, and Murder in the Cathedral, in the Fifth, dramatizing a crucial event in the life of a mortal which ultimately leads to sainthood.

Murder in the Cathedral opened two months after the Fourth Program; it was shown nightly in the fountained gardens of the old San Angel Inn, at the southern tip of Mexico City. The Inn had been converted into the School of Architecture of the Jesuit, Iberoamericano University, or U.I.A. The gardens were left intact, and for the program, only lighting was added and bleachers installed. The program was the festival's final event, slated to run at the Escenario Abierto de la U.I.A. from October 22-31, 1957. Salvador Novo called this late scheduling a "pity," because it could deprive the company of audiences generated by the festival's multiple daily events.[1] But in fact, on the basis of box-office success, the Jornadas de Arte Religioso decided to continue the showings through 3 November.[2] Some say that the UNAM contributed the publicity costs, others that it gave not one penny. Few critics attended the functions; the distant theatre location, and the alternately cold and rainy weather cycles kept most critics away from the open-air presentations.[3] Two weeks later, the

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[1]"Cartas a un amigo," Hoy, 9 November 1957, p. 25.

[2]Ibáñez interview, September 1977; Novedades ad, 31 October 1957 sec. 1, 2nd pt., p. 9.

[3]Ibáñez interview, September 1977, and Novo, on Fifth Program in "Cartas a un amigo." Most reviews appeared after the program's reopening at a later date.

See Playbill 5-A, Appendix A, pp. 364-67.

company was invited to present the play at another open-air, makeshift theatre in a cathedral of Cuernavaca, the Capilla Abierto de la Cathedral de Cuernavaca. It was shown twice on Saturday evening, 16 November 1957, and was also sponsored by a religious group.[1]

The lack of funds for the "elitist" Poesía en Voz Alta caused Paz to affiliate with a religious organization and, as a consequence, restrict his literary selection for the Fifth Program to fit the organization's needs. By 1958 and 1959, the same program would reopen twice more on other compromising terms, partly inflicted by the even more severe shortage of funds which was, in tum, partly related to Mexico's tense political climate.

In 1958, the United States and Cuba had begun a series of crises over the sugar quota. Mexico, geographically between them, had hoped to unite the countries, and yet maintain its neutrality. Further, there was a change of Mexico's govemment: President Adolfo Ruíz Cortines had completed his term in office and was succeeded by Adolfo López Mateos. With a precarious political situation and an unfamiliar President controlling it, the country's economy was affected.

For the theatre, the interrelated political events, economic drainage, and new govemment administration had several meanings, but two were particularly obvious. First, commercial producers sought sure-fire "hits," appealing to general audiences; hence, to invest in Poesía en Voz Alta was to invite controversy and take a financial risk. And second, the main

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[1]Ibáñez interview, September 1977.
See Playbill 5-B, Appendix A, pp. 368-71.

cultural institutions--the INBA always, and the UNAM sometimes--changed administrators after the new President took office; hence, until the new cultural directions became clear, hesitancy presided.

For such reasons, the theatre panorama of 1958 and 1959 included an overwhelming majority of foreign plays, popular abroad (John Osborne's Look Back in Anger, Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge and All My Sons, the musical, My Fair Lady), and revivals of formerly successful Mexican plays (Héctor Mendoza's Las cosas simples, Sergio Magaña's Los signos del zodíaco).[1] There was also a seeming lull in playwriting and an evident lack of productions for new Mexican plays during these two years. Neither Rodolfo Usigli nor Emilio Carballido, for instance, debuted any new theatre works. And the celebrated, unconventional dramatist, Elena Garro, who, at the period's start, did come forth with three new one-act plays--El Rey Mago (The Magus), Ventura Allende (Ventura Allende), and El encanto, tendajón mixta (Charm, Small Variety Store)[2]--received only one-day stagings of Ventura Allende and El encanto, tendajón mixta by Poésia

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[1]"Teatros de Comedia," Esto, 27 July 1958, sec. B, p. 2; Tomás, "En general, se impuso la justicia," Esto, 11 January 1959, sec. B, pp. 4-5; García Ponce, "Todos Eran Mis Hijos," Universidad de México 13 (May 1959): 30-31; Idem, "My Fair Lady," Universidad de México (June 1959): 35; "El Teatro en la Ciudad," Hoy, 27 June 1959, p. 59.

[2]El Rey Mago deals with a prisoner, whose inability to see and accept freedom, represented by a kindly child playing outside his prison window, leaves him both physically and spiritually incarcerated; Ventura Allende might be considered Garro's version of Ionesco's Rhinoceros; El encanto, tendajón mixta presents a woman's effect on the lives of three men.

en Voz Alta on two separate occasions, and ironically in the originally rejected form--as readings.[1] One playwright, however, was very active. He was Héctor Azar, the director of Teatro en Coapa, who in 1958 was named head of the Theatre Section of the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department, and shortly after, relocated the University Theatre to his new acquisition, the Caballito Theatre. Azar contributed five new plays, which included La appassionata and El alfarero.[2] Under Azar, the University Theatre, whose artistic director still remained Carlos Solórzano, and the University student-theatre groups showed renewed vitality, but here too, for producing mainly foreign plays, though of a noncommercial kind. During this period, the UNAM sponsored productions of such plays as Büchner's Woyzeck, Ghelderode's Les aveugles (The Blind Men), Ionesco's La cantatrice chauve (The Bald Soprano), and Sartre's The Dirty Hands.[3]

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[1]Flyer and playbill in the Soriano collection.

In all faimess, the recital form was ruled out only insofar as the special, experimental, theatre-housed project was concemed. It would be used in coming years at, especially, the UNAM's Casa del Lago in Chapultapec Park, where without the name of Poesía en Voz Alta, Ibáñez would again offer Paz's play and the choral sections of Eliot's, and Mendoza, the Archpriest of Hita's. See the brochure, Casa del Lago: 5 años de labor: 1961-1965 (Mexico: Dirección General de Difusión Cultural/UNAM, n.d.), pp. 8, 19-20.

[2]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 157, and Idem, ed., Teatro mexicano del siglo XX 5:136.

[3]García Ponce reviewed the productions in the Universidad de México: "Woyzeck," 12 (January 1958):27-28; "Los Ciegos y La Cantante Calva," 14 (September 1959):30-31; "Las Manos Sucias," 13 (January 1959):28-29.

The lack of productions of new Mexican plays is further revealed in 1959 by the absence of the INBA's customary season of Mexican theatre, by its dramatic festival including only one new Mexican author, and by its sponsorship of many foreign works.[1] But this same year, Salvador Novo took charge of the Theatre Department of the INBA.[2] To stimulate the development of Mexican plays and expose the public to innovative, noncommercial foreign plays--to continue the tradition of the Teatro de Orientación--Novo thought of allocating the Teatro Orientación, named in honor of the 1930s' company, to two groups. The Teatro Club was to present first-runs of exclusively Mexican plays, while another, undetermined group was to offer a purely foreign repertory.[3] This plan will bear on Poesía en Voz Alta's Sixth Program. In 1959, the contracted Teatro Club premiered Luisa Josefina Hernández's Arpas blancas...Conejos dorados (White Harps...Gilded Rabbits). The three-act comedy about the need to accept life with all its falsities, trivialities, and absurdities was staged by a guest director, Héctor Mendoza,[4] who substituted for an ailing

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[1]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 123.

[2]Ibáñez, 8 October 1977, and Soriano, 1977.
This second such appointment for Novo was unrecorded because apparently Novo resigned due to confirmed failing health before it became official. Luis Sandi, as Acting Director, replaced Novo, who had returned to teach at the INBA's theatre school.

[3]Ibáñez interview, October 1977.

[4]García Ponce, "Arpas Blancas...Conejos Dorados," Universidad de México 13 (April 1959):29-30.

Novo, the original director of the play.[1] After an extended stay in New York on a renewed grant, Mendoza returned to Mexico just prior to the closing of the Fifth Program and the beginning of rehearsals for the Sixth.

When Murder in the Cathedral reopened in 1958, it had been reworked--practically recast, with its staging adjusted to an indoor house. This was done to fulfill a single engagement on Thursday evening, 5 March, at the Teatro de Santa Fe, in the western part of Mexico City, under the sponsorship of a government agency.[2] The compact theatre, servicing neighborhood inhabitants, was lodged in a housing complex designed principally for families of govemment workers and civil servants. This kind of performance was as uncustomary to this nonpaying audience--including children--as the audience was for Poesía en Voz Alta. And the elevated, stately tragedy's final scene--in which the Knights confront the audience to justify Becket's murder--combined with the nearness of the actors to the public, elicited some disconcerting responses from the observing group.[3] Some eleven months later, on 9 February 1959, almost the same acting group reassembled to open and then present a series of

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[1]Mendoza interview, 10 October 1977; Hernández interview.

[2]Ibáñez, September 1977.

[3]It came perilously close to disruption, according to Antonio Medellín, who related the account on 27 September 1976. Only at the Teatro de Santa Fe did the public stare directly into the actors' eyes, while trying to either stifle their laughter, or detain it long enough for the actors to simultaneously join in with them.

See Playbill 5-C, Appendix A, pp. 372-75.

two-Monday showings of the play through 9 March, at the commercial, Virginia Fábregas Theatre, with a seating capacity of nearly one thousand. The company overcame its funding problems by forming a cooperativo whereby, instead of receiving salaries, the participants shared the profits.[1] Murder in the Cathedral was the last program of Poesía en Voz Alta which Octavio Paz saw. As a diplomat in the Mexican Foreign Service, Paz was called to return to Paris in 1959; in 1962, one year before the company disbanded, Paz was named Ambassador to India.[2]

Another departure from Poesía en Voz Alta's modus operandi was that two of the four different playbills for the Fifth Program were designed by the sponsoring organizations and carried their own commentaries. Both of these commentaries, written for the Escenario Abierto de la U.I.A. and the Teatro de Santa Fe audiences, were unsigned educative notes on Eliot's play and the historical events which motivated it; neither one referred to Poesía en Voz Alta. According to José Luis Ibáñez, the first commentary was written by the former priest, Felipe Párdinas, which may account for its religious slant; the other, by an unknown employee at the housing complex, the Unidad Santa Fe.[3]

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[1]The initiative came from Ibáñez, and the leading actor, Raúl Dantés. (Ibáñez interview, September 1977.)

[2]"Octavio Paz: A Biographical Sketch," p. 610. Paz expressed few regrets about his departure when he was interviewed in 1972. Poesía en Voz Alta was struggling to survive, and it was a struggle finding funds. See Playbill 5-D, Appendix A, pp. 376-79.

[3]Interview, September 1977.

But for Cuernavaca and the Fábregas Theatre, Juan Soriano again teamed with the artist, Juan Martín to design the characteristic, costly Poesía en Voz Alta playbill, with its special type of layout and format.[1] These playbills carried the same Octavio Paz commentary to the program, written in 1957, except for updating the opening sentence to reflect the company's doubled age. The 1959 edition read:

> Before completing three years of life--against wind and tide, against the silence of some and the obscene shriek of the rest, against indifference, cowardliness, tepidity, desertion, against stupidity--Poesía en Voz Alta brings its fifth program to the stage. The professional gravediggers can keep their phrases of condolence to themselves: the only dead ones are they.
>
> In our third program we ventured forth with an auto sacramental of Calderón's: King Belshazzar's Feast. We were not satisfied with what we had done. It was necessary to try the experience again. Thus, the choice of Murder in the Cathedral is not accidental. In this play, as in the auto of Calderón, the true drama--as noted by Becket in one of the grandest moments of the piece--is not so much that of the martyr before his executioners, as that of the conscience alone with itself. The most powerful temptation is not that of pleasure, power, or glory, but the fascination that our own consciences exercises over us, the phantom image of our greedy ego. Or as Quevedo says:
>
> The abyss of waters
> Where I fell in love with myself
>
> Fascination with nothingness. Excessive pride is nihilism. Thomas knows that only he who forgets about himself can be saved, he who surrenders himself and transcends himself so that he can then be transformed. From this point of view, Eliot's play (even though it

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[1] That is, brown and black lettering and sketches, heavy beige paper of uncommon length, 8 1/2" x 10". Only the playbill to the Second Program deviated somewhat: The paper was tinted off-white, and the print was in black and red.

According to Ibáñez, September 1977, Soriano was unhappy about the playbill for San Angel, because it departed from Poesía en Voz Alta's line. That was why the Cuernavaca playbill was born. It was not used at the Teatro de Santa Fe, either to economize on costs or because the housing complex had its own playbill style.

has the extemal form of a tragedy) is a modem auto sacramental. That is: a play whose only character is the conscience with no other intermediaries than the void and grace. In this tense atmosphere, the human story actually has no place, and from there, the realistic discourses of the assassins seem to us strangely unreal. And so they are. Because the theme of the drama is not the history of England, nor the dispute between the temporal and spiritual powers, nor the conflict within man thirsting for absolute power before a utilitarian "historical reason" (relative, but all-powerful and homicidal in its relativism). The wind that drags Becket along to martyrdom is not the wind of tragedy.

A short time ago, Reyes was reminding us of that definition of tragedy which says: "a play in which everyone is right." In a political tragedy like Danton's Death, for example, the conflict grows out of this apparent paradox: all the characters incarnate distinct visions of history, each one equally valid and powerful: all being right. A relative right, but one which becomes absolute by being thrown into a world whose essence is as relative as is its politics. Everyone speaks the same language, even those who hold contrary beliefs. Murder in the Cathedral is not a political tragedy; the gentlemen assassins do not speak the language of Becket, and that is why the dramatic poet uses the monologue and the chorus rather than dialogue. There is nothing in common between Beckett, full of grace, and his assassins, skillful in dialectics, rhetoric, and law. They are two worlds which can never touch.

Within the growing style of Poesía en Voz Alta (a style is never the application of a formula, but a spirit in search of its form), José Luis Ibáñez, the young stage director, presents what perhaps might not be exaggeratedly called the solemnity of the word, as opposed to the manner of Héctor Mendoza, which is the wings of the word. It is not odd, therefore, that a work like Murder in the Cathedral happened to be selected. From the very beginning, we purposed to play with fire.

Farces, juegos de escarnio,[1] dance of words and summersault of images, auto sacramental and modem tragedy, anything goes in theatre so long as it ignites: the classic and the primitive, the celebrated author and the unknown poet. Fire: game. The theatre is a game; a game of mirrors, consciences that are reflected, that combat, negate, or dissolve into an embrace of light. Then, what can be lost or gained in this game is one's own conscience. The theatre is fire. And what blazes and burns and glows, or turns into ashes is also the conscience. The conscience of all, which is the conscience of each one of us. The theatre is lucid participation,

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[1]These are games of satire.

> communion of consciences, not dispersion or confusion of the spirit in an emotional animal. Participation is lucidity. We call upon the wisdom of your reason, not the complicity of your instincts. We are solitary in solidarity.[1]

The commentary is more than an eloquent introduction. Its opening paragraph is an explosive diatribe against the company's opponents and silent proponents. Two critics referred to these words. One saw them as Paz's "defense"; the other was irked, calling them "out-of-tune," and saying that they only lacked the word, "Reds,"[2] to imply, presumably, that the audiences had the democratic right to support or ignore this particular cause--Poesía en Voz Alta.

The commentary is also significant in the way that Paz contrasts the directing styles of José Luis Ibáñez and Héctor Mendoza. His remarks are prefaced by defining a style as a "spirit in search of its form" and not the "application of a formula," a reiteration of Poesía en Voz Alta's position, rather than a new idea. Paz goes on to term Ibáñez's directing style the "solemnity of the word," while Mendoza's is the "wings of the word."

Ibáñez's approach, unlike Mendoza's, put more emphasis on the text. Ibáñez was concerned with their words, their phrasing, rhythm, and intonation--their literary values. His staging relied less on physical

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[1] Playbill 5-D, Appendix A, p. 379.

[2] The respective critics are Alicia Rocha, "'Enterradores de Profesión,' Principales Detractores del Teatro en Nuestro País," Últimas Noticias, 2nd ed., 10 February 1959, p. 8, and LFC, "Teatro de Comedia y Drama: Asesinato en la Catedral en el Teatro Virginia Fábregas," El Figaro, 15 February 1959, p. 16.

movement. Paz, consequently, was preparing the audience for a radically different style, a solemn, rather than light, theatre game which had become the trademark of Poesía en Voz Alta.[1]

The Fifth Program was performed by a mixed group in which the new members predominated. Out of a cast of seventeen, in 1957, only eight actors had previously worked in Poesía en Voz Alta, rightly seven, since Raúl Dantés had been hired only to replace Arreola in the first-two programs. The number dwindled by 1958, and the cast changes occurred chiefly within this former group. Juan José Gurrola, Enrique Stopen, and Argentina Morales remained, though Nancy Cárdenas from the First Program came back. In 1959, Stopen left, but the number was balanced by the return of Eduardo MacGregor from the Second Program. And as the playbills show, parts were often redistributed, rather than recast.

On the surface, the new members looked like Poesía en Voz Alta actors in age, physical makeup, and in that none were stars, although at least Raúl Dantés, Socorro Avelar, and Emilia Carranza had thriving professional acting careers. With perhaps the exception of the two University students, Lilia Aragón, a major in law, and Héctor Ortega, in architecture, the others had specialized in acting at the INBA's theatre school, and

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[1]Luisa Josefina Hernández offered an observer's opinion to explain their different styles: "If you went to a play directed by José Luis Ibáñez, what was important was the text. And it came out just beautifully, beautifully." "Mendoza," she continued, "had a plastic talent, a sense of theatre as more than dialogue, and he would rather have had a circus than an old-fashioned theatre." (Interview.)

most had studied with Salvador Novo. But they were not a group of friends; in fact, Alicia Quintos and Agustín Balvanera were hired by Ibáñez on recommendation alone.[1] One difference, therefore, between the actors working under Ibáñez, and those under Mendoza was of degree: coming to Poesía en Voz Alta with acting preparation and experience, in express pursuit of an acting career, and without committed personal or working relationships, became the rule rather than the exception among the participants in Ibáñez's group. Probably the major distinction was in attitude. It was that quality which made Ibáñez's actors seem more "professional," more geared to the commercial stage than were Mendoza's.[2] But then, said José Luis Ibáñez: "By the Fifth Program, it was no longer a group," "no longer in essence, Poesía en Voz Alta either," he added.[3]

For the presentations at the open-air theatres, the natural environment served as the total setting, with no more than artificial illumination added. The shape of the environment determined the production's form, and its natural elements functioned as set pieces or theatre machinery.

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[1]Ibáñez interview, September 1977.

[2]Among those to note this attitude was Hernández; interview.

[3]Interview, September 1977. Ibáñez discounted the four final programs as Poesía en Voz Alta: "When the Fourth Program ended, Poesía en Voz Alta ended." Others have said much the same because the company's buoyant, youthful character had tempered and matured by the Fifth Program--when Poesía en Voz Alta entered its second and final phase of life.

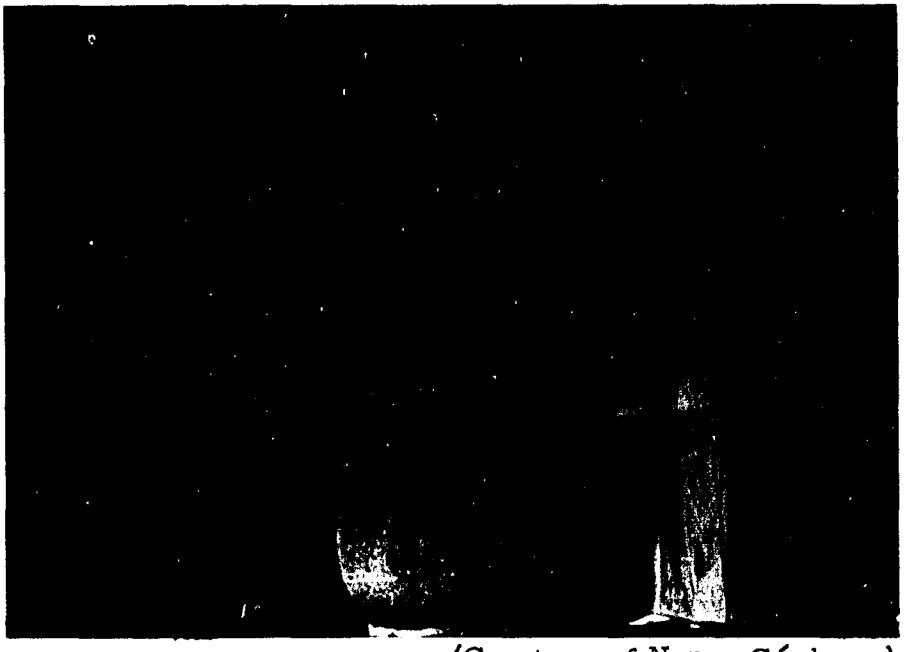
It is noteworthy, however, that Magda Vizcaíno, who acted in Murder in the Cathedral, negated that it was a Poesía en Voz Alta production: "I never worked in [the group] Poesía en Voz Alta," she told this investigator, 13 June 1977.

Handprops were solely swords. At San Angel, the design of the circular-shaped garden focused attention on a central stone artifact-fountain, set over a pebble and stone inlay. The fountain stood at the nucleus of another, or inner circle, formed by a low, stone embankment, around which four narrow pathways, equally spaced apart, jutted out and ran through the garden. The circularity of the garden itself was also stressed by sections of bushes that stood a few feet behind a few smaller stone artifacts, not far from the embankment, and a few trees were scattered around the garden's sides. In the production, the central fountain became the altar; the embankment tended to demarcate the areas for the play's main action (within the embankment) and the choral parts (most often outside of it); the pathways were used as entrance and exit ways, the bushes, as stage wings behind which the chorus most often hid, and the trees, apparatus for hanging lights.[1] [See Figure 20, p. 220.] Soriano emphasized the rotundity of the playing space by encircling it with bleachers, thereby transforming the space into a true arena stage. In the gardened, probably treeless,[2] open-air chapel area of Cuernavaca's Cathedral, where attention naturally riveted on the facade of the ancient Cathedral, the bleachers were arranged in a semi-circle to face it. Lights were set up in the garden, on poles, and along the Cathedral's wall. The Cathedral's opened entrance

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[1]Numerous, diversified photos of the San Angel, and the other productions belong to Soriano, Ibáñez, and Cárdenas.

[2]Memories are vague about this, however. Ketty Valdés conjectured that if there were any trees indeed, they were too distant from the Cathedral to be useful. (Interview.)



(Courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas)

Fig. 20. T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral in the gardens of the old San Angel Inn. The altar is between Becket and the Temptor-Knights; lights (top) hang from a branch of the faintly outlined tree at the left.

door was the altar place; the play's main action took place on the Cathedral's stairhead; the stairs and the garden area directly below were chiefly for the Chorus's use.[1]

For the indoor settings, the cyclorama and drop curtain were enlisted again. Soriano removed a deep triangular slice of the curtain, to represent the Cathedral's entrance door; a wooden construction which was covered in a shiny white material to look like marble from afar, was the altar.[2] Stored behind the curtain's opening and moved out to center stage for the death scene, the altar was made "disproportionately" high, above average waist-height, to at once promote Becket's fragility at the play's end and suggest "a mausoleum, a tomb."[3] Through two cloth flies, protruding from each side of the stage, entrances and exits were made.[4] [See Figure 21, p. 222.] As explained in an interview with unnamed members of Poesía en Voz Alta, conducted by Marcela del Río prior to the play's Fábregas Theatre opening, a minimum of scenery and set pieces were employed because the essence of theatre was the "word": "The public can create the environment which the poet invokes through the word."[5]

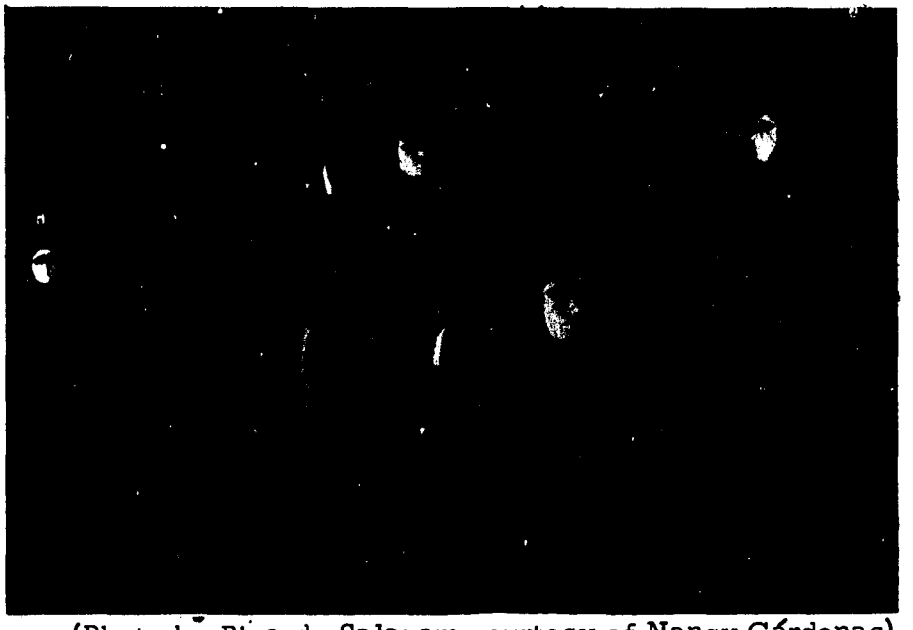
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[1]Interviews with Soriano, 1977, Valdés, Antonio Alcalá, 20 September 1976, Medellín, and Ibáñez, September 1977.

[2]Soriano interview, 1977. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid. Valdés, Alcalá, Medellín, and Ibáñez, September 1977. The altar appears in the photo in Artes de México, pp. 74-75.

[5]"Habla 'Poesía en Voz Alta,'" Excelsior, 8 February 1959, supp., p. 4.



(Photo by Ricardo Salazar; courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas)

Fig. 21. Soriano's indoor setting for Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, directed by José Luis Ibáñez.

In common with past practices, Juan Soriano's makeup and costume designs showed variations on a common theme. But for Murder in the Cathedral, color took on symbolic value, especially in the costumes which contrasted levels of light and dark. For instance, the nondescript Herald wore a medium-colored gown; the benign Priests were in beige; Becket was in mulberry until the Interlude and final scene when his snow white gown and miter gave striking contrast to the dark gray--but not black--gowns of the assassin Knights.[1] Soriano's conception of group identities made known through uniform costuming, and individuals, through a jot of unique detail, was reapplied in this program too. But as though to support Paz's claim that Murder in the Cathedral represented Poesía en Voz Alta's attempt at redoing its staging of the other auto sacramental, King Belshazzar's Feast,[2] Soriano's designs for Eliot's play, like Ibáñez's stylized movements, were reminiscent of those of Calderón's but more extreme. This was particularly evident in the multiple combinations that Soriano wrought from a few basic tones and geometric shapes and forms of ornaments and accessories, to show similarities and dissimilarities between groups. Accordingly to the del Río interview, Poesía en Voz Alta sought to remove all elements of reality so that "the actor might be the only reality"; that through its makeup and costume design, Poesía en Voz Alta again proved the dispensability of type-casting; and

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[1]Soriano, 1977, Medellín, and Alcalá interviews.

[2]As implied in his commentary, Playbill 5-D, Appendix A, p. 379.

that by means of "makeup," "wardrobe," "gesture," and "attitude," "an authentic characterization could be attained." "The important part of the character is inside; having grasped that, the outside becomes transformed."

All character faces were makeup masks of chalk white, exaggeratedly darkened around the eyes and cheeks. The design for Raúl Dantés, as Becket, was copied for Juan José Gurrola, as the Second Tempter-Second Knight. It consisted of two thick straight lines in dark red for eyebrows, huge violet triangles framing the eyes and peaking at the brows, an "almost black" cross on the forehead, as Soriano specified on the makeup sketch, and carefully outlined gray smudgings that extended from the cheeks to the jaw line for indentation.[1] The Chorus of Canterbury Women, also sporting eye-triangles, had an added special feature which, in the context of the full design as well as the costuming, made the group seem like an expressionistic Sophoclean chorus in function and role. Painted tears of gradated thicknesses flowed down their cheeks which stamped their faces with the same, unchangeable expression--of "anguish," of "solemnity,"[2] [See Figure 22, p. 225.] Soriano estimated about eight makeup artists were responsible for the cast.[3]

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[1]Gallery sketches. The other Tempter-Knights were given minor variations, noticeable in photos belonging to José Luis Ibáñez.

[2]Del Río interview.

[3]Interview, 1977.



(Courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas)

Fig. 22. Five of the eight-member Chorus in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral photographed backstage.

The uniformly floor-length costumes, primarily of wool and dominated by two-tone tweeds, were coordinated with dance slippers and snugly fitted hoods, covering the ears and neck, that attached to some costume part. Like the Herald, whose tall square hat topped the hood, all characters wore added headwear besides, except for the Priests and Chorus. Such overt similarity between and within these two groups stopped here. The Priests were distinguishable through modifications in their biblike scarves; their robes were identical in cut, ornamentation, and color, beige.[1] The jumpers for the Chorus, though styled alike, diverged where the Priests' robes did not: in color and ornamentation. That the jumpers more resembled rice sacks than wool tweeds was owing to Soriano's preference for the look of the garments turned inside-out.[2]

Two outfits were designed for Becket and the Tempter-Knights. As the Tempters, representing the conscience of Becket, they mirrored him in cape, and one Tempter, the Fourth, matched Becket in miter. But all colors were distinctive, as were the hats for the remaining three Tempters.[3] With

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[1]Ibid., and Ibáñez's photos. The scarf variations are comparable to the apron variations for the women's dresses in Calderón's play. But the principle of identifying groups and individuals by varying an element or two in the makeup and costuming was more malleable in Calderón's play; the women were recognizable through color of dress and their unmasked, mutable faces.

[2]Soriano interview, 1977; see photo 22, p. 225 above.

[3]Ibáñez, January 1978. Soriano's exhibited pencil sketch, "Four Capes," listed the names of the four actors playing the Tempter-Knights alongside three samples of gray and pale blue, gray and pale pink, and red and black tweeds. From interviews and other data analysis, I am assuming that a fourth fabic was used and that the tweeds were used for the Tempters, not Knights.

means as economic as these, Soriano visually represented the Tempters' relationship to Becket, to each other, and their separate identities as well. When the Tempters turned into Knights for the play's finale, the costuming principle changed. The varied element was not hats--now lengthily peaked caps--but capes, ever so slightly different in cut and shading of gray.[1] Besides Becket in white gown and miter, the Knights symbolized the forces of dark against the light.

The most individualized and spectacular gown was this white robe designed for Raúl Dantés as Becket. Of wool flannel, with a red breast cross and two slashes below the knees, like an iota of red trim, the robe had a multitude of cuts, visible only at close range where they seemed like tiny v-lettering. In the dramatically staged death scene, equally effective indoors where the brilliant white of the gown and tall altar made Becket truly look the "sacrificial lamb,"[2] the Knights encircled Becket and plunged raised swords into him. When this happened, Becket fell to the ground, and each v flipped over to reveal its bright red lining: affecting splatters of blood.[3]

Ibáñez's direction followed Paz's interpretation of the play, that it "is not a political tragedy," but takes place in the conscience of Becket,

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[1]See Figure 22, p. 225 above.

[2]Soriano interview, 1977.

[3]Soriano's pencil sketch, Guerreros, illustrates this much discussed gown used in this equally discussed scene.

an interpretation disputed by one critic,[1] and accommodated Soriano's coverup cosmetic and wardrobe designs. Ibáñez emphasized slow, fluid, choreographed movements, far more pronounced than Mendoza did for Calderón's play, and precisely set vocal tones and rhythmic phrases of speech. The Chorus spoke in unison, but at certain intervals, paired off so that while one group delivered Eliot's verses, the other group made humming, clicking, and glottal sounds to underscore the significance of the words and heighten tension.[2]

The critical verdict was unanimous: the Fifth Program was great: the most important theatre event of the [1957] year"; "Poesía en Voz Alta has gotten a new, indubitable triumph with Murder in the Cathedral [in 1959]."[3] But for the first time, a critic came to note that a singular vision had guided the team: "It is precisely Juan Soriano who contributes most to imprinting a distinguished, significant, and characteristic style to these presentations by Poesía en Voz Alta . . . "[4]

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[1]Miguel Guardia, "José Luis Ibañez se inicia como director con una obra difícil: Asesinato en la Catedral," Novedades, 15 February 1959, supp., p. 9.

[2]Valdés interview.

[3]Alejandro Moreno Ling, "'Asesinato en la Catedral,'" La Nación, 27 October 1957, p. 32; José Luis Alba, "Ciudad Universitaria," Cine Mundial, 13 March 1959, p. 2.

[4]Luis G. Basurto, "El Teatro: 'Asesinato en la Catedral,'" Excelsior, 18 February 1959, sec. B, p. 4.

Wilberto Cantón recorded mixed reactions to the Fifth Program; doubtless genuine, nowhere else did such negative or indefinite oral responses find their way into print:

> Monday: Comments heard upon leaving the sensational presentation of Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral at the Fábregas:
> An Actor (Enrique Aguilar): "It's a political crime."
> A Writer: "It's the struggle between the temporal and spiritual powers."
> A Painter (Ema Ceballos): "I've come to see all the showings of this play... to try to understand something!"
> A Famous Woman (Lupe Marín): "This appeals to those who are behind the times. Not to me; I belong to this century."
> An Atheist: "The extraordinary poetry it contains makes it worthwhile. And no wonder--it's by Eliot."
> A Realist: "I don't know why they write such complicated plays. The theatre ought to be accessible to everyone."
> A Catholic Dramatist (Basurto): "It's one of the most extraordinary things I've seen; one of its greatest merits is that it is understandable to all sensitivities."
> A Famous Actor: "How many years I've lost doing bad theatre."[1]

Three reasons explain the program's triumph. The most heavily weighted of these was the nature of the play itself. Far more important than the play making its Mexican premiere and the playwright's existence so little known in the country, was that Murder in the Cathedral, a concrete, historical and religious story--a modern auto sacramental--of already acclaimed literary worth, and with recognizable and traditional elements, such as the Greek chorus and monologues, readily leant itself to discussion and debate. Memories vividly recall a steady stream of heated disputes on its meaning.[2] The bulk of the reviewing space was, therefore,

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[1]"Bitacora," Éxito, 15 February 1959, p. 8.

[2]Memories of Soriano (1977), Ibáñez (1978), and the observers Antonio Alatorre (1976), and León and Ruth Davidoff (9 December 1977).

reserved for T. S. Eliot--the man, his body of work, Murder in the Cathedral, and its inspirational historical events.[1]

The next reason was related to the first. The production, because it let the play--the "word"--be the end-all, through screening out such potentially distracting or attention-getting elements as varied, natural facial expressions, movements, and gestures, and a dazzling array of one-of-a-kind costumes. For two critics, the style was somewhat overdone and drew attention to itself. Miguel Guardia, who had disagreed with the play's interpretation, appraised Ibáñez's direction as "boasting of excessive formalism" in the choreographic movement, "rhythmic monotony of the speeches," and "too-even handling of the pauses." Juan García Ponce saw the "plastic intention" occasionally "overly noticeable."[2] No other critics reported such objections. Indeed, the critic in Siempre was impressed that Poesía en Voz Alta had seen to raise the play's poetic, rather than theatrical, effects which this critic found "very inferior."[3] And an enraptured Octavio Blanco painstakingly drew upon Aristotle's Poetics and Paul Valéry's definition of literary art to liken Poesía en Voz

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[1]For a sampling of such reviews, see Juan Tomás, "Esto Vímos en el Teatro: Auténtico Teatro Religioso," Esto, 8 November 1957, sec. B, p. 6; Armando de María y Campos, "El Teatro: Asesinato en la Catedral, de Eliot, por Estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional [sic]," Novedades, 15 February 1959, sec. 3, p. 10; Antonio Magaña-Esquivel, "Calderón y Eliot Tienen Razón," El Nacional, 22 March 1959, supp., p. 11.

[2]"Poesía en Voz Alta," Universidad de México 12 (November 1957): 26.

[3]"Espectáculos," 10 March 1959, p. 50.

Alta by analogy to chamber music, a form he regarded as chemically purer than symphonic, and conclude that Murder in the Cathedral was a "'chemically pure poetic product,'" whose "stage version . . . [was] poetry in word and action."[1] From the brevity of space that almost all critics allotted to the production and those who made it possible, comes the following summary.[2]

On Ibáñez, whom most warmly welcomed to Mexico's theatre scene, several critics applauded his courage at tackling Murder in the Cathedral for a professional debut; Salvador Novo, describing Ibáñez as a director with "patience, talent, and imagination," made it a point to record that another young director, Oscar Ledesma, had "confided" that "he would not have dared to stage such a difficult play." Ibáñez's direction was deemed "sober, balanced, and seriously dramatic, without stridencies, and disunities" (Basurto); "extraordinarily sober, estimable . . . but pulsating with burning emotion" (María y Campos); attaining a "team hit," a production without "defect" or "excess," and a "harmonious" relationship between the performances and requirements of text (Tomás); and showing that Ibáñez had "perfectly understood the significance of each

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[1]"Teatro: Teatro de Cámara," Mañana, 21 February 1959, p. 58.

[2]Perhaps as an outcome of this focus on Eliot, Ibáñez and Soriano sometimes received merely passing (favorable) mention. But the following reviewers, absent from the appropriate parts of the ensuing discussion, failed to name both the director and designer (Octavio Blanco and LFC), or Ibáñez alone (Magaña-Esquivel), or Soriano (Tomás).

one or the [play's] scenes, and [that] he endowed them all with the rhythm and intensity they required" (García Ponce).[1]

On Soriano's visual realization of the play, judged by all, described by none, Basurto found the "plastic conception" to have "unity, harmony, justification, and that same dramatic gravity which presided over the entire show." María Luisa Mendoza praised the set--"admirable"--and costumes--"correct, beautiful, and modern"--unlike many others whose comments were confined to one or the other. "A round of applause to Juan Soriano for his lovely costumes," wrote Magaña-Esquivel; "perhaps more than ever, [the costuming is] effective and appropriate. Juan Soriano does not limit himself to finding beauty in the contrast of colors and forms, but is also concerned with the costumes serving the director's intentions, overcoming physical deficiencies of the actors, and underlining the unique qualities of each one of the characters. His clothes are severe and resplendent, direct and suggestive, practical and beautiful. In short: masterly," summed up García Ponce. The set was rated "almost indispensable," to Octavio Blanco. Carmen G. de Tapia, who incorrectly credited the set to its realizer, Ramón Atilano, saw its virtue in helping "to liberate the drama

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[1]Other favorable mentions were written by María Luisa Mendoza, "Ciclorama," Hoy, 21 February 1959, p. 54; Carmen G. de Tapia, "Teatro en Acción: Reposición de 'Asesinato en la Catedral,'" El Universal Gráfico, 11 February 1959, p. 14; Fernando Mota, "Se Levanta el Telón," Últimas Noticias, 2nd ed., 25 February 1959, p. 5; and Lya Engel, "Teatro," Impacto, 4 March 1959, p. 62.

from everything not integral to it," so as to permit "attention to be focused on the thoughts and emotions of the diverse characters."

As to the acting, critics hardly broached the subject. It was not a production conducive to individual applause; the makeup, costumes, and set rhythms of movement and speech went counter to that. But the actor's vocal qualities did count, and reviewers commended the performers in especially this respect. The leading player, Raúl Dantés, given the nature of his role, was an exception; he was repeatedly singled out for excellence in voice, speech, and mannerisms; only two critics made note of flaws: Dantés was "a little exaggerated at the beginning," for de Tapia's taste, and Magaña-Esquivel noted a bit of "languidness" and a lack of that certain "spark."[1]

The third and final reason for the program's unanimous critical approval had to do with nature of the offering (comprehensible, nonantagonistic, nonthreatening) and the seating capacity of the theatre where most reviewers witnessed the play, the Virginia Fábregas (some four or five times greater than the Moderno or Caballito), in relation to the audience, one changing in size and composition. By and large, the Press did not comment on the audience, in contrast to some Fourth Program reviews.

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[1]To account for another source, the column "Septimo Cielo" of the weekly Claridades carried only a recommendation to see the program in its 15 March 1959 issue, pp. 13 and 15; its writer, Juan Tomás, had already published his review in 1957 in Esto.

But the two reviews that did touch on the subject implied, in different ways, that Poesía en Voz Alta was making a healthy attempt to meet the people at least half-way, and the public was responding to the gesture.[1]

One of these reviews was written by Lya Engel, the theatre critic for the leftist Impacto, which had ignored Poesía en Voz Alta after sharply denouncing its Second Program. Engel acknowledged the Fifth Program's excellence, saying nothing about any limited, snob, or unhealthy appeal--as she would later on. Engel grudgingly stated that since the theatre had been practically full for each perfomance at the Fábregas, and the audience seemed to comprehend the play, a sufficient public in Mexico apparently existed for a production like this, even though "it's possible that this [play] won't be of much help with one's daily chores." The other review contained a specific reference to a change in Poesía en Voz Alta and the level of public--albeit invited public--unrelated by the critic, however, to any change in the theatre's size. In Fernando Mota's sour introduction--it was the first time that Mota had been invited to Poesía en Voz Alta, he notes later[2]--to an otherwise favorable review, there is the suggestion that the general paying public would now be more welcome too:

> The group, association, confraternity, community, society, congregation, ensemble, cast, or whatever you will, called Poesía en Voz Alta, is at this time changing its initial criterion of isolated

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[1]Had the program been seen as actually or potentially anti-social, such a public response would have elicited negative reactions from particularly the socially oriented critics.

[2]Mota is presumably referring to a Poesía en Voz Alta opening.

> and rigorous selection in the admission of invited persons to attend the celebration, like hermetic rites, of their acts of pure dramatic art. At last it has opened the doors of its temple and let the general public enter its mystical stronghold, until now only accessible to the initiated. . . . It is good this way, even though such an attitude may be "pure" condescension.

The Fifth Program of Poesía en Voz Alta was a critical and financial success at its first commercial theatre house.[1]

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[1]Soriano, 1977, and Ibáñez, October 1977, were among those to speak of the finances. This is logical given the filled houses, the "cooperative" business arrangement, and the already-made sets and costumes.

CHAPTER 8

1959: THE SIXTH PROGRAM

Some Press items following the Friday, 24 July opening of Jean Genet's Les bonnes (The Maids) at the Fábregas Theatre:

> Since he was lacking a cook, he went to see The Maids. But it enraged him so much, that they have just extirpated his gall bladder.[1]

> The Maids won't be a success. Because it is a farce with Ofelia Guilmáin and Rita Macedo, instead of being something realistic with Lilia Prado and María Victor.[2]

> Genet's play, The Maids, is being harshly treated by the public and critics. Some are saying that they are only 'maids,' others, that it is intolerable, and others, that it is tolerable. In conclusion, the only ones who feel comfortable with the play are the actresses, Macedo, Guilmáin, and Pascual (Meche).[3]

> The Maids Provoke a Crisis:
> More than 150 people walked out of the Fábregas Theatre during the premiere of Jean Genet's play, The Maids.
> The public walked out of the room as a sign of protest. Some, due to the incongruency of the play, others, alleging that it

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[1]Manuel Angel Bayardi, "Cinensañarse," Novedades, 26 July 1959, sec. 3, p. 3.

[2]Vila, "Cambio de rollo: 'Las Criadas' no Hallaron a sus Mejores Intépretes," Cine Mundial, 29 July 1959, p. 7.

[3]Rodolfo de la Rosa, "Panorama," El Nacional, 29 July 1959, p. 5.

is a very vulgar piece, and some others, because it is an incomprehensible piece.[1]

The spectators who stayed until the end, lavished a very warm ovation on the play and actors.

This public reaction seems to have also affected the honorable Office of Spectacles because, going against its puritanical spirit of the last weeks, it extended an authorization to the impresarios of the Fábregas Theatre so that the piece could be presented for adolescents and adults.[2]

Fábregas: The Maids. An alluvium of opinions has broken loose with regard to this French play. Our opinion: it is a good, interesting piece, but VERY BADLY acted and directed. We know that we are exposing ourselves to suffer the anathema of the conclave of homosexuals who are hovering round this play. But no matter; the truth above all... [3]

What altercation The Maids caused!... It's getting to be such a thing that a group of intellectuals are planning to discuss its [the play's] problems at the Ateneo Español. Over there we will see fine existentialist beards and uncombed long hair, à la Bardot, which are

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[1]A massive and noisy retreat of spectators was mentioned in reviews too; see, e.g., Armando de María y Campos, "El Teatro: Estreno de 'Las Criadas' de Jean Genet en el Teatro Fábregas," Novedades, 31 July 1959, sec. 3, p. 6.

[2]The playbill notes, "fit for adolescents and adults"; see Appendix A, p. 382.

The unidentifiable clippings on The Maids are from the collection of Nancy Cárdenas. They are included in Appendix C, p. 502; this clipping is no. 1.

[3]"Teatro de Comedia," Esto, 26 July 1959, sec. B, p. 4. Also see p. 238 below for the Alberto Isaac cartoon from Esto, 29 July 1959, sec. A, p. 9. It says: "Of those who go to see Comédie Française (in French), at least 75% understand nothing. Nevertheless, 100% leave, saying marvelous things about the performance."

She: "Marvelous, isn't it?" He: "Yes, but it made me sleepy." "And of those who go to see The Maids (in Spanish), 95% don't understand what is happening, and 99% leave expelling fury."

He: "Psst! Not so much realism, Ofelia." [Guilmáin, the actress] "Moral: They ought to have staged The Maids in French."

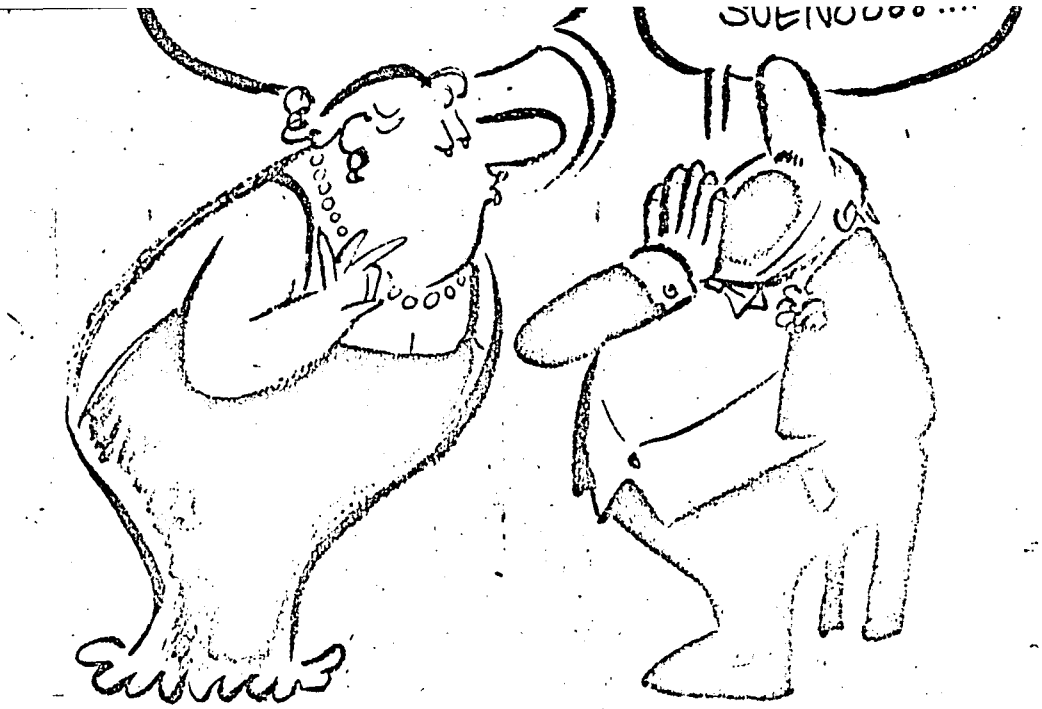
¿Parlez vu Français?

DE LOS QUE VAN A VER LA **COMEDIE FRANÇAISE** (EN FRANCES) CUANDO MENOS EL **75%** NO ENTIENDEN NADA. SALEN, SIN EMBARGO, HABLANDO MARAVILLAS DE LA FUNCION EL **100%**



Y DE LOS QUE VAN A VER "**LAS CRIADAS**" (EN ESPAÑOL) EL **95%** NO ENTIENDE LO QUE PASA, Y EL **99%** SALEN ECHANDO PESTES





Y DE LOS QUE VAN A VER "**LAS CRIADAS**" (EN ESPAÑOL) EL **95%** NO ENTIENDE LO QUE PASA, Y EL **99%** SALEN ECHANDO PESTES



MORALEJA: DEBIAN HABER PUESTO "LAS CRIADAS" EN FRANCES.

liked by our national existentialists, among whom, Genet, the author of the play at the Fábregas, counts great admirers.[1]

The Maids: absurd.[2]

When a country produces young men of José Luis Ibáñez's quality, it doesn't have to worry. Mexico has, at the present time, one of the most brilliant generations in its history. Whoever still doubts it can see The Maids by Genet which, since July 24, has been playing at the Fábregas.

Even the one who might not like such a play--very beautiful, to my way of thinking--will have to recognize that the work of the director, Ibáñez, proclaims an artistic maturity, out of the ordinary, at age twenty-six.

The play, direction, and acting deserve a special commentary.[3]

Adverse criticism for The Maids abounds, Nevertheless, it seems to us that the major part of them are being produced for reasons unrelated to the qualities of the play itself.[4]

Poesía en Voz Alta played two performances daily, Tuesday through Sunday, of its Sixth Program, The Maids, during a fifteen-day run, through 9 August, at the Fábregas Theatre.[5] And to filled houses, helped possibly by the responses above and by the misleading title of the play, suggesting "a costumbrista drama with domestic problems."[6]

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[1]"Cortas de Clarita," La Prensa, 1 August 1959, p. 30. This refers to the round-table discussion, held on Monday, 3 August 1959, at the Ateneo Español de México, with Ibáñez, Juan García Ponce, José Miquel García Ascot, and León Felipe. It was announced by, for example, R. Vázquez Mota, "Notas Culturales," El Universal, 31 July 1959, sec. 1, p. 3.

[2]"Espejo Mágico," El Redondel, 26 July 1959, sec. 2, p. 12.

[3]See Appendix C, p. 502., no. 2. [4]Ibid., no. 3.

[5]One closing notice appears in the Sunday edition of Novedades, 9 August 1959, sec. 3, p. 8; a two-week notice is in Últimas Noticias, 1st ed., 21 July 1959, p. 8. The reference to a twenty-two day run in Armando de María y Campos's review, "Las Criadas," is incorrect.

[6]So called by Cárdenas in the 1974 interview. Among others to have spoken of this were León Davidoff and Soriano in their interviews of 1977.

Given the didactic, socially constructive tenor of the times, the familistic orientation of Mexico, a country in which also households of at least the upper-middle and upper classes--part of the Poesía en Voz Alta audiences--were rarely unattended by maids, and the tension produced by the country's unstable economy, the choice of Genet's play--of Genet himself--was brazen, arrogant, and not commercial. Yet, in the past, Poesía en Voz Alta had been counter to trends, and had exhibited boldness and impudence in its choice of materials, production designs, or both. In still other respects, The Maids was a logical choice for these, "rebels with cause," as the critic, Fausto Castillo, nicknamed the founders.[1] It is a one-act play with a simple plot, in a nonrealistic, poetic genre. The Maids (or for that matter, any other Genet play) was unknown to the Mexican stage, and unpublished in Spanish translation. Even more logical in the selection of The Maids was that the play allowed for economical staging. It has three characters and one simple, interior setting. But these factors were not the sole basis for the choice. Other influences came indirectly from Octavio Paz, who was abroad at the time, and directly from the famed actress, Rita Macedo, and Salvador Novo.

It was Paz who had first spoken of Genet to the company, and who had fostered hopes of staging a Genet play with Poesía en Voz Alta. For this reason perhaps, Paz was given credit as literary director of the program--as an honorary title--along with Diego de Mesa who had continued to work with Poesía en Voz Alta and had helped with The Maid's translation.[2]

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[1]"Dos juicios sobre Las Criadas: Rebeldía ¿contra qué? han querido dar la batalla con una resortera," Novedades, 2 August 1959, supp., p. 8.

[2]Paz, interviewed 14 October 1977, was unable to account for the playbill's credit. De Mesa, who resides in Rome, Italy, was unavailable for comment, but Ibáñez, January 1978, referred to the writer's assistance on the translation (uncredited in the playbill).

It was Rita Macedo who, in search of an acting vehicle for herself, encountered The Maids, wished to play the role of Claire, considered producing the play, and approached Soriano and Ibáñez about staging it. But the commitment to the play came with Salvador Novo's offer to let Poesía en Voz Alta become the Teatro Club's alternating company at the Teatro Orientación. The Maids, among three or four foreign choices presented by Ibáñez as possibilities for the venture, was the one Ibáñez thought would work best, owing to Novo's slender budget and desire to open a play in short time.[1] Although acting on behalf of a government agency, Novo readily approved the controversial choice. Novo, who had introduced Samuel Beckett to Mexico by directing En attendant Godot (Waiting For Godot), had himself written a most controversial play in 1934, El tercer Fausto (The Third Faust). Originally written French (Le troisième Faust), later translated into Spanish, only recently published in Mexico, and never staged, El tercer Fausto presents a homosexual love.[2]

With sponsorship and theatre secured, José Luis Ibáñez proceeded to translate and cast the play with recognized names--a radical departure from Poesía en Voz Alta's past policy. The role of Solange went to Isabela

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[1]Ibáñez interview, October 1977.

[2]In the play, Alberto summons the Devil to transform him into a woman, in order to obtain Armando's love and society's permission; it is contained in Novo's collection of writings, Díalogos (Mexico: Organización Editorial Novaro, S.A., 1970), pp. 49-66. Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, p. 133, notes the play as unstaged as of 1961; no record exists of the play's later staging either.

Corona, and Rita Macedo was cast to her liking in the other leading role of Claire. Corona, whose brilliant acting career was initiated in the early experimental groups, the Teatro de Ulises, Escolares del Teatro, and Teatro de Orientación, was considered one of Mexico's great ladies of the theatre. In 1957, Corona had been voted best actress of the year, for her performance in O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night; the critic, Vicent, saw the award's justification as leaving "no room for discussion."[1] Rita Macedo, contending against Corona in William Faulkner's Requiem For A Nun, had been the 1955 categorical winner for The Bad Seed; Macedo was known to theatre, film, and television viewers.[2] The smaller role of Madame went to Meche Pascual who had theatre and film credits, but was not yet a star.[3] These actresses combined box-office appeal with critical respect as artists.

The Maids never opened at the Orientación; Novo's contractional terms were unsatisfactory in too many ways, and Poesía en Voz Alta withdrew from the project. Nor did it open at the Fábregas with Corona; in the interim, she had continued rehearsals at her home, but after awhile, stepped

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[1]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 56, 62-65, 70; Vicent "El 17 el reparto de premios," p. 54.

[2]Vicent, "Balance de 1957," pp. 54-55; Rita Macedo y Ofelia Guilmáin, Desde Hoy en Las Criadas," Novedades, 24 July 1959, sec. 1, 2nd pt., p. 5.

[3]"Rita Macedo y Ofelia Guilmáin."

out of the cast.[1] Her replacement was another important actress of stage and screen, Ofelia Guilmáin, best known for her work in classical theatre, but with nearly as many credits in modem and modem avant-garde plays.[2] Guilmáin joined the cast after the theatre had been secured.[3]

Instead of an organization, institution, or multi-sponsorship, the Sixth Program was financed by a private patron, León Davidoff. Long a friend of the arts, and closely acquainted with Soriano and Paz, Davidoff had contributed to the Fourth Program's financing. Around the same time that Davidoff was gratuitously assisting on Bob Lerner's lavish production of My Fair Lady, he saw the Fifth Program and was impressed by the stark simplicity of its staging.[4] Davidoff offered to help the company, to "lose" money, as Ibáñez and María y Campos both worded it, and concurring with other forecasts for the play.[5] He "gifted," María y Campos and Novo's word, the 30,000 pesos (then, $2400 U.S.) for the project, requesting

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[1]According to Ibáñez, October 1977 and Soriano, 1977, Poesía en Voz Alta withdrew over matters of finance and production control; they conjectured that Corona's reasons related to other offers and a billing dispute.

[2]On the actress's background, see, e.g., Margarita García Flores's interview with Guilmáin, "Herede Una Vocación Frustrada," Novedades, 29 August, 1976, supp. "La Onda," pp. 7-8.

[3]Ibáñez by phone, 24 March 1978.

[4]Interview.

[5]Interview, October 1977; review. Davidoff, Soriano, 1977, and Ibáñez, October 1977, spoke of several who warned against investing in the venture, predicting a financial catastrophe.

no recognition for it.[1] The arrangement called for the actresses to receive salaries, generous salaries, but Soriano and Ibáñez were to forfeit theirs for a one-third share each of any profits.[2]

The Fábregas was the theatre most desired to house the daring play, owing to Poesía en Voz Alta's positive relations with its owners, the Toledo family, established during the Fifth Program's profitable run. The Fábregas was booked, however, for playwright-director-critic Luis G. Basurto's latest play, Los reyes del mundo (Kings of the World), to star Ofelia Guilmáin, during the period requested. Basurto volunteered to postpone his opening for two or three weeks, and thus Guilmáin was freed to take on the role of Solange.[3]

The Sixth Program was the first of its kind in many respects. First without Octavio Paz as participant or, the case of the First Program, influential observer; first with Nancy Cárdenas as assistant director; the

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[1]Davidoff's name is omitted in the playbill, Appendix A, pp. 380-83. and in García Ponce's reference to a "private producer," "Las Criadas," Universidad de México 13 (August 1959):30. However, he was named and the sum of money supplied, by María y Campos, and by Novo as a brief insert in "Cartas a un amigo," Hoy, 25 July 1959, p. 33; for Novo, this was in lieu of a review.

[2]The arrangement to divide profits three ways was related by Ibáñez, January 1972 and 24 March 1978, Soriano, 1977, and Davidoff. This reduced costs, but also, claimed Davidoff, demonstrated Soriano's and Ibáñez's sincere desire to stage the play for no profit motive. As to the actresses' salaries, according to Ibáñez and Soriano they were nicely above what the University would have paid. This became policy with Davidoff, which he reapplied in his next financing of Poesía en Voz Alta.

[3]Ibáñez, interview October 1977 and March 1978. The publicity, discussed next, adds support to this.

Sixth Program was also the first to be sponsored by a single private patron, to employ only name actors, be presented at a commercial theatre on a full-week, if limited, run, and be clearly designed for commercial consumption. For the latter reason, the play was divided into two acts, claimed García Ponce, in "Las Criadas,"[1] while "for the spectator to rest" was María y Campos's blunt contention, and the program's publicity, with its hard-sell approach, evinced commercialization glaringly. This publicity was included free-of-charge in the steep theatre rental terms of, as Davidoff recalled, either twenty-five or thirty percent of the gross intake.[2] It publicized the Sixth Program through a large ad, the layout handled by the staff of the Fábregas, with a "plug" for Basurto's incoming play at the bottom. The ad presented a captioned Soriano-sketched caricature of the Maids attending Madame that played up Genet's scandalous repute, and whereas the actresses' names were blazoned in big, bold print, hardly visible lettering was exclusively reserved for Poesía en Voz Alta's name.[3] In effect, the Sixth Program was being sold by means of

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[1]P. 30.

[2]Interview. The Toledos also owned the "Cartalera Teatral," the newspaper theatre directory.

According to Davidoff, other theatres were then charging between ten and fifteen percent without publicity included. How they compared to the Fábregas in location, seating capacity, popularity, and other such factors is, however, unknown, as is whether the theatres would have charged these nominal rates for a production like The Maids, and with its big-name cast.

[3]Ibáñez, March 1978, supplied the layout and caption credits. The ad appears in, for example, Últimas Noticias, 1st ed., 21 July 1959, p. 8.

sensationalism and name appeal, unlike the former straightforward directives in a tiny box display.[1] Only one critic referred to the publicity. Poesía en Voz Alta "seems to be hiding behind tiny letters," he wrote, noting the plenitude of advertisements on a play scheduled for two weeks, which he based on the "necessities of times which demand the maximum publicity."[2]

The playbill carried one more "first." In place of an original commentary, a reprint of segments from Jean-Paul Sartre's "Introduction" to the play was found, with no further information, explanation, or statement of program intent. Nothwithstanding Soriano's allegation for the "commentary," which paralleled the appraisal by the critic for Claridades who wrote that Sartre's words "explain[ed] the content of the play better than anything else,"[3] there was a resultant outpouring of confusion about the play. In the playbill, the commentary was titled "Four Words on 'The Maids'":

> 1) The Maids are absolutely relative beings: they depend on everything and everyone. The Maids are the others; they are a pure emanation of their masters. Like criminals, they belong to the order of the Other, to the order of Evil. They love Madame: . . .[4] they would like to become Madame, in other words, to

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[1]Ibáñez insisted, March 1978, that had Soriano objected to the Sixth Program's ad, it would have been changed.

[2]"Comedias y Comediantes: Extraordinaria Interpretación de 'Las Criadas' a Cargo de Ofelia Guilmáin, Rita Macedo y Meche Pascual," Claridades, 26 July 1959, p. 22.

[3]Ibid. Also Soriano interview, 1977.

[4]Ellipses in the original text.

become integrated into the social order and stop being outcasts. They hate Madame: . . . in other words, they detest the society that rejects them and they wish to annihilate it.

2) In the presence of Madame, Solange and Claire are not real. Their submission is false, their tenderness is false, their respect and gratitude are false. Their entire behavior is a lie. When they return to being left alone, they put on their true faces again. But when they are alone, they play. Claire plays at being Madame and Solange plays at being Claire. And the spectator, despite himself, awaits the return of Madame: in front of her, their masks will fall, and the maids will return to their true situation as maids.
3) In the presence of the Masters, the truth of the Maids consists in being maids false to the end, masking the human being that hides behind a guise of servility. But in the absence of the Masters, that human being does not manifest himself either: the truth of the servant, when he is alone, consists of playing at being the master. Thus, the two maids play, in turn, at being Madame. When he presents them to the public, Genet merely mirrors the fantasies of the right-minded women in that audience. Every night, five hundred Madames can exclaim: "Yes, that is what maids are like," without realizing that they create maids, the same way that North-American Southerners create blacks . . . The Maids are the crepuscular guard of bourgeois families. The Maids are dreams who dream of swallowing up the Madames who dream them up.
4) Solange helps Claire put on one of the Madame's dresses. This is the ceremony, the sacred game which is repeated with the stereotyped monotony of schizophrenic dreams . . . It is the Black Mass. Every evening, the murder of the Madame is performed, a murder always being interrupted, never completed.[1]

The press coverage provided the final noteworthy "first." Three news arteries--Siempre, El Nacional, and Impacto--published their program reviews post-mortem.[2] For whom these communications were intended, better still, for what desired effect, is anyone's guess--perhaps just for coverage of a controversial event. Obviously they were not aimed

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[1]Playbill 6, Appendix A, p. 383.

[2]The program closed 9 August 1959; the respective reviews appeared 12 August, 23 August, and 12 August. All reviews will be covered after the next section on production elements.

at swaying ticket sales. At the other extreme of these missed-deadline reviews and some tardily published others, were the various relatively punctual brief blurbs and press items.[1] It was these curiosity piquing releases that roused the nonhabitual theatregoer to attend the functions at the start of the run,[2] and resulted in Davidoff's assertion about The Maids: "for once, the press influenced box-office receipts," and the more negative, derogatory the press, the more positive the ticket sales.[3]

For the production design of The Maids, Soriano mixed natural makeup, stereotypic and originally styled realistic costumes, and a combined realistic-abstract set. The Maids, in dark brown uniforms with crisply starched white collars and half-aprons, typified French parlor maids of the 1930s. Madame wore tailored, unadorned clothing--two basic white dresses, one short sleeved, the other Kabuki-styled, and a collarless, black and white checkered coat. For Rita Macedo, when she played at being Madame, Soriano fashioned a red velvet, sleeveless gown whose train streamed down from the shoulders and ran across the floor. As the dress was adorned and removed during the course of one scene, a particularly wordy scene, Soriano designed it to do more than

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[1]Novedades can serve as an illustration. The Bayardi item appeared 26 July 1959; five days later, the María y Campos review; and two days after, two reviews by Castillo and García Ascot.

[2]There will be reviewer mention of a wide array of audience types from a wide array of occupations.

[3]Interview.

flatter the actress--to function for her. He ran a multitude of tiny buttons down the front, transforming it into an easy on and off coat-dress, "and the buttons gave Macedo something [extra] to do during the speeches."[1]

Soriano's interior setting, like the colors of his costumes, closely followed Genet's text specifications and stage directions. The play evolved in Madame's bedroom of Louis V decor; the set included a bed, dressing table, door, windows, and flowers. But Soriano's furniture was actually just rectangular and square blocks of unsculpted wood, either coated in paint or covered in fabric, on which thick squiggles were painted to convey the idea of the Louis V style. Similarly, the windows were painted flats, and the artificial flowers, arranged so as to resemble the sun's face, were stuck to individually odd shaped, expressionistic structures, the "vases," [See Figure 23, p. 250.] Soriano's ongoing concern for textures and materials was further expressed in this production through his choice of velvet for the red dress, lace trimming on the satin bedspread and linens, and a thick floral-patterned lace to cover the dressing table.[2]

The upstage area of the playing space was the seat of fantasy and imagination, so suggested through lighting--an element whose versatility Poesía en Voz Alta was first coming to explore--the cyclorama, the material and color divisions of the stage floor, and the two sets of double-tiered steps. As the set stressed brown, beige, gold, and gray, so the stage

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[1]Soriano interview, 1977.

[2]Photo collections of Ibáñez and Soriano.



(Photo by Rodrigo Moya; courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas)

Fig. 23. The Maids by Jean Genet with Macedo as Claire and Pascual as Madame.

floor carried out much the same scheme. The only uncovered plank of natural wood was downstage; it apparently demarcated Madame's quarters from the world outside; none of the actresses used the space. Behind it, the indoors area, was a horizontal strip of dark gray cloth, then light gray, and golden beige at back. This back area housed the matching colored cyclorama, with its two large unattached flats that almost met at center stage to form a "v." Stairs stood before these flats, one set at the right flat, the other, between the two.[1] These two main flats often took on symbolic value in The Maids. When the stage lights were dimmed and the flats lit from behind, a wooden skeleton construction was revealed. To Soriano, this represented the balcony area, accessible by the stairs, which showed a view of the city at night.[2] To Ibáñez, the dark stage and lucid constructions also represented the breaking down of "walls," simultaneously those of the house (suggestible by the flat's square frame and front stairs) and those of the mind.[3] As the intensity of lighting varied, so did the visibility of these constructions. This expressed different times of day, to Soriano's way of thinking,[4] while to Ibáñez, taking his interpretation one step further, it might have also implied how great the Maids' involvement in fantasy was--the degree of their mental freedom.

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[1]See the photos in Artes de México, pp. 72-73 and p. 84 which is a color print.

[2]Interview, 1977. [3]Interview, October 1977. [4]Interview, 1977.

The most dramatic use of the cyclorama was saved for Solange's monologue, in which she imagines Madame dead and herself triumphing. The scene was staged in obscurity, lanced only by a bright spotlight cast on a tall, slim flat at stage right which illuminated Madame's bed area, and strong back lighting on the cycloramic flats. In this way, visual and, especially, auditory discrimination was heightened during the course of the lengthy speech because simply a few meaningful set pieces were illuminated and Genet's lines were delivered by a moving silhouette. [See Figure 24, p. 253.]

At least a couple of reviewers were disgruntled, but evidently not distracted by the staging of the monologue. In common with all other reviewers, they offered neither rhyme nor reason for such visual effects; nor did they or any other reviewer, make mention of the cyclorama, or any other set piece or costume element in the play. Nonetheless, Magaña-Equivel, in the Sunday supplement of El Nacional, spoke of "lighting errors," and Fausto Castillo, who used his initials, F. C. in his review for Diario de la Tarde of Novedades, sarcastically blamed the misuse of lighting on "someone's idea to have actors speak long speeches in the dark."[1] Later, in the Novedades Sunday cultural supplement, Castillo bluntly spelled out his objection, while discussing the merits of artistic rebellion--when well done:

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[1]"Cinco Comedias Francesas Distintas y Un Solo Teatro Verdadero," 23 August 1959, p. 11; "Anoche en el Teatro: Las criadas," 28 July 1959, p. 8



(Courtesy of José Luis Ibáñez)

Fig. 24. Solange's monologue (performed by Guilmáin) in Genet's The Maids.

> In the piece, there is a long scene which is set in such darkness that you cannot see the actress who speaks. Let's not kid one another: this is not rebellion against anything. This is simply to go against one of the fundamental conditions of the dramatic phenomenon: theatre is to be heard and SEEN.

Of these other production elements, the direction, scenography overall, and the acting, styled along a farcical line, critical responses were mixed.[1] Luis G. Basurto thought Ibáñez directed with "brillance and classical precision"; Carlos Estrada Lang, that he "attained a perfect balance on stage";[2] Antonio Magaña-Esquivel disagreed by terming the direction "obscure," attributed to the "lighting errors" and "mixture of abstraction[ism] and realism in the set and costumes." The direction was excellent to Alejandro Moreno Ling, "slow" and "indecisive" to Fausto Castillo, and "plastic, agile," and "inspired" to María Luisa Mendoza who found the production "heavy and slow," notwithstanding her praise for all elements and participants.[3] "José Luis Ibáñez has attained a truly magistral execution," wrote the critic in Mañana; "José Luis Ibáñez directed The Maids very intelligently," was the assessment of J. T., or

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[1]This discussion omits the Siempre, Impacto, El Universal, and El Redondel reviews; they appear later in the section, translated in part or entirety.

[2]"El Teatro: Las Criadas," Excelsior, 25 July 1959, sec. B, p. 4; "Rita Macedo se consagra en la obra, 'Las Criadas,'" Éxito, 26 July 1959, p. 6.

[3]"Las Criadas," La Nación, 2 August 1959, p. 27; Diario de la Tarde; "La Comedia Francesa vs. Las criadas," Hoy, 8 August 1959, p. 60.

Juan Tomás,[1] while Fausto Castillo's concession to this "intelligence," as evidenced by the "ease and imagination" with which the actors moved, was tagged onto a "lack of craft" because, purported the critic, Ibáñez gave the actors free rein to create their characters alone. Lastly, there were the views of Juan García Ponce, the sole critic who did not speak on Genet or the play, and José Miguel García Ascot, the poet, writer, and husband of María Luisa Elío who acted in the Second and Third Programs. Both critics minced no words in hailing the direction, hailing every aspect of the production for that matter, with García Ascot going so far as to declare Ibáñez "indisputably the best [director] which our present-day theatre depends on," "clearly of the stature of the greatest directors from whichever country."[2]

The scenography, "lyrical and professional" to María Luisa Mendoza, serving the play "with total fitness" to the critic in Claridades, was assessed as "very lovely, adequate, and functional," with "great worth in itself" to the critic in Mañana, who isolated Soriano as special to Mexico's theatre set and costume designers, being probably the only one to give "his creations a high plastic value." Counterclaims were these:

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[1]"Teatro: Sexto programa de poesía en voz alta," 1 August 1959, p. 45; "Esto Vímos en el Teatro: Obra Desigual, Ampulosa, y Aburrida," Esto, 28 July 1959, sec. B, p. 7.

[2]García Ponce, pp. 30-31; "Dos juicios sobre Las Criadas: Nunca, en México, se había alcanzado esta altura, este nivel teatral," Novedades, 2 August 1959, supp., p. 8.

Soriano's set "doesn't fulfull itself"; "Soriano felt too free . . . [the scenography] doesn't work"; and the following rationale:

> Genet advised that although his play is of a realistic type, it ought to be presented in a poetic climate. Neither the one or the other was obtained in Mexico. Sir José Luis Ibáñez was inclined towards farce, perhaps so obligated by the very poor, though tasteful setting of Juan Soriano's.[1]

García Ponce and García Ascot stood at the other extreme. García Ponce rated the production "perfect"; he gauged Soriano's use of "space, form, and color" as having realized its goal, "not to imitate reality, but to create a new reality within a distinct style: that of art," and thought that the direction and acting followed the style with equal success.[2] García Ascot succinctly put his position in the title of his review, which also registers the critique's tone: "Never, in Mexico, has this height, this theatrical level, been reached." Dissenting, Castillo found pure amateurism, without any freshness or charm. In Diario de la Tarde, he labeled the staging "cold, vacillating, 'green,'" and belittled "the men who move it [who] are each moment demonstrating that they have not even mastered theatre craft." In Novedades, Castillo pursued his point about Ibáñez and Soriano needing to "know how to do things," needing "to possess craft."[3]

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[1]Castillo, Diario de la Tarde; Idem, Novedades; María y Campos.

[2]Pp. 30-31.

[3]Other favorable appraisals of the direction and scenography were written by Basurto and Moreno Ling; negative ones, by Magaña-Equivel and others held back temporarily.

As to the acting, most critics commended Guilmáin, Macedo, and Pascual, but were divided on whose performance was the finest. Of those partially satisfied critics, blame tended to be put on either the director, for not tapping acting capacities, the case of Magaña-Esquivel and Castillo in Novedades, or perceived detrimental effects of the actresses' working in cinema and television, the case of Estrada Lang, or both the director and these mediums, the case of María y Campos. The latter critic wrote:

> The main actors, Ofelia Guilmáin and Rita Macedo, both drafted as tragic [characters] in search of a tragedy, act[ed] full of determination, almost always overdone, and notwithstanding screams and intonations that wanted to be dramatic, did not affect the public. Guilmáin as much as Macedo acted coldly; accustomed to acting without a public in cinema or TV, they have lost the secret of arousing emotion in live audiences. Meche Pascual, in her fleeting appearance and despite the farcical tone in which she acted, gives the feeling that crossing the stage is an actress without great temperamental complications, simply an actress.

Once again, the outpouring of reviews and commentaries were directed, by and large, at the playwright and play. But the emotional pitch of certain reviews was unmatched by anything heard in the Eliot or Garro reviews; the hostility unparalled by anything on the productions of the Archpriest and Quevedo, or on Poesía en Voz Alta before. Genet's life was detailed by nearly every critic. The play was almost always spoken about in brief and evaluated at length. About half concluded that The Maids was a flawed play.

Those who liked Genet's piece, but stated so in the most concise of terms were Basurto, Mendoza, García Ponce, Estrada Lang, and the

critic in Mañana. The opinions expressed by Moreno Ling and the critic in Claridades, both of whose reviews were production centered, seemed favorable, somewhat noncommitally. As an illustration, here is what the Claridades critic had to say about the play:

> Verbalist theatre, in which the word is everything, the monologues and dialogues are loaded with grief, rebellion, and protest, and the author handles it all in poetic ways, and with a very personal playwright's vision.

Only García Ascot championed the play to such an extent that his review, which sought to critically prove the greatness of The Maids, became a rebuttal. In a profusive flow of often cryptic comments, García Ascot analyzed the play, whose "fundamental motivation" he called "Hegelian," by relating it to "themes" that he considered representative of Freud, Frazer, Jung, Adler, Marx, and Kafka. "Over these themes," García Ascot wrote, "Genet fashions a magnificent and obscure-disordered play where a symbol without preceding exposition or motivation interweaves language which results at once esoteric and realistic. The result is a play that gives the impression of emerging from another, and which has lost the clear scheme of its origin in the process of abstraction and poetization." To conclude, García Ascot took a tack diverse from the tolerant Estrada Lang's dispassionate reasoning of the play's lack of public acceptance as grounded on its "hybrid" audience having expected to find a different kind of play, one "accessible to whatever mentality." García Ascot made use of insult, intimidation, and accusation of harboring evil motives. His last sentence read: "We hope that the reaction of an inexpert public, some

deaf, blind, as well as ill-intentioned critics, and the inevitable opposition of our theatre 'authorities,' do not add obstacles to what is finally our first great theatre."

María y Campos, who saw the play as linked to the author's life, acquainted his readers with some background information on the play: that when it first opened in Paris, the play "did not have success," in spite of the City's cultural ambience which fostered "free ideas." Nor "five or six years later" when presented again. "It is evident," María y Campos concluded, "that there is not a good author of theatre in Genet," soon after adding that public successes failed to come with Le balcon (The Balcony) or Haute surveillance (Deathwatch) either. Castillo claimed the play was about "two servants who want to live like masters in their absence . . . [the play] presents the psychological problem." But Genet had complicated his theme, thought Castillo, for instance by adopting "existential postures," and so turned it into "an illogical, absurd, and useless nightmare."[1] In Novedades, Castillo tempered his appraisal to the play "not [being] a good piece. . . . The theme is very interesting, but the development seems to wander about." Juan Tomás found occasional "bursts of true poetry," but agreed that the play lacked clarity; the title of his review in Esto summed up his opinion: "uneven, pompous, and boring play." Magaña-Esquivel, who saw the play as posing "the inner conflict of servitude," and interpreted it as "the drama of enslaved spirits, oppressed not only by an economic

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[1]Diario de la Tarde.

dependency but by some incapacity, some trauma," gave his evaluation and the basis for it:

> Disorganized play, which is an incessant crossing of disorbited ideas and incoherent anxieties, transfiguration of hallucinative homosexuality, and the author's psychological conflicts, The Maids demands an interpretation which, on account of being abstract and schematic, and due to its esoteric language, results in being not only difficult but dangerous. Not even Jouvet, when he premiered it in Paris, dared to use male actors for Solange and Claire, which was Genet's original idea, and which clarifies or justifies some situations and speeches. In the way that it has been kept, The Maids is a confusing, obscure play, loaded with vagueness, weak and melodramatic, talky, tiring, and literary in its main conflict which involves the characters.

The four final reviews to be referred to were carried by two periodicals, one daily, and one weekly newspaper, and were special sorts of rejections. These reviews are of interest not only because of their high degree of subjectivity, but because they reveal certain strong predilections and register certain prejudices, openly or transparently disguised in print.

The widely spread, highly esteemed Siempre, contained the fullest developed, most analytical, and subtlest of the four reviews, despite its sarcastic tone, one snide remark about "normalcy," and other denigrating terms. Its anonymous writer was hardly unique in trying to deflate the prominence and spreading popularity of Poesía en Voz Alta; this tendency had lain dormant for the Fifth Program, but the Sixth rekindled it.[1]

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[1] Nancy Cárdenas believed that The Maids introduced a new kind of threat--one of contamination by those who were espousing Genet's thoughts, Genet's way of life, as the presentation of his play was taken to mean. "If," Cárdenas exempliefied in 1974, "Genet was a homosexual, drug addict, and thief," then those who were presenting his play in Mexico had to share some of these characteristics with him. Hence, at stake was society's well-being.

Curiously, one of his methods was taking swipes at the UNAM and Poesía en Voz Alta's university breeding--for most of the original participants did represent the first theatre generation of actors, directors, and writers that the UNAM produced[1]--even though Poesía en Voz Alta had been independent for close to two years, and was employing non-university performers of renown. The critic opened on an appreciative note of irony for Poesía en Voz Alta: that it was left to the initiative of this Mexican group to introduce the "ultramodern" of the French theatre to Mexico, something which the unspecified French company, but unmistakably the Comédie Française which the critic spoke about prior to The Maids, had failed to do while in Mexico, being "wont to tarry very many years in accepting novelties."[2] He continued to compliment Poesía en Voz Alta, esteeming it "the most distinguished, active, valuable group of avant-garde theatre that we have in Mexico"; he named Soriano its animator, and referred to the group's composition as including "some intelligent youngsters of university extraction," into which the critic placed Soriano because university education could now be bestowed on him, "honoris causa." Then came the negative comments:

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[1]Nancy Cárdenas saw this education as still another ingredient that colored some reviewers. It antagonized and personally threatened some critics who, though wielding the power of the pen, and "feeling themselves important," had far less formal and theatre education than the group which, anyway, was paying the critics little mind, as they well knew. (Interview, 1974.)

[2]"Espectáculos: Criadas," 12 August 1959, p. 50.

[3]Ibid.

These youngsters chose Jean Genet's The Maids, a play of bitter hull, petulant, harsh, and insolent, and which has not unified the criteria of the spectators or the critics for or against it, in order to show off.

The basis of The Maids is good; but it has nothing new. . . .

Overpowering verbosity, lack of action, without character development, only partaking of given premises, based on preconceptions and prejudices, the piece unfolds with asphyxiating slowness, and in a morbose, unhealthy climate which can create satisfaction for some spectators, fans of strong cheeses, but fatigue in people of certain normalcy. The translator puts phrases into the mouths of maid-servants, as incoherent to their own corresponding vocabulary as this one, which is not textual, but which I am making up with words the actresses pronounced: "I abhor her because she has metamorphosed into excrement. . . "

It could be said, and with reason, that neither by author of translator was there an attempt to write a documentary about the way maids speak. Nor is it near the way they think,[1] nor the way they act. Nor is there an attempt at doing anything real, of copying facts, situations, or words, nor furniture that could put it in reality. . . nor clothes. Then what is it [Poesía en Voz Alta] trying to do? To do theatre, theatre in abstract, as Juan Soriano now does painting in abstract which doesn't try to resemble anything. (At one time, he painted magnificent portraits, still life, and landscapes which you will see in his retrospective exhibition, next to be inaugurated.) Now Juan paints whatever thing, with showy colors, and gives any name to the painting: "Red Motorcycle," for example. Why couldn't Genet have said any string of phrases, and then have given a name to it, for example, The Maids? If we whisperingly recognize abstract painting and abstract sculpture, why don't we have to recognize that same abstract poetry aloud, and call it theatre?

That [abstract poetry] should be able to have its followers. Everything has them. But. . . the people should know what they're going to. They're going to hear an outcry, see some very comical clothes, some very entertaining furniture, and for two hours, allow themselves to have their legs pulled with something that is so far away from what, up until now, they have understood as theatre, as. . . "Red Motorcycle," by Juan Soriano is to the Mona Lisa. . . .

Because they succeed with the tone which was asked of them, of grievous distortion, and handle themselves in a paranoic climate which was asked by the piece, the actresses triumph, and should be congratulated and given ovations. Because it [the scenography] created

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[1]Italics mine.

> an unreal, artistic ambience, outside of nature, which the play asks for, the set and costume designer (whose dresses are so horrible that we don't doubt one could become rich sketching them for the most exclusive fashion house) should be applauded and praised. And because it took on the most ungrateful task of introducing us to the latest rage from France, knowing that it would be repudiated by the public, the university group of Poesía en Voz Alta (don't put Poesía en Voz Lata,[1] friend linotypist) merits congratulation for having shown such an horrendous show.
>
> Before, the University was supposing that it ought to go ahead carrying a light, to show the way to the nation. Today it understands its mission in another way: it must go counter to the people. That is how Terrés, Fuentes, and also the priests and acolytes of this art chapel which is university theatre understand it. There is talk. Let's see if from this talk a light will arise. Up until now, everything seemed dark to us.[2]

Another response to The Maids is given by José Hugo Cardona in the newspaper, El Universal. Were it not for a few cutting remarks intended to undermine the intelligence of the "select," suggesting pseudo-intelligence, and one very strong reference to the Mexican, José Luis Ibáñez, as "a little boy," Cardona's review would perhaps sound less offensive. Here is the entire review:

> The man seated behind us at the Fábregas Theatre last Friday night when the paranoid play by Jean Genet, farm laborer and orphaned author, ex-convict of several jails, and maniac about literature and psychological study, officially opened, gave Poesía en Voz Alta, which is presenting the play as its sixth program, an eloquent response.
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> That spectator's response (although there were many others in the same condition) was reduced to the sonorous eloquence of several snores which, with top efficiency, underscored the presentation of The Maids, the piece to which I am referring, and which is

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[1]Scrambling alta to lata, changes the company's name from "Poetry Aloud," to "Poetry in a Pestering (or, Annoying) Voice."

[2]Pp. 50-51.

pleasing very few and disgusting the majority. It is pleasing very few because, as Jean-Paul Sartre says about this thing, "ladies invent maids in the same way that Texans invent Negroes... " and those understanding Mexicans [the "liberals"] invent their own intelligence. It disgusts the majority because it is tiring, cerebral, psychological, obscure (mentally), and false.

The piece was originally written for three masculine characters who would have had to do strange things on stage; later, after a petition was made to Genet in Paris--I don't know if on account on censure or for another reason--they were changed to women, which is the way we see it now.

One could not wish for greater public provocation. It [the public] grew tired; it burst into rage; the author jeered those who condemned him for that work, full of anguish, perversity, and nothingness... He once said that he was happy to be hated for his play. He is not getting that, because hate is something, and The Maids only produces tedium, sleepiness, and drowsiness, as is evident, everyday, to any person who hasn't a select spirit.

It should not be prohibited. Nor did it have to be prohibited before its opening, because it is the public, we ignoramuses, who are repudiating it with snores, like the eloquent man did who was spoken about at first.

Rita Macedo and Ofelia Guilmáin perform with super ability in a marathon of monologues, strange and surrealistic speeches which are the foundation, the primordial element of the play, which the director-translator used to give it form. It has a meaningful display of lights, and fairly cliché movement which went unnoticed by José Luis Ibáñez, a little boy who ought to be advised to first get acquainted with what it is to direct Theatre. This [theatre] it is not; perhaps it could be called "spoken literature" and only that. After-show Entertainment:[1] Since just thinking about it made me sleepy... Curtain... Goodbye.[2]

The following unedited review from the Sunday tabloid, El Redondel, also attempts to deflate Poesía en Voz Alta's reputation. But here the writer seems retaliatory on account of the play. Most telling is the writer's perception of what the play means, and the shape that his defensive retort takes:

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[1]This refers to the improvised, sort of "epilogue" part of a performance in the traditional Spanish theatre.

[2]"Desde las 'Diablas': Literatura," 28 July 1959, sec. 3, p. 11. "Goodbye" was written in English, though as two words in the review.

> Whoever wants to spend a bad time, go to the Fábregas Theatre to see the production of The Maids. Unfortunately, we spent it, and we only rested when the function, which was a 104° feverish nightmare, ended.
>
> The chronicler does not recall having seen a more dumb, more false, and more boring play in his life. The only thing he wanted was for it to end. In order to describe the hate that two maids had for their patron, there was no need to write two very long and soporiferous acts, abounding in truly sententious dialogue, put into mouths of two servants, as if they were two great thinkers.
>
> Everything is confusion and contrivance in Jean Genet's piece.
>
> Being the play presented by the group, Poesía en Voz Alta, some will surely say that it has a high poetic sense, and that it is attempting a magistral play. That's how the applause and bravos at the end make us see it, although we ought to warn that the majority were invited guests. Maybe they will argue that he who writes this [commentary] is a heretic, but the public will say who is right.
>
> As expected, it is Ofelia Guilmáin who is the best of the three actresses, in spite of having forced, almost ridiculous attitudes. Whatever the case, she affirms her dramatic personality. The one who is most at home is Rita Macedo, very given to exaggerated roles in which this play abounds. She screams, leaps about, cries, tears out her hair, dies, and even becomes resuscitated, A charm! Meche Pascual fulfills, but also with plenty of "farcing." One ought to recognize that they memorize[d] [their lines] perfectly, despite the interminable dialogue.[1]

Last is Lya Engel's review of The Maids, published in Impacto. As predictable, the review adopts the magazine's point of view; The Maids, looked upon as an instrument of propaganda, is judged in terms of perceived benefit or danger of society. But there is more to it than this. Apart from the dubious data about André Gide evaluating Genet's work as "nauseous," Engel's review presents a most truthful statement of personal opinion, thought, and gut reactions to the play, and paints the most lucid picture of its resultant bewilderment, wrath, and fear; fear, much the way that Nancy

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[1]A. B., "Por nuestros teatros," 26 July 1959, sec. 2, p. 14.

Cárdenas had interpreted it, chiefly of contagion from a Genet[1] and his ideas, as Engel, as others, deduced from the piece. Engel's review, in conjunction with others, expose the concerns and anxieties of the Mexico of that time. They also provide insight into the ten-year lapse, as Carlos Solórzano calculated, that separated this from the next Mexican production of another Genet play which was one far removed from the Mexican public, Les nègres (The Blacks), staged with an all-white cast.[2] Here are Lya Engel's words on The Maids:

> In order to understand this disconcerting play which is being staged at the Fábregas, you have to look for characteristic features in the author, which are not precisely those corresponding to a normal person.
>
> Jean Genet, who is presently approaching fifty years of age, is being proud of his immorality. He is vainglorious of being "the devilish poet" [maudit], a nickname they imposed on him due to his condition of being pederast and thief.
>
> According to the data which we have been able to obtain, we know that Jean Genet was jailed several times for theft, and perhaps also for his wrong sexual inclination. A group of writers secured the pardon for the last penal offense, which was evidently the most serious offense, from the President of the French Republic. With all of this, Jean Genet has obtained a tremendous popularity, especially among those congenerics like Jean Cocteau and Jean-Paul Sartre; this latter one even wrote a volume about Genet, entitled Saint Genet, Martyr and Comedian.
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> In such a manner, Genet has found, in the posture of shamelessness, his most adequate medium of manifestation, immediately having, as we have pointed out, the sympathy of those who are as twisted as he, already amounting to too many, and to the disgrace of France and the capitals of the rest of the world. By this we are not saying that he had not detractors. The great writers, like André Gide and François Mauriac, have occasionally sung some truths, and they have classified his literature as being nauseous.
>
> In any case, Genet has obtained public attention, and luckier still, he lives in this time in which morbidity and wantonness shake hands in a grotesque dance of mockery, directed toward society and

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[1]See p. 260, n. 1 above. [2]Testimonios, pp. 96-97.

good customs. This very day, everything, even imbecility, nakedness in the style of many film stars, and homosexuality in Genet, is being capitalized on. But since everything calls for a justification, while the stars are justifying their way, Genet is justifying himself by writing plays in which he wants to impose an artificiality of style which is difficult to accept, and which collides with what we understand as theatre.

It is possible that at bottom, not even Genet himself may be absolutely convinced of the new theory he is trying to impose. This type of theatre (as seen by his play, The Maids), between crafty and grotesque, hides its own naturalness and image in attitudes and in twisted, rhetorical figures, and as a result, only intellectuals of his condition, and I say intellectuals because the uncultured will not be able to capture the subtlety, will be able to understand him and praise him. Then, it is fitting to ask: For what reason, and for whom does Jean Genet write? Of course we know that Oscar Wilde suffered from the same defect, that he was also jailed, but from Genet to Wilde there is a distance of refinement and humanism, in which Genet, in order to reach him [Wilde], hasn't taken even the first step.

We also know that the play, The Maids, really has three versions. That is to say: one, written to be acted by three elderly actresses; another, the way we saw it presented; and another, where the protagonists are adolescent boys. I think that one must search this latter version for the true meaning of The Maids, which is nothing other than a constantly repeated "black mass," that reaches its climax in the imaginary murders of the patron. We see no social type of problem. On the other hand, we see, with great evidence, homosexual reactions, and should it have some rebellion, it is not characteristically the natural one of maids against patron, like the slave against the master, but a complete aberration.

Now then: nor is it possible to affirm that the play lacks value. Twisted, decadent, brutal, fantastic, and schizophrenic, it has undeniable literary values in spite of the monstrous maids who, for sure, speak in a tone very far from the common one used by servants. But we have already said that it was a very artificial play, and in this field, anything can happen.

Nonetheless, I am not saying that we ought to ignore the presentations of The Maids. You have to see the magnificent work done by Rita Macedo, perhaps her best performance in her entire artistic career. With an extraordinary dramatic maturity, Rita is treating us to her marvelous, purified art, which cannot be a loss for you if you like theatre. Ofelia Guilmáin is also excellent, which should not seem strange to anyone, for it is known what a marvelous actress she is.

Meche Pascual, in her episodic character, gives the required tone and develops it with ease and grace, if one can find anything graceful in this nightmare which is The Maids.

> Without doubt, the young director, José Luis Ibáñez, knew how to interpret the author while directing with aimed accuracy. He took care of all the details and one must point out that Genet's play is very difficult and would have been so for the most consumate director. The same can be said for Juan Soriano, author of the scenography, who knew how to conjugate shades, shapes, and form, which contributes, in the highest degree, to emphasizing the action which is, we repeat, nothing other than a nightmare of paranoid-schizohrenia.
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> My own servants asked me if the play was worthwhile. They know that when there's a good play, I send them to the theatre, and when they were informed that it was about "The Maids," they thought that it would be of much interest to them. The truth is that I wasn't sure how to answer them, nor did I dare to send them to see something from which they would take only the negative part. Is it worthwhile to write about maids without the true maids understanding it?
>
> It seems to me that writers of Genet's style desperately need someone like Roberto Blanco Moheno.[1] Only he would know the way to point out that horrible danger for society with his virility and his vigorous, intelligent pen. What do you make out of all of this, Roberto? As I am antiquated, this inversion of values disconcerts and troubles me, and I fear very much that if we remain silent, the moment will come when the abnormal minority will be us. We are arriving at an intolerable state of affairs, Roberto. We must do something, and fast.[2]

And thus The Maids, playing in an ambience of more furor than adoration, to lots of clamorous seated and departing spectators, packed the Fábregas throughout its fifteen day run. For Poesía en Voz Alta, it culminated in more than tripling the initial 30,000 peso investment. After approximately one-quarter of the gross went to theatre rental, there remained enough intake to pay the actresses' salaries, set aside a five percent of the gross royalty check for Genet, and leave a clear 90,000 peso profit besides,

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[1]Blanco Moheno was the social and political critic for Impacto.

[2]"Teatro," 12 August 1959, p. 75.

which Soriano, Ibáñez, and Davidoff split in three.[1] Last minute plans to extend the play's run a while longer were thwarted by insufficient time to reach accord on an insisted-upon reduction in theatre rent.[2]

After the Sixth Program, the participants parted, with no immediate plans to reconvene for a seventh. Ibáñez, twice the director of Poesía en Voz Alta's single-play programs, went on to direct a commercial non-experimentally staged, production of Peter Shaffer's Five Finger Exercise, and then to accept the British Consul's invitation to investigate theatre in England. He did so, convinced that Mendoza, back in Mexico, would resume directing Poesía en Voz Alta in the event of another offering.[3] Soriano and de Mesa departed to vacation abroad. The rest went separate ways.

Poesía en Voz Alta concluded its life with two more programs, once again, of single plays. Neither the one nor the other was directed by Mendoza.[4] Nearly as dissimilar as the 1950s were to the 1960s, so the

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[1]Interviews with Soriano, 1977, Davidoff, and Ibáñez, 1972. January and March, 1978. Davidoff and Ibáñez (January 1978) referred to Genet's royalty check. As prescribed by Mexican law, a representative of the writer's union is entrusted with delivery of such payments; in this instance, Ibáñez relayed, a foul-up occurred somewhere along the line, because Genet's representative, whom Ibáñez met while in France, disavowed receipt of the check.

[2]Davidoff, Ibáñez, January 1977, expressed the belief that Basurto would have agreed to a brief postponement of his play.

[3]Ibáñez interviews, 1971 and January 1978.

[4]This was not by choice, claimed Mendoza in 1972. However, Soriano (1977), García Ponce (1974), and others recollected that when Mendoza returned from abroad, he brought new ideas for Poesía en Voz Alta that clashed with Soriano's.

programs, spaced some 3 1/2 years apart, were to each other. The fundamental link between the programs was Juan Soriano, Poesía en Voz Alta's "spine,"[1] the only participant to have remained until its end. Because of Soriano, the programs bore the Poesía en Voz Alta name, and showed the unmistakeably Soriano--now called Poesía en Voz Alta--style.

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[1]To quote Gurrola, interview 1974.

CHAPTER 9

LAST STAGES: PROGRAMS SEVEN (1960) AND EIGHT (1963)

The decade of the sixties launched Mexico, as well as other countries in new directions. One historical cycle had nearly run its course, another one had started. The realistic phase, crinolined skirts, and Elvis Presley were passé. The poetic phase, blue jeans, the Beatles, and Bob Dylan became the fashion. Many theatre artists broke with tradition; in Mexico, there was a further development of budding local movements and tendencies of the late 1950s, very much influenced by France, and of other Occidental trends, particularly those of the United States and England. Group enterprises, some of them collectives, such as the Living Theatre in the United States, came to be a new wave of the avant-garde. During the course of the decade, theatre would shift emphasis from actor to playwright to director.

From an overview, Mexico's theatre showed no drastic change, insofar as the frivolous forms and traditional Mexican plays fared side by side with the ever-prestigious foreign plays, directors, such as the newly arrived

Chilean, Alexandro Jodorowsky, and companies invited by the INBA. At the decade's start, the INBA sponsored Jean Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire from France, and two North-American companies, the New York Repertory Theatre, as it called itself, and the Theatre Guild American Repertory Company; the following year, 1962, it was the Old Vic Company from London.[1]

But there were significant local breakthroughs: the formation of groups, for example, the Teatro Club, under the direction of Rafael López Miarnau; others guided by such directors as Gurrola, Mendoza, Ibáñez, Jodorowsky, and Juan Ibáñez. The latter's production of Valle-Inclán's Divinas palabras (Divine Words) won first prize at the 1964 international Festival of University Theatre at Nancy, France. There was renewed interest in poetic plays, and the adoption of "new" writing forms--especially the poetic avant-garde, or the "theatre of the absurd" to use Martin Esslin's label for a wide assortment of poetic plays. The writers Ionesco, Tardieu, and Neveux were now in vogue, as were Beckett, Arrabal, Garro, Mishima, Albee, and later, Pinter. The 1960s in Mexico also saw plays by Brecht, Anouilh, Artaud, and after the Seventh Program's Electra by Sophocles, productions of Greek tragedies.[2]

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[1]Magaña-Esquivel, Medio siglo, pp. 130-31.

[2]See Solórzano's Testimonios, particularly pp. 110-44 for a summary of select theatre events between 1963 and 1969. Also, "La Vida Cultural: Teatro," Cuadernos de Bellas Artes, no. 2 (February 1961), pp. 44-45 (the highlights of 1960 and early 1961); the same column of the journal's no. 10

Poesía en Voz Alta, which had introduced the "absurdists" to Mexico, a fact omitted in almost all critical writings,[1] had consistently ignored local trends, and this period proved no exception. For its concluding two programs, Poesía en Voz Alta reverted to the classics, but freshly conceptualized them by imaginative production.

Nothwithstanding Poesía en Voz Alta, an observation on the 1960 theatre season concerning critical awards sums up the greater part of the decade. As related by an unnamed columnist, the year was described by the playwright, then President of the Agrupación de Críticos de Teatro, Rafael Solana, as leaning "more towards novelty than tradition; . . . [having] many young people among the award winners . . . [and offering

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(October 1961), pp. 51-53; Julia Marichal, "Balance de la Crítica Teatral de México. (Junio a diciembre de 1961)," Revista de la Escuela de Arte Teatral, no. 5 (1962), pp. 82-117; and Magaña-Esquivel's "Introduction" to Teatro mexicano del siglo XX 5:22-26, for the critic-award winners of 1965-1969.

[1]The 1967 anthology, ¿Qué Pasa Con El Teatro En México? (Mexico: Organización Editorial Novaro, S.A., 1967), may be the finest illustration of the slight. References to the absurd and poetic avant-garde run throughout the sixteen opinions of critics, dramatists, and directors, on "what's happening in the theatre of Mexico?" or "what's the matter with the theatre in Mexico?" as the vaguely worded title could be, and was by about half, interpreted to mean. Nowhere does the name of Poesía en Voz Alta appear; not one of its former members participated in the survey. There is one reference to Arreola as a playwright (p. 72), another to Mendoza, Gurrola, and both José Luis and Juan Ibáñez as directors commended for their individual efforts (pp. 102-4), and still another to Gurrola, José Luis, and Juan Ibáñez as "new splendid directors" who have worked with Héctor Azar (p. 111). Azar, who contributes to, and is often mentioned in the text, was by this time the Director of the Theatre Sections of both the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department and of the INBA.

plays which] when they are not 'avant-garde' (Ionesco, Beckett), are by topical authors: Anouilh, Brecht."[1] The "topical" and "'avant-garde'" playwrights were to infuse Mexico's theatre with vitality for years to come, encouraging play output and affecting writing style and form as they did abroad.

Just as Héctor Mendoza had been the director to present Brecht in 1960--Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches (The Private Life of the Master Race)[2]--and Leonora Carrington, the set and costume designer of her own surrealist play, Penélope,[3], so others from Poesía en Voz Alta remained in the forefront of cultural activity. They wrote for and about the theatre; acted and directed both the latest plays and those from the past which were little known or never staged in Mexico;[4] taught; designed theatres[5]

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[1]"La Vida Cultural," Cuadernos, no. 2, pp. 44-45.

[2]According to Mendoza (18 June 1978), Brecht's Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera) and Die Mutter (The Mother) had been staged, but as amateur productions around the 1940s.

[3]The play, which Jodorowsky directed in 1960, is discussed by Solórzano, Testimonios, pp. 15-17.

[4]To illustrate by citing some of those who were working outside their customary fields in the 1960s: Carrington, García Ponce (to take an active part in the Seventh Program), and Fuentes, writing plays; Ibáñez and Cárdenas, writing about the theatre; Carlos Fernández, Carlos Castaño, Manola Saavedra, Enrique Stopen, and Héctor Ortega, directing.

[5]Gurrola's designs for an integral theatre were published in Buhnen Technische Rundshau (Germany), Aujourd'hui (France), Times (London), and Excelsior, copies of which are in his scrapbook collection.

and productions; and made films.[1] They also devised and activated new theatre mechanisms. One of these was the Casa del Lago in Chapultapec Park.

The Casa del Lago, founded in 1959 by Juan José Arreola, its director until 1961, was designed as a cultural center, dependent for support on the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department. From 1961 through 1965, three directors, Mendoza, Gurrola, and Ibáñez, invited "to work with their groups,"[2] on an independent basis, expanded the drama and poetry offerings. It was at the Casa del Lago in 1962, the time when activities were being planned to celebrate the centenary of Lope de Vega's birth, that Ibáñez had the idea to reunite with Soriano and continue Poesía en Voz Alta. Thus the Eighth Program would be born.[3]

But less a continuation of Poesía en Voz Alta, the Eighth Program more accurately represented a final stab at reviving a tradition long since passed; the Seventh, the official end to a company that had dispersed.

The Seventh Program was Electra by Sophocles, in a new version by Diego de Mesa. The program was inspired by the palatial ruins which Soriano and de Mesa had seen while vacationing in Greece, and by their

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[1]On the early film-making efforts of Gurrola, Mendoza, José Luis and Juan Ibáñez, see Jorge Ayala Blanco, "Parodoja: Con el cine experimental comienza la etapa adulta del cine mexicano," Novedades, 11 July 1965, supp., pp. 4-5, 7.

[2]Casa del Lago, p. 7; also, p. 2.

[3]Ibáñez interviews, 1971 and January 1978.

desire to rectify what they considered false impressions about the ancient Greek theatre.[1] The program introduced a new type of drama to the Poesía en Voz Alta repertoire, and, an untried director, de Mesa, to Mexico's stage.

The Eighth Program, the idea of its director, Ibáñez, was originally to have been a play adaptation of the Lope de Vega novel, La Dorotea (The Torch of Gold).[2] But this was changed to an equally unknown work by the same writer, the play, La moza de cántaro (The Pitcher Maiden). With it, Poesía en Voz Alta returned to the Spanish classics. By repeating an author from the First Program, it broke the historical pattern of confining works by one literary figure to a single show.

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[1]Soriano (1977) and Valdés interviews; also, María y Campos, "El Teatro: Poesía en Voz Alta y La Electra de Sófocles," Novedades, 22 April 1960, sec. 4, p. 6. The critic wrote that de Mesa wanted to stage "the Greek theatre upon returning to Mexico, because the one exalted by the bloody Mycenean dynasty had nothing to do with the one done on these lands [Mexico]--nor through those of Europe--during Christian centuries."

[2]Ibáñez had given a conference on the novel for the Lope de Vega festivities, organized by the Cultural Diffusion Department, but not held at the Casa del Lago. This gave him the idea to present sections from the work. (Phone interview, 10 May 1978.) The title, La Dorotea, is a play on words: tea de oro, torch of gold, gold symbolizing purity and corruption; also "Dorothy," or "That Dorothy Woman," the character on whom the closely autobiographical novel revolves. La Dorotea--at once about Lope's beloved--"Dorothy"--and human nature--pure, corruptible, and corruptive--was discarded after many months of preparation due to excessive length, and aversion to "mutilate" the work by cutting it further down. See Rosa Castro's interview with Soriano, "Galería del Mundo: Entrevista con Juan Soriano," El Día, 13 October 1963, p. 4. La Dorotea was finally staged in 1978, and by Nancy Cárdenas, at the Casa del Lago, starring Beatriz Sheridan who played in the Eighth Program's other Lope play.

The Seventh Program was a commercial production, a carry-over from the Sixth. It played at a commercial house (smaller than the Fábregas), the Sullivan Theatre, off Reforma Avenue, which contained 348 seats;[1] the schedule called for two nightly performances, six days a week. This program, too, was sponsored by León Davidoff.

The Eighth Program was institutionally sponsored. It was staged at the makeshift theatre of the Casa del Lago, which seated from eighty to one hundred spectators on portable chairs and benches.[2] The program played twice weekly in the early evening, once Friday and once Sunday, as one of several cultural activities and events that the Casa del Lago scheduled for its nonpaying public on weekends. Financing, channeled through the Casa del Lago's budget, came from Poesía en Voz Alta's original source, the University's Cultural Diffusion Department, still, in 1963, headed by Jaime García Terrés.[3]

The Seventh and Eighth Programs contain additional contrasts, but they are connected by Soriano, whose role in the programs is more than ever pronounced, his costuming, most extreme. These programs lend support

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[1]"Guía Para ir al Teatro," El Universal, 26 May 1957, sec. 4, p. 6.

[2]The estimation of Ibáñez (May 1978) and this investigator. The theatre, once the main salon in an elegant turn-of-the-century "Lake House," has since added permanent seats.

[3]For unexplained reasons, La moza de cántaro was not called Poesía en Voz Alta in either the Casa del Lago's newspaper advertisements or its bulletin, Casa del Lago, p. 9.

to an earlier claim that Soriano's set, and mainly his wardrobe designs help to delineate an acting style.[1] They show pre-existing tendencies now more fully realized that were either formerly restricted (by Arreola, Mendoza[2]), or further developed by the artist through the years.

Seventh Program

Electra by Sophocles premiered on Saturday, 16 April 1960. It closed after the two Sunday performances of 8 May,[3] less than a month later. The reason was financial. Poesía en Voz Alta's costliest production yet, in the neighborhood of 60-80,000 pesos,[4] that is, double to almost triple the cost of the Sixth, and with its larger cast, had failed to generate enough public--enough ticket sales.

The Seventh Program was found flawed in significant ways by many critics. Carlos Solórzano thought in retrospect that its originality and plasticity "repelled some critics precisely because it did not intend to be

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[1]Monteros interview.

[2]Soriano acknowledged that he had sometimes been pressed for costume changes, and brought up the names of Arreola and Mendoza. Soriano spoke of how a persistent Mendoza, for example, would request "a little bow" here (on Monteros's costume for The Canary), or a little this there, and Soriano often complied by adding "something" extra which tended to soften, at times add humor to, the look. (Interview 1977.)

[3]Novedades, 16 April 1960, sec. 2, p. 6, opening ad; Cine Mundial, 8 May 1960, p. 11, closing notice.

[4]The figure varies with the source: In interviews, Soriano (1977) gave the lesser amount, Davidoff, the greater one.

the photograph of a tragedy, but an imaginative transposition which nevertheless kept the dense, symbolic atmosphere that surrounds the tragedy."[1] The program was mostly ignored by the public--suggesting to one critic that it possessed "a provident sense of smell . . . [for] this profanation of 'Electra'"[2]--though thoroughly appreciated by the student body for whom half-price afternoon performances were arranged toward the run's end.[3] The Seventh Program may have "broken even" (Soriano), or suffered a financial loss (Davidoff).[4]

Precisely why this particular play, the Electra by Sophocles, was chosen is inconclusive. Soriano said that the play was "liked"; Valdés, that it had been de Mesa's "dream" to stage it; and one critic, and in a favorable review, interjected his personal explanation for at least the choice of version: that the one by Euripides had greater force, but the one by Sophocles was easier to stage.[5]

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[1]Testimonios, p. 20.

[2]Roberto [Núñez y Domínguez] El Diablo, "El Mundo de la Farándula: 'Electra,'" Excelsior, 22 April 1960, sec. B, p. 4.

[3]Davidoff interview; also Soriano, 1977, on the reception by students.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Interview, 1977; interview; "Teatro de Comedia y Drama: Electra, el el Sullivan," El Figaro, 24 April 1960, p. 12. De Mesa, residing in Rome, was unavailable for comment.

The Diego de Mesa "paraphrase" of Electra, as the writer himself termed it,[1] was a new translation of the play, with no conceptual change. The language was simplified and made more concrete; the text was shortened to play about 1 1/2 hours on stage; and it was generally considered "an essentially 'theatrical' adaptation."[2] The text was published as a limited-edition paperback for sale in the lobby during the program's run. Five hundred copies were printed as Ediciones Poesía en Voz Alta, the first in what was intended as a series of publications.[3] Although the proceeds might have helped reduce the production's cost, or finance future projects, "more than half" the books disappeared from the theatre,[4] and the venture ended because "Poesía en Voz Alta was through."[5]

To economize on production costs, which, Davidoff claimed (and Soriano admitted), soared as Soriano discarded items and revised designs,[6] two different playbills were used. One, the Soriano-Martín design, was distributed on opening night.[7] The other, very small, inexpensive, and financed through advertisement, was used at all other times. An unsigned,

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[1]In the playbills and text to be discussed.

[2]Miguel Guardia, "Espectáculos nuevos en Teatros de Comedias," Novedades, 24 April 1960, supp., p. 10. Also Valdés interview, among others.

[3]Ibáñez interview, April 1978. The text was published in Mexico by Editorial Grijalbo, S.A., 1960

[4]Davidoff interview. [5]Ibáñez interview, April 1978.

[6]Interviews 1977. [7]See Playbill 7-A, Appendix A, pp. 384-87.

loose insert, giving the background of the legend, accompanied the second playbill.[1] The first playbill carried the customary commentary, but like the one for the Sixth Program, reprinted a published selection. This one, by María Zambrano, from El hombre y lo divino (Man and the Divine), gave perspective to the program, and restated Poesía en Voz Alta's philosophy of the universe, and its mirror, the theatre:

> Classical tragedy is the genre where a long delirium of centuries finds its maturity and ultimate clarity; for this reason, the protagonist, before being a man, is a race; an immemorial delirium, first form of intimate, autobiographical memory. The ministry of man's passion which, among conjurations, invocation, and weeping, helps man to be born, to conquer his peculiar solitude; that solitude where one is seen and judged, where one exists at the same time as the other, as the others, and exists in relation to them. Because only the one who pays attention to the others' game--the total game--can pay attention to his own game. The archaic, infantile game encloses an enigma: "each one attend to his own game, and he who does not attend to it will have to give something as a pledge."
>
> And everyone has to give something as a pledge at the end, because no one understands that in each one's game, everything enters into game: the others and the one: the universe.
>
> This is what tragedy, rite of Greek life, made a thousand, congregated spectators feel at the same time, in an instant; ministry of piety in its art of dealing with the other," [sic] with oneself, when we are becoming others or when we have not yet stopped being them.
>
> And giving something as a pledge is the condition for the universe--everyone's game--to get into game into each one's game. And even when playing this way, and doing it well, it is still necessary to give something as a pledge. Because the paid pledge is the inevitable sacrifice that extricates one from the inherited and generic burden. One pays for being a son and for simply being man, and only then will the road of the individual life open up; only from then on can one pretend to be oneself.[2]

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[1]See Playbill 7-B, Appendix A, pp. 388-90.

[2]Playbill 7-A, Appendix A, p. 385.

The actors in Electra were familiar names, except for Amparo Villegas, the Chorus leader. Guilmáin rejoined Poesía en Voz Alta, as did Dantés, Alcalá, Ruiz, Valdés, Quintos, and Medellín, all of whom had worked under Ibáñez. Two players from the past--part of Mendoza's so-called group--returned to Poesía en Voz Alta: Pina Pellicer, recently back from filming One-Eyed Jacks in Hollywood and whose film-stardom career had been launched,[1] and Tara Parra, long since returned from France, but making her stage comeback.[2]

As the first playbill shows,[3] two literary figures were new to the staff. José Emilio Pacheco, the poet and writer for the Universidad de México, handled public relations, and Juan García Ponce, the critic-novelist-playwright, assisted the director, de Mesa, whose background was literary too. Neither playbill includes the names of Davidoff, the producer, who took an active role in the program, in charge of the lighting design and music selection; nor those of two unknown young women, cast as silent attendants to the queen, and hired by union demand.[4] This was Poesía en Voz Alta's first confrontation with the ANDA, the actors' union.

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[1]"Teatro," Siempre, 27 April 1960, p. 54; this blurb on Pellicer and Guilmáin was in lieu of a review. Until Pellicer ended her life, later in the same decade, she was one of Mexico's most popular, active, and awarded actresses of the screen.

[2]Interview 1974.

[3]There is no explaining why the second playbill, 7-B does not.

[4]Soriano, interview 1977. The young women appear in Figure 25, p. 285 below.

As Poesía en Voz Alta was no longer affiliated with the University which had secured permits for the group, nor performing once weekly in a commercial house, or full time but with a cast of stars, the union intervened, and noted the shortage of members.[1] As a result, the two extra salaries elevated expenses even more.

Soriano's aim for the program was "to give an idea"--a "stylization"--"of how the ancient Greek theatre was done."[2] This meant no "false" means--"veils, golden sandals on the feet, long curls," "much movement," and "realistic" acting and staging, as Soriano claimed other directors had done--but through the "only available" means, "modern means."[3] As the assistant director, García Ponce, noted in his review of the program, whose value to the discussion resides in setting forth aims and the underlying concept, the intent was to stage a "rite," a "ceremony"; the accent was on uniformity and the "plastic," "rhythmic," and "poetic," qualities used to describe the adaptation and which the direction, set, costumes, and acting attempted to further.[4] There was no concern for reproducing exterior detail, as it was impossible to stage the play exactly as it had been done in its time, and nothing was to be taken as real, except within the context of art and theatre.[5]

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[1]Ibáñez interview, April 1978. [2]Soriano interview, 1977.

[3]Ibid. [4]"Electra," Universidad de México 14 (April 1960):38-39.

[5]Ibid., p. 38.

Soriano's set was a cyclorama of three wooden frames. It was painted snow white, as was the stage floor. Two narrow, towering frames, "almost reaching the mouth of the theatre,"[1] were placed at the right and left of the stage. The wider, shorter frame was slightly upstage of the others, and slightly off-center to allow for the suggestion of a door. The three frames were filled in with abstract wooden structures, varied in shape and size, and arranged for different densities. Like "a collage," said Davidoff, made from "broken chairs," crates, "even art objects."[2] This set, a modification of the structure used in The Maids, also employed lighting to create various impressions and effects. The set represented the palace of Agamemnon, but as Soriano had seen it, in ruins.[3] [See Figure 25, p. 285.]

"To conserve the idea of the Greek theatre,"[4] Soriano constructed a platform on the stage for use by all characters except the Chorus. For the same reason--to show the characters as "bigger than normal"[5]--Soriano designed platform shoes, some over five inches in height, and

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[1]Soriano interview, 1977.

[2]Interview. Davidoff recalled his horror at entering the theatre and finding his friend, Soriano, gleefully ripping apart "anything" that entered his sight, including unspecified "art objects."

[3]Soriano interview, 1977; Valdés interview; María Luisa Mendoza, "Ciclorama: 'Electra' y 'Melocotón' en Almíbar," Hoy, 30 April 1960. p. 60.

[4]Soriano interview, 1977. [5]Ibid.



(Courtesy of José Luis Ibáñez)

Fig. 25. Soriano's vision of the Palace of Agamemnon. The Electra by Sophocles, with Pellicer, Guilmáin at center, and the two actresses from the ANDA.

hats, some more than two feet tall.[1] Costumes were most expensive. Soriano used the finest French velvets obtainable, "not for luxury," he insisted, but because the less expensive velvets, such as those available at Davidoff's textile factory, failed "to give the idea."[2] All costumes included matching-colored velvet shoes and individually styled hats. Electra wore black. Her gown was the only unadorned, unaccentuated one of the lot. Orestes was in violet; Clytemnestra, in deep red; Chrysothemis, in orangy red; and others were in greens, blues, and grays. Orestes was made the tallest character; Electra, the most frail and petite. The light, perhaps white-colored gowns for the Chorus, were worn over a contrasting dark, perhaps black, undergarment, like a "layered look."[3] The gowns were inflated at the hips, and inspired by a type of Grecian urn.[4] [See Figure 26, p. 287.] The skirt of Clytemnestra's gown had velvet-covered cartons that jutted out, and the bodice, flesh-colored fabric that cupped the breasts to symbolize maternity, the mother. The idea of encircling the breasts had been applied in the costuming of the First Program. All skirts were floor-length and full, with one exception: the flashy colored, tapered

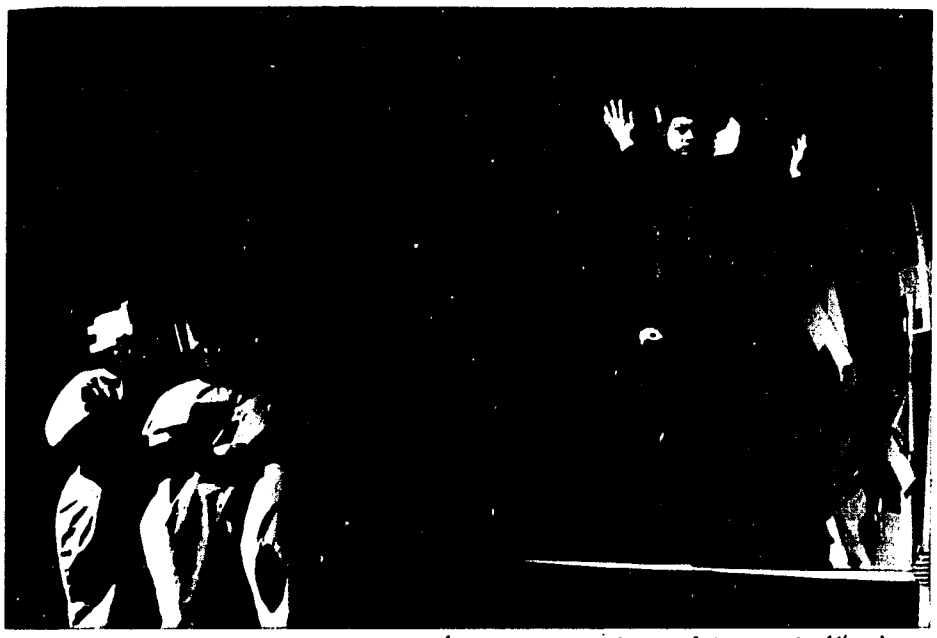
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[1]Photos, collections of Ibáñez and Soriano; also, Artes de México, p. [84] and front cover.

[2]Interview, 1977. Davidoff, interview, about the textile factory; Valdés, Alcalá, Medellín, and others interviewed, about the French velvets.

[3]Expression mine. Available color photos fail to show the Chorus.

[4]Soriano interview, 1977; Mendoza review of Electra.



(Courtesy of José Luis Ibáñez)

Fig. 26. The Chorus (Valdés, Quintos, Villegas) overhearing Orestes (Dantés) and Electra (Pellicer) in Sophocles's Electra.

gown for Tara Parra as Chrysothemis. Drawn tightly around the knees, and to complicate matters, worn with high-platform shoes,[1] the gown restricted Parra's movements to a slink, to the amusement and anger of spectators. "It [the costuming] reaches the ridiculous when one of the actresses exhibits a skirt as tight-fitting as those used by the songstress, María Victoria," one critic wrote.[2] Another critic noted the "ridiculous short steps that Tara Parra is forced to take, owing to her dress."[3] Makeup was natural; hand-props, such as swords carved from wood, were completely unreal.[4] And headwear, like some costumes, had geometrically shaped projections, some of them fingerlike. "Martian"-wear, cried out critics, and even participants described the costumes as "astronautlike," or "interplanetary" in air.[5] To which Soriano replied:

> Juan Soriano, the known painter and now scenographer, violently denounced the critics for calling his clothes for the play, "Electra," "martian" clothes.

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[1]See, e.g., photo in Artes de México, p. [84].

[2]Roberto [Núñez y Domínguez] El Diablo. Victoria, sort of Mexico's answer to Marilyn Monroe, was known for her form-fitted, or molded, gowns.

[3]Juan Miguel de Mora, "Anoche en el Teatro: Electra: Erronea Interpretación Abstracta de un Drama Harto Concreto," Diario de la Tarde, 18 April 1960, p. 2.

[4]See photo, Artes de México, p. [84].

[5]E.g., the word "martian" appeared in the anonymous review, "Teatro: Programa," Política, 1 May 1960, p. 43: the influence of "galaxy" films, was noted by Fausto Castillo, "2 Puntos de Vista sobre Electra," Novedades, 24 April 1960, supp., p. 10; "astronaut" was used in interviews with Valdés and Medellín, the latter noting the "interplanetary air."

> And he says that he based his designs on clothes from the Atrean epoch. He affirmed that, over a space of six months, he was preparing himself and documenting from whatever book fell into his hands, in order to costume the characters from the celebrated play of Sophocles. . . .[1]

Critics tended to be more explicit about Poesía en Voz Alta's Seventh Program than others. The body of reviews contained various references to set and costume elements, a few to acting styles and descriptions of performances, and certain judgments were supported in detail. For example, the review by Luisa Josefina Hernández presented a detailed discussion of the play related to the nature of the Greek theatre and tragedy, to show how the overall interpretation, which emphasized "immobility" and "symmetry," not only fails to "accentuate" the "necessary impression"--the "exceptionality of Electra," the "continuous psychological movement" of the play--but "erases it."[2]

One element of the production, overlooked by all reviewers, was the music. It was inserted during "different breaks," and used to support the soft-voiced Pellicer in her monologue.[3] For this monologue, Davidoff chose Israeli music, yet very much like Greek, and with a melancholy sound

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[1]"Soriano Copió de los Atridas sus Trajes de Electra," Excelsior, 27 April 1960, sec. B., p. 5.

[2]"2 Puntos de Vista sobre Electra," Novedades, 24 April 1960, supp., p. 10.

[3]Davidoff interview.

emitted from a small drum and wooden flute.[1] A slow, pulsating drum beat was heard when the mortally wounded Clytemnestra was dragged off, and a wailing sound, produced by electronic music, at the end.

One reviewer, Miguel Guardia, was openly enthusiastic about Electra. Actually, there was more than one enthusiastic review, if García Ponce's was included, as well as the two only brief notes by new reviewers, J. H. Trujillo and Cipriano Rivas Xerif.[2] Guardia was "left satisfied" by the adaptation, in which respect, all but one reviewer, Roberto El Diablo, among those who mentioned the text,[3] concurred. But when Guardia unreservedly approved of the direction, acting, set--"original within its traditionalism"--and the costumes, he expressed a minority view. Even María Luisa Mendoza, who was ecstatic, almost defensive, about the

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[1]Davidoff termed the music "Israeli." (Interview.) However, this instrumental segment in the Hillel and Avila album, Night on the Desert, was taken from the song, titled "Yam Safiri: Lebanese Love Song." All musical selections were played for this investigator during the above interview.

[2]Trujillo ("Poesía en Voz Alta triunfa otra vez: 'Electra' de Sófocles Aplaudid por los conocedores," Cine Mundial, 22 April 1960, p. 13), said little on the production, praised Pellicer, noted an enthralled audience, and showed several production photos; Rivas Xerif ("Calendario del Aficionado," El Redondel, 24 April 1960, sec. 2, p. 2) said nothing on the production, but praised the intention (unstated), translation, acting, and uncompromising spirit of Soriano. Cantón, Basurto, Novo, Engel, and other former reviewers who will not be named here, did not review the program.

[3]Certain rejective, production-focused reviews ignored the text. These were written by Castillo, the critic in Política, Hernández, and de Mora.

program, especially Soriano's work, included a passing remark about Parra's "temperament," in part "bridled" by her "greedy diameter of skirt," and Pellicer's superb performance, deficient in "gamuts and textures in the spoken verse."[1]

At the other extreme, Roberto El Diablo called the text "lamentably mutilated," accused Poesía en Voz Alta of "committing a transgression out of Sophocles," having "stained" and "desecrated" the play, shown "disrespect," and made a "pachanga," a "profanation" of Electra. Much the same sentiments, expressed in an almost-identical tone, came from the critic in Política. The critic, Juan Tomás, offered a peculiar one-line remark: that "a circus is perfection," and maybe you could call the costumes for Electra "perfection."[2] And two very favorable reviews by Moreno Ling, and a new reviewer Horacio Zales, registered discontent: Moreno Ling, who thought the Chorus's movements inappropriate, simply called Electra not Poesía en Voz Alta's "best program";[3] Zales, disturbed by the hat worn by Dantés, called Soriano's work "inadequate," and wrote that the "scenic elements must further the interpretation," to imply that they did not.[4]

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[1]"Electra."

[2]"Septimo Cielo," Claridades, 8 May 1960, p. 13.

[3]"Electra," La Nación, 24 April 1960, pp. 25-26.

[4]"Teatro," Mañana, 30 April 1960, pp. 50-51.

There were still others who found great value to Electra--María y Campos and Magaña-Esquivel[1]--and others who did not--Hernández, Castillo, and de Mora. But both groups shared one thought: that the production was "static" (Hernández, María y Campos, and Magaña-Esquivel[2]), "slow" and dehumanized (Magaña-Esquivel[3]), bereft of blood (de Mora), and robotized (de Mora and Castillo). It was, in the words of Castillo, "a tragedy between robots," which, as Hernández had explained, robbed the Sophoclean play of its essence.

And like some other critics, Hernández, Castillo, and de Mora, placed part of the blame on the "geometic" conception (Hernández) and de Mesa's misdirection or lack of direction of the actors. Guilmáin made a vulgar, coarse woman out of the regal queen, thought Hernández and Castillo; Medellín, a "fool," "coward," and "simple ballet figure" of Aegisthus, according to Castillo; Pellicer was monotonal, and the others just plain rigid with monolithic movements that both Hernández and Castillo exemplified. The other part of the blame, the greater part, was shouldered by Soriano. Castillo, de Mora, and other critics, saw neither rhyme nor reason in the "abstract" set. The costumes were "improbable" (to Castillo) and nonfunctional to many others. Soriano, thought de Mora, had lovely sketches that looked well on paper, but failed to work on stage, as

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[1]"Una Endeble Comedia de Alfonso Anaya," part of which is on Electra, El Nacional, 15 May 1960, supp., p. 11.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

exemplified by Parra's inflexible skirt, and the "sad spectacle" of wrinkles on those of the Chorus, attesting to Soriano's failure to "subject" his designs "to the reality of the fabrics"; as exemplified, added Hernández, by Pellicer's need for assistance to rise from the ground, after embracing the urn, owing to the effective (they "give the impression of having her feet shackled," wrote Hernández), but nonfunctional cothurni. And on and on it went, with Castillo finally making his wonderment known. The "mystery," to Castillo, was why the actors, upon seeing the clothes that Soriano had designed for them, submitted to putting them on, rather than saying: "'excuse me, but I'm not going to wear that...'"

Thus ended Poesía en Voz Alta, until 1963, when Castillo's prophecy came to pass.

Eighth Program

The Eighth Program that was supposed to have been La Dorotea and became La moza de cántaro, was also supposed to have opened on 23 August, rather than a month later on 27 September 1963.[1] This postponement was the result of the "actors' walkout"[2] during a general rehearsal, one or two days prior to the scheduled opening. It almost ended the project, as flyers

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[1]One of the two identical flyers, over two feet long and nearly as wide, given to this investigator by Caos and Soriano, shows the opening date of 23 August inked out professionally, and 27 September printed instead. Newspaper advertisements, however, announced only the latter date. See Playbill 8, Appendix A, pp. 391-92.

[2]So termed by Ibáñez, October 1977.

had already been printed, and invitations to such guests as the Rector and other University dignitaries, had already been sent, perhaps, received.[1] The actors balked about the costumes--the masks--and four actors refused to continue the performance. Ultimately they were replaced, the new actors rehearsed, and the masks redesigned.[2]

La moza de cántaro was chosen for three basic reasons. One, to remain with a Lope de Vega play,[3] presumably in light of the centenary celebrations and so that some of the preparation for La Dorotea might be be salvaged. Two, because of the extraordinary lyrical poetry of the hardly known piece.[4] And three, "because," said Soriano, "the leading role went perfectly with Silvia Caos."[5] The Cuban-born Caos, who had started her acting career in Basurto's Cada quien su vida, had an excellent singing and speaking voice, a quality which Soriano considered of maximum importance for the theatre,[6] and was gaining a superb reputation.[7]

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[1]Interviews: Soriano, 1977; Ibáñez, October 1977 and January 1978.

[2]Ibid. Soriano details the many obstacles and problems that plagued the staging of an eighth program in his interview with Rosa Castro, "Galería del Mundo." The subject of the masks will be covered later in the discussion.

[3]Ibáñez interview, January 1978.

[4]Ibid, October 1977 and January 1978; Soriano, 1977.

[5]Interview, 1977, also Castro interview. [6]Ibid.

[7]Ibáñez interview, January 1978. The talents of Caos were also mentioned in interviews with Mendoza, August 1977, and García Ponce, 1974. In 1962, Caos had worked with Ibáñez in a program of poetry recitals at the Casa del Lago. (See Casa del Lago, pp. 14-15.)

La moza de cántaro is a multiscened, episodic play in three acts, set in various indoor and outdoor locales. The "cape and sword" play combines a love triangle, rivalry, dueling, a killing for revenge, mistaken identities, and quid pro quos. The main plot concerns Doña María (played by Caos), the young daughter of Don Bernardo (Felio Eliel), who kills Don Diego (Luis Miranda) to defend her father's honor. She is forced to flea, disguises herself as a servant, becomes known as the "Pitcher Maid" when noticed fetching water from a fountain, and obtains employment with (becoming confidante to) the wealthy Doña Ana (Beatriz Sheridan).[1] Doña María, now called Luisa, falls in love with Don Juan (Raúl Dantés)[2] who, in turn, is loved by her mistress, Doña Ana. And thus, the complications. La moza de cántaro ends typically and happily. Doña María is vindicated for her act by order of the crown; she returns to her former status and plans to wed her Don Juan. Sergio Fernández, specialist in the Spanish theatre of the Golden Age, professor of literature at the UNAM, and collaborator on the text analysis for the production, wrote the commentary to the Eighth Program. Fernández described the play this way:

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[1]Sheridan, considered one of Mexico's great actresses, had acted under Alexandro Jodorowsky before joining Poesía en Voz Alta. She replaced the talented, versatile Marta Verduzco who had appeared in Ibáñez, Mendoza, and Gurrola-directed productions at the Casa del Lago.

[2]Dantés stepped in for another talented actor, Roberto Dumont, who, like Dantés, Verduzco, and Caos, had worked in several productions at the Casa del Lago. (See Casa del Lago, pp. 6-19.) The other two replacements were in minor parts; Héctor Cruz substituted for Rogelio Guerra, and Jorge Sánchez Fogarty, for Eduardo López Rojas.

> In La moza de cántaro, the presence of a human order exists, which today is almost in ruins. Before the spectator's eyes, problems--fundamentally the archaic, medieval one of honor--appear like old visions of a conscience which is now very little recognizable. The exaggeration of sentiment, the importance of cleverness as a fundamental virtue, the struggle between reason and desire, and so many other illusory characteristics, lend magic to the baroque stage because of its fiction and absurdity.
>
> But if the play and the entire theatre of the XVII century give little importance to human dramatic reality, nevertheless--thanks to word and image--everything is alive in La moza de cántaro. What does it matter if we recognize in the taste and inner attitudes [of the characters] no more than an infinitesimal part of the historical beings we are? Language gives everlasting existence to the heroic sense of life, to love judged to be the unforeseen part of the game between souls, and to the character who has, as his essential human condition, an innate mixture of earthly and divine creature, [a mixture], as arbitrary as, so Tirso de Molina says--a tree planted upside-down.
>
> The Spanish stage, most often stained with blood, projects itself metaphysically--whether in the comic, whether in the tragic. The spontaneity of passions enrich the human condition, even though only momentarily and superficially. That is why La moza de cántaro, which unites both sources [earthly and divine], is really two plays at once. In it, the baroque soul, hidden in the plot and metaphor because of fear, defends itself from a common, pedestrian reality which is so much against it.[1]

It was decided to stage the play unedited, the preference of both Soriano and Ibáñez. But this meant transposing the episodic work with seventeen actors[2] to the tiny Casa del Lago stage which, for a while, was considered an impossibility.[3] The salon was used as a multipurpose theatre,

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[1]Playbill 8, Appendix A, p. 392. [2]Castro interview; also playbill.

[3]According to Soriano in the Castro interview, the idea changed to using the Casa del Lago as rehearsal space, so that León Davidoff could see the play staged, and decide whether or not to produce it at a larger house. The story gets fuzzy here, and Soriano is contradictory. However, based on the data from this written interview, and my oral interviews with Davidoff and Soriano (1977), it seems as though the intent was to open the play at the Casa del Lago, and then move it to another house. But owing

presenting major conferences and film showings, though primarily performance events. It had a huge, crystal chandelier, but no true lighting system. There were no real dressing rooms; two storage areas (attic, basement) doubled as dressing rooms for the large cast. The stage itself was narrow in width and shallow in depth, with no entrance, exit, or backstage areas. It was semicircular in shape and had several sets of functional windows, which reduced wall space. The scanty dimensions of the stage, combined with the limited viewing space and low budget,[1] almost mandated that the original shape be retained, and ruled out set changes or the use of a revolving stage. But numerous set pieces, set changes, or intricate theatre machinery had never been part of the Soriano style, and Soriano, perhaps more than any other designer at the time, had a special aptitude for adapting his designs to the environment.

The theatre did have one functional door beneath and to the left of the stage; it led to a smaller room, followed by an entrance door.[2] From this inner space, entrances and exits were made, though the public customarily took part of the space for seating.[3] Soriano covered the stage

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to several problems, one of them being the actors' walkout, Davidoff decided against the venture.

[1]Soriano even added personal funds. (Interview, 1977; also Castro interview.)

[2]The public generally, but not always, used the back entrance door.

[3]The side door was opened, and chairs set up for extra seating, which was, according to Ibáñez (January 1978), Soriano (1977), and others, needed for all the performances.

floor, its three steps, and walls in a wine-colored heavy fabric[1] that was tucked, like drapery, at the window areas; he retained the chandelier but added side lighting. [See Figure 27, p. 299.] The main set pieces, reminiscent of the Fourth Program, were the versatile fabric-covered crates that served multiple purposes in interior and exterior settings.[2] A locale was identifiable through minor properties or a set piece carried on stage by actors. In at least two scenes, identically costumed and heavily masked actors were used as stagehands or assistants, symbolically invisible, in the tradition of the Oriental theatre. Once, to designate a garden, two actors stood immobile behind the players of the scene, all the while holding up two poles with ledges, suggesting a tree with branches, to which brightly colored cardboard birds were attached.[3] The other time was to give movement to a carriage with Doña Ana and "Luisa" seated inside. The carriage, which was seen from the side, had two carved figures of white horses whose lower bodies were shaped as circles--wheels--but was carried out by two actors.[4]

Soriano called La moza de cántaro his "most complete realization";[5] the production came closest to what Soriano considered the Poesía en Voz

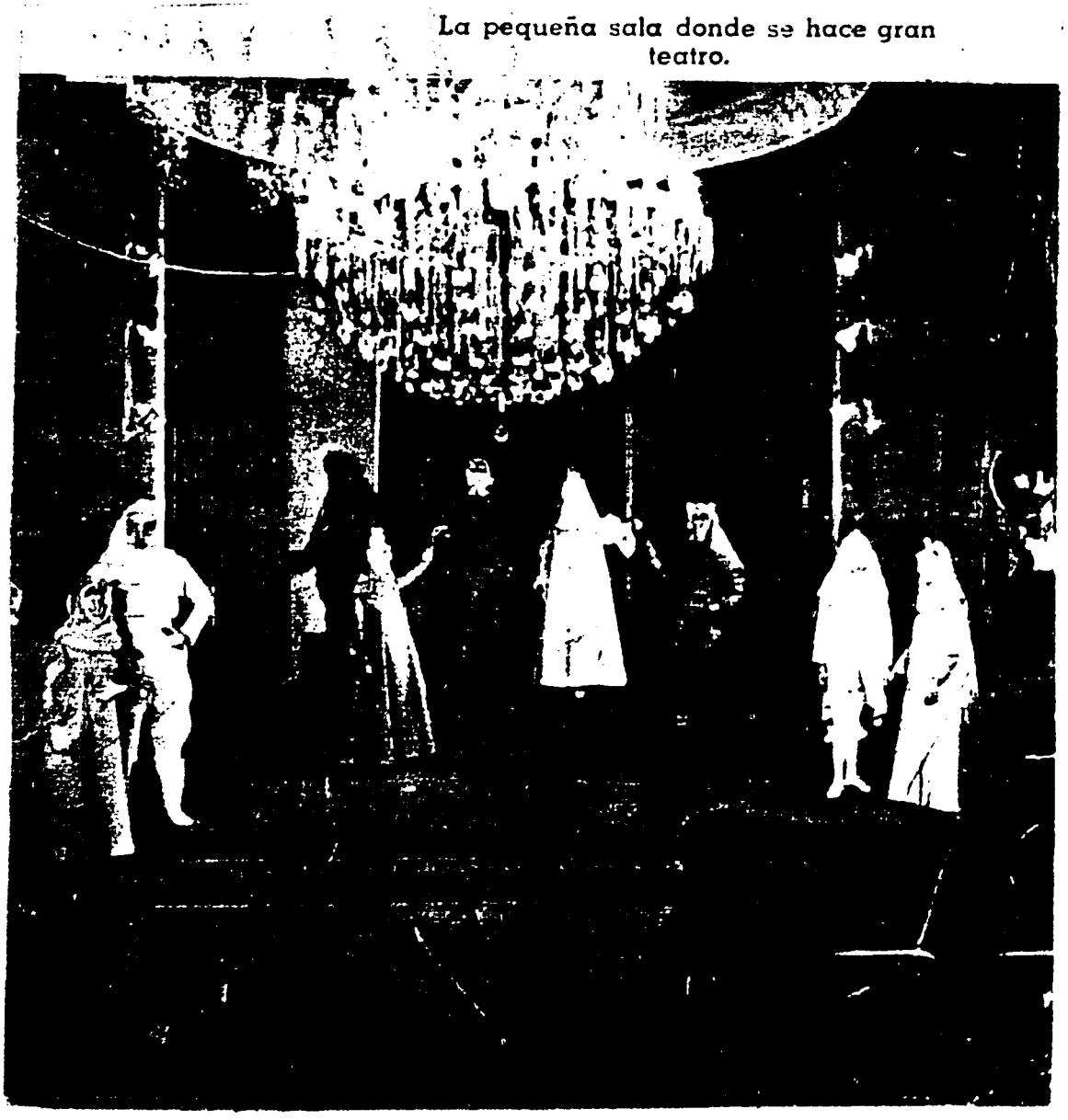
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[1]Ibáñez interview, January 1978. Also see Artes de México, pp. 85-86 and front cover, though some photos distort the color to brown.

[2]Ibid. [3]See Artes de México, p. 86.

[4]Casa del Lago, p. 12; also see the color photo in Artes de México, p. 85, but showing one actor.

[5]Interview, 1975 (letter); also interview, 1977.



(Clipping, courtesy of Silvia Caos; source unknown)

Fig. 27. A final rehearsal of Lope de Vega's La moza de cántaro.

Alta aim, "to serve the poet."[1] Not unexpectedly, the production stressed language. From five to eight months of preparation went into the program.[2] Actors were trained in theoretical and practical aspects of verse. They learned how to "count syllables," "link vowels," and make "certain pauses" so that a wide range of emotions could be conveyed vocally; they worked to perfect the "rhythm of the verses," which Ibáñez and Soriano had marked for them, and the "music of each speech."[3] Every gesture, every movement, every sound was polished, refined, and fixed. All production elements--the set; the original, incidental music of Renaissance theme and predominant flute sound that Raúl Cosío composed;[4] the costumes; and the nonvocal physicality of the performers--were subservient to the text which, insisted Soriano, was communicated by the voice alone.[5]

Costumes were again in solid colors, dominated by blue, green, and orange-brown tones. Again, accessories, such as shoes, stockings, and for some characters, capes and gloves, usually carried out the color scheme,

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[1]Interview, 1975 (letter).

[2]Soriano, in the Castro interview, cites five months; Valdés, interview, cites eight; Marta Verduzco, interviewed 11 April 1978, around six.

[3]Soriano in Castro interview; also mentioned by all other interviewed participants of La moza de cántaro.

[4]Ibáñez interview, April 1978. According to Ibáñez, although musicians were named in the playbill, the music was recorded at the University's station, Radio Universidad.

[5]Interview, 1977.

or varied the tone in intensity.[1] Men wore knickers, tunic shirts, and hooded capes; women wore triangular shaped gowns which Soriano described as "a bit like the clothes of the [Spanish] Virgins, like a stylization of nun's robes."[2] [See Figures 27 and 28, pp. 299 and 302.] But all characters wore a type of round face frame with a translucent veil which Soriano called a "semimask."[3] These masks had frames in contrasting colors, veils to match the costumes, and cardboard features of hair, ears, whiskers, and/or eyes. The masks were the cause of the actors' discontent.

Soriano has repeatedly and undeviatingly explained his reason for the masks: to prevent the closeness of the public to the Casa del Lago stage from destroying moods and images created by the verses of Lope.[4] Soriano believes that "facial expressions mean nothing in the theatre; . . . no one sees the face of an actor from afar."[5] That "for a poet to reach the public," "you have to exert much imagination"; that theatre designs must take into account the nature of the "place, the actors, type of director," and other factors.[6] At the Casa del Lago, the idea to veil faces was to "inspire" ideas and images in the spectator which would otherwise be lost.[7] Soriano illustrated: when the face of the actress is unable to reach the level of

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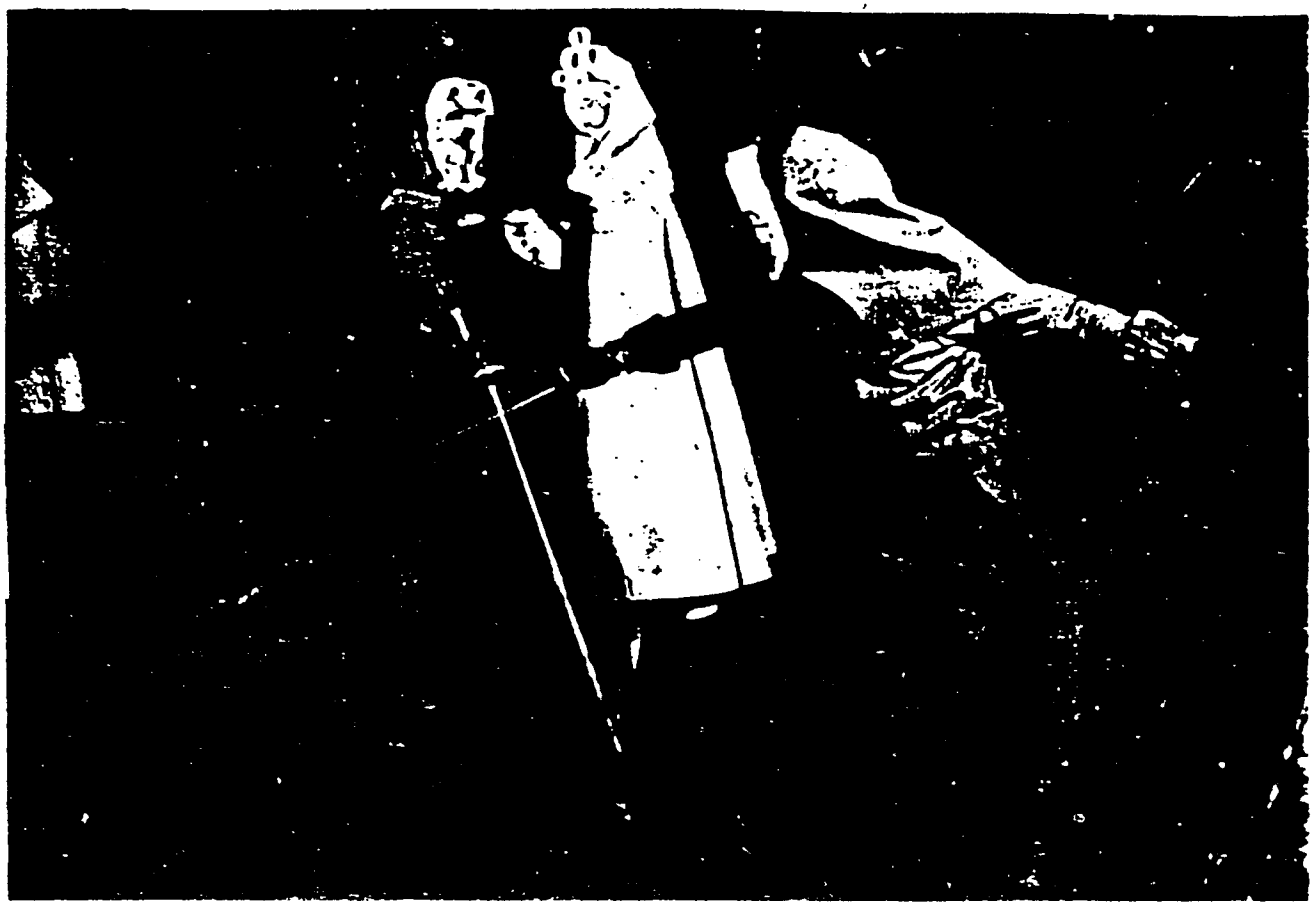
[1]Artes de México, front cover and pp. 85-86. [2]Interview, 1977.

[3]Ibid. In the Castro interview, Soriano calls the veils "transparent," which they were, but after being redesigned, according to several sources.

[4]Interview, 1977; Castro interview. [5]Interview, 1977.

[6]Ibid. [7]Ibid. and Castro interview.

La prodigiosa imaginación de Soriano al servicio del teatro.



(Clipping, courtesy of Silvia Caos; source unknown)

Fig. 28. Lope de Vega's La moza de cántaro.

beauty described by Lope's verses, the image is lost; when, hypothetically, the much-discussed green-eyed beauty is showing the audience her eyes of black, the image, the emotion of the verses are lost.[1]

The application of the concept created the problem. The veils were made of heavy mesh fabrics, and the actors found it difficult to breathe.[2] The actors had not been prepared in advance for the masks, and some resented losing "one of their means of expression, the face,"[3] and others, the time and effort spent to rehearse expressions.[4] The masks demanded adjusted movements because the telescopic eye attachments restricted peripheral vision radically.[5] Blame for what ensued has been put on the ego of actors, but to a greater extent, on the actions and inactions of Soriano and Ibáñez. The result was the last-minute withdrawal of four actors, after many months of unpaid rehearsal.

Audiences, mainly intellectuals and students, filled the small salon to overcapacity for the Eighth Program's two weekly showings.[6] But few

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Interviews with Valdés, Verduzco, Ibáñez (January 1978), Ruth and León Davidoff, and others.

[3]Castro interview. [4]Soriano, 1977; also, Verduzco, interview.

[5]Verduzco interview.

[6]Interviews with Ibáñez (April 1978), Soriano (1977), and Héctor Cruz (27 April 1978); also, María Sabines [Nancy Cárdenas], "Se Durmieron los Críticos," letter in Política, 15 November 1963, p. 3.

critics appeared.[1] The political climate of 1963, which had begun to erupt in 1960 over the question of Cuba,[2] might be causally related. Periodicals had become more political, or more diversion oriented, and one, La Nación, had eliminated theatre coverage.[3] The institutional nature of the Casa del Lago, its free-admission policy, and the weekend (and early-hour) showings, might also have lessened the possibility of reviews. Other theatre events competed for reviewer time; Poesía en Voz Alta had been absent for nearly three years and had made a timid return--insofar as the setting was institutional, the play, a Spanish classic, and the somewhat "martian" wear,[4] no longer startling, no longer new--which might have reduced interest. An infuriated Nancy Cárdenas, using the fictitious name of María Sabines for her open letter in Política, drew other conclusions at the time.[5] Cárdenas

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[1]Ibid.

[2]The Mexican government's unsuccessful attempt at maintaining neutrality, siding with neither Cuba nor the United States, is discussed by Cline, p. 324. In August 1960, demonstrations were staged against the government's position, which to the populace seemed more supportive of the United States than Cuba. Several artists gave support to the movement, such as the muralist, David Alfaro Siqueiros, who was jailed for publicly announcing that these protests would continue.

[3]Novo was writing mostly on political and economic affairs in Hoy, which, like La Nación, had become bi-monthly, and like Siempre, had decreased in size. Other changes are noted in Chapter 1, pp. 11-12 above.

[4]"Martian," unqualified, is quoted from Wilberto Cantón's review, "El Teatro Clásico Español: La Moza del [sic] Cántaro," Excelsior, 29 November 1963, sec. A, p. 38.

[5]Cárdenas has since revised her position. In a phone interview of 4 July 1978, Cárdenas pointed out that later productions at the Casa del

bitterly rebuked the critics for neglecting La moza de cántaro, but acknowledging the Alvaro Custodio productions of classical Spanish plays,[1] and hurrying to review the "scenic elephantiasis" of the Seguro Social[2] and the insignificant plays, handsomely budgeted by Bellas Artes. She insinuated that prejudice, lack of comprehension, and general intimidation evoked by the name of the group, were the true causes of the neglect.

Nevertheless, those critics who did write about the production had positive things to say, and, suspiciously, were almost too kind. Two observers, in contrast, both long supporters of Poesía en Voz Alta, dismissed the production as "boring to death," and "not very good."[3] The only written negative comments were Wilberto Cantón's; his was a belated review. Cantón highly praised the play, its staging, and performances. But he reprimanded Soriano for his distracting "martian visions," which lost the thread of the action, and substituting "strange submarine monsters" for

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Lago have met with much the same reception as La moza de cántaro did (a point supported by newspaper and periodical theatre coverage over the years). Cárdenas now believes that the nature of the Casa del Lago (institutional free-admission policy, weekend showings) is not conducive to reviews.

[1]The Spaniard, Custodio, who had directed the 1956 open-air production of Lope de Vega's The Sheep Well in which both Monteros and Cárdenas appeared, directed such plays exclusively. His productions were called Teatro Español de México presentations, more accurately the name of an organization than a group.

[2]The Mexican Institute of Social Security allotted funds for cultural diffusion, and sponsored numerous plays in theatres that it controlled.

[3]These observers prefer to remain unnamed.

"men of flesh and blood," which weighted down certain scenes. "Once again," an exasperated Cantón concluded, "an artist uses the theatre for his personal gain, instead of modestly making himself serve the play which he accepted to exalt." María Luisa Mendoza, on the other hand, wrote a completely favorable review, as did Magaña-Esquivel, though he quoted largely from the playbill commentary.[1] An unnamed critic in El Figaro noted the loving care that went into the play's staging, and commended the acting, choice of play, the direction, and especially Soriano's work which the critic thought was as excellent as "before in 'Electra.'"[2] However, the above mention in El Figaro was one paragraph long, only slightly longer than another warm announcement of the program that appeared in the same issue.[3] Other than these, there was a blurb about "this brilliant effort" in Esto,[4] and a similar note of publicity in El Día.[5] That was all.

Poesía en Voz Alta presented its Eighth Program through 24 November, after having cancelled the showing the Friday before, the day that John

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[1]"El Teatro," El Día, 13 October 1963, supp., "El Gallo Illustrado," p. [4]; "La Comedia española de Lope de Vega Degenero en Alfonso Paso," El Nacional, 27 October 1963, supp., p. 11.

[2]"Teatro de Comedia y Drama," 13 October 1963, p. 18.

[3]"Ellos y Ellas," p. 10.

[4]"Teatro Universitario: Mañana 'la Moza del [sic] Cántaro': En la Casa del Lago, en función especial," Esto, 6 October 1963, sec. C, p. 6.

[5]"Las Representaciones de la Moza de Cántaro se Inician con Éxito," 3 October 1963, p. 11.

F. Kennedy was killed. The closing was sudden[1] and the reasons uncertain. Perhaps the internal decision to halt the show stemmed from actor commitments to other plays, or from a feeling or recognition "that Poesía en Voz Alta was through."[2] For after a series of problems and obstacles that beset both programs--such as the union in the Seventh, the actors' walkout in the Eighth--and the cool reception by critics--mainly negated in the Seventh, ignored in the Eighth--Mexico's enfant terrible, Poesía en Voz Alta, "went out with a whimper, not a bang."[3] The 1960s were wrong for Poesía en Voz Alta; no longer was it unique.

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[1]No newspaper or periodical announced a projected closing date. The last ad to appear in Excelsior, for instance, was dated 24 November 1963 (sec. A, p. 34).

[2]Ibáñez, interview July 1972, stated: "we reconsidered, and realized that Poesía en Voz Alta was through."

[3]These words had already appeared in a draft of this study when Ibáñez coincidentally articulated them during our phone conversation, May 1978.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Poesía en Voz Alta presented eight programs within eight years. Half of these programs were staged during the first two years of 1956 and 1957; the other half, at sporadic intervals, through 1963. Poesía en Voz Alta flourished in the first phase, struggled to survive in the second, and expired. The following review of events will help to explain why. An attempt to assess the group's value and influences on the theatre of Mexico will complete the study.

The programs of the first phase received total or partial University support. Each of the four programs, under the direction of Héctor Mendoza, were dramatic collages of Spanish, French, and Mexican literary materials. All of them employed mostly young, novice actors and no famous names in the cast; theatre was conceived as a game, as make-believe, and conceptualized ironically. Although each program had unique traits, the First and Second, like the Third and Fourth, were basically alike. Both earlier programs were produced on smaller budgets and with smaller technical staffs than those of 1957. The programs of 1956 played once a week at the

Caballito Theatre; the programs of 1957 played daily at the Moderno Theatre.[1]

In 1956, Poesía en Voz Alta was strongly influenced by the presence of Juan José Arreola. The multi-authored materials of each program were unadapted. Poetry and poetic plays were spoken and performed by a small acting troupe. Little controversy surrounded the first-two programs, though the social value of the materials was questioned, and one critic, Bill Llano, reflecting his paper's point of view, did express hostility toward the existence of such a gifted, privileged group of aesthetes.[2]

In 1957, Paz became the sole literary director and Soriano the sole set and costume designer. The music hall, or revue, concept was introduced. The Third and Fourth Programs each spotlighted one playwright and a classical Spanish poet whose works were adapted into a play of skits that retained the old, original Spanish. These programs were staged with recitation, song, dance, an emphasis on visual spectacle, and had larger casts than the earlier two. The spectacles appeared to serve the poets by capturing the tone and mood of their works; they appeared to further the gaiety, irony, and erotically provocative elements in the texts. But they certainly provoked controversy.

Indignant critics and onlookers decried the lack of respect for the

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[1]The Fourth Program's seven-day week was two days longer than the Third's.

[2]"Poesía en Voz Alta," Impacto, 22 August 1956, n.p.

classics and detected an antagonizing arrogance, a flippancy in Poesía en Voz Alta's staging. Some perceived a snobbishness about the group. If the Poesía en Voz Alta of 1956 was elitist and seemed snobbish in its choice of texts primarily,[1] and was so informed by observers, the Poesía en Voz Alta of 1957 seemed to affirm the complaint by both the choice and manner in which it handled its texts. The language of the classical poetry was not updated for easy comprehension. No text analysis or synopsis accompanied any playbill. The staging distracted and burdened those--very many--who were meeting the old Spanish language, or the Archpriest and Quevedo for the first time.

The programs of 1957 disclosed another phenomenon which, like the denigration of elitism and opposing its right-to-life, related to the times. This phenomenon was not yet as transparent or pervasive as in years to come, but more so than in 1956 when a Bill Llano alone tried to dissuade the public from supporting the "idle intelligent ones." The phenomenon was threat--or, a fear of the unknown, a fear of novelty, and the perception of Poesía en Voz Alta as a threat. And more than the threat of feeling inferior to an admittedly superior group of individuals, was the growing threat that a charismatic, free-spirited, uncompromising group might have on the Mexican society of the 1950s and the social direction it was plotting--that Poesía en Voz Alta might interfere with society's plans. The threat was perceived as real when the group opened its doors to the public by multi-

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[1]Llano also finds the audience snobbish.

plying its weekly showings, and attracted a broader spectrum of the public, particularly impressionable students and the middle class.

Evidence for the above is suggested by Octavio Paz's recollection that Poesía en Voz Alta was lambasted as an "enemy of Mexico."[1] More damaging verbal abuse may be found in the newspapers. For Novedades to characterize the group as homosexual[2] in the Mexico of that time was a telling insult, and had the potential of serious consequences. Similarly telling and potentially serious was the review of a Poesía en Voz Alta audience which, far stronger than Llano's description, portrayed it in part as faddish emulators of upper-class intellectuals who, in both manner and dress, more closely resembled bourgeoisie disguised as decadent avant-gardists.[3]

This was Mexico of the mid-1950s, at the peak of an economic recovery and movement to educate, improve, and develop society. Art was beginning to be seen again as an instrument of propaganda, as it was in the late twenties and thirties,[4] and realistic plays were the most popular, acceptable, and desirable dramatic form. The elite, the intelligentsia--the ones

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[1]Interview, 1974.

[2]Elvira Vargas, "Multicosas," 12 June 1957, p. 5.

[3]Luis Sánchez Zevada, "Teatro," Siempre, 7 August 1957, p. 50.

[4]José Clemente Orozco's oft-repeated statement about nationalistic propaganda forced on art might have referred to the twenties and thirties, but applies to the fifties too: "'The public refuses to see painting. They want to hear painting,'" so paraphrased by the art critic, Toby Joysmith in "The Gallery Goer: Tracts for the Times," News (Mexico City), 24 April 1977, p. 18.

better off--were expected to cooperate, conform, contribute their talents and efforts toward a common cause--the social betterment of the masses. The individualistic members of Poesía en Voz Alta were opposed to the narrow visions of the charted course, remindful of the earlier experimental groups, particularly the Teatros, Ulises and Orientación. Poesía en Voz Alta presented poetry; it looked to broaden horizons through new, little known, and challenging dramatic and production forms; to experiment, try new techniques, and create new forms of theatre and staging--create a different kind of theatre.[1]

Poesía en Voz Alta was being supported by the public University's funds, at a time when the University was supposed to be a leader in the march toward social betterment. Thus, critics, enraged by the University's funneling of funds to so private a source, turned to the public for support against the University's costly whim. After the Third Program, funds were cut to token sponsorship. For the Fourth, private and institutional donations had to see the company through. The uncompromising Fourth Program failed to appease, and as the University's obligations to the group had theoretically ended anyway, Poesía en Voz Alta and its original sponsor parted company. After this program, the company's director and leading actress departed for abroad on fellowships, and actors actively sought

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[1]Herein are at least two ways that Poesía en Voz Alta differed from these early experimental groups: the nature of the materials, and the actual practice (rather than essentially only-articulated aims) of experimenting with staging forms.

employment elsewhere, several venturing forth on directing careers of their own.

In its second phase, Poesía en Voz Alta showed change. Like a chameleon, it kept changing in subsequent programs, carrying it farther away from what it was at the start. No longer were dramatic collages presented, only single plays. Personnel changed. José Luis Ibáñez directed three programs, Diego de Mesa directed one. Paz left for Europe during the Fifth Program's run, leaving Soriano the only original member of the directing group to remain. New actors were brought in, and "stars" were used. And Poesía en Voz Alta, in an effort to survive, went commercial.

Critics were appeased by the Fifth Program, Murder in the Cathedral, a serious, comprehensible, intellectually stimulating, but uncontroversial, substantial play. They were pleased that the play was staged in an interesting, but the critics thought, appropriate production, and in a commercial theatre for a general public. The Sixth Program again drove the critics into rage. The welfare of society was seen as threatened by the commercial presentation of The Maids, the work of a homosexual and criminal author. Upsetting, too, was the display of hatred between maids and masters. The "martian" costumes of Sophocles's Electra antagonized in the Seventh Program, and by the Eighth, when Poesía en Voz Alta made a final attempt to revive the past by producing Lope de Vega at a dependency of the UNAM, it was little noticed, and expired.

What made Poesía en Voz Alta's final four programs very different

from the first four was the sense of a progressively diminishing teamwork, and the increasing influence of a single presence, Soriano's. At the same time, the naiveté, play, innocence, and "kookiness" which characterized the first phase of Poesía en Voz Alta gave way to sobriety and seriousness. Also, without real subsidy, it could no longer survive.

Yet, it was not the cut-off of subsidy alone that caused the death, though this was probably of paramount influence. Subsidy might have prolonged the life of Poesía en Voz Alta, but would not have guaranteed its longevity. Too many other factors intervened, related to both internal and external affairs, and not all of them were controllable.

There were many factors that contributed to Poesía en Voz Alta's end. They included the changes of management, materials, directors, and performers, some of whom left to develop their abilities and pursue independent careers. The changes of attitudes toward the work itself played a part. For instance, the attempts to please the sponsor and critics of the Fifth Program, the choice of actors oriented toward professional theatre and film careers, and the ultimate concentration of power in the hands of one man were not advantageous for experimental work and the continued existence of this group. There were changes in the political and economic conditions of the country and the ascension of new theatre talents and experimental groups, all of which may have also influenced the decision to officially disband the group after the Eighth Program.

The story of Poesía en Voz Alta comes from Mexico and is shaped in

part by the conditions, events, and prevalent thought of Mexico of the time. That almost all of its founders--including Arreola, Paz, Soriano, and Carrington, but excluding Mendoza--were unconnected to the theatre, uninterested in establishing theatre careers, and joined Poesía en Voz Alta only temporarily, made Poesía en Voz Alta also unlike many experimental groups in the world. Nonetheless, its story is related to theirs--to Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, for instance, to the Teatro Piccolo, the Royal Court Theatre, which after the retirement of George Devine, changed as Poesía en Voz Alta did after the Fourth Program, though in a different way, and to the more recent groups, such as those directed by Peter Brook, Joseph Chaikin, Judith Malina and Julian Beck, and Jerzy Grotowski. Despite some obvious differences and variations in the accounts, the stories all reveal an inability for productive experimental groups to survive as such for very long--which may be inherent in their nature, as some Poesía en Voz Alta members tend to think.[1]

Groups begin with the inclination to experiment, to see what evolves. Immediate goals can be posited with specificity, long-range goals cannot. Performers tend to drift off to pursue their own careers. Influences eventually appear in the works of others. The experimental companies tend to reach a peak, then decline and dissolve--or change. Poesía en Voz Alta did change, but failed to survive. Without subsidy, the change was insuf-

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[1]For instance, Gurrola and García Ponce, in the interviews of 1974. Similar sentiments were expressed by Paz in his interview of 1974.

ficient to attract enough public to keep it alive. With subsidy, Poesía en Voz Alta's continuance as an experimental group would have been contingent on its ability to repeatedly create, innovate, and retain its freshness and novelty. This ideal has thus far not been realized by even the financially solvent, truly experimental groups.

Poesía en Voz Alta, considered by some to be Mexico's first experimental group owing to its concern for both staging and dramatic forms,[1] exposed Mexico to the latest avant-garde trends in the world, especially France; it made "discoveries" (Elena Garro) and "rediscoveries (Quevedo),[2] and popularized the Greek classics for the Mexican stage.[3]

Poesía en Voz Alta, "a small seed that bore good fruit," said Arreola,[4] contributed theatre and film practitioners, most notably to the areas of acting and directing. Some participants have passed away (Dantés, Saviñón, Pellicer, presumably the elderly Villegas[5]). Some participants have entered new fields (Stopen, law; Ulalume, writing), and the founding artists have returned to their original careers: Soriano and Paz (like Xavier and de Mesa) had no further involvement in theatre; Carrington contributed the plays

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[1]Carlos Fernández, interviewed 22 January 1976, e.g. Also Hernández interview, insofar as she saw the influence of the earlier groups as exclusively "literary."

[2]Paz interview, 1974.

[3]See, e.g., Solórzano, Testimonios, pp. 20-22, and pp. 110-44 in comparison with the theatre events listed in any newspaper or periodical prior to 1960.

[4]Interview. [5]Ibáñez interview, January 1978.

Penélope and La invención del mole (How Mole Came About), a short, extravagant farce on the creation of the Mexican sauce which was published during the first year of Poesía en Voz Alta,[1] and she designed the sets and costumes for her own Penélope and Ionesco's Le roi se meurt (Exit the King), both of which Jodorowsky directed in Mexico in the 1960s. But Arreola, who had some background in performance and had acted in Poesía en Voz Alta, is currently combining a flourishing writing career with a spectacular new one in television. Though he has never returned to the theatre, Arreola appears regularly in his one-man program, given to poetry recitations, commentaries, and chats on literature, language--the "word"--and a host of subjects. With few other exceptions, the remainder of the Poesía en Voz Alta participants entered the mainstream of Mexico's active theatre and cinema industries, and many of them still remain there.

Among the actors produced by Poesía en Voz Alta are Rosenda Monteros and Beatriz Sheridan. The versatile, charismatic Monteros has gone on to play a wide range of roles in classical and contemporary plays, and her extensive film credits include The Magnificent Seven. In 1976, Monteros appeared with Ana Ofelia Murguía, another talented Poesía en Voz Alta product, in Manuel Montoro's production of Fuentevaqueros (The Cowboys' Well), a dramatic collage composed of selections from the works of Lorca. In 1977,

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[1]In Revista Mexicana de Literatura, no. 7 (September-October, 1956), pp. 33-37. To this investigator's knowledge, the play has not yet been staged in Mexico.

Monteros was seen on stage in a rendition of Brecht/Weill's The Threepenny Opera.

Beatriz Sheridan, critically acclaimed for her performance in Beckett's Ô les beaux jours (Happy Days) at the end of 1977,[1] more recently played the leading role in Lope de Vega's La Dorotea, under the direction of Poesía en Voz Alta's Nancy Cárdenas. Unlike Monteros, Sheridan was influenced by Poesía en Voz Alta as an observer. According to Cárdenas, Sheridan called Poesía en Voz Alta a major factor in her decision to pursue an acting career, because it showed her that the profession could be respectable.[2]

Poesía en Voz Alta contributed to the development of other actors. They include José Carlos Ruiz, best known in cinema, Claudio Obregón, Lilia Aragón, Antonio Medellín, and Héctor Cruz--to cite only those who have been regularly working in the field over the past few years.[3] But excluding Pina Pellicer possibly alone, the group produced leading and supporting players, not rightly "stars"; Ofelia Guilmáin and Rita Macedo had already gained fame before joining Poesía en Voz Alta. And it is difficult to ascertain the effect of Poesía en Voz Alta on the later efforts of its actors, as no particular acting style emerged from the group.

More definitive influences are found in the work of its stage directors;

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[1]See, e.g., Eduardo Rodríguez Solis's review, "Teatro: ¡Ah, Beckett!" Novedades, 18 December 1977, supp. "La Onda," p. 15.

[2]Cárdenas interview, 1974. The notion of acting as disreputable still persists in Mexico to a great extent.

[3]Carlos Fernández, e.g., has been mostly teaching theatre of late.

it is in the directing field that Poesía en Voz Alta made its greatest contribution to theatre personnel. The company produced four prominent, prolific directors, Héctor Mendoza, Juan José Gurrola, José Luis Ibáñez, and Nancy Cárdenas, and was instrumental in starting the career of another, Juan Ibáñez.[1] Each of these directors had been involved in Poesía en Voz Alta's first phase, a phase which also stimulated such others to direct as Carlos Fernández, Enrique Stopen, Carlos Castaño, and Manola Saavedra. The second phase generated no similar phenomenon, and produced no directors of note.[2]

The work of Héctor Mendoza, from 1973 through early 1978 the head of the Theatre Section of the UNAM's Cultural Diffusion Department, has recalled the tradition of Poesía en Voz Alta in several ways. For instance, his productions have been presented as group efforts without stars, and with young actors, often students (whom he has personally trained). His recent production of Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, which he and Carlos Solórzano translated and adapted for the stage, may be the one exception; presented

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[1]Juan Ibáñez appeared in the Fourth Program only. By his own claim, he is more rightly a product of Héctor Azar's tutelage. (Interview, 29 July 1971.) Ibáñez and his work are briefly referred to on pp. 272-73 above.

[2]The ensuing discussion is an attempt to document the influence of Poesía en Voz Alta on the work of the above-named four major directors. It makes no attempt to discuss their work in detail (supplementary articles are being planned by this investigator for such a purpose), nor to account for their entire output, and those productions dealt with in earlier chapters will generally not be covered again. A sample selection of reviews and interviews with the directors is included in the Bibliography.

at the commercial theatre, the Hidalgo, it starred the famed Silvia Pinal and Carlos Bracho.

Mendoza has also consistently favored the poetic plays and pieces, mostly those unknown or little known in Mexico. Brecht's The Private Life of the Master Race and Der gute Mensch von Sezuan (The Good Woman of Sezuan), and Emilio Carballido's El relojero de Córdoba (The Clockmaker from Córdoba), are only three of several plays that he premiered in Mexico.[1] Although he has staged other contemporary foreign and native plays, Mendoza has avoided the box-office favorites and commercial trends--David Rudkin's Ashes, his current production, the exception--and has in fact shown a marked preference for the classics. Marivaux's The False Confessions (in which Tara Parra appeared), Tirso de Molina's El melancólico (The Melancholic One) and Don Gil de las calzas verdes (Don Gil of the Green Stockings), the latter employing mime and acrobatics, reflecting the Third Program's El buen amor, and Mendoza's Reso (Rhesus), based on Euripides's play, with texts from Homer's The Iliad, are illustrations.

The concept of theatre as a "game" pervades especially a small group of works which Mendoza calls "spectacles," and are furtherances of El buen amor and La vida airada. The "spectacles" are original plays, adapted by Mendoza from usually classical works--or, as he terms them, works by "dead authors who cannot complain"[2]--and which are staged with music,

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[1]The Carballido play was a world premiere.

[2]Interview, August 1977.

song, dance, merriment, touches of the risqué (updated to often mean nudity), and lots of "play." They include the delightful, award-winning In memoriam,[1] based on the life and work of the Mexican romantic poet, Manuel Acuña, which mocks the notion of romanticism; ¡Vamanos a la guerra! (Let's Go Off to the War!), adapted from George Farquhar's The Recruiting Officer, which represents Mendoza's "women's liberation" play.[2]

Language has remained central to Mendoza's productions; so has theatricality or the idea of theatre as a visual "show." Technically, certain stagings have evidenced the strong influence of Juan Soriano. In memoriam, ¡Vamanos a la guerra!, and El melancólico, for example, employed cyclorамic curtains on matching colored (neutral) stage floors; playing spaces were nearly empty, without any fixed set pieces; the actors, on whom attention was purposely focused, used few hand props and wore striking clothes of simple elegance. For In memoriam and ¡Vamanos a la guerra!, Mendoza designed the sets and costumes himself.[3]

Juan José Gurrola, like Mendoza, is categorized as a director of experimental theatre. Gurrola, too, has adhered to the Poesía en Voz Alta practice of staging the poetic works, especially those unfamiliar to Mexico; his actors have been amateurs and beginners, but normally blended with

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[1]See, e.g., "Drama Critics Union Names Tops in '75," News (Mexico City), 15 February 1976, p. 15.

[2]Mendoza interview, September 1977.

[3]Playbills: In memoriam and ¡Vamanos a la guerra!

professional or experienced ones, though unrenowned; his audiences have largely contained intellectuals and students; his productions have shown such Poesía en Voz Alta traits as a fondness for surprise, "play" (upon occasion) with the audience, and a rebellious, uncompromising spirit.

But in Gurrola, this spirit has been manifested less through production means--Mendoza's customary way--than choice of play.[1] One illustration is the Cuban dramatist, José Triana's La noche de los asesinos (The Criminals), which Gurrola staged in 1967; the politically metaphoric play focuses on the ritual planning by three children of the execution of their parents. Another illustration is the Mexican writer, Jorge Ibargüengoitia's El atentado (The Transgression); the play was completed in 1962, allowed its first commercial staging in 1976, and is about the murder of Mexico's President Obregón.

Also dissimilar to Mendoza is Gurrola's seeming preference for the contemporary plays, particularly from the absurdist and poetic avant-garde schools, though not to the exclusion of such early plays as Henry Fielding's Tom Thumb, or the Tragedy of Tragedies and John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, his latest production. Gurrola, who introduced Elena Garro to the North-American stage through an English-language production of A Solid

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[1] One important exception for Mendoza, however, is Carballido's The Clockmaker from Córdoba, a highly controversial play with numerous political overtones, which had a suspiciously short-lived run at the start of the 1960s.

Home in Texas,[1] has presented the Mexican premieres of Ionesco's The Bald Soprano, Pinter's The Homecoming, e. e. cummings's him, and Albee's The Sandbox, among others, in most cases introducing the authors as well to the Mexican stage in this way.

Sometimes the influence of Poesía en Voz Alta is suggested technically: The sets for Gurrola's productions have characteristically stressed two-dimensionality. The staging of him, though including multiple set changes and pieces, had a cyclorama as the basic scenery; the stand-up caricatures of painted wood, used in the circus scene, recalled the Soriano kind of constructions for Ionesco's The Motor Show.

Sometimes there are reminders of Poesía en Voz Alta in Gurrola's treatment of the materials: him had a silent moment full of expectation but in which nothing happened; so did Rappaccini's Daughter in the Second Program. Jazz palabra (Word Jazz), whose title alone connotes an influence, was a collage of poems and poetic texts; it employed jazz music, as had King Belshazzar's Feast in the Third Program, but performed live and with much dance. And though to a lesser extent than his production of Dylan Thomas's Under Milkwood, Jazz palabra incorporated elements from the recital form, as El buen amor had done.[2]

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[1]See, e.g., the review by Virgil Miers, "A Fine Evening of Madness... Ole, Juan José Gurrola," Dallas Times Herald, 10 June 1959, n.p. (This clipping, with page number missing, was included in Gurrola's scrapbook collection.)

[2]Other productions and influences are covered on pp. 203-4 above.

It is clear that Gurrola has absorbed many of the ideals and practices of Poesía en Voz Alta but applied them in individual ways. He has acknowledged the influence of Poesía en Voz Alta on his development and career.[1] In a published interview, he was quoted as saying that his entire career was owed to "the luck of having begun with Poesía en Voz Alta which Octavio Paz, Juan Soriano, Juan José Arreola, and Héctor Mendoza directed."[2] On another occasion, Gurrola stated that Poesía en Voz Alta had taught him to recognize plastic and literary values, and to realize that "the poetry [of a play] was really the spinal column" of a production.[3]

That Poesía en Voz Alta inspired individuality and creative enterprise has been mentioned by several, among them, José Luis Ibáñez and Nancy Cárdenas,[4] themselves exemplifications of the traits. These directors also had the opportunity to work in various facets of the group's operations--"to test their abilities and grow."[5] In Poesía en Voz Alta, Ibáñez was assistant director, lighting technician, director, and translator of one of the plays, The Maids; Cárdenas acted in a wide range of roles, handled pub-

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[1]Interview, 1974.

[2]Olga Harmony, "Gurrola o la necesidad de cambio," Excelsior, 19 August 1973, supp. "Diorama de la Cultura," p. 14.

[3]Interview, 1974.

[4]Interviews: Ibáñez (1971) and Cárdenas (1974); Fernández, Parra (1974), and Stopen, are among the several.

[5]Cárdenas, interview of 1974, referring generally to Poesía en Voz Alta's attributes.

lic relations (Fifth Program), and served as assistant director (Sixth Program). Both Ibáñez and Cárdenas have since staged the classics, especially from Spain, and worked in the experimental theatre. But they are best known as directors of the commercial stage.[1]

In the early efforts of Ibáñez, the influence of Poesía en Voz Alta is often overt: Programs of poetry, composed of selections by classical Roman and Spanish writers, and such contemporary Mexican poets as Octavio Paz, Alfonso Reyes, Carlos Pellicer, and Ramón López Velarde, were given as staged readings and recitals during 1962-63.[2] Lope de Vega's La gatomaquia (The Cat Phantasy), an epic narrative about two heroic cats, was performed in 1966 with recitation, music, mime, dance, and frolic. Outfits for the cast of four (among them, Raúl Dantés) reflected the Soriano method of showing sameness and difference; they were varied combinations, and alternating tonal schemes, of turtleneck shirts, v-neck sweaters, slacks, and a skirt. The set consisted of a cyclorama and front curtain. Properties were little more than some straight

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[1]It should be noted that Ibáñez and Cárdenas, like Mendoza and Gurrola, have also been involved in such other cultural areas and activities as writing creatively and/or critically, directing noncommercial films and/or television programs, translating plays for production, and, except for Cárdenas, teaching practical and/or theoretical theatre courses.

[2]See Casa del Lago, pp. 14-20.

chairs, a ladder, large hoop, and disproportionate tricycle whose front wheel was miniature and side wheels, gigantic.[1]

In later works, unless intended as training vehicles for student-actors, Chekhov's The Three Sisters, for instance, which had a Soriano-esque set, it is only Ibáñez's continued stress on language and literary values that brings Poesía en Voz Alta to mind. This stress is as pervasive in his direction of musicals, like Auntie Mame[2] and Annie Get Your Gun, as it is in his dramas and comedies, like Robert Patrick's Kennedy's Children, Noel Coward's Design for Living, and the John Balderston-Hamilton Dean adaptation of Bram Stoker's Dracula, his current offering.

If this selection of past and present Broadway hits is far removed from Poesía en Voz Alta, the choices by Cárdenas are not much closer--particularly because they are based first on social ideology and then on art.[3] Her productions include Paul Zindel's And Miss Reardon Drinks A Little, George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion, Mart Crowley's The Boys in the Band--which, in the spirit of Poesía en Voz Alta, Cárdenas fought to get staged--and two

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[1]For Ibáñez's theatrical version of the play and production photos, see Lope de Vega, La gatomaquia, Colección de Teatro, no. 6 (Mexico: Departamento de Teatro del INBA, 1966). For a discussion on the production, see García Ponce, Trazos (Mexico: UNAM, 1974), pp. 90-92. Trazos, a diversified collection of García Ponce's writings, has a special focus on affiliates of Poesía en Voz Alta.

[2]This investigator observed Auntie Mame both in rehearsal (August 1973) and public performance (January 1974).

[3]Cárdenas expressed her preference for socially oriented plays in her interviews of 1974 and 1978.

poetic treatments of the lives and inner worlds of women, René Marques's Los soles truncos (The Fanlights), and Aleksander Ścibor-Rylskí's Rodeo (Going Round).

Cárdenas often casts "stars"; Ibáñez usually does. Neither director's latest major productions relate to Poesía en Voz Alta technically. Yet both were trained by Poesía en Voz Alta, and see themselves as its children--who went their own separate ways.

Poesía en Voz Alta generated some dramatic efforts among its participants, but produced only one important dramatist, Elena Garro, who contributed over a dozen plays.[1] Coincidentally or not, after Poesía en Voz Alta, there was a substantially increased number of poetic, one-act Mexican plays;[2] before Poesía en Voz Alta, there was practically none, other than the few written during the twenties and thirties.

Poesía en Voz Alta produced some directors who have occasionally furnished their own set and costume designs, in part or entirety, but no theatre designers per se. Yet, the group seems to have affected staging practices and scenic styles. For instance, Héctor Azar's 1960 production of Neveux's Juliette ou la clé des songes (Juliet, or the Key to the Dreams) utilized only basic elements in an essentially two-dimensional setting; according to García Ponce, the production gave literal and symbolic value to a cur-

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[1]See Colecchia and Matas, p. 36.

[2]Azar and Solórzano were among the nonparticipants who were writing such plays.

tain, once painted with birds to represent a forest, and showed an application of Poesía en Voz Alta's overall style and game-concept of theatre.[1]

Scenographical remnants still remain: the versatile wooden crates, to replace set pieces, are in current use at the INBA's theatre school; the crates were also the basis of Guillermo Barclay's designs for the 1976 production of Fuentevaqueros, the collage of Lorca works.[2] The 1977 staging of La gran revolución (The Great Revolution) elevated plastic values in a setting that was framed with a neutral curtain, and featured only small, moveable objects and properties.

La gran revolución, an historical/political/poetic treatment of the French Revolution, marked the theatrical debut of its author, the Mexican poet, Jaime August Shelley; also, the first, independent directorial effort of young Luis de Tavira, a former student of Mendoza's. The year before, de Tavira had staged Santa, a spectacle based on the novel by Mexico's Federico Gamboa, but with the collaboration of his teacher, Mendoza, and another Mendoza disciple, Julio Castillo. The latter is one of Mexico's most innovative, talented, and productive directors who, a few years prior, had been considered by many the most promising and best "young" director in Mexico.

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[1]The critic was displeased with the production, however, and his review was sharply negative; "Teatro: Julieta o La Clave de los Sueños," Universidad de México 15 (September 1960):27-28.

[2]See the photo accompanying the review by Eduardo Rodríguez Solis, "Teatro: Y Sobre el Teatro Poesía," Novedades, 10 October 1976, supp. "La Onda," pp. 8 and 19.

Julio Castillo is further evidence of Poesía en Voz Alta's impact on the theatre of Mexico. It influenced a new generation--in a sense two generations--of theatre practitioners. Castillo acted in Mendoza's Teatro 61 at the Casa del Lago, directed Fernando Arrabal's Le cimètiere des voitures (The Automobile Graveyard), Lorca's When Five Years Pass (Poesía en Voz Alta's First Program had included a scene from this play) with "rock music, acrobatics, and a shadow play,"[1] and many others including an enchanting production of the Čapek Brothers' The Insect Comedy that incorporated music, dance, and puppetry. Salvador Garcini, acting student of Mendoza's, actor in Gurrola's production of him and Castillo's production of The Insect Comedy, and assistant director (to Gurrola) on El atentado, was voted best director of 1977 for Genet's The Maids, which he staged with an all-male cast. Such major, new acting discoveries as Blanca Guerra, Julieta Egurrola, and Margarita Sanz were less than two years ago acting students of Mendoza's who had performed in his plays. And as Abraham Oceransky, acclaimed for his productions of Simio (Ape), Conejo blanco (White Rabbit), and Acto de amor (Act of Love), has cited Gurrola's production Ionesco's The Bald Soprano as inspiring him to direct, so Gurrola has credited as his inspiration, Héctor Mendoza--and Poesía en Voz Alta.[2]

What Poesía en Voz Alta contributed mainly to the theatre of Mexico

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[1]Joanne Pottlitzer, "Theatre of a Forgotten Continent," The Drama Review 14 (Winter 1970):36.

[2]Oceransky interview, 26 August 1971; Gurrola, 1974.

was inspiration to experiment in all kinds of theatre and popular entertainment forms; a recognition of plastic and literary values; and a belief in the ability to develop the individual, independent man. Soriano has said, writing from Rome: "I don't think that the group, Poesía en Voz Alta ended; it always exists wherever someone does true theatre."[1]

If this retelling of the story of Poesía en Voz Alta in the theatre of Mexico has been able to shed some light on the workings of theatre, and may be a source of inspiration and encouragement to others, then it will have accomplished its principal goal and benefit the theatre to come. But if it has done no more than make the story of this company known, and tangentially, Mexican theatre history, then the study has contributed to theatre knowledge. And maybe, perceptions will be broadened about the theatre of Mexico, so often glossed over in theatre history texts, and a new awareness created that the theatre of Mexico is worthy of more recognition than has been formerly--or presently--afforded it. This study was written as a beginning, not an end.

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[1]Letter, 1975.

APPENDIX A: Playbills

First Program
Playbill 1 (Courtesy of Tara Parra) 332

Second Program
Playbill 2 (Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras) 340

Third Program
*Playbill 3 (José Luis Martínez; Juan Soriano) 348

Fourth Program
*Playbill 4 (José Luis Martínez; Juan José Gurrola) 356

Fifth Program
Playbill 5-A (Antonio Medellín) 364
5-B (Antonio Medellín) 368
5-C (Antonio Medellín) 372
*5-D (Nancy Cárdenas) 376

Sixth Program
Playbill 6 (Juan Soriano) 380

Seventh Program
Playbill 7-A (Antonio Medellín) 384
7-B (Antonio Medellín) 388

Eighth Program
*Playbill 8 (Silvia Caos) 391

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*From photocopies.



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO

LA DIRECCION GENERAL DE DIFUSION CULTURAL

presenta en el

TEATRO DEL CABALLITO

el primer programa de

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

●

Director de escena . . . . **Héctor Mendoza**

Director literario . . . . **Juan José Arreola**

Escenografía . . . . . **Juan Soriano y Héctor Xavier**

Dibujos. . . . . . **Juan Soriano Héctor Xavier**

NECESITAMOS ponernos de acuerdo, señoras y señores: no estamos haciendo *teatro* en el sentido cada vez más anómalo que tiene esta palabra. Deliberadamente hemos optado por la solución más difícil: la de jugar limpio al antiguo y limpio juego del teatro. Esto quiere decir que no vamos a engañar a nadie, que renunciamos lúcidamente a la mayoría de los recursos técnicos que pervierten y complican el teatro contemporáneo. Lejos de ser nueva, la fórmula adoptada por nosotros se remonta al origen mismo del teatro occidental: el "auto" y el "misterio" hagiográfico y sacramental, la farsa profana que prospera en la comedia del arte de Italia y en el "paso" español. A esto debemos añadir el ejemplo que nos han dado algunas tentativas modernas que se apoyan en ese criterio tradicional, como las realizaciones de Ghéon y Chancerel. En lengua española, nadie como García Lorca se ha preocupado por reanimar el verdadero espíritu del teatro. Por eso le rendimos homenaje y representamos sus obras junto a las de los clásicos: porque él recoge y modula con su voz personal una herencia lírica henchida de savia popular.

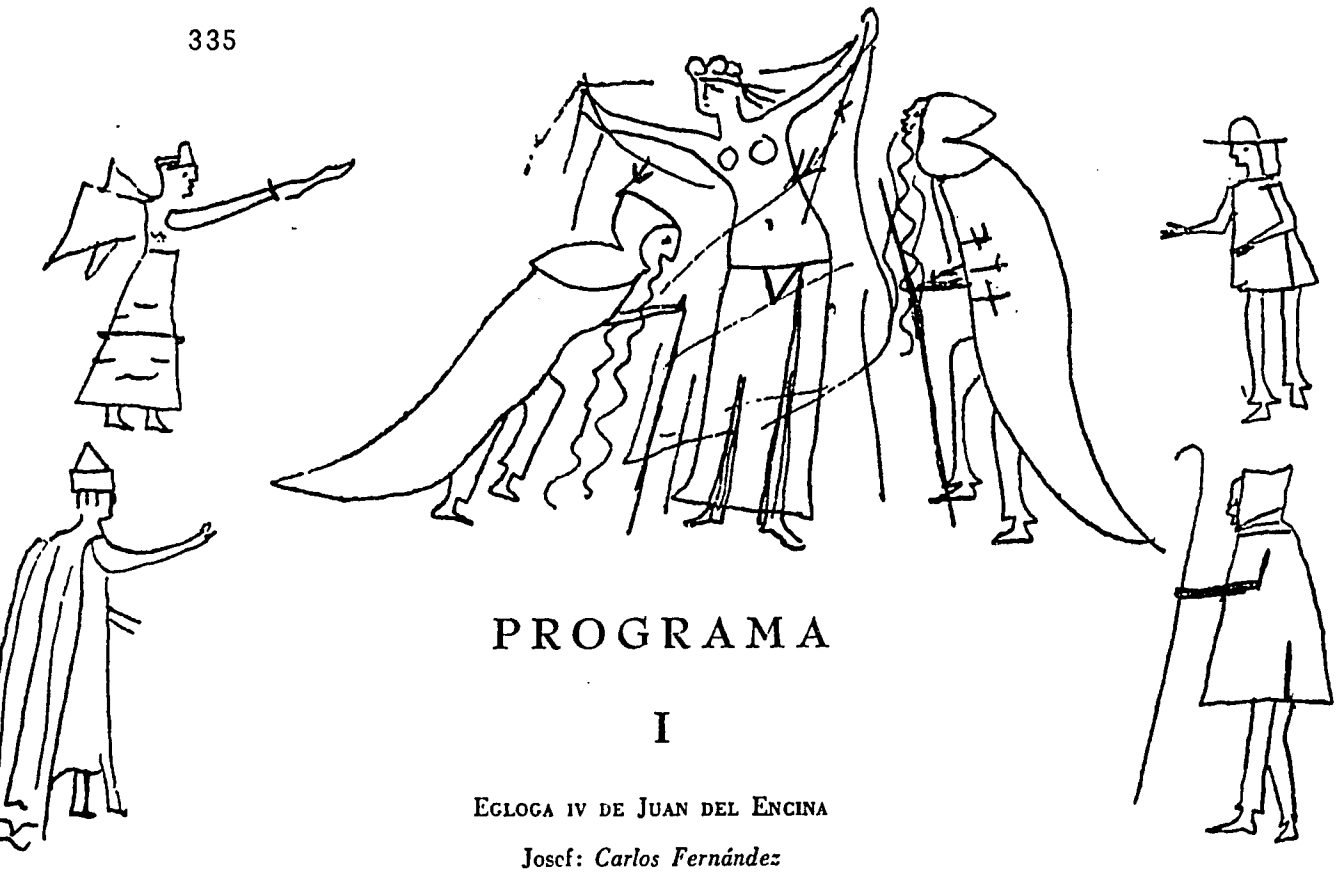
Estas razones explican con claridad la composición de nuestro programa inicial. A Juan del Encina corresponde la gloria de ser el fundador conocido del teatro español. Escogimos adrede la más primitiva y dura de sus *Eglogas*, la más inmóvil y saturada de espíritu religioso, aquella en que los personajes apenas entablan un conato de diálogo, y se concretan a declamar sus arias octosilábicas Escrita hace más de cuatrocientos cincuenta años, es un ejemplo magnífico de poderío verbal que llega hasta nosotros lleno de gracia y lozanía. Fuímos injustos en cierto modo con del Encina, porque la corriente profana que él inauguró llega a su perfección en Diego Sánchez de Badajoz. *La farsa de Santa Susaña,* escrita unos cincuenta años después, es ya "teatro" en el pleno y auténtico sentido de la palabra. Concebida como un apólogo de la virtud, se enriquece con la agudeza y la sabiduría del espíritu popular, que invade los diálogos en una amplia y saludable corriente. El *"Telón de Bodas" del Peribáñez* recoge, en una estampa vertical, uno de los pasajes más ilustres de la lengua dramática de Lope.

Del tesoro musical de la España clásica, tan valioso como desconocido, Antonio Alatorre y su grupo de cantantes han seleccionado un grupo de composiciones que pretenden despertar el amor del público hacia un legado artísticó que también nos corresponde. Debemos señalar con orgullo la circunstancia de "los Alatorre" no son cantantes profesionales, sino que se ligan estrechamente a nosotros por su condición de aficionados devotos, de fieles ejercitantes de un arte consumado y perfecto, que por primera vez trasciende el círculo de la amistad y la familia.

Para las piezas que forman el *Teatro Breve* de García Lorca, hemos seguido el criterio que indudablemente presidió la composición de esas punzantes y poéticas "improvisaciones". Nos hemos limitado, en rigor, a improvisarlas también sobre la escena, afrontando con limpieza el problema de su enigmática desnudez, de su rica y compleja fuerza latente, que combina sin violencia procedimientos diversos, que van de Lope de Rueda a Franz Kafka.

Sinceramente, señoras y señores, creemos que es posible ponernos de acuerdo, si ustedes renuncian también a su habitual condición de expertos y ambiciosos espectadores, y entran al juego con suficiente candor. Juntos, podremos recobrar el perdido espíritu del *teatro,* que no es, en fin de cuentas, más que antigua, recóndita y divertida poesía: poesía en voz alta.

JUAN JOSÉ ARREOLA.



PROGRAMA

I

Egloga iv de Juan del Encina

Josef: *Carlos Fernández*
Madalena: *Rosenda Monteros*
Lucas: *Juan José Arreola*
Cleofás: *Juan José Gurrola*
Angel: *Tara Parra*

Farsa de la Casta Susaña de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz

Angel: *Tara Parra*
Pastor: *Juan José Gurrola*
Hortolano: *Enrique Stopen*
Viejo primero: *Carlos Fernández*
Viejo segundo: *Juan José Arreola*
Susaña: *Nancy Cárdenas*
Daniel: *Rosenda Monteros*

Escena de la Boda de Peribáñez de Lope de Vega

Inés: *Tara Parra*
Constanza: *Rosenda Monteros*
Casilda: *Nancy Cárdenas*
Cura: *Juan José Arreola*
Peribañez: *Carlos Fernández*
Músicos: *Juan José Gurrola y Enrique Stopen*

Intermedio

II

CANCIONES ESPAÑOLAS DEL RENACIMIENTO

Introducción de León Felipe
Juan José Arreola
(lector)

Margit Frenk Alatorre
(Soprano)

Yolanda Iris Alatorre
(contralto)

Enrique Alatorre
(bajo)

Antonio Alatorre
(tenor y director)

Ma. Cristina Flores Alatorre
(arpista)

Intermedio

III

La Doncella, El Marinero y El Estudiante de
Federico García Lorca

Vieja: *Nancy Cárdenas*
Doncella: *Tara Parra*
La Madre: *Rosenda Monteros*
Marinero: *Enrique Stopen*
Estudiante: *Carlos Fernández*
Acotaciones: *Juan José Arreola*

El Paseo de Buster Keaton de Federico
García Lorca

Buster Keaton: *Carlos Fernández*
El Gallo y el Buho: *Juan José Gurrola*
Un Negro: *Enrique Stopen*
Una joven: *Tara Parra*
Una Americana: *Nancy Cárdenas*
Acotaciones: *Juan José Arreola*

Quimera de Federico García Lorca

Enrique: *Carlos Fernández*
Viejo: *Juan José Arreola*
Mujer: *Rosenda Monteros*
Niña: *Tara Parra*
Voces: *Nacy Cárdenas, Juan José Gurrola y*
Enrique Stopen.

Escena del Niño y El Gato de Así que Pasen Cinco
Años de Federico García Lorca

Gato: *Rosenda Monteros*
Niño: *Juan José Gurrola*

CANCIONES ESPAÑOLAS
del
RENACIMIENTO

No *pueden dormir mis ojos*
no pueden dormir.
y soñaba, yo, mi madre,
dos horas antes del día,
que me florecía la rosa,
el pino so el agua frida
No pueden dormir.
Y soñaba yo, mi madre,
dos horas antes del alba,
que me florecía la rosa,
el pino so el agua clara,
no pueden dormir.

Ay, *que non era,*
mas ay, que non hay
quien de mi pena se duela
Madre, la mi madre,
el mi lindo amigo,
moricos de allende
lo llevan cativo,
cadenas de oro,
candado morisco,
Ay, que non era...

Las *mis penas, madre,*
de amores son.
Salid, mi señora,
de so el naranjale,
que sois tan hermosa,
quemarvos ha el aire
(de amores son.)

Si *me llaman, a mí llaman,*
que cuido que me llaman a mí.
En aquella sierra erguida
(cuido que me llaman a mí),
llaman a la más garrida
(que cuido que me llaman a mí).

No *puedo apartame*
de los amores, madre
María y Rodrigo
arman un castillo.
(de los amores, madre)



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

SEGUNDO PROGRAMA
(estreno el 17 de julio)

LA HIJA DE RAPPACCINI

pieza en un acto de

OCTAVIO PAZ

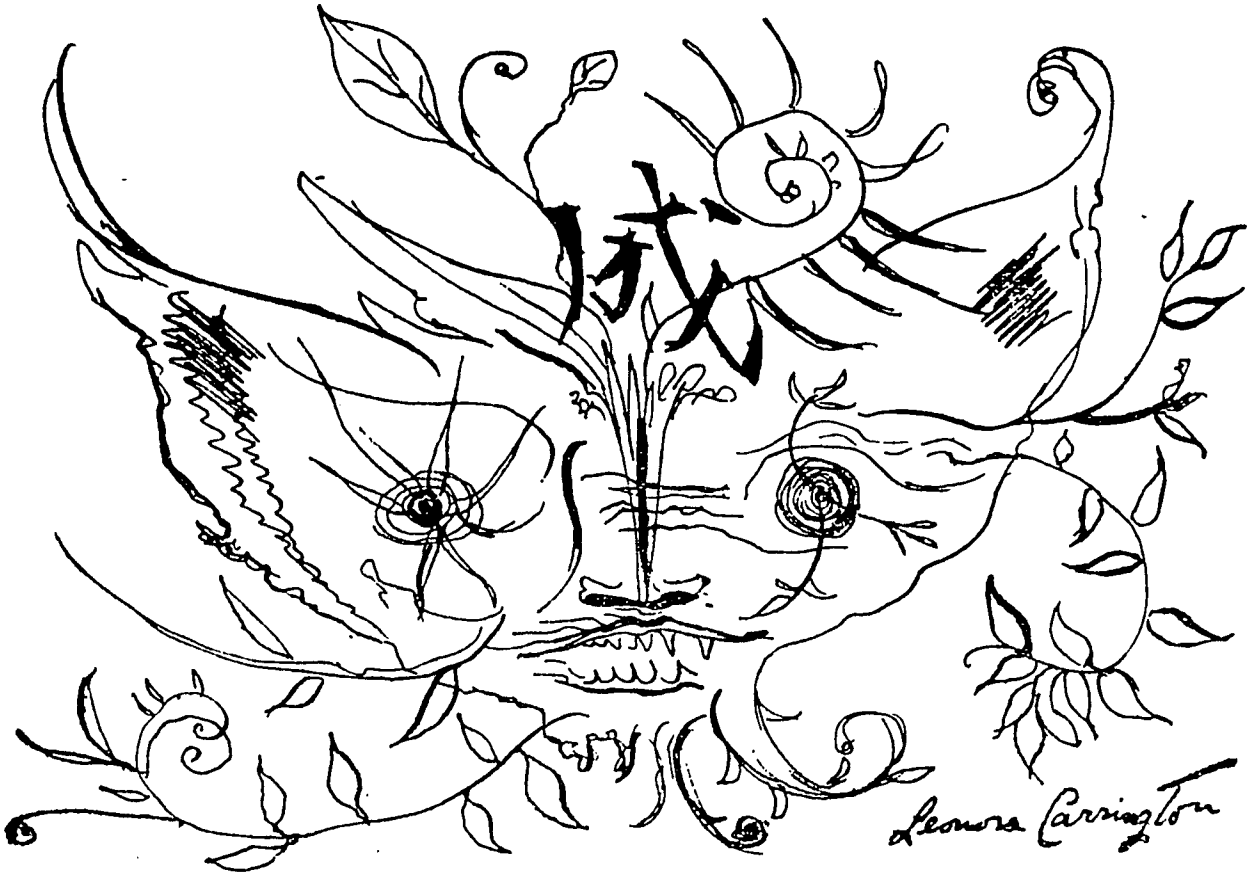
escenografía y vestuario:

LEONORA CARRINGTON

dirección:

HECTOR MENDOZA

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO
Dirección General de Difusión Cultural
Director: *Jaime García Terrés*



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO

LA DIRECCION GENERAL DE DIFUSION CULTURAL

presenta en el

TEATRO DEL CABALLITO

el segundo programa de

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

●

Director de escena . . . . . Héctor Mendoza

Director literario . . . . . Octavio Paz

Escenografía y vestuario . . . Leonora Carrington y Juan Soriano

Música incidental . . . . . Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras

Dibujos del programa . . . . . Leonora Carrington y Juan Soriano

Efectos especiales de sonido . . . . Antonio Castillo Ledón

Asistente de dirección . . . . . José Luis Ibáñez

Iluminaciones . . . . . Raúl Cerezo

Maquillaje . . . . . María Antonieta Horcacitas

Tramoyista . . . . . José Quiñones

Traspunte . . . . . Elías Morales V.

Realización del vestuario . . . . . Edie M. de Xavier

LAS OBRAS

El segundo programa de *Poesía en Voz Alta* completa y afirma la intención del primero. El teatro vuelve a ser recreo, misterio, limpia diversión, conato de libertad. No pretenden estos programas arrogarse una originalidad revolucionaria. Logran, simplemente, colocarnos de pie sobre el punto de partida —la original frescura— de todo gran teatro, radicada en la palabra, núcleo vivo de la imaginación y el deseo, la memoria y la previsión. Abren, de esta manera, una brecha contra el conformismo y la vulgaridad. Restauran y proclaman la esencia de la creación artística: la realidad no es algo dado; es menester descubrirla y recrearla en la imaginación. Y la realidad es total: sueño y vigilia, vida y muerte, la mitad visible y la mitad oculta la componen.

Las piezas de esta noche lo dicen claramente. Su tema común es el amor, cuatro rostros diversos del amor alcanzados por la palabra imaginativa. En *Los apartes* de Jean Tardieu, su llama mínima brilla candorosa, tierna y eterna, en medio de una parodia de las frases hechas del romanticismo. En *El canario* de Georges Neveux, se vuelve doloroso: la naturaleza lo impide, levanta una ciega barrera entre los amantes. En *El salón del automóvil* de Eugène Ionesco, un alegre amor se abre paso a través de la maleza de la mecánica y los lemas publicitarios, los reduce al absurdo y se salva en el humor. Y en *La hija de Rappaccini* de Octavio Paz, el amor se enfrenta a sí mismo, a su otra cara. Se establece la lucha entre las exigencias del amor total, al rojo vivo, y las del amor cotidiano; entre el amor que trasciende al mundo y se basta a sí, y el amor que debe apoyarse en el mundo, participar y alimentarse de la naturaleza, recrearse en lo finito.

El teatro breve de Tardieu, Neveux y Ionesco viste sus temas contemporáneos (es decir, permanentes) con la antigua forma del paso, el entremés y la farsa. La de Paz —primera obra larga, y primera mexicana, que monta este grupo— acaso señale un nuevo rumbo a nuestra literatura teatral, por lo común anecdótica, al hermanar su tema y su propósito escuetamente humanos con un lenguaje de conflicto, apretadas imágenes y contraste lírico, bien enraizado en las tensiones, la conciencia y las fórmulas solares del hombre y el paisaje mexicanos.

El teatro que vamos a presenciar, producto del entusiasmo común, de la labor de equipo, sin "estrellas", producto de un auténtico taller universitario es, en verdad, teatro popular. Se funda en el gran lenguaje, y éste nunca ha sido posible sin un *pueblo* —comunidad referida a quehaceres valiosos, colectividad con dimensiones— que lo dispare, de abajo arriba, hasta las manos del espíritu creador. Estamos acostumbrados al lenguaje sórdido, metropolitano, del teatro pequeño burgués: teatro para la *masa* —para la comunidad desnuda de atributos, mera suma aritmética de sus individuos— en que la palabra es ordenada, estéril, de arriba abajo. El idioma llevado a su expresión más alta vuelve a ser el idioma original, común y comunicable. El idioma en que todos pueden reconocerse y reconocer a los demás. Esta es, ha sido y será la intención primaria del teatro. De allí su función libertadora y unificante.

Los intérpretes y animadores de este grupo universitario, al encarnar tal función desde el planeta vibrante y alhajado de las tablas, prestan, con modestia, con dedicación, un servicio nacional y humano.

CARLOS FUENTES



EL CANARIO

DE GEORGE NEVEUX

El Señor: *Héctor Godoy*
La Señora: *Rosenda Monteros*

Tara Parra
Voces: *Manola Saavedra*
Carlos Castaño

I

I

OSVALDO Y ZENAIDA
o
LOS APARTES

DE JEAN TARDIEU

Zenaida: *Tara Parra*

Osvaldo: *Carlos Castaño*

Sr. Pomméchon: *Juan José Arreola*

Traducciones de *Octavio Paz*

Escenografía y Vestuario de *Juan Soriano*

INTERMEDIO

EL SALON DEL AUTOMOVIL

DE EUGÈNE IONESCO

Señor: *Eduardo MacGregor*

Señorita: *Tara Parra*

Vendedor: *Juan José Arreola*

II

LA HIJA DE RAPPACCINI

DE OCTAVIO PAZ

El Mensajero: *María Luisa Elío*

Juan: *Carlos Fernández*

Isabel: *Ana María Hernández*

Rappaccini: *Juan José Arreola*

Beatriz: *Manola Saavedra*

Baglioni: *Eduardo MacGregor*

Escenografía y Vestuario de *Leonora Carrington*

LOS AUTORES

Amigo y colaborador de Louis Jouvet y de Jean Louis Barrault, la vida y la obra de GEORGES NEVEUX están íntimamente ligadas a la historia del teatro moderno en Francia. Poeta y dramaturgo, Neveux es autor de dramas y comedias hechas de humor y lirismo, ironía y ternura, construcciones verbales a un tiempo aéreas y rigurosas; entre sus obras destacan *Zamora*, drama premiado en un reciente festival, y *Julieta o La Llave de los Sueños*, preciosa comedia que Michel Carné ha trasladado al cine, interpretada por Gerard Phillip. Neveux también es autor de adaptaciones de obras clásicas, como *El Perro del Hortelano*, de *Lope de Vega*, presentada al público de México por la compañía Renaud-Barrault.

JEAN TARDIEU es uno de los poetas más personales de la poesía francesa contemporánea. Su preocupación por el lenguaje (directo y simple a medida que aumenta la tensión y complejidad de lo que intenta decir) lo ha llevado al teatro. Autor de piezas breves y concentradas, su *Teatro de Cámara* está "poblado de personajes insólitos en situaciones extrañas". Su arte, refinado e incisivo, no deja de tener analogías con la música: "virtuoso a la manera de Scarlatti, Tardieu es imprevisto como Eric Satie".

Entre los nuevos poetas dramáticos franceses — Schehadé, Becket, Adamov, Tardieu— destaca el escritor de origen rumano EUGENE IONESCO. Armado de un humor desconcertante y demoledor, desde que estrenó su primera obra no cesa de irritar y asombrar al público. Su teatro es "seguramente el más extraño y espontáneo que se ha representado en Francia, desde la guerra... Absurdos como nosotros, conmovedores como nosotros, sus héroes persiguen a tientas la aventura incongruente de la vida cotidiana", dice el crítico Jacques Lemarchand. Para Ionesco el teatro es la proyección de su mundo interior: "mis sueños, mis angustias, mis deseos oscuros, mis contradicciones interiores, constituyen mi materia teatral. Y como no estoy solo en el mundo, como cada uno de nosotros es, al mismo tiempo, todos los otros, mis sueños, mis deseos, mis angustias, mis obsesiones no me pertenecen: son parte de una herencia común. Y esto es lo que reúne a los hombres, crea nuestra profunda comunidad y hace universal nuestro lenguaje".

La obra de OCTAVIO PAZ había sido un largo monólogo. Pero un monólogo que tendía a desembocar en un diálogo; de ahí que no sea extraño que se interese ahora por el teatro. *La Hija de Rappaccini* es su primera aventura teatral. Basada en un cuento de *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (que, a su vez, utilizó un viejo relato, procedimiento común a todos los autores en todas las épocas) la pieza del poeta mexicano recoge algunas de las preocupaciones de su poesía: el amor y la realidad, el conflicto entre el instinto de conservación y el impulso amoroso, que es todo desprendimiento. El teatro es máscara, pero máscara de cristal: su misión no es ocultar sino hacer más transparente la condición humana.

LOS ANIMADORES

HECTOR MENDOZA, el joven director y autor teatral, nació en 1932. Su obra *Ahogados* obtuvo, en 1952, el premio "Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza" y en 1953, con *Las cosas simples*, mereció el premio de la Asociación de Críticos de Teatro para la mejor comedia del año. Tiene una pieza, aún no presentada al público, titulada *El tobogán.*

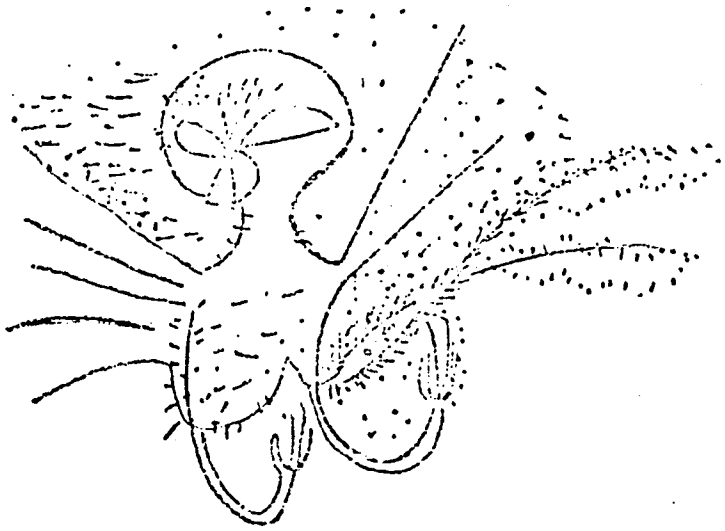
LEONORA CARRINGTON realizó la escenografía y el vestuario de *La hija de Rappaccini*. Cercana a la de Bosch, Brueghel el viejo, Grunewald y William Blake, la obra de la gran pintora inglesa ha sido muy discutida tanto en Europa como en América. De ella, dice André Breton: "Desde 1940, es la obra más cargada de *maravilloso moderno* que conozco, toda ella impregnada de luz oculta".

JUAN SORIANO es el autor del vestuario y decorado de las piezas de Neveux, Tardieu y Ionesco. Soriano ha viajado por Italia, Grecia, Francia y España, y ha cultivado todas las formas de la plástica: pintura, escultura, grabado, decoración teatral, etc. María Zambrano ha escrito: "En la obra de Juan Soriano diríase que las máscaras de su México dejan ver el rostro escondido que las habita".

JOAQUIN GUTIERREZ HERAS es el autor de la parte musical del programa. Ganó en 1950 el Concurso Nacional de Música, con su *Divertimiento para Piano y Orquesta.* Hizo estudios en París y es uno de nuestros más jóvenes compositores.

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO
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POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO

LA DIRECCION GENERAL DE DIFUSION CULTURAL

presenta en el

TEATRO-MODERNO

el tercer programa de

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

Director de escena . . . . . Héctor Mendoza
Director literario . . . . . Octavio Paz
Escenografía y vestuario . . . . . Juan Soriano
Música . . . . . Leonardo Velázquez
Asistente de director . . . . . José Luis Ibáñez
Efectos especiales de sonido . . Antonio Castillo Ledón

Realización del vestuario:
Vestidos . . . . . Cristina Vidrio, Angela Yáñez, Silvia Arellano, Sastrería Alvarez

Zapatos . . . . . Narciso
Tocados . . . . . Esteban Mayo

Realización de la escenografía y utilería . Taller Durán, Ramón Atilano, Casa del Arte

HORARIO: *Los miércoles, jueves y viernes a las 20 hrs.*
Los sábados a las 19.30 y 21.45 hrs.
Domingos y días festivos a las 17 y 20 hrs.

LOCALIDAD $ 12.00

J.L. Ibáñez 2ª Prog 12.

Fiel a sus propósitos, el grupo *Poesía en Voz Alta* vuelve ahora, en su tercer programa, a nuestros clásicos. Tradición y novedad: dos caras de una misma medalla. En efecto, un clásico es un autor que guarda intactos sus poderes de sorpresa, contagio y novedad. Un clásico es un autor joven. Asimismo, es un modelo, quiero decir, algo que nos inspira y nos alimenta; algo, también, que nos revela una parte de nosotros mismos y nos invita a realizarla en obras. Clásicos vivos y no ídolos inmóviles; poesía que tolera, y aun reclama, la interpretación y colaboración de los modernos:

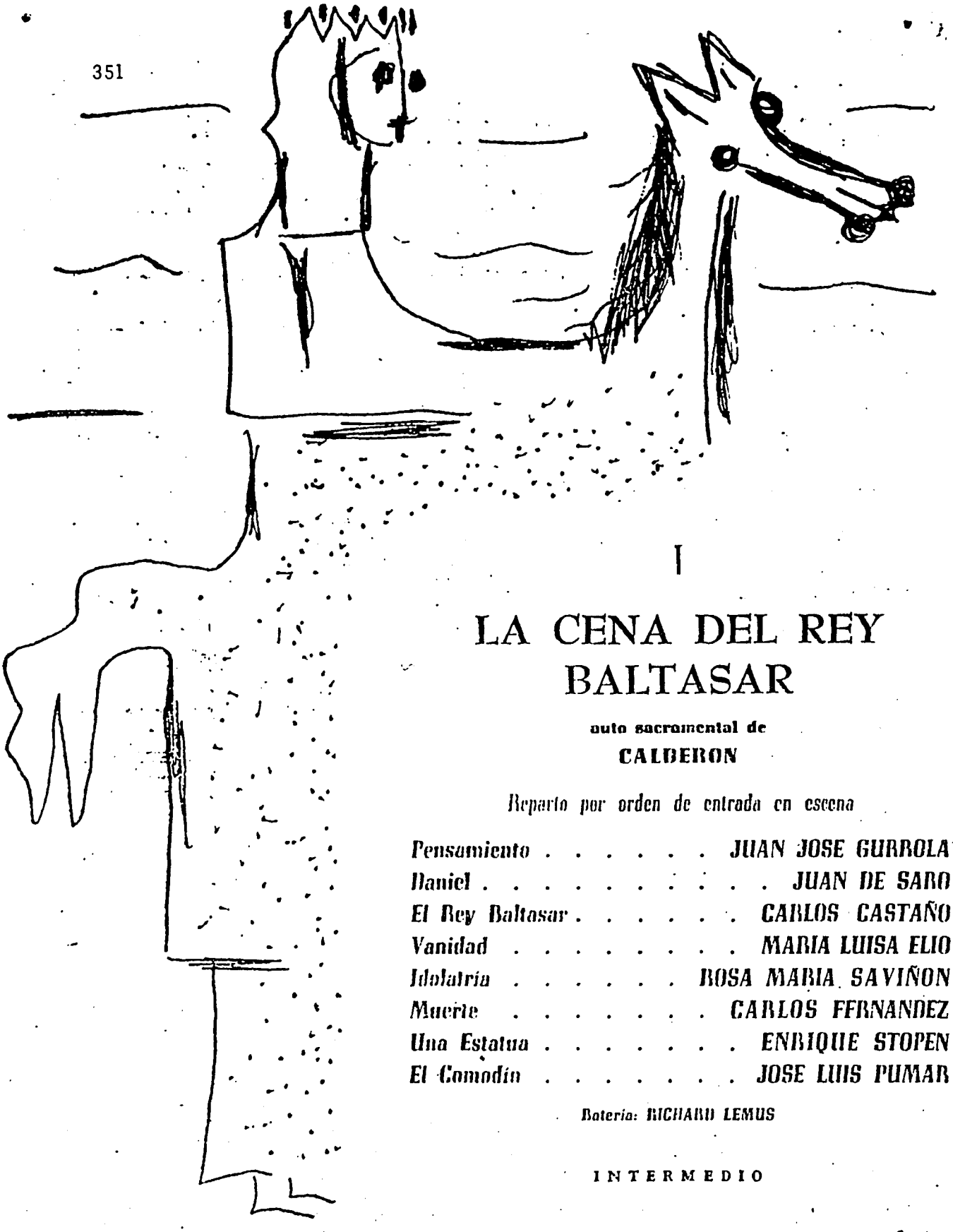
Cualquier hombre que la oyere, si bien trovar supiere
puede más y añadir y enmendar si quisiere;
ande de mano en mano a quienquier quel'pidiere,
como pella a las dueñas tómelo quien pudiere.

Cada generación busca sus clásicos. Acaso sea más exacto decir: los redescubre y los reinventa. En el primer programa, los primitivos españoles y García Lorca; hoy, Calderón y el Arcipestre de Hita. No es accidental la reunión de nombres en apariencia tan distintos. Lo mismo en el poeta del siglo XIV que en el del siglo barroco, la palabra posee tal plenitud que, fatalmente, nos lleva a repetirla en voz alta, a comunicarla y convertirla en lo que es realmente: un objeto de participación. Y esto es, ni más ni menos, el teatro: participación de actores y público en la palabra viva. Como en los misterios sagrados, el teatro es representación, participación y repartición de la palabra humana.

El auto sacramental de Calderón que presenta hoy *Poesía en Voz Alta* es una suerte de monólogo. Todo pasa en la conciencia del rey. Idolatría, Vanidad, el loco Pensamiento y la misma Muerte no son sino fragmentos de su ser, reflejos que crea y borra su alma. Más que seres de verdad son *personas*, en el sentido original de la palabra: máscaras, representaciones. Pero máscaras de nosotros mismos, máscaras que hacen corpórea la lucha invisible que nos escinde. El único personaje que no pertenece al mundo fantasmal de la conciencia es Daniel, el profeta. Daniel: la voz de Dios. Atento a su propio monólogo y al debate interminable que sostiene consigo mismo. Baltasar no escucha esa voz. Misterio de la conciencia que no alcanza a salir de sí misma, esta obra de Calderón es también el drama del amor sagrado. Desgarrado entre el amor a Dios y el amor a sí mismo y sus fantasmas, Baltasar escoge su propia nada y se precipita en ella.

Frente a la palabra racional de Calderón —cortante como un silogismo, laberíntica como una obra de ingeniería lunar— el decir directo, terrestre y sabroso de Juan Ruiz. Si el auto de Calderón es un monólogo, *El libro de buen amor* es un coro, en el que hablan, cantan, bailan, riñen, rezan, comen, ayunan, medran y se enamoran, locos del "loco amor", dueñas y zagalas, frailes y caballeros, lacayos y alcahuetas, personajes alegóricos y esperpentos. También los animales de la fábula clásica —cornejas y ratones, leones y asnos— participan en el coro; y la letra que cantan, como no podía ser menos en mundo tan loco y vivaz, es la de la moral. La palabra-espejo de Calderón aquí es palabra-cuerpo, palabra-vino, palabra-danza. Baile comunal en la plaza pública, danza de cuerpos que se enlazan y entrelazan y ríen en el abrazo. El loco amor es buen amor. Libro sabio, en el que el hombre se reconoce en su totalidad y no en un fragmento de su ser: alma y cuerpo y sangre y razón y locura. Libro del *sentido común*, que no es lo mismo que el buen juicio o la cordura. Sentido común: lo sentido por todos, lo que todos sentimos; y, también, la comunidad de los sentimientos y pensamientos humanos: amor, pena, muerte, pecado, gula, celos, dicha. *Poesía en Voz Alta* ha desprendido unas cuantas hojas de este libro admirable; y con esa falta de respeto, con ese atrevimiento que es prueba de amor auténtico y violento, Héctor Mendoza ha puesto esos poemas a bailar y cantar sobre un tablado. Pantomima, función de carpa y "music hall", farsa, circo y zarabanda, el espectáculo que presenta es el reverso de la medalla calderoniana: frente al monólogo, el coro popular; frente al lenguaje laberíntico, el lenguaje que es agua, pan y vino; frente al sacro amor, el loco amor. El hombre está hecho de todos estos elementos —y de otros más.

OCTAVIO PAZ



I

LA CENA DEL REY BALTASAR

auto sacramental de

CALDERON

Reparto por orden de entrada en escena

Pensamiento	*JUAN JOSE GURROLA*
Daniel	*JUAN DE SARO*
El Rey Baltasar	*CARLOS CASTAÑO*
Vanidad	*MARIA LUISA ELIO*
Idolatría	*ROSA MARIA SAVIÑON*
Muerte	*CARLOS FERNANDEZ*
Una Estatua	*ENRIQUE STOPEN*
El Comodín	*JOSE LUIS PUMAR*

Batería: **RICHARD LEMUS**

INTERMEDIO

II

EL BUEN AMOR

un espectáculo creado con fragmentos de la poesía de

JUAN RUIZ

Arcipreste de Hita

Selección y arreglo de
Diego de Mesa y Héctor Mendoza

REPARTO:

Tara Parra, Carlos Fernández, María Luisa Elío, Juan De Saro, Carlos Castaño, Ulalume, Enrique Stopen, Juan José Gurrola, Pina Pellicer, José Luis Pumar y Rosa María Saviñón.

ORDEN DE LOS CUADROS:

1.—Iesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum.
2.—La muger (I).
3.—De cómo segund natura los omes e las otras animalias quieren aver compañía con las fenbras.
4.—De don Ffurón, moço del arçipreste.
5.—Los Consejos.
6.—Ensienplo de quando la tierra bramava.
7.—La muger (II).
8.—De las propiedades que las dueñas chicas han.
9.—De cómo el arçipreste fué a provar la ssierra e de lo que le contesçió con la sserrana.
10.—Enssienplo de los dos perezosos, que querían cassar con una dueña.
11.—Guardarse de bever mucho vino blanco e tynto.
12.—Enxienplo del pavón e de la corneja.
13.—La muger (III).
14.—De cómo clérigos e legos e flayres e monjas e dueñas e joglares salieron a reçebir a don Amor.

ENSIENPLO DE QUANDO LA TIERRA BRAMAVA

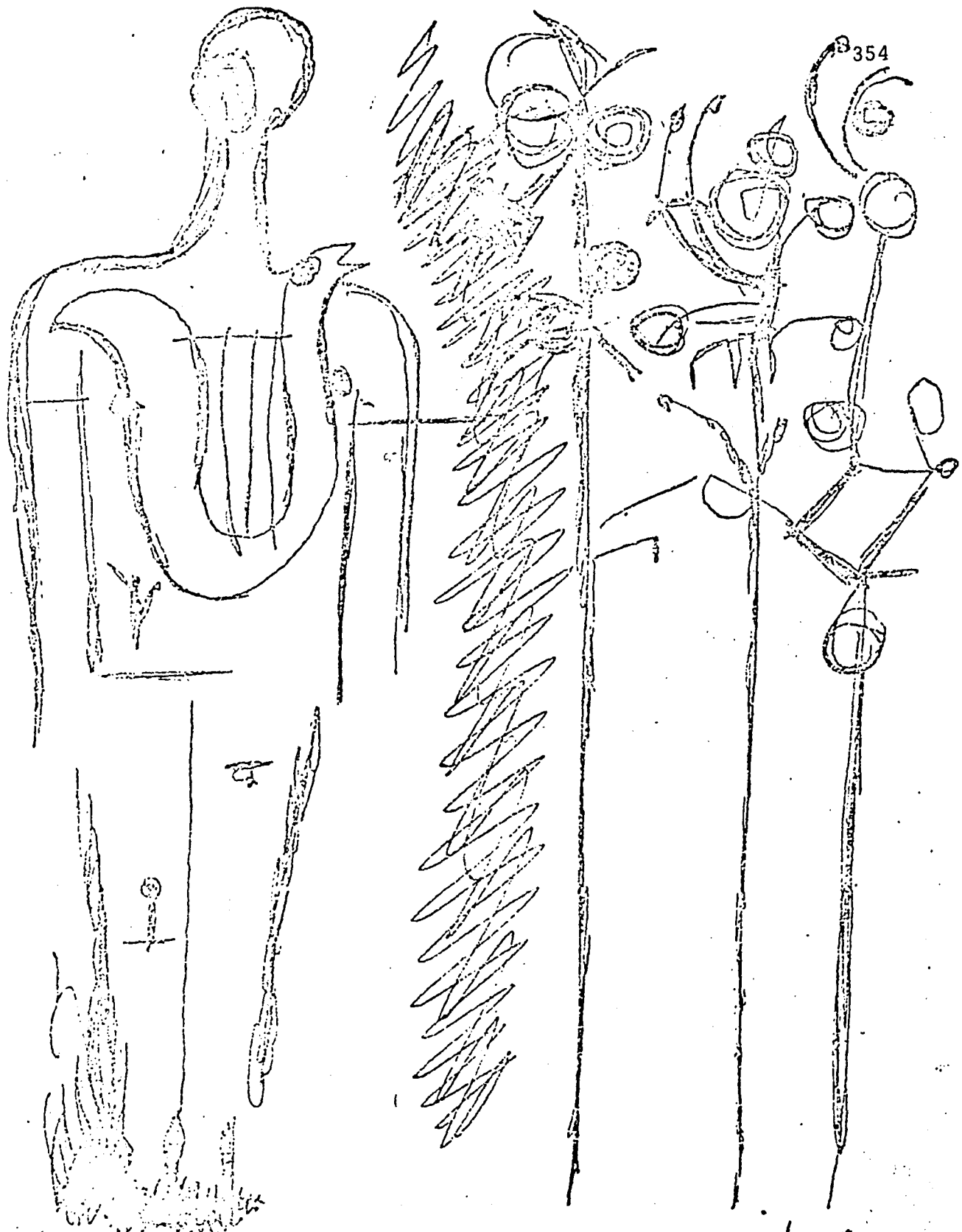
Quando quiere casar ome con dueña muy onrrada,
Promete e manda mucho; desque la a ganada,
De quanto le promete o da poco o nada:
Faze como la tierra, quando estava prenada.

Así fué que la tierra començó a bramar:
Estaba tan finchada, que queria quebrar;
A quantos lo oyan, podía mal espantar,
Como dueña en parto començos' a cuytar.

La gente, que bramidos a tan grandes oya,
Coydaban era preñada: atanto se dolia;
Penssavan que grand sierpe o bestia pariría,
Que a todo el mundo conbri' e estragaría.

Quando ella bramava, pensava de foyr,
E desque vino el día, que ovo de parir,
Parió solo un mur topo: fué escarnio de rreyr,
Ssus bramuras e espantos en burla fueron salir.

Quando quiere casar ome con dueña muy onrrada,
Promete e manda mucho; desque la a ganada,
De quanto le promete o da poco o nada:
Faze como la tierra, quando estava prenada.


8354
I. Agricola
57

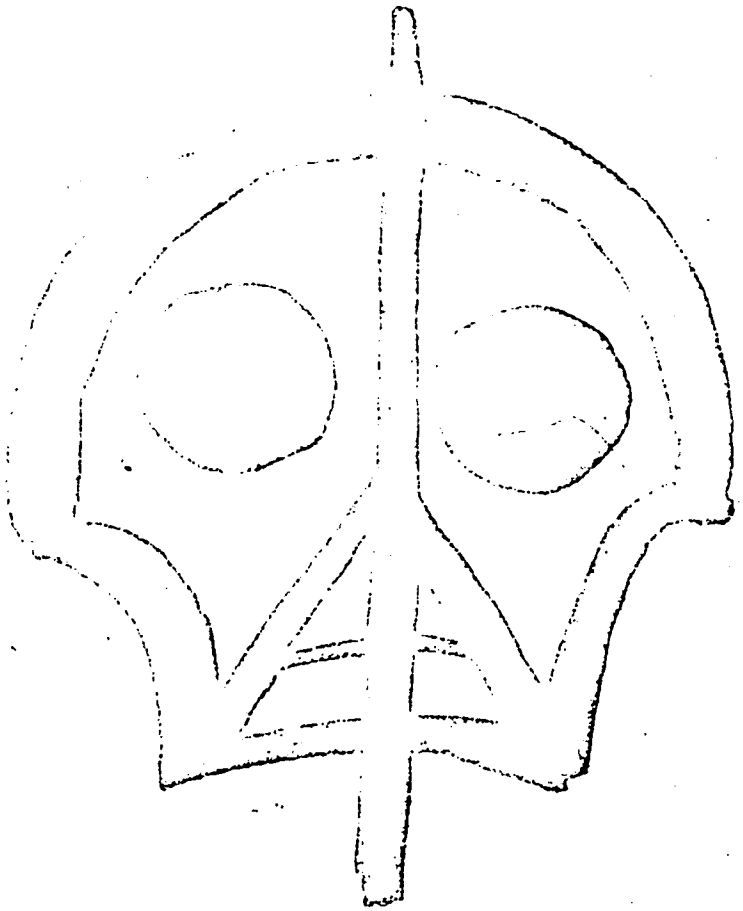
PRIMER PROGRAMA

Egloga IV de Juan del Encina
Farsa de la Casta Susaña de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz
Escena de la Boda de Peribañez de Lope de Vega
Canciones Españolas del Renacimiento
Teatro Breve de Federico García Lorca:
La Doncella, El Marinero y El Estudiante
El Paseo de Buster Keaton
Quimera
Escena del Niño y El Gato de Así que pasen Cinco Años

SEGUNDO PROGRAMA

El Canario de George Neveux
Osvaldo y Zenaida o Los Apartes de Jean Tardieu
El Salón del Automóvil de Eugene Ionesco
La Hija de Rappaccini de Octavio Paz

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO
Rector: DOCTOR NABOR CARRILLO
Secretario General: DOCTOR EFREN C. DEL POZO
DIRECCION GENERAL DE DIFUSION CULTURAL
Director: JAIME GARCIA TERRES



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

357

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

presenta su

CUARTO PROGRAMA

en el

TEATRO MODERNO

Director de escena . . . . . Héctor Mendoza
Director literario . . . . . Octavio Paz
Escenografía y vestuario . . . . . Juan Soriano
Ritmos . . . . . Richard Lemus
Asistente de director . . . . . José Luis Ibáñez
Efectos especiales de sonido . . Antonio Castillo Ledón

Realización del vestuario . . . . . Gérard, Sastrería Británica, Cristina Vidrio, Silvia Arellano, Sastrería Alvarez, Camisas Arrow

Zapatos . . . . . Claudine, Iberia, Narciso

Tocados y sombreros . . . . . Esteban Mayo
Realización de escenografía . Ramón Atilano y Casa del Arte
Maquillaje . . . . . Torcacitas y Centro Hedwig
Encargada del vestuario . . . . . Ana María Sosa

HORARIO: *Los lunes, martes, miércoles, jueves y viernes a las 21 horas. Los sábados: a las 19.15 y 21.45 horas. Los domingos: a las 17 y 20 horas.*

LOCALIDAD $ 12.00

Siguiendo el camino que se trazó en un principio, *Poesía en Voz Alta* —palabra creadora dicha para todos, conjuro ritual que produce el milagro colectivo, abriendo espacios libertadores de los que se posesionan a un tiempo oficiantes y pueblo— junta en su cuarto programa a un autor clásico con un autor novel: a Quevedo con Elena Garro.

No se pretenden hacer comparaciones ni establecer afinidades —que siempre existen— sino, simplemente, seguir dando al público, viva, la palabra que es suya y hacer entrar en el rito a los poetas jóvenes, deseosos de que no se interrumpa el milagro.

El juego escénico es limpio y es, sobre todo, éso: juego. Sólo quitando se llega a la esencia de las cosas. Y un Quevedo sin golas, sin guardainfantes, sin perillas y sin melenas, puede ser más Quevedo, y es más "polvo enamorado", que oculto en la erudita, o falseada, representación arqueológica. Además Quevedo, primer poeta madrileño, terrible moralista, satiriza a una sociedad cuyas circunstancias eran muy parecidas a las nuestras. A una sociedad que, apenas establecida, corrompían ya los mismos vicios de su formación. Madrid, durante el reinado de Felipe III, era una ciudad apenas asentada. De pocos años convertida en Corte, había visto afluir una copiosa inmigración y había crecido rápidamente, con todo lo que ésto trae consigo: especulaciones sobre terrenos y edificios, fundación de empresas, acumulación de fortunas, y ese deseo general de hacer pronto dinero. Madrid, convertida en gran ciudad, tiene sus nuevos ricos y sus buscones, su nobleza palaciega y sus hidalgos pobres, su sociedad dorada y su hampa, no muy distintas de las que hoy conocemos.

Los Bailes y el Entremés que ha escogido y combinado para su programa *Poesía en Voz Alta*, van desnudos de todo atuéndo académico que pudiera ser una barrera entre el poeta y el pueblo, a quien se trata de hacer llegar la palabra mágica. Y al decir pueblo quiero decir todos.

Las farsas de Elena Garro son un teatro esencialmente poético y satírico, un teatro, pues, elemental, puesto que poesía es lo elemental y lo demás anécdota o episodio. El mundo nostálgico de Elena Garro, el mundo que recupera con su poesía, es sobre todo el de la infancia. Encuentra la realidad en los juegos populares, en los refranes y frases hechas; se apodera de élla, la desnuda con espíritu crítico y rebelde de todos los convencionalismos que la cubren, y acierta con la vestidura noble, con la forma nueva, para dársela así a todos, a todos los que han jugado, o siguen jugando, a "doña Blanca está cubierta...", sin saber que era un juego de ilusión, a todos los que se han ido por las ramas en busca de esa libertad que sólo da la poesía.

En "El hogar sólido" el tiempo de la infancia, de sus recuerdos, es un tiempo que nunca ha sido, un tiempo puramente poético: el tiempo de la tumba. Su humor —un poco negro— libera a los personajes muertos —personas vivas— de los prejuicios que en vida les ataron, y su poesía les abre esos espacios hacia los que les empuja la nostalgia de cosas no vividas.

DIEGO DE MESA

I

ANDARSE POR LAS RAMAS

REPARTO:

Titina . . . . . Tara Parra
Don Fernando . . . . . José Luis Pumar
Polito . . . . . Enrique Stopen
Lagartito . . . . . Carlos Castaño
Señora . . . . . Rosa María Saviñón

y

LOS PILARES DE DOÑA BLANCA

REPARTO:

Doña Blanca . . . . . Tara Parra
Rubí . . . . . Carlos Castaño
Caballero 1° . . . . . Enrique Stopen
Caballero 2° . . . . . Juan Ibáñez
Caballero 3° . . . . . Juan José Gurrola
Caballero 4° . . . . . José Luis Pumar
Caballero Alazán . . . . . Carlos Fernández

Dos obras de ELENA GARRO

INTERMEDIO

II

LA VIDA AIRADA

"Los valientes y tomajonas"
"Diálogo"
"Los galeotes"
"Entremés del Caballero de la Tenaza"
"Las sonsaconas"

De Francisco de Quevedo

Selección y arreglo de Octavio Paz y Héctor Mendoza

REPARTO:

Maestro, Caballero de la Tenaza . . . . . Carlos Fernández

Hembras de la vida airada:

La Vaquería . . . . . Manola Saavedra
La Capona, Doña Anzuelo . . . . . Argentina Morales
La Pironda . . . . . Rosa María Saviñón
La Corruja . . . . . Tara Parra
La Carrasca . . . . . Ana Ofelia Murguía
Maripizca la Tamaña . . . . . Pina Pellicer

Rufianes:

Juan Redondo . . . . . Juan José Currola
Perico de Soria . . . . . Carlos Castaño
Obregón el de Granada . . . . . Juan Ibáñez
Móstoles el de Toledo . . . . . Enrique Stopen
Santurde el de Ocaña . . . . . José Luis Pumar

Batería: Richard Lemus (cortesía de "Riguz")

INTERMEDIO:

III

UN HOGAR SOLIDO

De Elena Garro

REPARTO:

Gertrudis . . . . . Argentina Morales
Clemente . . . . . Juan José Currola
Catita . . . . . Pina Pellicer
Vicente Mejía . . . . . Carlos Castaño
Mamá Jesusita . . . . . Tara Parra
Eva Extranjera . . . . . Ana Ofelia Murguía
Mani . . . . . Enrique Stopen
Lidia . . . . . Manola Saavedra
Orador . . . . . José Luis Pumar
Cortejo fúnebre . . . . . Carlos Fernández, Rosa María Saviñón, Juan Ibáñez

P A T R O C I N A D O R E S

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social.
Nacional Financiera
Altos Hornos de México
Reaseguradora Patria

Sr. Lic. Gilberto Loyo
Sra. Aurora Abascal
Sr. Gabino Alvarez
Sr. Evaristo Araiza
Sra. Inés Amor
Sr. Manuel Barbachano Ponce
Sr. Luis Barragán
Sr. Manuel Calvillo
Sr. León Davidoff y Sra.
Sr. Guillermo Dávila y Sra.
Sr. Diego de Mesa
Sr. Alfonso de Rosenzweig y Sra.
Sr. Alejandro Elegueźabal
Sr. Lic. Carlos Fuentes
Sr. Guillermo Guajardo Davis
Sr. Agustín Guevara
Sr. Lic. Licio Lagos
Sr. Roberto López
Sr. José Llano
Sr. Lic. Raúl Martínez Ostos
Sr. José Luis Martínez
Sr. Fernando Medina
Sr. Héctor Mendoza
Sr. Alberto Misrachi
Sr. Lic. Raúl Noriega
Sr. Alfonso Noriega Jr.
Sra. Luisa Palomino de Guie
Sr. Octavio Paz
Sr. Francisco Pelaez y Sra.
Sr. Melchor Perusquía
Sr. Carlos Prieto
Sr. Roberto Rivera
Sr. Juan Sánchez Navarro
Arq. Enrique del Moral y Sra.
Sra. Concepción de la Serna de García Ponce
Sr. Juan Soriano
Sr. Antonio Souza
Sr. Raúl Candiani
Sr. Eduardo Villaseñor
Sr. Lic. Adolfo Zamora

Poesía en Voz Alta, A.C. agradece públicamente a los patrocinadores su ayuda. Asimismo desea señalar que la realización de este Cuarto Programa habría sido imposible sin el interés entusiasmo y generosidad de muchos amigos — su número nos impide desgraciadamente citar sus nombres — que han colaborado con nosotros como socios contribuyentes o de otras formas.

PRIMER PROGRAMA

Egloga IV de Juan del Encina.
Farsa de la Casta Susaña, de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz.
Escena de la Boda de Peribáñez, de Lope de Vega.
Canciones Españolas del Renacimiento.

Teatro Breve, de Federico García Lorca:

La Doncella, el Marinero y el Estudiante.
El Paseo de Buster Keaton.
Quimera.
Escena del Niño y el Gato, de "Así que Pasen Cinco Años".

SEGUNDO PROGRAMA

El Canario, de George Neveux.
Osvaldo y Zenaida o Los Apartes, de Jean Tardieu.
El Salón del Automóvil, de Eugène Ionesco.
La Hija de Rapaccini, de Octavio Paz.

TERCER PROGRAMA

La Cena del Rey Baltasar, auto sacramental de Calderón de la Barca.
El Buen Amor, un espectáculo creado con fragmentos de la poesía de Juan Ruíz, Arcipreste de Hita.



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA



JORNADAS DE ARTE RELIGIOSO

presentan el

QUINTO PROGRAMA de

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

en el Escenario abierto de la U. I. A.

(Palmas No 50 Sn. Angel - Inn)

ASESINATO EN LA CATEDRAL

de T. S. Eliot

Traducción de: Jorge Hernández Campos
Director de escena: José Luis Ibáñez.
Director Literario: Octavio Paz
Vestuario y escenografía : Juan Soriano.
Asistente del Director : Víctor Anteo.
Coordinación : Jorge Ibargüengoitia.

LOCALIDAD $ 12.00

Del 22 al 31 de Octubre diariamente a las 8.30 p. m.

REPARTO

Coro de mujeres de Canterbury:

Socorro Avelar
Pina Pellicer
Argentina Morales
Magda Vizcaíno
Ketty Valdés
Lilia Aragón
Yolanda Alcántara
Ana Ofelia Murguía

1er. Sacerdote: José Carlos Ruiz
2o. Sacerdote: José Luis Pumar.
3er. Sacerdote: Enrique Stopen.

Tomás Becket,
Arzobispo de Canterbury: Raúl Dantés

Mensajero : Antonio Alcalá.

1er. Tentador
3er. Caballero : Agustín Balvanera

2o. Tentador
2o. Caballero : Juan José Gurrola.

3er. Tentador
1er. Caballero : Antonio Medellín

4o. Tentador
4o. Caballero : Carlos Fernández.

Cortesía de Pinturas PITTSBURGH DE MEXICO, S. A.

ASESINATO EN LA CATEDRAL.

T. S. Eliot.

Eliot, el gran dramaturgo contemporáneo anglonorteamericano, cuyos escritos, un tanto elevados, lo han encerrado con frecuencia dentro de círculos de alta cultura, entró en la publicidad popular al recibir el Premio Nóbel por su obra literaria en 1948.

Eliot pertenece a un humanismo moderno que a un tiempo vive de un hondo enraizamiento en la tierra fecunda de las antiguas tradiciones de Occidente y de una franca y abierta presencia en la inestabilidad de la vida moderna.

De esta situación humanística, al mismo tiempo tradicional y libre ha brotado una obra que perdurará en la Literatura mundial.

Quizá su Obra más elocuente o incisiva es "El Asesinato en la Catedral".

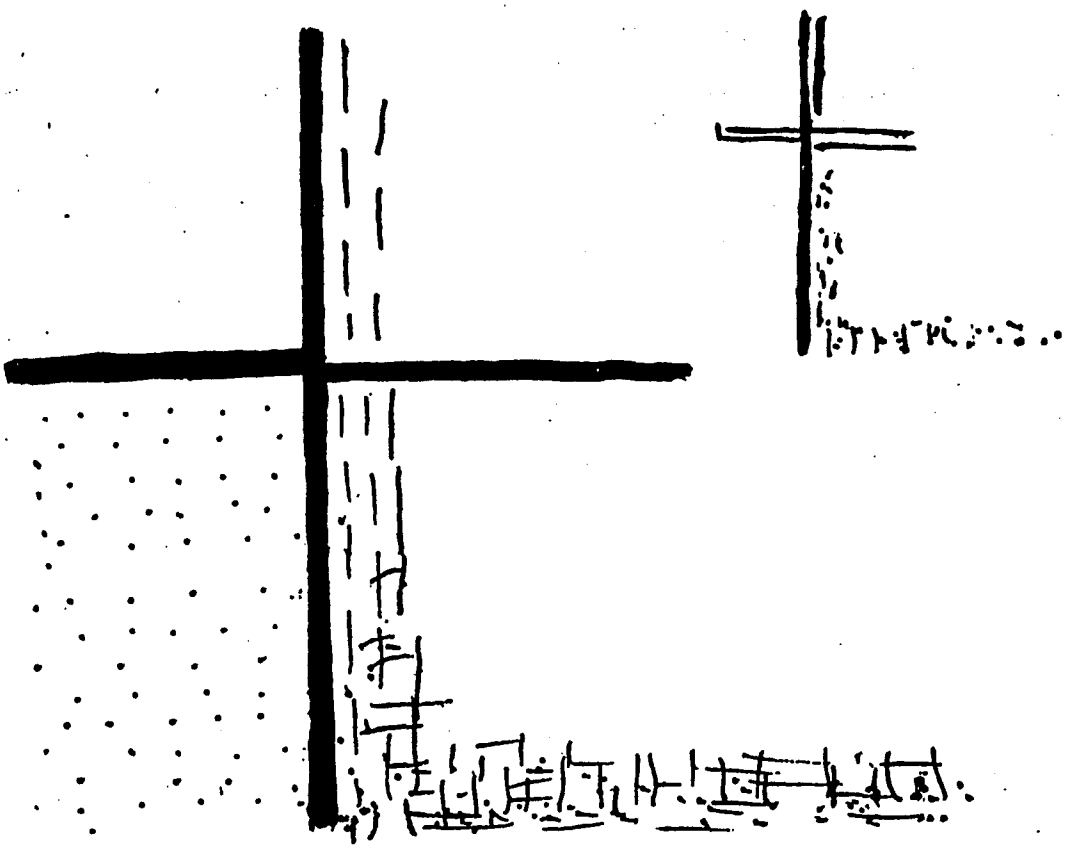
El protagonista es Santo Tomás Becket, antiguo Canciller de Enrique II de Inglaterra y luego Arzobispo de Canterbury. Tomás Becket era hijo de un Normando colonizador de la Isla y de madre Sarracena, jurista, gobernante, gran administrador. Su más profunda vocación fué la defensa de la libertad del espíritu.

El 29 de diciembre de 1170, a distancia de 45 años de la Carta Magna de Inglaterra, su sangre bañó las piedras antiguas de la Catedral de Canterbury, de la que era Arzobispo Primado.

La honda experiencia humana, política y religiosa, que vivió la cristiandad al saber la nueva del asesinato del Arzobispo de Canterbury, es proyectado por Eliot sobre el panorama de la conciencia contemporánea. El drama culmina en un examen de conciencia en que los cuatro Caballeros asesinos del Arzobispo nos impelen rudamente a sondear dentro de la propia conciencia nuestra verdadera actitud ante la libertad. Cualquier romanticismo floreado, retórica estruendosa, o demagogia hipócrita quedan sutilmente patentes ante el cinismo implacable de estos personajes en los que hablamos un poco nosotros mismos.

El Coro de las mujeres de Canterbury, manejado con refinamientos técnicos que recuerdan el teatro Griego, más que un personaje, es una atmósfera con que el sufrimiento anónimo del pueblo envuelve el rojo surtidor de sangre del Arzobispo. Sin halo de héroes, sin épica de personaje legendario, sin aureola de santos, allí confluyen con inhumana inercia las injusticias, las violencias y los fraudes. Por el coro, que es el pueblo vivo, pasa lo mejor y lo peor que el hombre lleva dentro de sí. El Pueblo de Canterbury no está unido a su Arzobispo por religiosidad ciega ni por lealtad feudal ni por devoción jerárquica, sino por el parentesco familiar y profundo del sufrimiento injusto.

La tragedia de Eliot no es una tragedia inglesa ni una tragedia medioeval; quizá pueda llamarse estrictamente una tragedia cristiana, aquella en que los personajes, la trama, en una palabra, el fragmento de vida, alcanza dimensiones humanas universales, en que las ideas cristianas vienen a hacerse patentes en la vida de las edades por todos los rumbos de la tierra. La tentación, la libertad, la muerte, iluminados por una idea de corredención con Cristo de la Humanidad centaurada. La chispa relampagueante que las manos de Dios sacan del pecado y del mal para iluminar la historia viva, las cuatro estaciones, la jornada diaria del corazón del hombre sobre la tierra, con un rayo providencial de certidumbre en un destino de buenaventuranza.



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

presenta su

QUINTO PROGRAMA

con

Asesinato en la Catedral

de T. S. ELIOT

en la

CAPILLA ABIERTA DE LA CATEDRAL DE CUERNAVACA

Sábado 16 de noviembre a las 18.00 y 20.30 horas

Traducción de . . . . . Jorge Hernández Campos
Director de escena . . . . . José Luis Ibáñez
Director Literario . . . . . Octavio Paz
Escenografía y vestuario . . . . . Juan Soriano
Asistente del Director . . . . . Víctor Anteo
Coordinación . . . . . Jorge Ibargüengoitia

Realización del vestuario . . . . . { Cristina Vidrio / Ma. Luisa Carmona
Tocados y sombreros . . . . . Esteban Mayo
Realización de escenografía . . . . . Ramón Atilano
Encargada del vestuario . . . . . Ana María Sosa
Utilería . . . . . Durán
Zapatos . . . . . Narciso

LOCALIDAD $12.00

REPARTO

Coro de mujeres de Canterbury:

Socorro Avelar
Pina Pellicer
Argentina Morales
Magda Vizcaíno
Ketty Valdés
Lilia Aragón
Yolanda Alcántara
Ana Ofelia Murguía

1er. Sacerdote: José Carlos Ruiz.
2o. Sacerdote: José Luis Pumar.
3er. Sacerdote: Enrique Stopen.

Tomás Becket,
Arzobispo de Canterbury: Raúl Dantés

Mensajero: Antonio Alcalá.

1er. Tentador
: Agustín Balvanera
3er. Caballero

2o. Tentador
: Juan José Gurrola.
2o. Caballero

3er. Tentador
: Antonio Medellín
1er. Caballero

4o. Tentador
: Carlos Fernández.
4o. Caballero

Antes de cumplir año y medio de vida —contra viento y marea, contra el silencio de estos y el griterío obsceno de aquellos, contra la indiferencia, la cobardía, la tibieza, la deserción, contra la estupidez— *Poesía en Voz Alta* lleva al tablado su quinto programa. Los enterradores de profesión pueden guardarse sus frases de condolencia: los únicos muertos son ellos.

En nuestro tercer programa nos atrevimos con un auto sacramental de Calderón: *La Cena del Rey Baltasar*. No quedamos satisfechos con lo que hicimos. Era necesario intentar de nuevo la experiencia. Así, no es casual la elección de *Asesinato en la Catedral*. En esta obra, como en el auto de Calderón, el verdadero drama —según lo advierte Becket en uno de los mejores momentos de la pieza no es tanto el del mártir frente a sus verdugos como el de la conciencia a solas consigo misma. La tentación más poderosa no es la del placer, el poder o la gloria sino la fascinación que ejerce sobre nosotros nuestra propia conciencia, la imagen fantasmal de nuestro yo ávido. O como dice Quevedo:

Las aguas del abismo
donde me enamoraba de mí mismo...

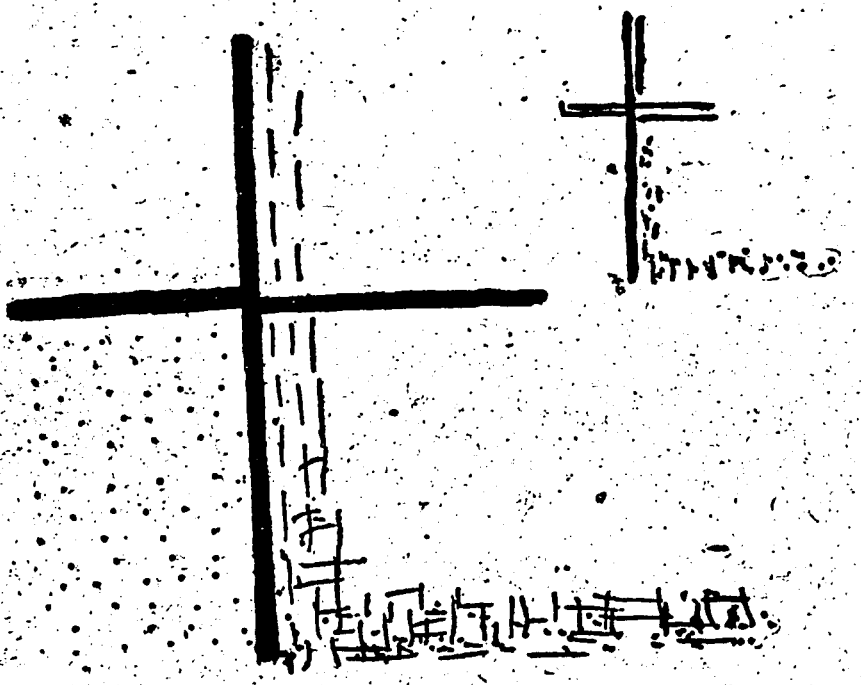
Fascinación de la nada. La soberbia es nihilismo. Tomás sabe que sólo se salva el que se olvida de sí, el que se entrega y se trasciende para luego transfigurarse. Desde este punto de vista la obra de Eliot (aunque tenga la forma externa de una tragedia) es un auto sacramental moderno. O sea: una obra teatral cuyo único personaje es la conciencia sin más interlocutores que la nada y la gracia. En esta atmósfera tensa la historia humana propiamente dicha no tiene sitio y de ahí que los discursos realistas de los asesinos nos parezcan extrañamente irreales. Y lo son. Pues el drama no tiene por tema la historia de Inglaterra, ni la disputa entre el poder temporal y el espiritual o el conflicto entre el hombre sediento de absoluto frente a una utilitaria "razón histórica" (relativa pero todopoderosa y homicida en su relativismo). El viento que arrastra a Becket al martirio no es el viento de la historia.

Hace poco Reyes nos recordaba aquella definición de la tragedia: "una obra en la que todos tienen razón". En una tragedia política como *La muerte de Dantón*, por ejemplo, el conflicto brota precisamente de esta aparente paradoja: todos los personajes encarnan una visión distinta de la historia, cada una igualmente válida y poderosa: todos tienen razón. Una razón relativa, pero que se vuelve absoluta al proyectarse en un mundo por esencia relativo como el de la política. Todos hablan el mismo lenguaje, aunque sostengan actitudes contrarias. *Asesinato en la Catedral* no es una tragedia política; los caballeros asesinos no hablan el lenguaje de Becket y por eso el poeta dramático se sirve más bien del monólogo y el coro que del diálogo. No hay nada común entre Becket, poseído por la gracia, y sus asesinos, diestros en la dialéctica, la retórica y el derecho. Son dos mundos que no se tocan nunca.

Dentro del naciente *estilo* de *Poesía en Voz Alta* (un estilo nunca es la aplicación de una fórmula sino un espíritu que busca su forma) José Luis Ibáñez, el joven director de escena, representa lo que acaso no sea exagerado llamar la *gravedad de la palabra*, por oposición a la manera de Héctor Mendoza, que es su vuelo. No es extraño, por tanto, que haya elegido una obra como *Asesinato en la Catedral*. Desde el principio nos propusinos jugar con fuego.

Farsas, juegos de escarnio, danza de las palabras y salto mortal de las imágenes, auto sacramental y tragedia moderna, todo vale en el teatro a condición de que arda: el clásico y el primitivo, el autor célebre y el poeta desconocido. Fuego: juego. El teatro es juego; juego de espejos, conciencias que se reflejan, se combaten, se niegan o disuelven en un abrazo de luz. Pues lo que se pierde o se gana en este juego es la propia conciencia. El teatro es fuego. Y lo que arde y se quema y resplandece o se vuelve ceniza es también la conciencia. La conciencia de todos, que es la de cada uno. El teatro es participación lúcida, comunión de conciencias, no dispersión ni confusión del espíritu en una emoción animal. Participación es lucidez. Acudimos al juicio de vuestra razón, no a la complicidad de vuestros instintos. Somos "solitarios solidarios".

OCTAVIO PAZ



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

TEATRO SANTA FE

ASESINATO EN LA CATEDRAL

de T. S. ELIOT

Jueves 5 de Marzo a las 20:00 horas

Traducción de ..... Jorge Hernández Campos

Director de escena ..... José Luis Ibáñez

Director literario ..... Octavio Paz

Vestuario y escenografía ..... Juan Soriano

Tocados y sombreros ..... Esteban Mayo

Maquillaje especial ..... Centro de Belleza "Beauté"

Realización de vestuario ..... Cristina Vidrio
Ma. Luisa Carmona

Realización de escenografía ..... Ramón Atilano

Utilería ..... Durán

Zapatos ..... Narciso

Prensa y Publicidad ..... Nancy Cárdenas

REPARTO

Coro de Mujeres de Canterbury:

Socorro Avelar
Alicia Quintos
Argentina Morales
Magda Vizcaíno
Ketty Valdés
Nancy Cárdenas
Yolanda Alcántara
Emilia Carranza

1er. Sacerdote: José Carlos Ruiz
2o. Sacerdote: Héctor Ortega
3er. Sacerdote: Luis Duval
Mensajero: Antonio Alcalá
Tomás Becket,
Arzobispo de Canterbury: Raúl Dantés

1er. Tentador
3er. Caballero: Agustín Balvanera

2o. Tentador
2o. Caballero: Enrique Stopen

3er. Tentador
1er. Caballero: Antonio Medellín

4o. Tentador
4o. Caballero: Juan José Gurrola

En Inglaterra el año de 1164. Tomás Becket, arzobispo de Canterbury se negó a someter el poder espiritual de su Iglesia a la voluntad de Enrique II de Inglaterra, y fue acusado por éste de traidor ante la corte y los obispos reunidos para emitir el juicio definitivo que absolviese o condenase al arzobispo.

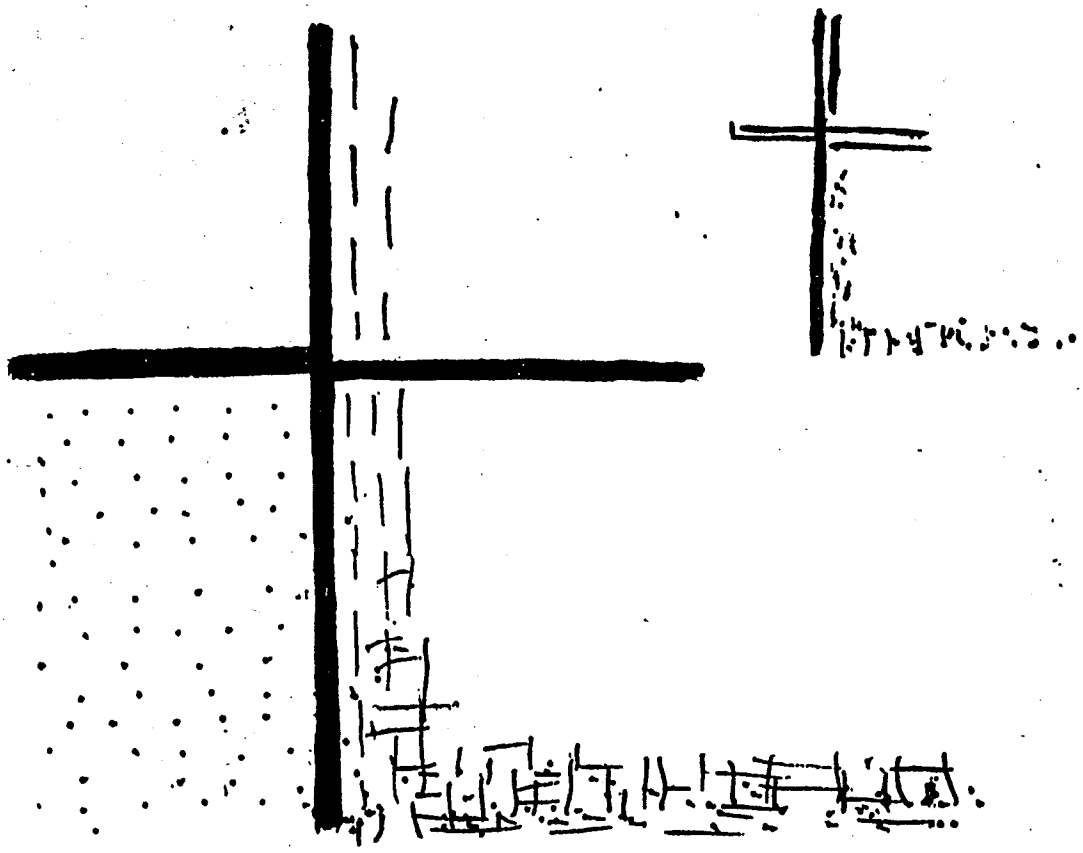
Becket, reusando escuchar el veredicto, dejó la corte y viajó o Francia desde donde apeló ante el Papa en defensa propia. Siete años después, logrado su propósito y el favor del Papa (al finalizar el año de 1170) Tomás Becket volvió a Canterbury donde por orden del Rey fue asesinado al pie del altar de su catedral.

T. S. Eliot escribió *Asesinato en la Catedral* en el año de 1935, inspirándose en el martirio de Tomás Becket, pero la obra no es un registro minucioso de sucesos históricos. Lo que al autor le interesó de Becket no fue "tanto el drama del mártir frente a sus verdugos, como el de la conciencia a solas consigo misma".

En efecto, el personaje que ustedes verán aparecer es un hombre "que vuelve a su casa previendo que será asesinado", que medita sobre las posibilidades de salvarse, que duda de los motivos que pueden llevarle al martirio y que, finalmente, al experimentar la revelación de que su voluntad es instrumento de la voluntad divina, se entrega y es asesinado.

Una vez que hemos conocido íntegramente el drama interior del arzobispo, el autor nos presenta el mismo problema pero visto desde el exterior, es decir, con los ojos de los asesinos, que enjuician públicamente a su víctima.

T. S. Eliot, poeta, ensayista y dramaturgo, nació en San Luis, Missouri, en 1888. En 1915 viajó a Inglaterra, en donde ha permanecido desde entonces. En el año de 1948, recibió el Premio Nóbel.



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

377

TEATRO FABREGAS

Asesinato en la Catedral

de T. S. ELIOT

LUNES 16 y 23 DE FEBRERO, 2 y 9 DE MARZO

a las 19.15 y 21.45 horas

Traducción de . . . . . Jorge Hernández Campos

Director de escena . . . . . José Luis Ibáñez

Director literario . . . . . Octavio Paz

Vestuario y escenografía . . . . . Juan Soriano

Tocados y sombreros . . . . . Esteban Mayo

Maquillaje especial . . . . . Centro de Belleza "Baute"

Realización de vestuario . . . . . Cristina Vidrio
Ma. Luisa Carmona

Realización de escenografía . . . . . Ramón Atilano

Utilería . . . . . Durán

Zapatos . . . . . Narciso

Prensa y Publicidad . . . . . Nancy Cárdenas

PRECIOS

Luneta: $12.00 **Anfiteatro: $6.00**

REPARTO

Coro de mujeres de Canterbury:

Socorro Avelar
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1er. Tentador / *3er. Caballero*: Agustín Balvanera

2o. Tentador / *2o. Caballero*: Enrique Stopen

3er. Tentador / *1er. Caballero*: Antonio Medellín

4o. Tentador / *4o. Caballero*: Juan José Gurrola

Quinto Programa de
POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

Antes de cumplir tres años de vida —contra viento y marea, contra el silencio de estos y el criterio obsceno de aquellos, contra la indiferencia, la cobardía, la tibieza, la deserción, contra la estupidez— *Poesía en Voz Alta* lleva al tablado su quinto programa. Los enterradores de profesión pueden guardarse sus frases de condolencia: los únicos muertos son ellos.

En nuestro tercer programa nos atrevimos con un auto sacramental de Calderón: *La Cena del Rey Baltasar*. No quedamos satisfechos con lo que hicimos. Era necesario intentar de nuevo la experiencia. Así, no es casual la elección de *Asesinato en la Catedral*. En esta obra, como en el auto de Calderón, el verdadero drama —según lo advierte Becket en uno de los mejores momentos de la pieza no es tanto el del mártir frente a sus verdugos como el de la conciencia a solas consigo misma. La tentación más poderosa no es la del placer, el poder o la gloria sino la fascinación que ejerce sobre nosotros nuestra propia conciencia, la imagen fantasmal de nuestro yo ávido. O como dice Quevedo:

Las aguas del abismo
donde me enamoraba de mí mismo...

Fascinación de la nada. La soberbia es nihilismo. Tomás sabe que sólo se salva el que se olvida de sí, el que se entrega y se trasciende para luego transfigurarse. Desde este punto de vista la obra de Eliot (aunque tenga la forma externa de una tragedia) es un auto sacramental moderno. O sea: una obra teatral cuyo único personaje es la conciencia sin más interlocutores que la nada y la gracia. En esta atmósfera tensa la historia humana propiamente dicha no tiene sitio y de ahí que los discursos realistas de los asesinos nos parezcan extrañamente irreales. Y lo son. Pues el drama no tiene por tema la historia de Inglaterra, ni la disputa entre el poder temporal y el espiritual o el conflicto entre el hombre sediento de absoluto frente a una utilitaria "razón histórica" (relativa pero todopoderosa y homicida en su relativismo). El viento que arrastra a Becket al martirio no es el viento de la historia.

Hace poco Reyes nos recordaba aquella definición de la tragedia: "una obra en la que todos tienen razón". En una tragedia política como *La muerte de Dantón*, por ejemplo, el conflicto brota precisamente de esta aparente paradoja: todos los personajes encarnan una visión distinta de la historia, cada una igualmente válida y poderosa: todos tienen razón. Una razón relativa, pero que se vuelve absoluta al proyectarse en un mundo por esencia relativo como el de la política. Todos hablan el mismo lenguaje, aunque sostengan actitudes contrarias. *Asesinato en la Catedral* no es una tragedia política; los caballeros asesinos no hablan el lenguaje de Becket y por eso el poeta dramático se sirve más bien del monólogo y el coro que del diálogo. No hay nada común entre Becket, poseído por la gracia, y sus asesinos, diestros en la dialéctica, la retórica y el derecho. Son dos mundos que no se tocan nunca.

Dentro del naciente *estilo* de *Poesía en Voz Alta* (un estilo nunca es la aplicación de una fórmula sino un espíritu que busca su forma) José Luis Ibáñez, el joven director de escena, representa lo que acaso no sea exagerado llamar la *gravedad de la palabra*, por oposición a la manera de Héctor Mendoza, que es su vuelo. No es extraño, por tanto, que haya elegido una obra como *Asesinato en la Catedral*. Desde el principio nos propusimos jugar con fuego.

Farsas, juegos de escarnio, danza de las palabras y salto mortal de las imágenes, auto sacramental y tragedia moderna, todo vale en el teatro a condición de que arda: el clásico y el primitivo, el autor célebre y el poeta desconocido. Fuego: juego. El teatro es juego; juego de espejos, conciencias que se reflejan, se combaten, se niegan o disuelven en un abrazo de luz. Pues lo que se pierde o se gana en este juego es la propia conciencia. El teatro es fuego. Y lo que arde y se quema y resplandece o se vuelve ceniza es también la conciencia. La conciencia de todos, que es la de cada uno. El teatro es participación lúcida, comunión de conciencias, no dispersión ni confusión del espíritu en una emoción animal. Participación es lucidez. Acudimos al juicio de vuestra razón, no a la complicidad de vuestros instintos. Somos "solitarios solidarios".

OCTAVIO PAZ



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA



presenta su
Sexto Programa
en el

TEATRO FABREGAS

(Donceles No. 24)

Dirección y traducción	José Luis Ibáñez
Dirección Literaria	Octavio Paz Diego de Mesa
Vestuario y escenografía	Juan Soriano
Ayudante de dirección	Nancy Cárdenas
Realización de vestuario	Gérard Cristina Vidrio Gristina Jiménez
Sombreros	Esteban Mayo
Realización de escenografía y utilería	Ramón Atilano
Maquillaje y peluquería	Beauté

De martes a sábado: a las 7:30 y 9:45

Domingos: a las 5:00 y 8:00

Lunes: No hay función

Luneta $ 12.00 Anfiteatro $ 6.00

OFELIA GUILMAIN (Soledad)

RITA MACEDO (Clara)

en

L A S C R I A D A S

de JEAN GENET

con **MECHE PASCUAL**

(la Señora)

Apta para adolescentes y adultos

CUATRO PALABRAS SOBRE "LAS CRIADAS"

1) Las Criadas son seres absolutamente relativos: dependen de todo y de todos. Las Criadas son las *otras;* son una pura emanación de sus amos. A semejanza de los criminales, pertenecen al orden de lo Otro, al orden del Mal. *Aman* a la Señora: ...quisieran *convertirse* en la Señora, es decir, integrarse al orden social y dejar de ser parias. *Odian* a la Señora: ...es decir, detestan a la sociedad que las rechaza y quieren aniquilarla.

2) En presencia de la Señora, Soledad y Clara no son reales. Su servilismo es falso, tu ternura es falsa, su respeto y su gratitud son falsos. Toda su conducta es mentirosa. Cuando vuelven a quedar solas, asumen de nuevo sus verdaderos rostros. Pero cuando están solas, juegan. Clara juega a que es la Señora, y Soledad juega a que es Clara. Y el espectador, a su pesar, ansía el regreso de la Señora: frente a ella, las máscaras caerán y las criadas volverán a ser verdaderas criadas.

3) En presencia de los Amos, la verdad de las Criadas consiste en ser criadas falsas a fin de enmascarar la humanidad que se esconde detrás del servilismo. Pero en ausencia de los Amos, esa humanidad tampoco se manifiesta: la verdad del sirviente, cuando está solo, consiste en fingir que es el amo. De esta manera, las dos criadas fingen, por turnos, que son la Señora. Al presentarlas al público, Genet sólo refleja las fantasías de las mujeres con buena conciencia en ese mismo público. Todas las noches, quinientas Señoras pueden exclamar: "Sí, así son las criadas", sin darse cuenta de que las señoras inventan a las criadas, de la misma manera que los sureños norteamericanos inventan a los negros... Las Criadas son la guardia crepuscular de las familias burguesas. Las Criadas son sueños que sueñan con tragarse a las Señoras que las sueñan.

4) Soledad ayuda a Clara a ponerse uno de los vestidos de la Señora. Es la ceremonia, el juego sagrado que se repite con la monotonía estereotipada de los sueños esquizofrénicos... Es la Misa Negra. Todas las noches se representa el asesinato de la Señora, un asesinato siempre interrumpido, nunca terminado.

JEAN - PAUL SARTRE.



POESIA EN VOZ ALTA

"...LA TRAGEDIA CLASICA es el género en que encuentra su madurez y su claridad última un largo delirio de siglos; por eso, el protagonista antes que ser un hombre es una estirpe; un delirio inmemorial, primera forma de memoria íntima, autobiográfica. El oficio de la pasión del hombre que entre conjuros, invocación y llanto ayuda al hombre a nacer, a ganar su soledad peculiar; esa soledad en que se es visto y juzgado, en que se es al mismo tiempo que el otro, que los otros, y en relación a ellos. Porque sólo atiende a su juego el que atiende al juego de los demás, al juego total. El arcaico juego infantil encierra un enigma: "cada cual atienda a su juego y el que no lo atienda pagará una prenda"...

Y todos han de pagarla al fin, porque no entienden que en el juego de cada uno entra en juego todo; los otros y lo uno: el universo.

Es lo que la tragedia, rito de vida griega, hacía sentir al mismo tiempo, en un instante, a los mil espectadores reunidos; oficio de la piedad en su arte de tratar con lo otro", con uno mismo, cuando nos hacemos otros o cuando todavía no hemos dejado de serlo.

Y el pagar la prenda es la condición de que en el juego de cada uno entre en juego el universo, el juego de todos. Y aun al jugar así, y al hacerlo bien, hay que pagar la prenda. Porque la prenda pagada es el inevitable sacrificio que libra de la carga heredada y de la genérica. Se paga por ser hijo y por ser simplemente hombre y sólo entonces se abre el camino de la vida individual; sólo a partir de entonces se puede pretender ser uno mismo".

MARÍA ZAMBRANO
(de *El hombre y lo divino*)

ELECTRA

de SOFOCLES

PARAFRASIS DE DIEGO DE MESA

REPARTO
por orden de aparición

Orestes	RAÚL DANTÉS
Pílades	ANTONIO ALCALÁ
Preceptor	JOSÉ CARLOS RUIZ
Electra	PINA PELLICER
Coro	AMPARO VILLEGAS
	KETTY VALDÉS
	ALICIA QUINTOS
Crisotemis	TARA PARRA
Clitemnestra	OFELIA GUILMAIN
Egisto	ANTONIO MEDELLIN

Dirección: DIEGO DE MESA

Escenografía y vestuario: JUAN SORIANO

Asistente de director: JUAN GARCÍA PONCE

Relaciones públicas: JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO

COLABORADORES:

JUAN MARTÍN, LIMA GÓMEZ, ROSINA, MIGUELITO

y elementos de la Federación Teatral.

MARTES A SABADOS: 7.30 y 10 hs.

DOMINGOS: 5 y 7 hs.

TEATRO SULLIVAN

ELECTRA

DE SOFOCLES

Agamenón, Rey de Micenas y Argos, Jefe de la Armada Griega que fue al rescate de la bella Elena y conquistó Troya, regresa a su hogar después de largos años de guerra.

En el festín real organizado para celebrar el regreso del héroe, la esposa de éste, Clitemnestra, le da muerte ayudada por Egisto, su amante.

La hija mayor de Agamenón, Electra, fiel al padre y al rey, decidida a vengar el crimen y el adulterio pero imposibilitada de hacerlo por sí misma, pone a salvo a su hermano Orestes para que sea un día el vengador del padre.

La tragedia de Electra comienza cuando regresa Orestes a Micenas, después de haber consultado al oráculo de Delfos, para llevar a cabo la venganza.

POESIA EN VOZ ALTA PRESENTA SU SEPTIMO PROGRAMA

ELECTRA

DE SOFOCLES

Personajes
(por orden de aparición en escena)

ORESTES . . . . . **Raúl Dantés**
PRECEPTOR . . . . . **José Carlos Ruiz**
PILADES . . . . . **Antonio Alcalá**
ELECTRA . . . . . **Pina Pellicer**
CORO . . . . . **Amparo Villegas, Ketty Valdés, Alicia Quintos**
CRISOTEMIS . . . . . **Tara Parra**
CLITEMNESTRA . . . . . **Ofelia Guilmáin**
EGISTO . . . . . **Antonio Medellín**

la acción en micenas

Dirección **Diego de Mesa**

Escenografía y Vestuario **Juan Soriano**

PERSONAL TECNICO

Jefe Maquinaria
Pedro Alayon
Electricista
Jorge Mendizábal
Traspunte
Santiago Robira
Utilería
Raymundo Acosta
Representante
Ricardo Palacios

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Señores: Lima Gómez, Víctor Cresencio. Javier Ezqueda y Ramón Ramírez. Zapatería "Miguelito".

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casa del lago
teatro de cámara
poesía en voz alta
octavo programa

La moza de cántaro

de
lope de vega

La moza de cántaro

COMEDIA EN TRES ACTOS DE **Lope de Vega**

LA ACCION EN RONDA, EN ADAMUZ Y EN MADRID.

DIRECCION: JOSE LUIS IBAÑEZ /

ESCENOGRAFIA Y VESTUARIO: JUAN SORIANO / MUSICA: RAUL COSIO

AYUDANTE DE DIRECCION: HECTOR ORTIZ

En *La moza de cántaro* existe la presencia de una estructura humana hoy casi en ruinas. Ante los ojos del espectador los problemas —fundamentalmente el arcaico y medieval del honor— aparecen como viejos fantasmas de una conciencia muy poco, en verdad, reconocible. La exageración del sentimiento, la importancia del ingenio como virtud fundamental, la lucha de la razón y el apetito y tantas otras características ilusionistas prestan a la escena barroca un hechizo por lo que de ficticio, de absurdo, posee.

Pero si poco observa la obra, y el teatro entero del siglo XVII, como realidad dramática humana, todo, sin embargo —gracias a la palabra y a la imagen— está vivo en *La moza de cántaro*. ¿Qué importa que no reconozcamos, en el gusto y en la actitud internas, más que una parte ínfima del ser histórico que somos? El idioma presta existencia permanente al sentido heroico de la vida, al amor juzgado como lo imprevisto del juego de las almas, al personaje que tiene, como condición esencial humana, su esencial mezcla de criatura terrestre y divina, arbitraria —ya lo dice Tirso de Molina— como un árbol plantado al revés.

La escena española, teñida de sangre las más veces, se proyecta —ya en lo cómico, ya en lo trágico— metafísicamente. Lo súbito de las pasiones enriquece (aun cuando momentánea y frívolamente) la condición humana. Por eso *La moza de cántaro*, que reúne ambas fuentes, es, en verdad, dos comedias a un tiempo. En ella el alma barroca, refugiada, por temor, en el enredo y la metáfora, se defiende de una realidad cotidiana y pedestre que tanto le es adversa.

SERGIO FERNANDEZ

reparto [POR ORDEN DE APARICION]

Doña María, SILVIA CAOS
Luisa, Ketty Valdés
Don Bernardo, Felio Eliel
Don Diego, Luis Miranda
Fulgencio, Agustín López Zavala
Alcaide, Roberto Porter
Conde, LUIS LOMELI
Don Juan, RAUL DANTES
Martín, Jorge Sánchez Fogarty
Leonor, María Teresa Monroy
Doña Ana, BEATRIZ SHERIDAN
Juana, Dolores Linares
Indiano, Claudio Obregón
Mozo, Octavio Ezquerra
Mesonero, Roberto Porter
Pedro, Héctor Cruz
Lorenzo, Octavio Ezquerra
Bernal, Roberto Porter
Acompañamiento, Jorge Fons
Octavio Márquez

MUSICOS:

Orlo y flauta dulce, Roberto Rivera
Flauta dulce y laúd, Manuel de Elías
Cromorno y flauta dulce, Jaime González.

A partir del viernes 27 de septiembre de 1963

VIERNES A LAS 18 HORAS
DOMINGOS A LAS 17 HORAS

APPENDIX B: Scripts and Sketches

All scripts and sketches were provided by José Luis Ibáñez

First Program

Scene 1: Egloga IV by Juan del Encina 394

Scene 2: Farsa de la Casta Susaña by Diego Sánchez de Badajoz 403

Scene 3: "Wedding Scene" from Peribáñez by Lope de Vega 416

Scene 4: The Virgin, the Sailor, and the Student by Federico García Lorca (sketch[1]) 425

Scene 5: Buster Keaton's Promenade by Federico García Lorca 426

Scene 6: Chimera by Federico García Lorca 430

Scene 7: "Child and the Cat" scene from When Five Years Pass by Federico García Lorca 437

Second Program

The Canary by Georges Neveux 446

Fourth Program

Scene 1: Andarse por las ramas by Elena Garro 456

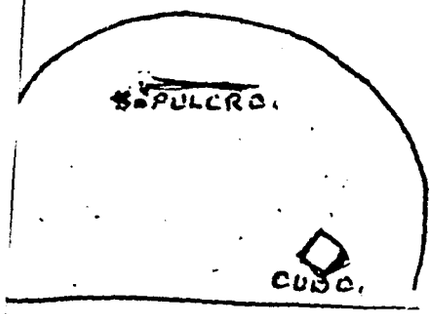
Scene 2: Los pilares de doña Blanca by Elena Garro . . . 467

Act 2: La vida airada by Francisco de Quevedo 477

Act 3: A Solid Home by Elena Garro (sketch[2]) 500

[1]Script illegible.

[2]Script illegible.



LUCES

1er CUADRO

16-AZUL DIABLA AZUL

18-19-~~22~~

~~32~~ 33 — ROSA (CUBO)

21-33-35

SEPULCRO Y CUBO.

EGLOGA IV DE JUAN DEL ENCINA.

Representación a la santísima resurrección de Cristo; adonde se introducen JOSEF y la MADALENA, y los dos discípulos que iban al castillo de Emaús; los cuales eran CLEOFÁS y SAN LÚCAS, y cada uno cuenta de qué manera le apareció nuestro Redentor. Y primero JOSEF comienza contemplando el sepulcro en que a Cristo sepultó; y después entró la MADALENA y estándose razonando con él, entraron los otros dos discípulos; y, - en fin, vino UN ÁNGEL á ellos por les acrecentar el alegría y fé de la resurrección.

C. FERNANDEZ

JOSEF: ¡Oh sepulcro singular,
De nuestra vida memoria!
Gran corona de vitoria
En tí se vino á labrar.
¡Oh misterio muy sin par,
Pues en tan pequeño suelo
Tomó Cristo su solar
Para en él edificar
El gran palacio del cielo!
Teníate yo guardado
Para ser mi sepultura;
No sabía la ventura
De tu precioso ditado.
Siempre serás adorado,
Pues eres hecho tan digno,
De Cristo fué sepultado
Y agora resuscitado
Con el su poder divino.

ROSENDA F.Y.

MADAL.: ¡Oh Josef, mi buen amigo!

JOSEF: ¡Oh María Magdalena!
Vengas mucho enhorabuena.

MADAL.: Dios esté siempre contigo.

JOSEF: No me harto yo comigo
De ver este monumento.

MADAL.: De gran mañana te digo
Vine ver á nuestro abrigo
Con esta caja de ungüento.
Mas, segun habrás ya vido,
Bien sabrás qu'el Redemptor
Resuscitó vencedor,
Y el demonio es ya vencido.

JOSEF: Bien lo tengo ya sabido;
Que yo ví muy libre y sano
A Cristo nuestro querido.

MADAL.: Á mi hame aparecido
En figura de hortolano.
Yo que estaba en gran pesar
Llorando, que no sabía
Adónde le hallaria,
Que le vine aquí á buscar,
Vile detrás de mi estar,
Y comenzó preguntarme
La causa de mi llorar;
Mas yo, que le iba á tocar,
Dijo: "No quieras tocarme".

JOSEF: Hortolano verdadero,
Plantador de las virtudes,
Que con gran socorro acudes;
Muy gran vencedor guerrero,

PREY.
DANTES
GURROLA
2.D

Que estando yo presionero
Tú mesmo me visitaste,
Á tí amo y á tí quiero;
En tí, Señor, sólo espero,
Pues tú, Señor, me libraste.
Aquella mala nacion,
Porque te dí sepultura,
De invidia y malicia pura
Me tenian en presion.
De grado muerte y pasion
Sufriera, Señor, por tí;
Mas con tu resurrecion
Dísteme la redencion
Y acordástete de mi.

MADAL.: Á Él se den los loores,
Á Él se den los servicios,
Que quitó de mí los vicios
Para plantarme de flores.
Con Él tengamos amores;
Honremos su santo templo;
Confien los pecadores
En su socorro y favores,
Pues que yo les soy enjemplo.

LÚCAS Y CLEOFÁS:
Dios os salve y dé reposo.

JOSEF: Y á vosotros dé placer;
Que venis tambien á ver

DANTES
GURROLA
2.D.

Su monumento precioso.
Mas su cuerpo glorïoso
Sabed que resuscitó.

LÚCAS: ¡Oh poder muy poderoso
De Cristo maravilloso,
Que allá nos apareció!
Cuando íbamos camino
Al castillo de Emaús,
Nos apareció Jesús
En traje de peregrino.
Y el sacro Verbo divino
Vino a confirmar la fé
Quë iba perdiendo el tino;
Y en tal hábito nos vino
Cual necesario nos fué.

CLEOPÁS: Y con Él mesmo comimos,
Aunque algunos dudarán;
Y en verle partir el pan,
Entónces le conocimos.
Y otra vez despues le vimos
Que entró, las puertas cerradas,
Á muchos que allí estovimos;
Y pues tal bien recebimos,
Á Dios gracias sean dadas.

LÚCAS: Aqueste dia bendito
Es el que hizo el Señor
El más santo y el mayor
Que se halla por escrito.

Tomemos gozo infinito;
Demos fin á los sospiros
Con corazon muy contrito:
Pongamos ojo en tal hito
Donde asesten nuestros tiros.
  Con Cristo resuscitemos
En estas cuatro maneras:
Con voluntades enteras;
Y presto, que no tardemos;
Y que á morir no tornemos;
Y muy verdaderamente,
Que nada no simulemos:
Y con esto alcanzarémos
Aquel imperio excelente.
  Que Cristo, nuestro dechado,
Resuscitó desta suerte,
Para que más de la muerte
No fuese señorëado;
Y en verdad, no simulade;
Y en la mañana, no tarde;
Y perfecto, no menguado:
Y el muerto por el pecado
Esto le cumple que guarde.

MADAL.: Busquemos resurrecion
Sin tornar más á morir,
Qu'es del pecado salir,
Y ha de ser por confession.

Y de puro corazon;
Proponiendo el emendar,
Con contricion y atricion
Y entera satisfacion,
Y en gracia perseverar.

JOSEF: ¡Oh capitan vencedor,
Que al enemigo venciste,
Y por tus siervos quesiste
Morir y ser redentor!
Padeciendo gran dolor
Por el mundo libertar,
Diste tal precio, Señor,
Que bastaba su valor
Para mill mundos mercar.

CLEOFÁS: ¡Oh qué bandera ganaste,
Lucero de nuestra luz!
Cinco plagas y la cruz
Por memoria nos dejaste.
Tú venciste y trïunfaste,
Y el campo por tí quedó;
Todo el mundo libertaste;
Los infiernos despojaste,
Que nadie te lo vedó.

LÚCAS: ¡Oh cruz, triunfo precïoso
De vitoria verdadera,
Tú serás nuestra bandera,
Bordon de nuestro reposo!
¡Árbol más que glorïoso,

Que llevaste tan buen fruto,
Tan buen fruto y tan sabroso,
Qu'él sólo fué poderoso
Para quitar nuestro luto!
Nuestro luto ya quitado,
De alegría nos vistamos,
Pues que ya resuscitamos
En Cristo resuscitado.
En muchos fué figurado,
Primero mucho que fuese
Por muchos profetizado;
Á muchos fué demostrado,
Porque el mundo lo creyese.

P. COMODIN

#TARA 1D.

MUSICO

FIN.

EL ÁNGEL: Paz sea con vos del cielo.
Tomad muy gran alegría,
Pues que Cristo en este dia
Resuscitó deste suelo.
Florezca vuestro consuelo
Más que nunca floreció,
Pues que con amor y celo
De esforzar vuestro recelo
Cristo ya resuscitó.

VILLANCICO.

CLEOFÁS: Todos se deben gozar
En Cristo resuscitar.

MADAL.: Pues que su triste pasion

Fué para resurrecion,
Con muy gran consolacion
Nos debemos alegrar.

LÚCAS: Cristo, por nos redemir,
Gran pasion quiso sufrir,
Con su precioso morir
La vida nos quiso dar.

JOSEF: Si fué muy grande el dolor,
El placer es muy mayor
Viendo á nuestro redentor
De muerte resuscitar.

OSCURO.

FIN.

Por tan excelente bien
Las gracias á Dios se dén;
Digamos todos Amén,
Por santamente acabar.

#OSCURO.

FELOA.

COMODIN.

CAMBIO RAPIDO.

TRASTOS.

FUENTE.
ESCALERA
CUBO.
ARBOLES.

LUCES

2º CUADRO

~~8~~ ROSA — ~~8~~ AMBAR

18-20-27-

29-32-33-35-36

ESTO

↓

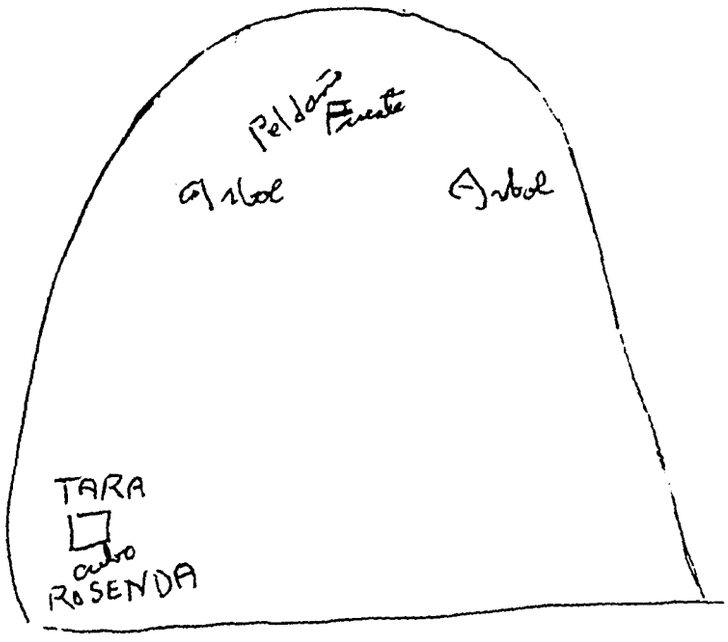
OSCURO

TAMBOR

COMODIN

o CONTAR L

LUZ



OSCURO COMODIN TARA ROSENDO 2 VIEJOS

DIEGO SANCHEZ DE BADAJOZ (TAMBOR)

Farsa de Santa Susaña en que entran seis figuras. Ha de ir la carreta hecha un vergel, y a la una parte ascondidos dos viejos con sus varas como jueces, y a la otra parte una mujer -- muy aderezada queces Susaña. Y ha de estar a la una parte del vergel un mancebo clérigo que es el profeta Daniel, y un án-- gel encubiertos; y un hortolano y un pastor, el cual comienza a decir: (TAMBOR)

STOPEN DANTES

PASTOR.- A Susaña, fatigada
del testimonio cruel,
el holgarse en su vergel
dio ocasión a ser tentada.

HORTOLANO.- También la vida holgada
de los dos alcaldes viejos,
les dió ganas y aparejos
de cometer tal errada.

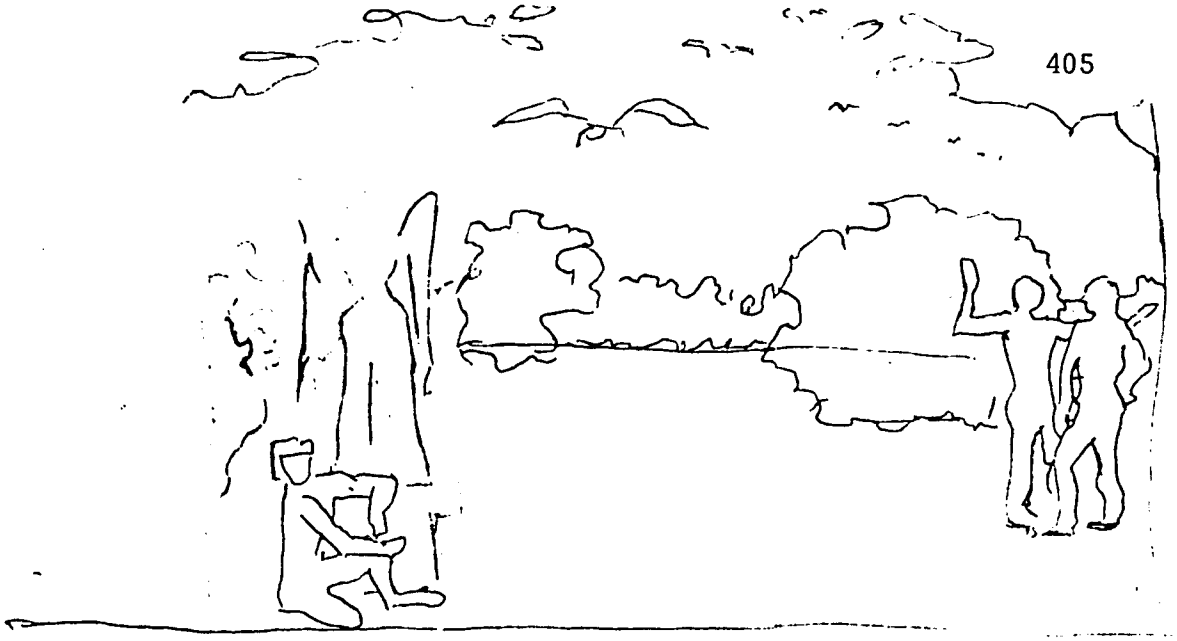
PASTOR.- Pues quiero vos avisar
que los dos viejos roines
eran bellacos malsines
aunque alcaldes de juzgar.

HORTOLANO.- Procuraban de mirar
por Susaña, muy honrada,
hermosa, rica y casada
con el mejor del lugar.
Mía fe, la continuación
encendiólos poco a poco.

PASTOR.- Y un viejo, des que está loco,
es la misma perdición.

HORTOLANO.- Ambos con una pasión,
sin se la comunicar,
cada cual vien a esperar
con dañado corazón.

PASTOR.- Des que juntos se hallaron
uno a otro descubierto,
esperáronla en su huerto.
Entre sí se concertaron





al mal se determinaron
en una parte encubierta;
como ella vino a la huerta
notaréis lo que tentaron.

Aquí viene el Viejo Primero callado, hablando entre sí, como pensativo, y éntrase en el huerto. Luego viene el Segundo -- Viejo de la mesma manera y al entrar en el tablado dice con un sospiro y luego sale el otro Viejo a él y respóndele:

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- ¡Oh penado corazón,
cuándo verás tu deseo...!

VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¿Qué es lo que en vos, señor, veo?
¿Tenéis alguna pasión?

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Fuera de toda razón
mi alma se desentraña
en amores de Susaña.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¡Oh mi desconsolación!
No es razón de os lo callar:
de lo mesmo estáy enfermo,
que yo ni como ni duermo
ni me puedo sosegar.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Bien podemos alternar
que yo he de morir por ella.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Pues yo cierto por habella
tengo el alma de trocar.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Pues quien le hablara tal,
que es mujer tan estimada...

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Eso no lo tengo en nada,
que todas son de un metal,
de natura accidental
en amar y aborrecer.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Y al fin, las más suelen ser
más constantes en el mal.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- No, que muchas hay muy buenas
y bondad siempre venció.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Eso no os lo niego yo,
mas todas saben dar penas.

P. CANTO. NANCY. J.D.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Di, señor, ¿tu no condenas
esta nuestra liviandad?
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Si, mas la sensualidad
ya nos tiene en sus cadenas.
Lo que yo tengo temor,
es que le pondrán frialdad
las canas de nuestra edad...
VIEJO PRIMERO.- Ved también nuestro valor...
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No el valor sino el dulzor
pienso yo que ellas pretenden,
porque antes su valor venden
por el gusto del amor.
VIEJO PRIMERO.- Conviénenos procuralla
sin que nadie nos lo sienta,
que será mayor afrenta
movella sin alcanzalla.
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- La que rogada se halla
siéntese dello tan rica
que ella mesma lo publica.
VIEJO PRIMERO.- Mas si vence la batalla,
sin duda no ha de callar
desque fuere acometida,
por esto nos va la vida:
en no vivir o reinar.
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Vamos aquí a la esperar,
ascondidos neste huerto,
que ella viene aquí muy cierto
cada día a se holgar.

Viene Susaña con una criada y escuderos. Pueden venir diciendo un cantarcillo; y llegada al huerto dice: NANCY

SUSAÑA.- (CANTO) Pues nadie me puede ver,
aquí quiero desnudarme
y en esta fuente bañarme.
Vosotros podéis volver.
VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¡Oh, qué hermosa mujer!
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- ¡Oh, qué angélica figura!

2-D.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¡Oh, hermosa criatura!
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No sé qué más puede ser...
SUSAÑA.- ¡Oh, pecadora de mí!
¡Oh, mi Dios sea conmigo!
Deslumbróme el enemigo,
que a estos hombres no los vi...
¿Cuándo se entraron aquí,
oh, señores, Dios me valga?
VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¡Atájala, no se salga!
PASTOR.- ¡Ay, lobos! ¡Ay, ay!
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No te alteres ni te azores,
Susaña, sálvete Dios.
Sábete que ambos a dos
ardemos en tus amores,
ves que somos juzgadores
del pueblo, y mucho valemos.
Consiente que te gozemos
y tendrás grandes favores.
VIEJO PRIMERO.- Tu gran beldad nos inflama
y penamos cada día.
Hános puesto cobardía
tu valor y clara fama,
mas ha crecido la llama
de tu amor que nos abrasa,
que de no caber en casa
ya de fuera se derrama.
Habémonos resistido
mirando tu gran bondad,
nuestro oficio y nuestra edad,
pero no habemos podido.
Ansí nos cegó el sentido
tu tan clara hermosura,
que el ser de nuestra natura
queda del todo rendido.
PASTOR.- Las naturas del rapaz
dizque rendidas están...
¡Malas brasas de alquitrán,

y ella se quedara en paz!
¡Qué rapaz y que tranguáz
de cada ciento y veinte años!
¡Oh que bellacos tamaños!
¡Hurra, vaya de solaz!

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Primero de acometerte,
no queriendo darte pena,
por romper esta cadena
hemos tragado la muerte.
Pero ha sido muy más fuerte
la fuerza de tus amores,
que las artes y vigores
que nos cupieron en suerte.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Ves que tienes aparejo,
sin ser de nadie sentida.
¡Remedia ya nuestra vida,
no cures de más consejo!

PASTOR.- ¡Hideputa el zagalejo,
blanco y verde como el puerro!

HORTOLANO.- El refrán no dice yerro:
Si se enciende el pajar viejo...

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Haznos aqueste placer
que te habemos suplicado,
el vergel está cerrado
y nadie nos puede ver.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Oh muy hermosa mujer,
concede lo que pedimos,
si no, diremos que te vimos
con un mancebo yacer.

PASTOR.- Fieramente la requiere,
él no cura de añagazas:
son luego a las amenazas.

HORTOLANO.- Si, si, que por mal se quiere...

PASTOR.- Si por fuerza lo hiciere,
llorando y a su pesar,
qué favor les puede dar
queriendo a quien no los quiere...

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No estés perpleja, turbada,
mira nuestro gran valor.
Convénzate nuestro amor
agora que eres rogada...

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Mira que no pierdes nada,
y si no quieres ansí,
hemos de decir de tí
y serás apedreada...

PASTOR.- ¡Oh, Dios les de mal abrigo,
ambos la quieren gozar!
¡Qué cosa para alternar,
lléveos el enemigo!

HORTOLANO.- Como amigo con amigo
que comen de compañía...

PASTOR.- Mal provecho me ternía,
si sintiese otro conmigo.

HORTOLANO.- Mil gasajos a mi ver
se pueden fer en compaña,
y el alegría es tamaña
cuanta más compaña hubier.

PASTOR.- Si, mas en bolsa y mujer
no se sufre compañero.
Cuánto yo nunca lo quiero
ni Dios me lo deje ver.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Acaba señora ya...
¿Quiés nos matar y morir?

PASTOR.- ¿Veis, veis? Ya la van a asir,
quiero decir ¡tatatá!

HORTOLANO.- El diablo te lo dará...
¿tú qué piensas de ganar?
Oír y ver y callar,
que esto se usa por acá.

SUSAÑA.- ¡Perversos viejos livianos!
Angustia me cerca fuerte,
si tal hago, esme la muerte;
si no, caigo en vuestras manos.
Pero más quiero, oh profanos,

en vuestras manos morir,
que pecando resistir
los preceptos soberanos.
Si me quisierdes dejar,
haréis bien a mi y a vos,
y si no, yo fío en Dios
que me ayudará a librar. (MUSICA)

PASTOR.- ¡Oh, que la quieren forzar!

SUSAÑA.- ¡Oh, cuitada! ¿Y qué haré?
¡Soltadme, que llamaré!

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No os ha de valer gritar.

SUSAÑA.- ¡Aquí, mis fieles criados!

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- ¡Aquí, aquí de la justicia!

VIEJO PRIMERO.-, ¡Oh mujer, pura malicia,
inventora de pecados!

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Aquí estaban ensotados,
con las plumas en la boca,
un mancebo y esta loca
de que estamos espantados.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- ¡Oh mujer! Con qué maldad
vímesla entrar de concierto
con un mozo en este huerto,
procurando soledad.
Juntos en su torpedad
los tomamos cometiendo...
El nos escapó huyendo.

SUSAÑA.- Tu, Dios, sabes la verdad.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- De su carne fué engañada
por torpe delectación.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Perdió su reputación
de todos tan estimada.

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Muera, muera la malvada,
muera con gran vituperio.

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Pues que cayó en adulterio
muera luego apedreada.

PASTOR.- ¡Madre, madre, madre mía,
oh milagrosa pasión!

HORTOLANO.- ¡Oh qué terrible traición!
¡Oh qué gran tacañería!
PASTOR.- Dios y la Virgen María
me escapen de los demoños.
HORTOLANO.- Y de falsos testimoños.
PASTOR.- Y de mala procresía.
VIEJO SEGUNDO.- No cumple que la encubramos
de la verdad. Mas, amigos,
de su delito testigos,
vímosla como aquí estamos.
VIEJO PRIMERO.- Como jueces, mandamos
que cuantos aquí la veen
luego al punto la apedreen,
porque ansí lo sentenciamos.
PASTOR.- Que apedreen es no es,
nombre del Padre y del Hijo;
do al diablo su amorijo
tan presto vuelto al revés.
HORTOLANO.- Oh Dios, que tu bien lo ves,
a ver en que parará;
que Dios en el cielo está.
PASTOR.- Yo os lo voto a San Dornés.
SUSAÑA.- Mi Dios eterno y perfeto,
tu saber alto y profundo
ve y juzga todo el mundo,
y escudriña lo secreto.
Tu conoces el defeto
de estos perversos ancianos,
yo lo remito a las manos
de tu divino decreto.
Tu sabes en la verdad
que me dan aquesta muerte,
por yo temer de ofenderte
y no perder mi bondad.
Tu alta divinidad
no querrá que su malicia
prevalezca a la justicia
sin que salga en claridad.

Aquí entra Daniel, algo apresurado, diciendo:

DANIEL.- Ta, ta, ta, engañada gente,
no se haga tal errada,
la sentencia está malvada
que condena a la inocente:
fue juzgada falsamente
sobre falso testimonio.

PASTOR.- Yo os digo que entró el demonio
a los viejos en la frente.

HORTOLANO.- Prega a Dios de la valer,
pues ninguna culpa tiene.

PASTOR.- Y a ellos que los condene
pues así lo suele hacer.

HORTOLANO.- El que me oyer-e me vier
tenga en Dios su corazón,
que quien levanta traición
en ella tien de caer.

Toma Daniel el un Viejo por la mano.

DANIEL.- Apártame aquel allá.
Mostrará Dios su justicia
y veréis la gran malicia
que en estos viejos está.
Viejo malo, ven acá;
cumplido de malos días,
las maldades que hacías
Dios no las consiente ya.
¿Ansí solíades juzgar?
¡Oh perversos juzgadores!
Perdonar los malhechores
y a los buenos condenar...
¿A dónde los viste hablar,
di viejo testimoñero?

VIEJO PRIMERO.- Debajo un almastiguero.

DANIEL.- Has mentido sin dudar.

Ase al otro Viejo, apártalo y dícele:

DANIEL.- Di tu ¿cómo te cegaste?
Canaheo sin ventura,
vencióte la hermosura,
a carne te sujetaste.
Dime, ¿dónde los tomaste
hablando, viejo malino?

VIEJO SEGUNDO.- Vílos debajo un endrino...

DANIEL.- ¡Oh, tacaño! Baste, baste...

PASTOR.- Dies que me has dado mil vidas,
tal lo quiero, tal lo quiero,
¡endrino es almastiguero!

HORTOLANO.- Conchavadme esas medidas.
Por más que están ascondidas,
la traición y la ruindad
salen a la claridad
que al fin son conocidas.

DANIEL.- Condenote tu respuesta,
perverso viejo traidor.
¿Ves el ángel del Señor
que tiene el espada enhiesta?
Por maldad tan manifiesta,
justamente condenados
eis de ser apedreädos.

PASTOR.- Acertole la ballesta.

HORTOLANO.- Mueran, mueran a pedradas
los falsos testimoñeros.

PASTOR.- Viejos malos harrumeros,
vayan con las malas hadas.

HORTOLANO.- Las intenciones dañadas
así salen al revés,
mentiras no tienen pies
y al final son alcanzadas.

P. I. Y OSCUR

MUSICA

Villancico.

Al que está libre de culpa,
aunque el mundo lo condene
Dios lo salva y lo sostiene.

Copla

La divina majestad
que los secretos aclara,
quiere tanto a la verdad
que nunca la desampara.
Muestren los buenos la cara,
que aquel que justicia tiene
Dios lo salva y lo sostiene.

~~COMEDIN~~ OSCIRO
TE~~COMEDIN~~ OSCURO

CORTINA SOBRE CÓMODIN-
ESCALERAS.

IIII

LUCES.

3er CUADRO.

29

19-22-24-32-35-36-33

20-21

Entra el Sacerdote al 29.

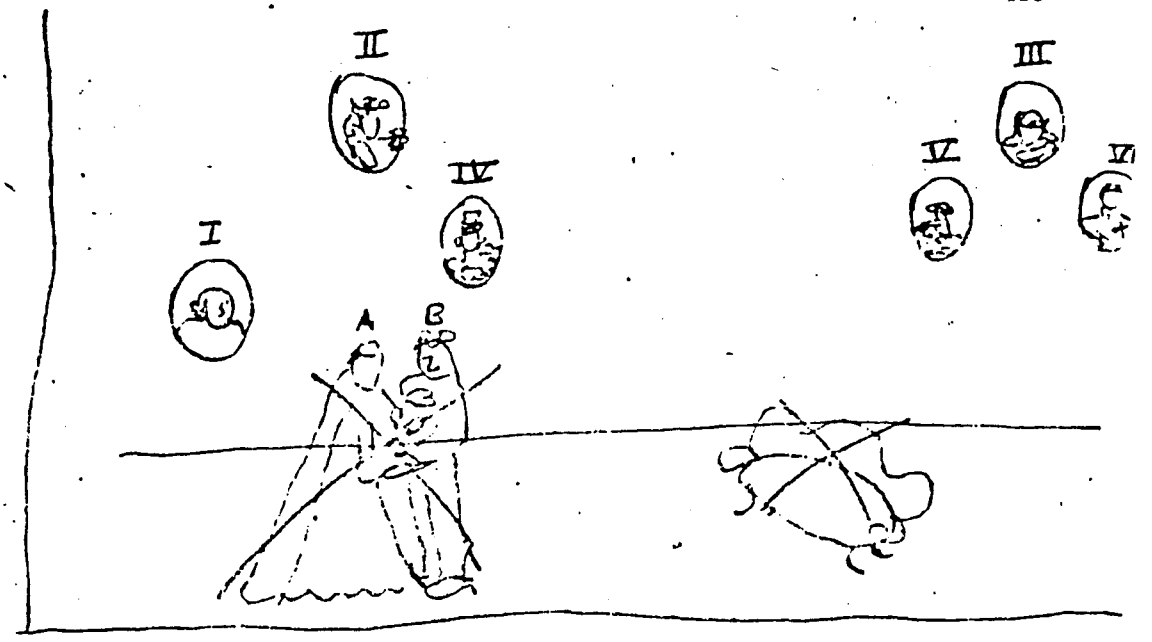
16-17-18-19-20-21-22

38-39-40

PERIBAÑEZ Y EL COMENDADOR DE OCAÑA.

SALA EN CASA DE PERIBÁÑEZ, EN OCAÑA.
PERIBAÑEZ Y CASILDA, DE NOVIOS; INES, DE MADRINA; EL CURA, CONSTANZA, MUSICOS, LABRADORES Y LABRADORAS.

INES.
Largos años os gocéis.
CONSTANZA.
Si son como yo deseo,
casi inmortales seréis.
CASILDA.
Por el de serviros, creo
que merezco que me honréis.
CURA.
Aunque no parecen mal,
son excusadas razones
para cumplimiento igual,
ni puede haber bendiciones
que igualen con el misal.
Hartas os dije: no queda
cosa que deciros pueda
el más deudo, el más amigo.
INES.
Señor doctor, yo no digo
más de que bien les suceda.
CURA.
Espéroxlo en Dios, que ayuda
a la gente virtüosa.
Mi sobrina es muy sesuda.



I.— Cura
II.— Cardenza
III.— Inés
IV.— Invitados
V.—
VI.—

A.— Casilda
B.— Peribáñez

Permanecen inmóviles hasta que el cura invita a sentarse. Casilda cruza por enfrente de Peribáñez y se sienta en el sillón en el extremo de la izquierda. Peribáñez la sigue invitado por un movimiento de ésta.

PERIBAÑEZ

Sólo con no ser celosa
saca este pleito de duda.

CASILDA/

No me deis vos ocasión;
que en mi vida tendré celos.

PERIBAÑEZ.

Por mí no sabréis qué son.

INES.

Dicen que al amor los cielos
le dieron esta pensión.

CURA.

Sentaos, y alegrad el día
en que sois uno los dos.

PERIBAÑEZ.

Yo no tengo harta alegría
en ver que me ha dado Dios
tan hermosa compañía.

CURA.

Bien es que a Dios se atribuya;
que en el reino de Toledo
no hay cara como la suya.

CASILDA.

Si con amor pagar puedo,
esposo, la afición tuya,
de lo que debiendo quedas
me estás en obligación.

PERIBAÑEZ.

Casilda, mientras no puedas
excederme en afición,
no con palabras me excedas.
Toda esta villa de Ocaña
poner quisiera a tus pies,
y aun todo aquello que baña
Tajo hasta ser portugués,
entrando en el mar de España.
El olivar más cargado
de aceitunas me parece
menos hermoso, y el prado
que por el mayo florece,
sólo del alba pisado.
No hay camuesa que se afeite
que no te rinda ventaja,
ni rubio y dorado aceite
conservado en la tinaja,
que me cause más deleite.
Ni el vino blanco imagino
de cuarenta años tan fino
como tu boca olorosa;
que como al señor la rosa
le huele al villano el vino.
Cepas que en diciembre arranco
y en octubre dulce mosto,
ni mayo de lluvias franco,
ni por los fines de agosto

cuando el tamboril sonase
por más que el tanborilerom
chillase con el garguero
y con el palo tocase.
En mañana de San Juan
nunca más placer me hicieron
la verbena y arrayán,
ni los relinchos me dieron
el que tus voces me dan.
¿Cuál adufe bien templado,
cuál salterio te ha igualado?
¿Cuál pendón de procesión,
con sus borlas y cordon,
a tu sombrero chapado?
No hay pies con zapatos nuevos
como agradan tus amores;
eres entre mil mancebos
hornazo en pascua de Flores
con sus picos y sus huevos.
Pareces en verde prado
toro bravo y rojo echado;
pareces camisa nueva,
que entre jazmines se lleva
en azafate dorado.
Pareces cirio pascual
y mazapán de bautismo,
con capillo de cendalp
y parécete a ti mismo,
porque no tienes igual.

P. CANTO

CURA.

Ea, bastan los amores,
que quieren estos mancebos
bailar y ofrecer.

PERIBAÑEZ.

Señores,
pues no sois en amor nuevos,
perdón.

UN LABRADOR.

——— Ama hasta que adores.

(CANTAN LOS MUSICOS Y BAILAN LOS LABRADORES Y LABRADORAS).

MUSICOS.

Dente parabienes
el mayo garrido,
los alegres campos,
las fuentes y ríos.

Alcen las cabezas
los verdes alisos
y con frutos nuevos
almendros floridos.

Echen las mañanas,
después del rocío,
en espadas verdes
guarnición de lirios.

Suban los ganados
por el monte mismo
que cubrió la nieve,
a pacer tomillo.

(FOLÍA)

Y a los nuevos desposados
eche Dios su bendición;
parabién les den los prados,
pues hoy para en uno son.

(VUELVEN A DANZAR).

Montañas heladas
y soberbios riscos,
antiguas encinas
y robustos pinos,
dad paso a las aguas
en arroyos limpios,
que a los valles bajan
de los hielos fríos.

Canten ruiseñores,
y con dulces silbos
sus amores cuenten
amestos verdes mirtos.

Fabriquen las aves
con nuevo artificio
para sus hijuelos
amorosos nidos.

(FOLÍA)

Ya a los nuevos desposados
eche Dios su bendición;
parabién les den los prados,

CORTINA

AL TERMINAR LA MUSICA

pues hoy para en uno son.

(SUENA DENTRO GRAN RUIDO)

TELON

INTERMEDIO.

(LUCES) 21-~~X~~-40-16-15-~~X~~.
32-33

CANCIONES. (3°BIS)
HNA. TERESINA. = TELON

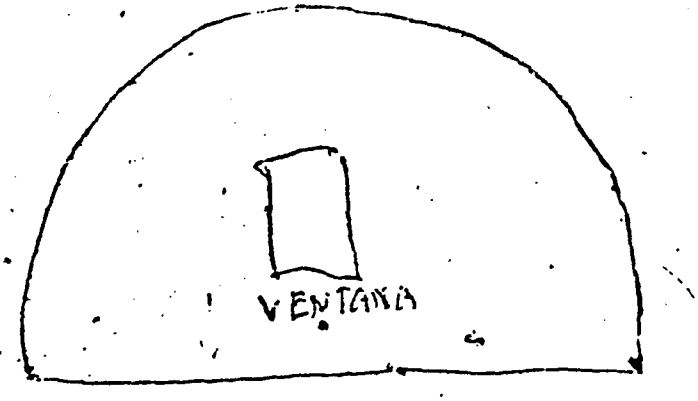
INTERMEDIO

BIOMBO - BALCON

LUCES.

4º CUADRO.

OSCURO
A TELON CORRIDO ENTRA
EL 30 EN DIMER.
ABRIR CONIODIN.
→ TODA LUZ.



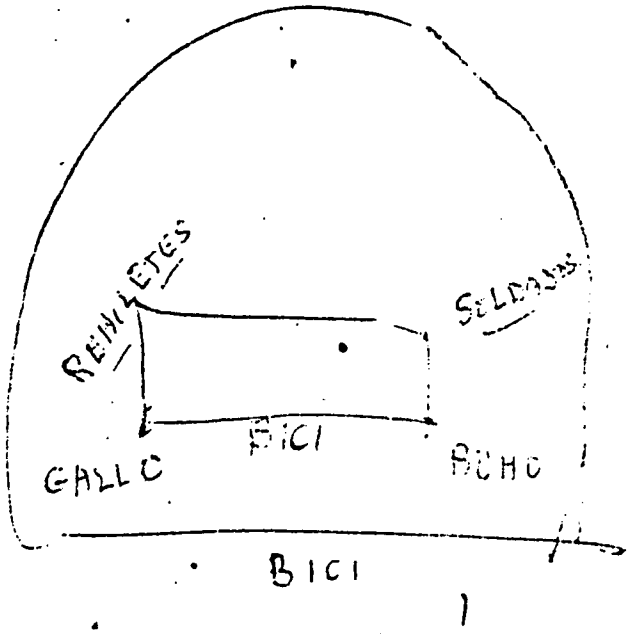
LUCES.

5ª CUADRO

OSCURO

30 } DIMER — 8-40
32 }

~~TODO~~



1

2 Tanta

EL PASEO DE BUSTER KEATON. / LUZ

Personajes:

Buster Keaton	El Buho	Una Americana
El Gallo	Un Negro	Una Joven

GALLO.- Kikiriquí.

Sale BUSTER KEATON con sus cuatro hijc de la mano.

BUSTER KEATON.- (Saca un poñal de madera y los mata). Pobres jitos míos.

GALLO.- Kikirikí.

BUSTER KEATON.- (Contando los cuerpos en tierra). Uno, dos, t y cuatro. (Coge una bicicleta y se va).

Entre las viejas llantas de goma y bic nes de gasolina, UN NEGRO come su sombre: de paja.

BUSTER KEATON.- ¡Qué hermosa tarde!

Un loro revolotea en el cielo neutro.

BUSTER KEATON.- Da gusto pasearse en bicicleta.

EL BUHO.- Chirri, chirri, chirri, chi.

BUSTER KEATON.- ¡Qué bien cantan los pajarillos!

EL BUHO.- Chirrrrrrrrrrrr.

BUSTER KEATON.- Es emocionante.

Pausa. BUSTER KEATON cruza inefable lc juncos y el campillo de centeno. El paisa je se achica entre las ruedas de la máqui na. La bicicleta tiene una sola dimensió: Puede entrar en los libros y tenderse en el horno del pan. La bicicleta de BUSTER KEATON no tiene el sillón de caramelo y -

y los pedales de azúcar, como quisieran - los hombres malos. Es una bicicleta como todas, pero la única empapada de inocencia. Adán y Eva correrían asustados si vieran - un vaso lleno de agua, y acariciarían, en cambio, la bicicleta de KEATON.

BUSTER KEATON.- ¡Ay amor, amor!

BUSTER KEATON cae al suelo. La bicicleta se le escapa. Corre detrás de dos grandes mariposas grises. Va como loco, a medio milímetro del suelo.

BUSTER KEATON.- (Levantándose). No quiero decir nada. ¿Qué voy a decir?

UNA VOZ.- Tonto.

Sigue andando. Sus ojos, infinitos y -- tristes como los de una bestia recién nacida, sueñan lirios ángeles y cinturones de seda. Sus ojos, que son de culo de vaso. - Sus ojos de niño tonto. Que son feísimos. Que son bellísimos. Sus ojos de avestruz. Sus ojos humanos en el equilibrio seguro de la melancolía. A lo lejos se ve Filadelfia. Los habitantes de esta urbe ya saben que el viejo poema de la máquina Singer puede circular entre las grandes rosas de los invernaderos, aunque no podrán comprender nunca qué sutilísima diferencia poética existe - entre una taza de té caliente y otra taza de té frío. A lo lejos brilla Filadelfia.

BUSTER KEATON.- Esto es un jardín. # NANCY. 1.D.

UNA AMERICANA con los ojos de celuloide viene por la hierba.

AMERICANA.- Buenas tardes.

BUSTER KEATON sonría y mira en "gros plan" los zapatos de la dama. ¡Oh, qué zapatos! - No debemos admitir esos zapatos. Se necesitan las pieles de tres cocodrilos para hacerlos.

BUSTER KEATON.- Yo quisiera...

AMERICANA.- ¿Tiene usted una espada adornada con hojas de mirto?

BUSTER KEATON se encoge de hombros y levanta el pie derecho.

AMERICANA.- ¿Tiene usted un anillo con la piedra envenenada?

BUSTER KEATON cierra lentamente los -- ojos y levanta el pie izquierdo.

AMERICANA.- ¿Pues entonces?

Cuatro serafines con las alas de gasa celeste bailan entre las flores. Las señoritas de la ciudad tocan el piano como si montaran en bicicleta. El vals, la luna y las canoas estremecen el precioso - corazón de nuestro amigo. Con gran sor-- presa de todos, el Otoño ha invadido el jardín, como el agua al geométrico te--- rrón de azucar.

BUSTER KEATON.- (Suspirando). Quisiera ser un cisne. Pero no puedo aunque quisiera. Porque ¿dónde dejaría mi sombrero? ¿Dónde mi cuello de pajarita y mi corbata de - moaré? ¡Qué desgracia!

UNA JOVEN, cintura de avispa y alto - cucuné, viene montada en bicicleta. Tiene cabeza de ruiseñor.

JOVEN.- ¿A quién tengo el honor de saludar?

BUSTER KEATON.- (Con una reverencia). A Buster Keaton.

LA JOVEN se desmaya y cae de la bicicleta. Sus piernas a listas tiemblan en el césped como dos cebras agonizantes. - Un gramófono decía en mil espectáculos a la vez: "En América no hay ruiseñores".

BUSTER KEATON.- (Arrodillándose). Señorita Eleonora, ¡perdóneme, que yo no he sido! ¡Señorita! (Bajo). ¡Señorita! (Más bajo). ¡Señorita! (La besa).

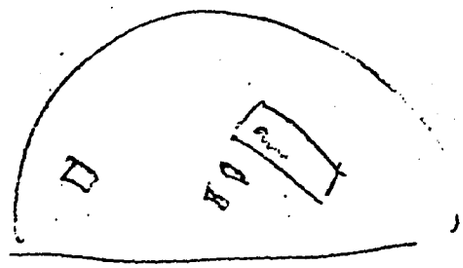
En el horizonte de Filadelfia luce la estrella rutilante de los policías.

LUCES.

6ª CUADRO.

14-20-21-29-32-33-35
36-40

Se puede abrir frente la costina, puesto que la actriz que falla, llega a tiempo.



Q U I M E R A

de Federico García Lorca.

Personajes

ENRIQUE – Hector. VIEJO – DANTES ARREOLA

MUJER ROSENDA. NIÑA – TARO

VOCES

PUERTA.

ENRIQUE.- Adiós.

SEIS VOCES.- (Dentro). Adiós.

ENRIQUE.- Estaré mucho tiempo en la sierra.

VOZ.- Una ardilla.

ENRIQUE.- Sí, una ardilla para tí y además cinco pájaros que no los haya tenido antes ningún niño.

VOZ.- No, yo quiero un lagarto.

VOZ.- Y yo un topo.

ENRIQUE.- Sois muy distintos, hijos. Cumpliré los encargos de todos.

VIEJO.- Muy distintos.

ENRIQUE.- ¿Qué dices?

VIEJO.- ¿Te puedo llevar las maletas?

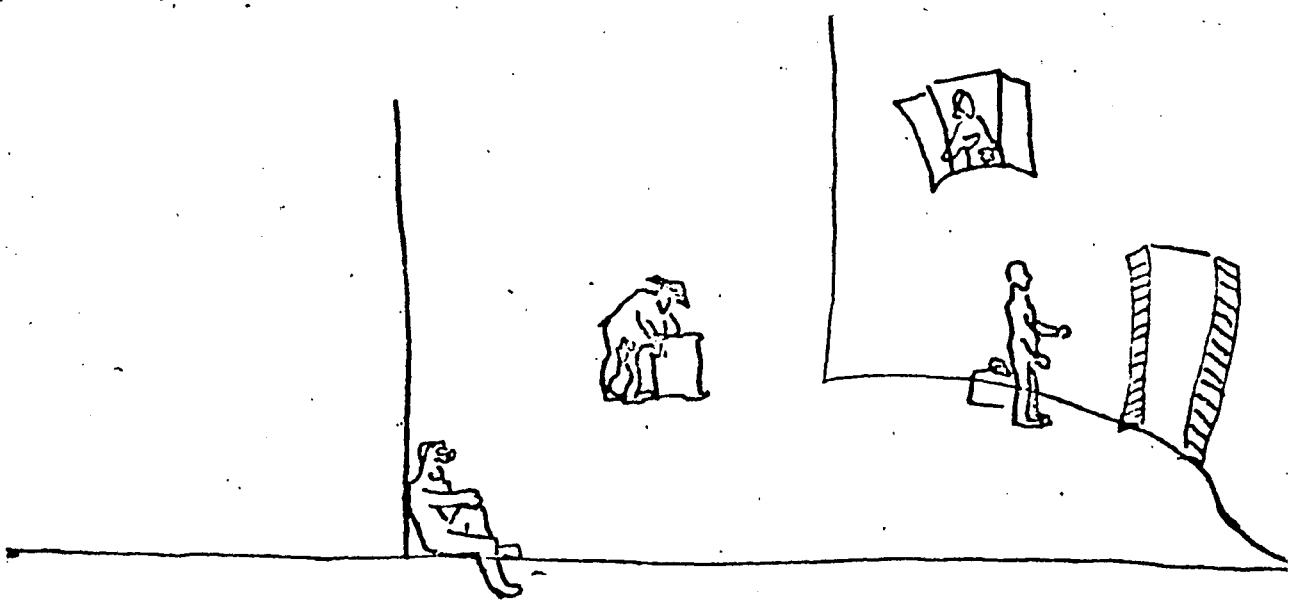
ENRIQUE.- No.

(Se oyen risas de niños).

VIEJO.- ¿Son hijos tuyos?

ENRIQUE.- Los seis.

VIEJO.- Yo conozco hace mucho tiempo a la madre de ellos, a t mujer. Estuve de cochero en su casa; pero si te confie so la verdad, ahora estoy mejor de mendigo. Los caball ¡jajajá! Nadie sabe el miedo que a mí me dan los caballos. Caiga un rayo sobre todos sus ojos. Guiar un coc es muy difícil. ¡Oh! Es dificilísimo. Si no tienes mie do, no te enteras, y si te enteras, no tienes miedo. ¡M ditos sean los caballos!



Los personajes permanecerán inmóviles hasta la salida de la niña.

ENRIQUE.- (Cogiendo las maletas). Déjame.

VIEJO.- No, no. Yo, por unas monedillas, las más pequeñas que tengas, te las llevo. Tu mujer te lo agradecerá. Ella no tenía miedo a los caballos. Ella es feliz.

ENRIQUE.- Vamos pronto. A las seis he de tomar el tren.

VIEJO.- ¡Ah, el tren! Eso es otra cosa. El tren es una tontería. Aunque viviera cien años yo no tendría miedo al tren. El tren no está vivo. Pasa y ha pasado... Pero los caballos ... Mira.

MUJER.- (En la ventana). Enrique mío. Enrique. No dejes de escribirme. No me olvides.

VIEJO.- ¡Ah, la muchacha! (Ríe). ¿Te acuerdas cómo saltaba la tapia, cómo se subía a los árboles sólo por verte?

MUJER.- Lo recordaré hasta que me muera.

ENRIQUE.- Yo también.

MUJER.- Te espero. Adiós.

ENRIQUE.- Adiós.

VIEJO.- No te aflijas. Es tu mujer y te ama. Tú la amas a ella. No te aflijas.

ENRIQUE.- Es verdad, pero me pesa esta ausencia.

VIEJO.- Peor es otra cosa. Peor es que todo ande y que el río sone. Peor es que haya un ciclón.

ENRIQUE.- No tengo ganas de bromas. Siempre estás así.

VIEJO.- Jajajá. Todo el mundo, y tú el primero, cree que lo importante de un ciclón son los destrozos que produce, y yo creo todo lo contrario. Lo importante de un ciclón...

ENRIQUE.- (Irritándose). Vamos. Van a dar las seis de un momento a otro.

VIEJO.- ¿Pues y el mar?... En el mar...

ENRIQUE.- (Furioso). Vamos, he dicho.

VIEJO.- ¿No se olvida nada?

ENRIQUE.- Todo lo dejo perfectamente organizado. Y además, a ti qué te importa. Lo peor de todo es un criado viejo, un -- mendigo.

VOZ 1a.- Papá.

VOZ 2a.- Papá.

VOZ 3a.- Papá.

VOZ 4a.- Papá.

VOZ 5a.- Papá;

VOZ 6a.- Papá.

VIEJO.- Tus hijos.

ENRIQUE.- Mis hijos.

NIÑA.- (En la puerta). Yo no quiero la ardilla. Si me traes l ardilla, no te querré. No me traigas la ardilla. No la quiere.

P. I.

VOZ.- Ni yo el lagarto.

VOZ.- Ni yo el topo.

NIÑA.- Queremos que nos traigas una colección de minerales.

VOZ.- No, no, yo quiero mi topo.

VOZ.- No, el topo es para mí... (Riñen).

NIÑA.- (Entrando). Pues ahora el topo va a ser para mi.

ENRIQUE.- ¡Basta! ¡Quedaréis contentos!

VIEJO.- Dijiste que eran muy distintos.

ENRIQUE.- Sí. Muy distintos. Afortunadamente.

VIEJO.- ¿Cómo?

ENRIQUE.- (Fuerte). Afortunadamente. (MUTIS)

VIEJO.- (Triste). Afortunadamente. (Salen).

MUJER.- (En la ventana). Adiós.

VOZ.- Adiós.

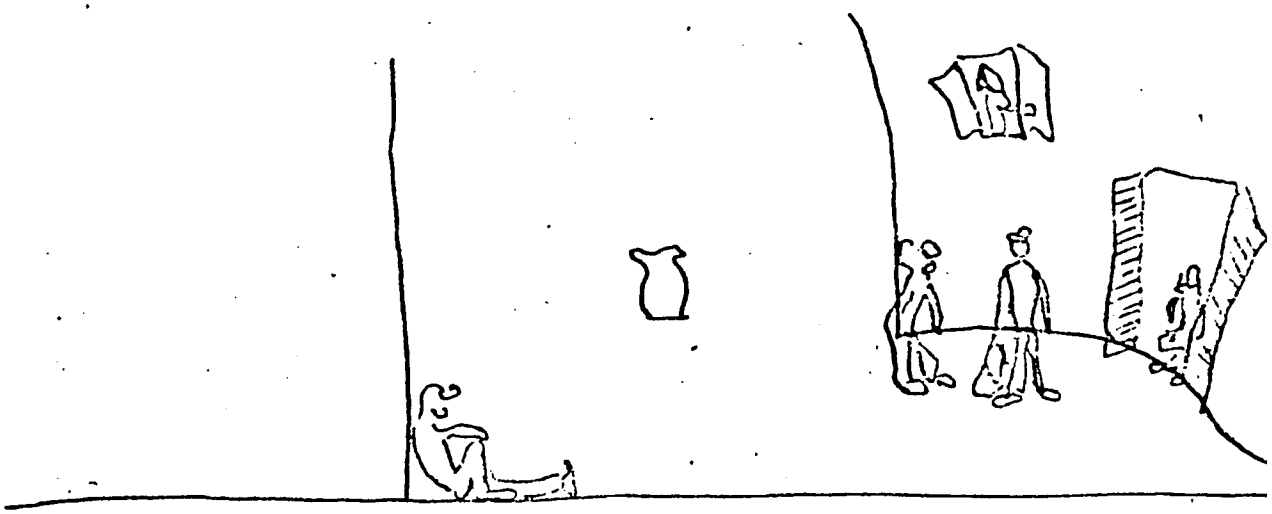
MUJER.- Vuelve pronto.

VOZ.- (Lejana). Pronto.

MUJER.- Se abrigará bien por la noche. Lleva cuatro mantas. Yo en cambio estaré sola en la cama. Tendré frío. El tiene ojos maravillosos; pero lo que yo amo es su fuerza. (Se desnuda). Me duele un poco la espalda. ¡Ah! ¡Si me pu-- diera despreciar! Yo quiero que él me desprecie... y me ame. Yo quiero huir y que me alcance. Yo quiero que me queme... que me queme. (Alto). Adiós, adiós... Enrique. Enrique... Te amo. Te veo pequeño. Saltas por las pie- dras. Pequeño. Ahora te podría tragar como si fueras un botón. Te podría tragar, Enrique...

NIÑA.- Mamá.

MUJER.- No salgas. Se ha levantado un viento frío. ¡He dicho - que no! (Entra. La luz huye de la escena).



NIÑA.- (Rápida). ¡Papáaa! ¡Papáaa! Que me traigas la ardilla. Que yo no quiero los minerales. Los minerales me rompe rán las uñas. Papáaa.

NIÑO.- (En la puerta). No-te-o-ye. No-te-o-ye. No-te-o-ye.

NIÑA.- Papá, que yo quiero la ardilla. (Rompiendo a llorar). - ¡Dios mío!-¡Yo quiero la ardilla! -YO QUIERO LA ARDILLA

COMODIN OSCURO

CUBITO (1/2 IZ.)

LUCES.

7º CUADRO.

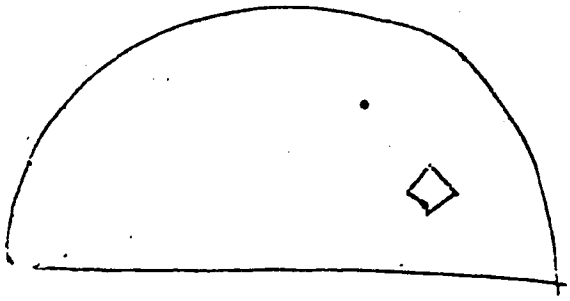
cuando acaba de hablar Amicola

32 en 50 → 20-21

Sale 32. y entran 20

20-21 — 32 en DIMER

SALE 32



ASI QUE PASEN CINCO AÑOS.

PERSONAJES: Niño. Gato.
Por la puerta de la izquierda aparece el NIÑO muerto con el GATO/ El NIÑO viene vestido de blanco, de primera --- comunión, con una corona de rosas blancas en la cabeza.- Sobre su rostro pintado de cera resaltan sus ojos y sus- labios de lirio seco. Trae un cirio rizado en la mano y- el gran lazo con flores de oro. El GATO es azul con dos eno mes manchas rojas de sangre en el pechito blanco gris y- en la cabeza. Avanza hacia el público. El NIÑO trae el - GATO cogido de una pata.

GATO.
Miau.
NIÑO.
Chisssss....
GATO.
~~Chisssx~~Miau.
Niño.

Toma mi pañuelo blanco.
Toma mi corona blanca.
No llores más.
GATO.
Me duelen las heridas
que los niños me hicieron en la espalda.
NIÑO.
También a mí me duele el corazón.
GATO.
¿Por qué te duele, niño, di?
NIÑO
Porque no anda.
Ayer se me paró muy despacito,
ruiseñor de mi cama.
Mucho ruido: ¡si vieras!... Me pusieron
con estas rosas frente a la ventana.

GATO.
¿Y qué sentías tú?
NIÑO.
Pues yo sentía
surtidores y abejas por la sala.
Me ataron las dos manos. ¡Muy mal hecho!
Los niños por los vidrios me miraban.
Y uh hombre con martillo iba clavando
estrellas de papel sobre mi caja.
(CRUZANDO LAS MANOS).
No vinieron los ángeles. No, Gato.
GATO.
No me digas más gato.
NIÑO.
¿No?
GATO.
Soy gata.
NIÑO.
¿Eres gata?
GATO. (MIMOSO)
Debiste conocerlo.
NIÑO.
¿Por qué?
GATO.
Por mi voz de plata.
NIÑO/(GALANTE)
¿No te quieres sentar?
GATO.
Sí. Tengo hambre.
NIÑO.
Voy a ver si te encuentro alguna rata.
(SE PONE A MIRAR DEBAJO DE LAS SILLAS. EL GATO, SENTADO EN UN TABURETE, TIEMBLA).

No te la comas entera. Una patita,
porque estás muy enferma.
GATO.
Diez pedradas
me tiraron los niños.
NIÑO.
Pesan como las rosas
que aprisionaron anoche mi garganta.
¿Quieres una?
(SE ARRANCA UNA ROSA DE LA CABEZA)
GATO. (ALEGRE)
Sí, quiero.
NIÑO.
Con tus manchas de cera, rosa blanca,
ojo de luna rota, me pareces
gacela entre los vidrios desmayada.
(SE LA PONE)
GATO.
¿Tú qué hacías?
NIÑO.
Jugar ¿y tú?
GATO.
¡Jugar!
Iba por el tejado, gata chata,
naricillas de hojadelata,
en la mañana
iba a coger los peces por el agua
y al mediodía
bajo el rosal del muro me dormía.
NIÑO
¿Y por la noche?
GATA. (ENFATICA)
Me iba sola.
NIÑO.
Sin nadie.

GATA.

Por el bosque.

NIÑO. (CON ALEGRIA)

Yo también iba, ¡ay!, gata chata, barata,
naricillas de hojadelata,
a comer zarzamoras y manzanas
y después a la iglesia con los niños
a jugar a la cabra.

GATA.

¿Qué es la cabra?

NIÑO.

Era mamar los clavos de la puerta.

GATA.

¿Y eran buenos?

(TRUENO LEJANO)

¡No, gata! Como chupar monedas.

(TRUENO LEJANO)

¡Ay! ¡Espera! ¿No vienen? Tengo miedo,
¿sabes? Me escapé de casa.

(LLORA)

Yo no quiero que me entierren.
Agremanes y vidrios adornan mi caja;
pero es mejor que me duerma
entre los juncos del agua.
Yo no quiero que me entierren. ¡Vamos pronto!

(LE TOMA DE LA PATA)

GATA.

¿Y nos van a enterrar? ¿Cuándo?

NIÑO.

Mañana,
en unos hoyos oscuros,
todos lloran. Todos callan.
Pero se van. Yo lo vi.
Y luego ¿sabes?

GATA.

¿qué pasa?

NIÑO.

Vienen a comernos.

GATA.

¿Quién?

NIÑO.

El lagarto y la lagarta
con sus hijitos pequeños, que son muchos.

GATA.

¿Y qué nos comen?

NIÑO.

La cara
con los dedos.
(BAJANDO LA VOZ)
y la cuca.

GATA. (OFENDIDA).

Yo no tengo cuca.

Niño.
(ENERGICO)
¡Gata!,
te comerán las patitas y el bigote.
(TRUENOS LEJÍSIMOS).

RELAMPAGOS BLANCO

Vámonos; de casa en casa
llegare(TRUENOS LEJÍSIMOS).
los caballitos del agua.
No es el cielo. Es tierra dura
con muchos grillos que cantan,
con hierbas que se menean,
con nubes que se levanatn,
con hondas que lanzan piedras
y el viento como una espada.
¡Yo quiero ser niño, un niño!
(SE DIRIGE A LA PUERTA DE LA DERECHA).

GATA.
Está la puerta cerrada.
Vámonos por la escalera.
NIÑO.
Por la escalera nos verán.
GATA.
Aguarda.
NIÑO.
¡Ya vienen para enterrarnos!
GATA.
Vámonos por la ventana.
NIÑO.
Nunca veremos la luz,
ni las nubes que se levantan,
ni los grillos en la hierba,
ni el viento como una espada.
(CRUZANDO LAS MANOS+.
¡Ay, girasol!
¡Ay, girasol de fuego!
¡Ay girasol!
GATA.
¡Ay clavelina del sol!
NIÑO.
Apagado va por el cielo.
Sólo mares y montes de carbón,
y una paloma muerta por la arena
con las alas tronchadas y en el pico una flor.
(CANTA).
Y en la flor una oliva,
y en la oliva un limón...
¿Cómo sigue?... No lo sé, ¿cómo sigue?
GATA.
¡Ay girasol!
¡Ay girasol de la mañanita!
NIÑO.
¡Ay clavelina del sol!

#BAJAR LUZ
DIMER= a 50
el otro Todo

(LA LUZ ES TENUE. EL NIÑO Y LA GATA, AGARRADOS, ANDAN A TIENTAS).

GATA.

No hay luz. ¿Dónde estás?

NIÑO.

Calla.

GATA/

¿Vendrán ya los lagartos, niño?

NIÑO.

No.

GATA.

¿Encontraste salida?

(LA GATA SE ACERCA A LA PUERTA DE LA DERECHA; SALE UNA MANO QUE LA EMPUJA HACIA ADENTRO).

GATA/. (DENTRO).

¡Niño! ¡niño! ¡niño!

(CON ANGUSTIA).

¡Niño, niño!

(EL NIÑO AVANZA CON TERROR, DETENIENDOSE A CADA PASO).

NIÑO. (EN VOZ BAJA).

Se hundió.

Le ha cogido una mano.

Debe ser la de Dios.

No me entierres. Espera unos minutos...

Mientras deshojo esta flor.

(SE ARRANCA LA FLOR DE LA CABEZA Y LA DESHOJA).

Yo iré solo, muy despacio,

después me dejarás mirar el sol...

Muy poco, con un rayo me contento.

(DESHOJANDO).

Sí, no, sí, no, sí.

VOZ.

No, no.

NIÑO.

Siempre dije que no.

(UNA MANO ASOMA Y ENTRA AL NIÑO, QUE SE DESMAYA/ LA LUZ, AL DESAPARECER EL NIÑO, VUELVE A SU TONO PRIMERO)...

TELON FINAL

Personaje: El Señor, la Señora.

((Calle. Dos ventanas, en la planta baja. En la de la izquierda, un señor toca la flauta)

SEÑOR (Cantando).- Si en lugar del corazón
un tren latiese en mi pecho,
a ciento veinte por hora
corriera mi tren en celo.

Y en una estación perdida,
¡ay! amor, por encontrarte,
a veces se detendría.

Ay amor, amor que corres,
sin amante y sin marido,
con dos maletas por alas
y por rienda un pañuelito.

Un pañuelo que aletea
en el andén olvidado,
¡ay! amor que corre y vuela,
¡ay! amor desmemoriado.

(Aparece una dama joven, que atraviesa la escena. Lleva dos pequeñas maletas en la mano).

SEÑORA.- ¡Taxi, taxi! Voy a perder mi tren. Es el tercer día que pierdo el tren.

SEÑOR.- Y es el tercer día que repito la misma canción, al verla pasar.

SEÑORA.- ¡Taxi, taxi!

SEÑOR.- Tres días seguidos que la oigo gritar, ¡taxi, taxi! , a pesar de que nunca pasa un taxi por esta calle.

SEÑORA.- ¡Taxi, taxi! Sólo tengo once minutos.

SEÑOR.- Ayer, por lo menos, tenía quince ¡y aún así perdió el tren!

SEÑORA.- Le prohibo que me dirija la palabra. Hace tres días que usted me sigue por todas partes. Ya estoy harta.

SEÑOR.- ¿Yo? ¿Yo la sigo? ¡Señora, jamás salgo de mi casa!

SEÑORA.- Es eso, precisamente, lo que le reprocho. Saberse seguida por un hombre visible y corpóreo, no es nada del otro mundo. Oímos sus pasos detrás de nosotras, a diez metros de distancia: es como si se hubiera comprado un eco y lo sacásemos a pasear, atado con un lazo. Eso es todo. Pero un hombre que todo el día nos sigue, únicamente con el pensamiento, eso, ¡eso es insoportable! Sabemos que no marcha detrás de nosotras y, sin embargo volvemos la cabeza. Dan ganas de rascarse la espalda. ¡Estoy harta! ¡Taxi!

SEÑOR.- Ya no le quedan sino nueve minutos.

SEÑORA.- ¡Nueve minutos! ¡Son muchos, nueve minutos! Usted no se imagina el número de cosas que se pueden hacer en nueve minutos. En nueve minutos acepté casarme con un hombre que apenas conocía. Y nueve minutos antes de la ceremonia, decidí no casarme.

SEÑOR.- Y hoy, nueve minutos antes de tomar el tren, vuelve a perderlo.

SEÑORA.- ¡Taxi! Tiene usted razón, es la fatalidad.

SEÑOR.- Y entonces, ¿qué va a hacer?

SEÑORA.- Volveré mañana. No por usted. Por el tren. Y no haré sino pasar. No me dé las gracias.

SEÑOR.- ¡Señora!

SEÑORA.- (deteniéndose) ¿Señor?

SEÑOR.- ¿Por qué quiere partir?

SEÑORA.- No soy yo la que quiere. A mi me gustaría deshacer mis maletas y no correr de un cuarto de hotel a la estación, de la estación a un cuarto de hotel. Todo eso me produce un cansancio horrible.

SEÑOR.- ¿Quizá le gustaría más tener una plancha eléctrica?

SEÑORA.- ¿Una plancha eléctrica?

SEÑOR.- Cuando se tiene una plancha, se compra una mesa. Cuando se tiene una mesa, hace falta una silla. Y apenas se tiene una silla, hace falta un departamento con puertas que se abren y se cierran. Y un marido para cerrar y abrir todas esas puertas.

SEÑORA.- ¿ De veras ?

SEÑOR.- Es indispensable. Usted encontrará todo eso en las "Nuevas Galerías", primera calle a la izquierda.

SEÑORA (soñando).- Si, quizá tiene usted razón. Después de todo, poseer una plancha debe ser hermoso.

SEÑOR.- Entonces, ¿por qué parte usted?

SEÑORA.- No me atrevo a decírselo.

SEÑOR.- Puede hacerme confidencias, puesto que no me conoce. Hablar a un desconocido, es como hablarse a si mismo. ¡Cuénteme!

SEÑORA.- Soy muy desdichada.

SEÑOR.- ¿Ama a alguien?

SEÑORA.- Peor que eso.

SEÑOR.- ¿Alguien la ama, a pesar suyo?

SEÑORA.- Ah, señor, es peor que eso. Hay gentes que no tienen memoria, hay gentes que no tienen proyectos. Yo, no tengo corazón. Y no es una manera figurada de hablar; exactamente es eso lo que me pasa. Un médico

me auscultó, luego un segundo, después un tercero; todos con estetoscopios, estatésfonos y teléfonos: ¡y no tengo corazón! Tengo otra cosa.

SEÑOR.- ¿Otra cosa en lugar de corazón?

SEÑORA.- Un canario.

SEÑOR.- ¡Un canario! Y yo que tengo horror a los pájaros enjaulados. Cada vez que veo uno, abro la jaula y el pájaro echa a volar. El impulso es más fuerte que yo.

SEÑORA.- ¡Señor, haga usted que mi canario se escape! Le juro q la vida de una mujer se vuelve imposible, apenas tiene un canario en lugar de corazón.

SEÑOR.- Es evidente.

SEÑORA.- Si tuviese un perro, estaría tranquila. Un perro es fi no nos abandona. Se instala, hecho una pelota, en un cojín y no da guerra Cuando hay invitados, se hace el interesante; luego, va a acostarse. ¡Ser maravilloso tener un perro en lugar de corazón! Pero un canario...

SEÑOR.- Le confieso que...

SEÑORA. (interrumpiendo).- ¿Sabe usted lo que es un canario?

SEÑOR.- Pues es... es...

SEÑORA (interrumpiendo).- No, señor, no es solamente un pajarit amarillo que hace cui, cui, cui, alzando el pico; es un personaje extraor nario, que tiene alas y las abre y quiere volar allá, siempre más allá.

SEÑOR.- Ahora me explico las maletas.

SEÑORA.- ¡Ay mis maletas!

SEÑOR.- Y sus nueve munutos.

SEÑORA.- ¿Mis nueve minutos?

SEÑOR.- Si, los nueve minutos que, primero, le bastaron para sarse y, después, para no casarse. Todo queda claro: es el canario.

SEÑORA.- ¡Ay, el canario!

SEÑOR.- Si no tuviese usted el canario, ¿tendría todavía deseos de tomar un tren?

SEÑORA.- Ni tren, ni barco, ni nada.

SEÑOR.- ¿Compraría la plancha eléctrica?

SEÑORA.- Con todas sus puertas y ventanas.

SEÑOR.- ¿Y el marido que las abre y las cierra?

SEÑORA.- ¿Por qué no?

SEÑOR.- Entonces, ¡los tres estamos salvados!

SEÑORA.- Cómo, ¿cuáles tres?

SEÑOR.- Usted, yo y el canario. Vamos a liberarnos los unos los otros; no será difícil. Bastará con abrir la jaula. El canario encontrará el aire libre, usted su plancha eléctrica y yo abriré todas las puertas de la casa. Al fin comprendo porque me sentía atraído por usted: se trataba, una vez más, de dar libertad a un canario.

SEÑORA.- Explíquese usted.

SEÑOR.- Mi vecino de pajarera es médico y ahora precisamente da consulta. Es una bendición para mí. Y para usted. Señora: el doctor la espera.

SEÑORA.- ¿ Y cómo es ese médico?

SEÑOR.- Laureado por la Facultad de Tolosa.

SEÑORA.- No es eso lo que le preguntaba.

SEÑOR.- Acaba de escribir una tesis sobre las vitaminas.

SEÑORA.- Eso es muy interesante, pero....

SEÑOR (recordando con esfuerzo).- Es un hombre alto... tirando a moreno, con ojos...negros. Ø 2ª Época

SEÑORA.- Los canarios son muy sensibles a los ojos negros. Antaño, los pajareros eran de ojos negros. ¡Bueno, me decido! Dejo mis maletas frente a su ventana y toco la puerta del doctor. Vuelvo enseguida.

SEÑOR.- Quisiera pedirle otra cosa...

SEÑORA.- Nos veremos más tarde.

SEÑOR.- Quisiera...

SEÑORA.- No me detenga, que siento que mi canario bate las alas.

SEÑOR.- Señora...

SEÑORA.- ¡ No, tengo miedo de echarme a volar! Hasta la vista señor.(Entra en la casa. El señor mira las maletas y se dirige a ella

SEÑOR.- (cantando).- Maletas, maletas,
ya no más suspiros,
maletas, maletas,
por el tren perdido.

Sin moverse un punto,
maletas, maletas,
viajarán conmigo,
soñarán despiertas.

Descansand maletas,
entornad los párpados,
que el viaje de amor
es de ojos cerrados.

(Se oye el ruido de un tren. Una de las maletas se echa a bailar, murmurando)

PRIMERA MALETA.- ¡No, no, y no!

SEÑOR (enojado).- ¿Qué?

SEGUNDA MALETA (moviéndose).- ¡No, no, no, no y no!

SEÑOR.- ¿Pero, por qué? ¿Que pasa? ## 2ª Corte

LAS DOS MALETAS CANTANDO (cantando).- El ruido del tren
que pasa a lo lejos
nos ha despertado.
Corazón viajero
ni cantos ni azores
lo hace prisionero.

SEÑOR.- ¡Eso no, señoras maletas! No hablen más de partur. Bastante trabajo me ha costado detener a su dueña.

LAS MALETAS (cantando).- Andenes, carreras,
danza de vagones,
patios desolados,
vagas extensiones
al alba entrevistas,
ruido de furgones
¡rieles donde cantan
nuestros corazones! X

SEÑOR.- ¡Un poco más de seriedad, señoras! Comprendo que el ruido de un tren les haga perder la cabeza, pero les ruego que piensen en que no se trata de una aventura sin importancia. (Se pone unos guantes blancos) Tengo la honra de pedirles la mano de su dueña.

LAS MALETAS.- ¡Déjenos reflexionar! Ø 3ª Corte

SEÑOR.- ¿Reflexionar? ¿Y para qué? En mi casa van a ser felices, muy felices. Les prometo que en verano dejaré la ventana abierta

Ø

para que puedan escuchar, dos veces al día, el paso del tren.

LAS MALETAS.- ¿Lo jura usted?

SEÑOR.- Lo juro

LAS MALETAS.- Entonces, ¡sí!

SENOR (se quita los guantes).- Gracias. (El ruido del tren se hace más y más débil).

LAS MALETAS (débilmente).- Volvió a suceder,
el tren ya se fué,
Dormiremos hoy,
¡mañana, al andén!

SEÑOR.- Muy bien, duerman, duerm an, es lo mejor, ¡Dios mío! que difícil es conquistar a una mujer dueña de tantas maletas. (Sale. Toma las maletas. Cuando se dispone a llevarlas a su casa, resuena un grito tras la ventana del médico. El señor queda inmóvil, con las maletas en la mano). ¿Qué pasa ahora? (Se abre la ventana del doctor. Aparece la joven dama).

SEÑORA.- Me he salvado.

SEÑOR.- ¿Su corazón?

SENORA.- Aquí está. (Le presenta una jaula con un canario).

SENOR (viendo al canario).- Desde el principio me imaginé que usted tenía un corazon adorable. Además, óigalo. (El canario canta).

SEÑORA (escucha con atención).- ¡ Qué extraño! No lo reconozco.

SEÑOR.- Uno jamás conoce su propio corazón.

SENORA.- Y no comprendo una palabra de lo que me dice.

SENOR.- En cambio, yo le entiendo muy bien. (El canario vuelve

a cantar. El señor interrumpe al canario y discute con él) ¿Ah, sí? ¿En serio? No, no... es imposible... no hay nada que eso. No hablemos más

SEÑORA.- ¿Qué es lo que dice?

SEÑOR.- Me pide que abra la puerta de su jaula. Pero, por primera vez en mi vida, me siento con autoridad ante un pájaro. (Al canario) Te quedarás en tu jaula, amigo mío. (A la señora(. Usted se queda, ¿verdad? Ya está decidido. Lo prometió.

SEÑORA.- Nunca más partiré.

SEÑOR.- ¿Se quedará aquí, en esta casa?

SEÑORA.- Para siempre. El doctor me persuadió. Me quedo con él.

SEÑOR.- ¡No era eso lo convenido! De ninguna manera. Yo me... yo le... (deja las maletas) yo había pedido su mano.

SEÑORA.- Seré su vecina. Eso es ya la mitad del matrimonio.

SEÑOR.- ¡Y pensar que ya me disponía a llevar sus maletas a casa!

SEÑORA.- Tráigalas aquí.

SEÑOR.- ¿A casa de mi vecino de pajarera, convertido en mi rival? Jamás. Por otra parte, no me doy por vencido. Retaré a duelo a ese doctor. Señora: siento que tenga un sable en el lugar del corazón.

SEÑORA.- Deme mis maletas y yo le daré un recuerdo.

SEÑOR.- ¡Con qué prisa vivimos! Hace once minutos apena nos conocíamos y ahora ya estamos en la hora de los recuerdos.

SEÑORA.- Enconces, ¿sí?

SEÑOR.- Aquí están sus maletas. (Se las da). Y ahora, mi recuerdo.

SEÑORA.- ¿Qué desea? Escoja.

SEÑOR.- Yo quisiera... (duda)

SEÑORA.- ¡Ande dígalo pronto!q

SEÑOR.- El canario.

VOZ DE HOMBRE (en el interior).- ¡Amanda, Amanda!

SEÑORA.- Adiós, señor.

SEÑOR.- Por lo menos, deme su canario. Lo he ganado a pulso.

SEÑORA.- ¿Que hará con él?

SEÑOR.- Colgaré la jaula en mi ventana. No podré vivir, dormir y respirar sin usted. La escucharé cantar día y noche.

SEÑORA.- Aquí está. (Le da la jaula y cierra la ventana).

SEÑOR.- (con la jaula en la mano).- Y ahora que estamos solo canta, mi canario. (Silencio) ¡Anda, canta, canta! Si tienes pico, es para cantar. (El canario canta el mismo son, pero más triste). ¿Qué?... No, de ninguna manera. Es imposible. No insistas. (El canario insiste). Después de todo, tienes razón. (Abre la jaula). ¡Si tienes alas, es para volar! (El canario se va). ¡Adios, canario! (Viéndolo desaparecer). No hay duda: cuando una mujer tiene un canario en lugar del corazón, lo mejor es dejarlo donde esté.

Telón

ANDARSE POR LAS RAMAS...

PERSONAJES: DON FERNANDO de las Siete y Cinco; TITINA, POLITO y LAGARTITO.

(Una mesa puesta. Sentado a la cabecera DON FERNANDO. TITINA a la derecha. POLITO, hijo de ambos, a la izquierda. Los tres visten de negro. El niño lleva un gran babero blanco. En el suelo, junto a POLITO, un gorro de arlequín, lleno de cascabeles. Al fondo, telones con fachadas de casas y tapias. DON FERNANDO come su sopa parsimoniosamente y de cuando en cuando mira su reloj. POLITO y TITINA, inmóviles, contemplan el fondo de su plato).

DON FERNANDO.- Las siete y siete y apenas han servido la sopa de poros. Sopa de poros: lunes. Lunes y mis mancuernillas checoeslovacas no aparecen.

TITINA.- Sí, hay alguien que hace aparecer y desaparecer las cosas. ¿Verdad, Polito?

POLITO.- Sí, mamá. Las mancuernillas son como los lunes, que aparecen y desaparecen.

DON FERNANDO.- ¡Basta de disparates!

TITINA.- Es cierto lo que dice Polito. ¿Ha pensado usted, Don Fernando de las Siete y Cinco, en dónde se meten los lunes?. En siete días no sabemos nada de ellos.

DON FERNANDO.- Los lunes son una medida cualquiera de tiempo... una convención. Se les llama lunes como se les podría llamar... pompónico.

TITINA (riéndose).- ¡Ay, Don Fernando, me hace usted reir!. ¡Ríete, Polito! ((Polito mira a su madre y se echa a reir)) Pompónico no sería nunca lunes. ¡Pompónico sería algo con borlas!.

POLITO.- ¡Borlas negras!

TITINA.- ¡Con coles moradas!

POLITO.- ¡Y zapatos picudos!

TITINA.- ¡Y una gran nariz azul!

POLITO.- ¡Cliendo una berengena!

DON FERNANDO ((los mira alternativamente. Da la última cucharada de sopa)).- Coman la sopa. ¿Cuánto tiempo voy a esperar para que sirvan los jitomates asados? (TITINA toca precipitadamente una campanilla de plata. DON FERNANDO se la arrebata)) ¡Polo, come tu sopa!

TITINA.- ¡Perdone, Don Fernando! ¿Quiere usted que traiga las tijeras para podar la risa?. Llevamos ya siete podas,- pero retoña...

DON FERNANDO.- ¿Tienen buen filo?

TITINA.- Sí, hoy pasó el afilador y nos trajo suerte...

DON FERNANDO (a Polito).- ¡Come la sopa!

TITINA.- ¡Una cucharadita por Titina, Polito!

((El niño sigue mirando el fondo de su plato))

DON FERNANDO.- ¿La vas a comer? ¿Sí o no? ¿No o sí? ¿Sí o no?

TITINA.- No se irrite, Don Fernando. En los platos de sopa a veces caen estrellas, hay eclipses, naufragios. Y los niños se quedan mirando.., ¿Quiere usted que le cuente cuando la luna cayó en mi plato de lentejas?...

DON FERNANDO.- ¡Justina, por Dios, Justina! Un poco de recato. ¿Sabes tú lo que es la luna? La luna es el pecado mortal; y mezclarla con un plato de humildes lentejas...

TITINA.- Así fué. Las lentejas están llenas de hierro; yo iba a ser soldado y pensé que no sería malo hacerme una armadura por dentro. Entonces, vi en mi plato...

DON FERNANDO.- Justina, no justifiques lo injustificable: que Polo no coma su sopa de poros. (Aire ausente de TITINA). ¡Justina, Justina! ¡Te estoy hablando! ¡Responde!

1er 139 Roja

(TITINA se levanta en silencio. Se dirige a los telones del fondo, saca de su pecho un gis rojo y sobre el muro dibuja una casita con su chimenea y su humito. Luego dibuja la puerta, la abre y desaparece. Encima del muro surgen las ramas de un árbol y TITINA, sentada en una de ellas. Mientras tanto DON FERNANDO habla, dirigiéndose a la silla vacía).

DON FERNANDO.- Siempre haces lo mismo. Te me vas, te escapas. No quieres oír la verdad. ¿Me estás oyendo?

TITINA.- (Desde el árbol). Lo oigo, Don Fernando.

DON FERNANDO (a la silla vacía).- La locura presidiendo mi casa. La fantasía a la cabecera de mi mesa. La mentira impidiendo que sirvan los jitomates asados de los lunes. Y tú sin oírme. Las mujeres viven en otra dimensión. La dimensión lunar. ¿Me oíste? ¡Luuunaaar!.

POLITO.- Titina te oye y también te oigo yo.

DON FERNANDO.- Se escapa; y lo peor de todo es que a ti también te enseña a irte por las ramas.

TITINA (desde el árbol).- Yo no creo que sea malo irse por las ramas...

DON FERNANDO (a la silla vacía).- Irse por las ramas es huír de la verdad.

TITINA.- Las ramas son verdad. Polito, dile a tu papá que las ramas son verdad.

POLITO.- Sí, son verdes y sirven para columpiarse, papá.

DON FERNANDO.- ¿Para columpiarse?. Aquí se trata de tener los pies honestamente en el suelo.

TITINA.- Las ramas tienen los pies en el suelo.

DON FERNANDO.- No respondas con sofismas, Justina.

TITINA.- No son sofismas. Las ramas tienen los pies en el suelo. ¿Pero dígame, Don Fernando, el suelo dónde tiene los pies?

DON FERNANDO.- ¡Qué idea tan atropellada!

POLITO.- ¡Es cierto! ¿En dónde están los pies del suelo?

TITINA.- El suelo es la cáscara que cubre al mundo... y debe tener...

POLITO.- Entonces el suelo tiene los pies en el mundo.

TITINA.- ¡Claro! ¿Y el mundo en donde tiene los pies, Don Fernando?

DON FERNANDO.- ¡El mundo no tiene pies!

POLITO.- ¿Entonces, cómo se sostiene?

DON FERNANDO.- El mundo gira en el espacio.

TITINA.- ¡El mundo baila un vals! ¿Ves qué hermoso, Polito? El mundo está bailando un vals. (Silba el Danubio Azul).

DON FERNANDO.- ¡Justina! ¿Van a reprobar a este niño en la escuela!.

(POLITO se pone el gorro de cascabeles y gira al compás del Danubio).

DON FERNANDO.- Hay que poner un hasta aquí.

TITINA.- ¿Un hasta aquí?

POLITO.- ¡Un hasta aquí!

DON FERNANDO.- Un hasta aquí. Un punto que ponga fin al desorden o Polito no será nunca ingeniero agrónomo.

POLITO.- Yo no quiero ser ingeniero agrónomo.

TITINA.- ¿Por qué no, Polito? Tendrás un anteojo para mirar a las estrellas y te irás a pascar por el campo vestido de explorador inglés.

DON FERNANDO (se levanta y habla a la silla). ¡Titina: voy a hablarte por última vez!

TITINA.- ¡Ay, Don Fernando, nunca diga usted por última vez!

DON FERNANDO.- Por última vez: ¿eres capaz de ser racional?

TITINA.- Nunca se es racional por última vez.

(DON FERNANDO sale. TITINA desaparece de las ramas, abre la puertecita que ella misma dibujó, saca un borrador, borra el dibujo y viene a sentarse a la mesa. DON FERNANDO vuelve con una maletita. Saca un gran pañuelo almidonado. Se enjuga una lágrima).

DON FERNANDO.- Adiós, Titina engañosa.

TITINA (enjugándose una lágrima).- Adiós, Don Fernando, cualquier golpe de viento me regresará a su casa.

DON FERNANDO.- Titina, no digas eso. Si vuelves, vuelve por tu propio pie. Quiero verte con los pies en el suelo, no -

Salen las cajas de Escena lado derecho
EL Obscuro

volando como una hoja. (Mira su reloj). Las siete y cincuenta y nueve y Polito no se come su sopa de poros.

(La escena oscurece. Al volver la luz, han desaparecido la mesa, DON FERNANDO y POLITO. TITINA con su maleta está sola en la calle).

TITINA.- ¡Aquí estoy, en las cinco esquinas!. En el centro de la estrella. Puedo viajar al pico de hielo: ver trineos, lobos hambrientos y rusos con kaftanes. ¡Quiero vodka! O puedo irme por el pico del Sur y llegar a esos mares a donde van los ingleses en pantalones cortos a beber whisky. ¡Quiero whisky!

(Aparece en escena un joven lechuguino, buscando a alguien. Descubre a TITINA).

LAGARTITO.- ¡Titina, no puedo creerlo! Tú vagando por las esquinas.

TITINA.- ¡Lagartito, yo quiero whisky!.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Whisky?

TITINA.- ¡Y vodka!.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Y vodka?

TITINA (fijándose en la corbata que lleva Lagartito).- Y que dejes de estrangularte con ese lazo verde.

LAGARTITO.- No es lazo ni es verde, es corbata.

TITINA.- Pues quítatela. Así dejarás ver el río.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Qué río?

TITINA.- El de tu garganta.

LAGARTITO.(se quita la corbata y se abre el cuello de la camisa). ¿Y a ti te gusta mi río?

TITINA.- Yo soy fluvial. A mí me gustan todos los ríos y sus — nombres. Por eso me gustaba la casa de Don Fernando, a - las orillas del Lerma.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Y cual río te gusta más, el mío o el Lerma?

TITINA.- Los dos, los dos corren y llevan garzas y estrellas. - ¿Y a ti te gusta el vodka?

LAGARTITO.- El vodka no es un río, Titina.

TITINA.- No, pero si lo bebes llegas al Neva.

LAGARTITO.- Estás borracha, Titina. (Cerrándose el cuello de la camisa muy serio). Voy a llevarte a tu casa.

((TITINA se le queda mirando; despacio se dirige al muro, saca su gis rojo, dibuja la casita

LAGARTITO ((interrumpiéndola).- Justina, no quieres ent
digo que una señora necesita algo más que un ár

LAGARTITO (dirigiéndose al lugar que ella ocupaba).- Debes oír-

LAGARTITO (dirigiéndose al lugar que ella ocupaba).- Debes oír-

me, Titina. Debes oír a la razón. Te hablo por tu bien. ¿Pero no me oyes? ¿Crees que es posible vagar así por — las calles? Suelta como una perrita callejera.... Y aun las perritas callejeras tienen al menos un árbol para levantar la patita y...

TITINA (desde el árbol).- También yo tengo un árbol.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Tú?

TITINA.- Sí, yo. En cambio tú y Don Fernando no tienen un árbol para levantar la patita y...

LAGARTITO ((interrumpiéndola).- Justina, no quieres entenderme; digo que una señora necesita algo más que un árbol para

levantar la patita y...

TITINA.- Un árbol para levantar la patita y... es más que suficiente. Pero tú no lo sabes. Tú no sabes sino recorrer oficinas, calles y señoras.

LAGARTITO.- Nunca he recorrido señoras, Titina.

TITINA.- Peor para tí. Yo creía que las habías andado a todas.

LAGARTITO.- Justina, tú no respetas nada.

TITINA.- ¿Es falta de respeto recorrer señoras?.

LAGARTITO.- ¡Claro!

TITINA.- Entonces, los lunes son pompónicos.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Qué dices? Un lunes es un lunes.

TITINA.- ¿Nunca te has asomado a ver lo que es un lunes?

LAGARTITO.- Nadie puede asomarse a un lunes.

TITINA.- Entonces nadie puede asomarse a ti.

LAGARTITO (angustiado).- ¿Y por qué no?

TITINA.- Porque no quieres ser lunes.

LAGARTITO.- ¿Y si yo fuera lunes, qué sería?

TITINA.- Serías después de la fiesta.

LAGARTITO.- Y antes de la fiesta.

TITINA.- Si eres lunes, eres toda la fiesta, porque estás entre la de ayer y la de mañana.

LAGARTITO.- ¡Titina, yo quiero ser lunes!

TITINA.- Pues eres lunes, Lagartito, eres el principio...

LAGARTITO.- ¿El principio de la semana?

TITINA.- El principio del viaje. Primero hay que caminar tu - perfil de media luna y desde allí viajar a las estre-- llas, para llegar el domingo al cielo del zócalo. Tú -

eres eso, Lagartito: una estrella fugaz, lanzada en un cohete por la mano de un borracho, viajando por el cielo del domingo. También yo soy una estrella del mismo cartucho. Por eso somos lunes. Así empieza la semana, con las estrellas caídas en la noche sobre el zócalo.- ¿En dónde quieres caer tú, Lagartito?

LAGARTITO.- A donde caigas tú.

TITINA.- No te creo. A ver, ¿en una cornisa de la catedral?

LAGARTITO.- Sí, en una cornisa de la catedral. Allí estaremos los dos, juntos como dos palomas de piedra.

TITINA.- Pero yo no caí en una cornisa de la catedral.

LAGARTITO.- Yo caeré en donde tú caíste.

TITINA.- A ver: ¿en el asta de la bandera que está en el balcón central del Palacio?

LAGARTITO.- Sí, en el asta de la bandera. Desde allí, como dos confetis, vemos juntos los desfiles del 16 de septiembre y giramos cuando los ejércitos pasan bajo nosotros...

TITINA.- ¡Ay, Lagartito, no hagas trampas! Yo no caí en el asta de la bandera.

LAGARTITO.- ¿No comprendes que yo caí en donde tú caíste?

TITINA.- Eso no es cierto. ¿Caí en una fuente?

LAGARTITO.- En una de las cuatro fuentes. Estamos en sus aguas: estrellas gemelas, azules, persiguiendo las manos de los niños y jugando con las cáscaras de frutas que echan los boleros.

TITINA.- Yo no estoy en una fuente, Lagartito. Si no lo adivinas, es que no has caído todavía.

LAGARTITO.- Pero voy cayendo. Hazme una seña, dime donde caíste tú.

TITINA.- Sería una trampa y el lunes sería sopa de poros.

LAGARTITO.- Eso sí que no. El lunes no es sopa de poros. El lunes somos nosotros, estrellas caídas en la noche del domingo. Algunas caen en las aceras, otra a media calle, otras en los balcones. Una que otra cae en las copas de los árboles. ¡Hay tan pocos árboles en el zócalo! Debería haber uno verde, copudo, ancho como el mundo y allí caeríamos los dos entre sus ramas.

TITINA.- ¡Ahí caí yo, Lagartito! Tú un poquito afuera, sobre la banqueta.

LAGARTITO.- Déjame subir a sus ramas.

TITINA.- No se puede; cada quien cae en donde debe caer.

LAGARTITO.- Por tí puedo volver a las manos del cohetero. Puedo volver a las manos del borracho. Esta vez no erraría la caída.

TITINA.- No se puede volver a las manos del cohetero. Ya quemaste tu viaje por el ciclo del zócalo.

LAGARTITO.- Entonces, déjame que te vea desde la banqueta.

TITINA.- ¡Mírame, Lagartito!

(LAGARTITO se vuelve, la mira entre las ramas y se acerca).

LAGARTITO.- ¡Dame la mano, Titina!

(TITINA alarga el brazo, LAGARTITO le toma la mano).

TITINA.- Así podríamos estar por los siglos de los siglos.

LAGARTITO.- Así estaremos por los siglos de los siglos.

TITINA.- Yo cogiéndote la mano desde el árbol de mi casa, a ti, que eres la estrella más azul del cartucho del cohetero.

LAGARTITO.- Y tú la estrella cuyos cinco picos son más blancos que la estrella más blanca salida del cartucho del cohetero.

(Pausa. Pasa un señor con una gran cartera. Pasa una señora. Ambos miran a LAGARTITO. Pausa. La luz decrece. Vuelve a pasar el señor. LAGARTITO lo mira. Pasa la señora, viendo fijamente a LAGARTITO. El vuelve el rostro para verla).

TITINA.- Tus pies, Lagartito, están echos para recorrer aceras, oficinas y señoras. Tus pies y tus ojos.

(La escena se oscurece del todo. Pausa. Se ilumina de nuevo. En las ramas del árbol está TITINA, acomodada como un pájaro. Pasa DON FERNANDO muy serio, de negro, con una guitarra. Canta:)

DON FERNANDO.- ¡Uy, Uy, Uy, que iguana tan fea!
¡Uy, Uy, Uy, que iguana tan fea!,
Que se sube al árbol
Y lo zarandea...

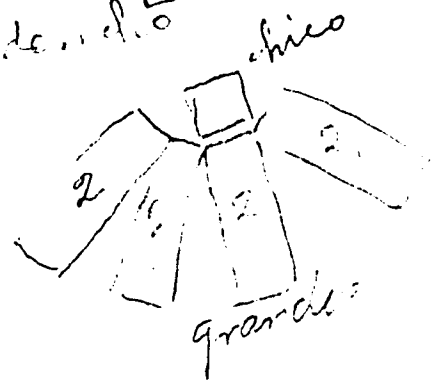
(Pasa LAGARTITO con su corbata puesta, del brazo de la señora).

LAGARTITO.- No te andes por las ramas, Uy, Uy, Uy.

2 do Cuadro

- la muralla -

chico 8 casas grandes
2 chicas



ojo

En Escena (2) Blanca (pregunta) 2do Cuadro -
4 Caballeros. Andaluz por las ramas
Pumar - Zurrola - Tara -
Stop en Ibañez
4 - H.
1 - M.

Toda la
mensajería

~~Pura Blanca~~
~~LA MURALLA~~
Los pilares de la Luz

PERSONAJES: BLANCA, RUBI, CUATRO CABALLEROS Y EL CABALLERO ALAZAN. - Pnev -
Castaño.
Fernández

Pnev
Voz de Rubí Dentro

(Un cielo azul claro. Una torre, rodeada por una muralla sostenida por enormes pilares. Silencio. BLANCA asoma por lo alto de la muralla. Mira en todas direcciones, haciéndose una visera con las manos).

BLANCA.- ¡Nada!

VOZ DE RUBI.- (Desde dentro). ¿Qué buscas, Blanca? ¿Qué miras con tus ojos redondos de paloma?

BLANCA.- ¡Horizontes! (Sigue mirando).

RUBI.- ¡Blancaaa!

BLANCA.- ¡Ya voy, amor! (Salta encima de la muralla, y se pasea alrededor de la torre. Abre su sombrilla roja).

CABALLERO I (entrando).- ¡La luna, con el sol en la mano! (Blanca lo mira y sonríe). ¡Tanta luz! ¡Tantas luces! Ardo: ¡me deslumbro!

BLANCA ((jugando con su sombrilla)).- ¿Y no te da miedo quemarte, hermoso?

CABALLERO I.- Mi corazón no cesará de arder por tí, reflejo de reflejos.

BLANCA.- ¿Y si te incendia todo? ¿Si sólo queda de ti un montoncito de cenizas?

CABALLERO I.- Mi corazón es incandescente.

BLANCA.- ¡Quiero verlo! Prenderlo a mi pecho, iluminando mi garganta.

CABALLERO I.- Es tuyo, Blanca. Baja por él.

BLANCA.- Nunca podré salir, ni bajar de esta torre. Mi marido la construyó para guardarme. Catorce muros que envuelven otro catorce muros me defienden.

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡Blanca! Cuello de paloma, ¿qué haces?

BLANCA.- ¡Ya voy! ¡Estoy viendo un paisaje incandescente! (Hace ademán de irse).

CABALLERO I.- ¡No desaparezcas todavía, las llamas de mi corazón amenazan matarme!

BLANCA.- (Volviéndose hacia él). ¡Amo el fuego! Soy como las salamandras: no me quema.

CABALLERO I.- Si tocaras mi corazón, arderías de arriba a abajo.

BLANCA.- (Sentándose en la muralla). ¡Quiero ver tu corazón en llamas! ¡Préstamelo! ¡Quiero arder de arriba a abajo! Mi llamarada sobre la torre iluminaría la ciudad. ¡Préstame tu ardiente corazón!

CABALLERO I (Se saca el corazón, en el cual arden tres llamitas: una azul, otra roja y la última blanca).- ¡Tómalo, Blanca! ((Extiende la mano ofreciendo el corazón. Blanca trata de alcanzarlo sin conseguirlo)).

BLANCA.- ¡Échamelo! No se me escapará: de niña jugaba muy bien a la pelota.

CABALLERO I (lanzando el corazón).- ¡Ahí va, bólido, cometa!

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡Blanca!, ¿qué haces?

BLANCA a RUBI (cogiendo el corazón).- Cazo cometas en el aire. (Mira el corazón). ¿Quieres que arda por la cabeza? (Se coloca el corazón en el pelo).

CABALLERO I.- ¡Sí, que arda tu divina cabeza!

BLANCA.- (Quitándose el corazón del pelo). Mejor empiezo a arder por los pies. Así, cuando el fuego llegue a mi garganta, tendré un hermoso collar de llamas. ¡Nadie habrá llevado alhaja tan peligrosa! (Coloca el corazón en la hebilla de su zapato).

CABALLERO II (al entrar, saca su corazón).- ¡Blanca: deja que mi corazón arda en tu incendio! (Lanza su corazón, disco de plata. Blanca lo coge al vuelo).

BLANCA.- ¡Este es un corazón plateado!

CABALLERO II.- Ya no queda de él sino el fantasma.

BLANCA (mirándolo al transluz).- ¡Qué pálido! Parece una luna disecada.

CABALLERO II.- Hace ya mucho que dejó de latir. ¿Recuerdas la primera vez que pasó por esta muralla? Desde entonces la sangre lo ha abandonado.

BLANCA.- ¡Pobre fantasma! Estará conmigo hasta que arda mi último rizo. Después, almas en pena los dos, iremos a espantar a los arrieros del camino.

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡Blanca, paloma reflejada en un río!, ¿qué haces?

BLANCA.- (Prendiéndose el corazón al pecho). Adornarme para ir al más allá.

CABALLERO III (entra y apresuradamente saca su corazón ya muy - viejo, que tiene la forma de un zapato usado. Lo lanza y Blanca lo recoge).

BLANCA.- ¡Qué humilde! Es un corazón de pobre. ¡Ven aquí, que no por eso dejarás de arder conmigo!

CABALLERO III.- Esperaba ese gesto de ti. Mi corazón ha caminado mucho, ha dado mil vueltas a tu torre y a tu rostro. Se ha perdido en el bosque de tus cabellos, ha recorrido los senderos azules de tus sienes, el borde de musgo de tus párpados, el mapa infinito de tu frente, el jardín submarino de tu oreja, la profundidad de los valles de tu mano, la pendiente vertiginosa de tu empeine, los arcos frutales de tu espalda. Y a fuerza de andar y andar por los caminos dibujados por tu voz, se ha ido gastando hasta convertirse en un zapato viejo.

VOZ DE RÙBI.- ¡Blanca, baja, que te traigan tus pies rosados de - paloma!

BLANCA.- Llegaré a ti con un zapato viejo que conoce los vericuetos de mis palabras y los parajes secretos de las plantas de mis pies.

CABALLERO IV (entrando precipitadamente).- ¡Antes que desaparezcas oh huidiza, acepta también mi ofrenda! (Se saca el corazón, que es un pan de muerto con dos velitas, y lo lanza).

BLANCA.- ¿Tiene canela? (Le da un mordisco).

CABALLERO IV.- Tiene todas las especies. Yo mismo lo hice. Tus deudenes lo mataron y con sus restos preparé esta ofrenda de - día de Muertos.

BLANCA.- Ahora arderá conmigo, arderá con nosotros. (Se pone el pan como corona)) ¡Esperemos el incendio!

VOZ DE RUBI.- Blanca, ¿qué esperas?

BLANCA.- ¡Espero el fuego! ¡El fuego! ¡Arderé como una pila sin Santa Juana! (Mira en silencio a los cuatro caballeros qu la miran). Siento un calorcito en el empeine. ¿Ardo?

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¡Sí! ¡Arde, Blanca! ¡Arde!

BLANCA.- En la seda de mi media hay un humito.

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¡Arde, Blanca! ¡Ardamos todos! ¡No hagas má larga la espera! (Saltan de entusiasmo). ¡Que arda la tor ¡Que arda la ciudad! ¡Arde, Blanca, arde!

BLANCA.- ¡Rubiiii! ¡Socorro! ¡Estoy en llamas!

RUBI.- (Aparece sobre la muralla con su hermosa cabeza de caball Los caballeros se miran entre sí, se quedan silenciosos y corren a resguardarse bajo la muralla). ¿Dónde está el fu go?

BLANCA ((mostrándole el pie)).- ¡Mira!

RUBI.- (Sopla y apaga el corazoncito en llamas). Era apenas la ch pita de un cigarro. ¿Estabas fumando? (Rubí coge a Blanca de la mano y desaparecen adentro de la muralla. Un instante después, Rubí vuelve y recoge la sombrilla que había qu dado abandonada. El escenario queda casi a obscuras).

LOS CABALLEROS ((se cogen de la mano, hacen la ronda y cantan)):

Doña Blanca está cubierta
de piñares de oro y plata
romperemos un pilar

para ver a Doña Blanca. ¿Quién es ese.....?

((Al decir esto se interrumpen, pues entra a escena el CABALLERO ALAZÁN con su hermosa cola dorada. En la mano -- lleva una lanza. El CABALLERO ALAZÁN mira en su derredor, caracolea un poco, mostrando la tupida crin de la cola y queda frente a la torre, con su lanza en ristre).

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¿Qué busca este insensato?

((ALAZÁN contesta con un golpe de lanza sobre el muro).

VOZ DE BLANCA.- ¿Quién golpea las piedras altas de mi casa?

CABALLERO I.- ¡Un indiscreto!

CABALLERO II.- ¡Un malnacido!

CABALLERO III.- ¡Alguien que intenta derribar la obra de Don Rubí

CABALLERO IV.- ¡Un malandrín!

((ALAZÁN da otro golpe a la muralla).

BLANCA.- ¿Es el tambor del Juicio Final?

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¡Un arrogante, con rabo de mamarracho! ¡Nunca vimos por aquí esperpento semejante!

VOZ DE BLANCA.- ¿Su figura es tan siniestra como sus golpes?

((ALAZÁN da otro golpe).

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- Peor que un sicofante disfrazado de filólogo

BLANCA.- ((Asoma la cabeza por encima de la muralla y ve al Caballero Alazán con asombro. El Caballero Alazán alza el rostro a su vez y la mira. Blanca sonría). ¿Qué deseas? Aquí no hay entrada y mi marido olvidó poner un aldabón. No recibimos visitas. (Pausa). ¡Qué hermosa cola alazana tienes

¿Es el camino por donde se pone el sol? (Alazán no contesta; la sigue mirando). ¿A quién buscas con esos ojos terribles?

ALAZAN (humildemente).- Me busco a mí.

BLANCA.- Pues sigue las huellas dejadas en el polvo por tu hermosa cola de oro.

ALAZAN.- Hace mucho que descifro el laberinto escrito por ella. - Todos esos geroglíficos, trazados en el agua, en los jardines y en el aire, me han traído hasta aquí.

BLANCA.- ¿Y por eso golpeas mi casa?

ALAZAN.- Golpeo a este muro que me cubre al mundo, que me aparta de mí mismo. Debo ver que guarda.

BLANCA.- Me guarda a mí. Pero no es a mí a quien buscas.

ALAZAN.- ¡Quizás! ¡Quizás! Para saberlo debo entrar. (Vuelve a dar golpes).

BLANCA.- Si es a mí a quien buscas, mírame desde allí, y no golpees más estos pilares.

ALAZAN.- Mientras más te miro, menos te veo. Tendría que verte adtro de mi corazón.

BLANCA.- ¡Nunca he sido más rica en corazones! Con el tuyo haré - cinco de corazones. ¡Déjame que lo vea! El corazón es tan variado como la calle Madero. ¡Hay de todo, hasta zapatos! ¿Tu corazón es como San Francisco?

ALAZAN.- Mi corazón no se enseña. Hay que visitarlo por dentro y no tiene puerta de salida. Es un palacio deshabitado.

BLANCA.- ¡Un palacio!

ALAZAN.- Con largas galerías jamás pisadas, con espejos vírgenes

de rostros extraños. Si te miraras en ellos, encontrarías el rostro que perdiste por haberte reflejado en espejos - contaminados de narices que no eran las tuyas.

BLANCA.- ¿Y en tu espejo sería más bonita?

ALAZAN.- (da otro golpe y cae un pilar).- No sé, serías tú.

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡Blanca! ¿Qué ruido es ése?

BLANCA.- ¡Una lluvia de estrellas!

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¡Un pilar, señor! ¡Un pilar!

BLANCA.- ¿Y cómo sería yo?

ALAZAN.- Como yo.

BLANCA.- Y tú ¿ya te has mirado? ¿Cómo eres tú?

ALAZAN.- Nunca me he visto. Te dije antes que me andaba buscando.

BLANCA.- Y si tú te miraras ¿qué encontrarías?

ALAZAN.- A ti.

BLANCA.- (Desilusionada). ¿A esta cara contaminada de narices?

ALAZAN.- ¡No! A tu rostro anterior a tu sombrilla roja.

BLANCA.- Odio a mi sombrilla roja. (Tira la sombrilla roja al interior de la torre. Alazán da otro golpe y cae otro pilar con mayor estrépito).

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡Qué mañana desapacible! ¿Qué ruido es ése?

BLANCA.- Mi sombrilla roja, Rubí.

CORO DE CABALLEROS.- ¡Un caballero desbocado!

BLANCA.- ¡Es inútil que te busques, Alazán! Deja en pié esta torre acueducto por el cual corro yo por las mañanas, como el agu que deshace la sed de las ciudades.

ALAZAN.- (Dando otro golpe). El signo de mi cola apunta hacia est torre. (Cae otro pilar).

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¿Blanca, no cesará nunca este furioso ruido?

BLANCA.- ¡Hay un derrumbe de narices, Rubí! ¡Se me están cayendo todas!

ALAZAN.- Debajo encontrarás las tuyas, finas como la quilla de un velero.

BLANCA.- Yo no tengo narices, Alazán. Nunca las tuve. Es inútil que las busques entre los escombros. (Los pilares caen con estrépito. Blanca desaparece).

VOZ DE BLANCA.- ¡Rubí, huyamos! ¡La casa se me está cayendo encima! ¡Ha caído sobre nosotros una montaña de narices!

VOZ DE RUBI.- ¡No hay torre! ¡No hay Blanca! ¡No hay Rubí! Todo era el reflejo de un espejo. Ahora se ha roto y ya no somos más. Sus astillas reflejan otros soles. (Reina un gran silencio. Alazán penetra en las ruinas de la torre. Hay un espejo roto; a un lado, entre el polvo, la sombrilla roja y los trajes de Rubí y de Blanca, vacíos y viejos.

CABALLERO I.- ¡El loco!

CABALLERO II.- ¡Se escaparon!

CABALLERO III.- ¡Le negó su corazón!

CABALLERO IV.- ¡Ah, el tacaño!

(Salen los cuatro. Sobre uno de los fragmentos del espejo aparece una paloma. Alazán la coge, la posa sobre su lanza y la contempla).

ALAZAN.- Ven aquí, copa de espuma, forma perfecta del granizo, entra: que te reciba mi corazón. (Se la guarda en el pecho).

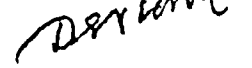
acto 1º

T E L O N

2° Dedo

silla

derecha



(3-A) - 2do Pato 13-SILLAS-5 lado izq
6-H } Encasecend LATERALES Y ULTIMA 7 - lado derecho
3-M } DIABLA-BLANCA 1 - Escena
LA VIDA AIRADA · Prodenio

BAILE I. ojo ⇒ PONER marcas rojas

MAESTRO: Fernández manola

La Vaquera
Gitanilla - Juan Redondo
Argentina - La Estepona
Perico de Soria
Rosita - La Rironda
Móstoles
Obregón
Granada

¡Todo se lo muque el tiempo,
los años todo lo mascan,
poco duran los valientes,
mucho el verdugo los gasta.
Son nuestras vidas un soplo;
hácennos grande ventaja
las vidas de los corchetes:
que de cien mil soplos pasan.
Reinando en Andalucía
Butrón el de Salamanca,
so el poder de la Villodres,
nació Santurde el de Ocaña.
Más hombres asió que el vino;
más corrió que las matracas;
más robó que la hermosura;
más pidió que las demandas.
Fueron galgos del verdugo
que le trujeron la caza,
Móstoles el de Toledo,
Obregón el de Granada.
¡Quién vió a Perico de Soria,
sastre de vidas humanas,
matar con un agujón
más hombres que el beber agua!
Mandáronle encordelar
los señores la garganta,
y, oliendo las entrepiernas
al verdugo, perdió el habla.
Pasaron estos jayanes,
y los que siguen su manga
por ellos, con vino tinto,
en lutada sed arrastran,
y, entre lágrimas dormidas

Aparece = Horca y lazo

por sus cuerpos y sus almas,
hacen el cabo de tragos,
y el túmulo, de las tazas.
Con la muerte de estos vientos
el mundo se quedó en calma;
mas toda pluma es ventosa,
y todo alguacil la saja.
Juan Redondo fué soltero;
tuvo una hija bastarda,
que llaman la Vaquería,
mujer de buena ganancia.
Chiquitico era de cuerpo
y grande en el corazón:
astilla de otros valientes;
chispa de todo furor.
Mató a su padre y su madre,
y un hermanito el mayor;
dos hermanas que tenía
puso al oficio trotón.
Hecho está tierra el buen viejo,
y, con todo, no se hallan
sin sus bailes los tablados,
sin sus coplas las guitarras.
Y para que no se acabe
su familia ni su casta,
y porque los gustos tengan
rumbo, fiesta, baile y chanza,
en la ciudad de Toledo,
donde los hidalgos son,
nacido nos ha un bailito,
nacido nos ha un bailón.

TODOS: "Porque veas que sabemos
de memoria la lición,
toca, que cuanto tocares
será la dotrina de hoy".

LA VAQUERÍA: Gusto y valentía
dinero y juego
tiene la que no admite
prometimientos.

LA PIRONDA: Dígalo Rastrojo,
que, de prudente,
de contado paga
lo que le quieren.

LA CAPONA: Helo por do viene
mi Juan Redondo,
con su cruz y sus armas
en el de a ocho.

LA PIRONDA: Dime, ¿qué señas tiene
tu enamorado?

LA VAQUERÍA: Es como un oro lindo,
doble y cruzado.
Dale, Perico;
no digo listones:
cadenas, digo.

LA PIRONDA: Dale, muchacho;
que con darle camina
todo ganado.

LA CAPONA: Háganse a zaga;
que se ahorcan las mulas
con quien no paga.

TODOS: De la Carretería
el baile es este;
camino carretero
fué darlas siempre.

LA PIR. y LA VAQ.: Helas, helas por do vienen
la Corruja y la Carrasca,

MAESTRO: a' más no poder mujeres,
hembras de la vida airada.
Mortales de miradura

Pan-Derecha
Maripisca

y ocasionadas de cara,
el andar a lo escocido,
el mirar a lo del hampa.

CORRUJA:

De las de la hoja
soy flor y fruto,
pues a los talegos
tiro de puño.

CARRASCA:

Tretas de montante
son cuantas juego;
a diez manos tomo
y a dos peleo.

MAESTRO:

Maripisca

Luego acedada de rostro
y ahigada de cara,
un tarazón de mujer,
una brizna de muchacha,
entró en la escuela del jueg
Maripizca la Tamaña,
por quien Ahorca-borricos
murió de mal de garganta.

MARIPIZCA:

Llamo uña arriba
a cuantos llamo,
y al recibo los hiero
uñas abajo.
Para el que me embiste
pobre y encueros,
siempre es mi postura
puerta de hierro.

MAESTRO:

Rebosando valentía
entró Santurde el de Ocaña,
zaino viene de bigotes
y atraidorado de barba.
Entró de capa caída
como los valientes andan,
azumbrada la cabeza
y bebida la palabra:

SANTURDE: // Entr. música

Tajo no le tiro,
menos le bebo;
estocadas de vino
son cuantas pego.

MAESTRO:

Una rueda se hicieron,
¿quién duda que de navajas?
Los codos tiraron coces;
azogáronse las plantas.
Trastornáronse los cuerpos,
desgoznáronse las arcas,
los pies se volvieron locos,
endiabláronse las plantas. //

// Tango - música

// Entr. Derecha,
Diálogo en Sala
Galan - Dama
Saavedra
Grosella

(3-B)

DIÁLOGO.

GALAN: Si queréis alma, Leonor,
daros el alma confío.
DAMA: ¡Jesús, qué gran desvarío!
Dinero será mejor.
GALAN: Ya no es nada mi dolor.
DAMA: ¿Pues qué es eso, señor mío?
GALAN: Dióme calentura y frío,
y quitóseme el amor.
DAMA: De que el alma queréis darme,
será más razón que os dé.
GALAN: ¿No basta el alma y la fe
en trueco de acariciarme?
DAMA: ¿Podré della sustentarme?
GALAN: El alma, bien puede ser.
DAMA: Y ¿querrá algún mercader
por tela su alma trocarme?
GALAN: Y ¿es poco daros, Leonor,
si toda el alma os confío?
DAMA: ¡Jesús, qué gran desvarío!
Dinero fuera mejor.
GALAN: Daréos su pena también.
DAMA: Mejor será una cadena
que vuestra alma, y más en pena.
GALAN: Con pena pago el desdén.
DAMA: Para una necesidad
no hay alma como el dinero.
GALAN: Queredme vos como os quiero,
por sola mi voluntad.
DAMA: No haremos buena amistad.
GALAN: ¿Por qué vuestro humor la estraga?
DAMA: Porque cuando un hombre paga,
entonces trata verdad.
GALAN: ¿Qué más paga de un favor
que el alma y el albedrío?
DAMA: ¡Jesús, qué gran desvarío! /Dinero será mejor.

BAILE II.

MAESTRO: Juan Redondo está en gurapas
lampiño por sus pecados,
porque dicen que cogió
treinta doncellas su carro.
Por bailarle, diez viudas
se hicieron diez mil andrajos;
empobreció mil barberos:
dejaron barbas por saltos.

DE ADENTRO: ¡El viento salta de tierra!
¡Mar bonanza! ¡Cielo claro!
¡Zarpá ferros! ¡Tocá la leva!

(Suena una trompeta y salen la CORRUJA y la PIRONDA.

~~PIRONDA~~: ¡A lindo tiempo llegamos!
SANTURDE: ¡Partenza en nombre de Dios!
JUAN REDONDO: Lleve Belcebú este cabo.
CORRUJA: ¿Es Juan Redondo?
PIRONDA: ¿Es Santurde?
JUAN REDONDO: Los dos son, menos el santo.
Oliscado me han vustedes
a personas del trabajo;
cuerpos de alquiler parecen,
y doncellitas de a cuatro.
Cuando yo estaba en el siglo,
pienso, si ya no me engaño,
que las conocí a las dos
fruteritas del pecado.
PIRONDA: ¿La Pironda y la Corruja
tan apriesa se olvidaron,
masicorales de bolsas,
y jugadores de manos?
JUAN REDONDO: ¡Pironda!
SANTURDE: ¿Corruja!
JUAN REDONDO: Hijas,
desde que tengo este cargo,

por vida del rey, que al fin
soy costiller de sus bancos;
que no he tenido más gusto.

SANTURDE: Ni yo he tenido descanso
desde que empujo maderos
y todos los golfos rasco.

CORRUJA: ¿No eran mejor las guitarras
que los calabreses largos?
Carretero fuiste, amigo,
y en los caminos cosario.

JUAN REDONDO: Troqué las ventas en golfos,
y los caminos en faros,
y las ruedas por los remos,
y en este capote el sayo.
¿En dónde estás, carro mío,
que no te duele mi agravio?

SANTURDE: O no lo sabes sin duda,
o eres ya desleal carro.

PIRONDA: ¿Hase olvidado el bailar
entre duelos y quebrantos?

SANTURDE: Quien bien baila, tarde olvida.

JUAN REDONDO: Báilase mortificado.
Puede tanto el natural,
el son, la mudanza, el garbo,
que bailamos el azote,
la galera y el trabajo.

CORRUJA: Mientras la prima rendida
se llega, señor hidalgo,
vaya un poco de galera.

SANTURDE: Pues cante y mande nuestro amo.

MAESTRO: Cuando Amor quiere mandar
a los amantes remar,
como cómitre maldito,
lo primero toma el pito,
que lo primero es pitar.
Y cuando el amante espera

Quien guarda, cela y enfada,
nada, nada, nada, nada.

MÓSTOLES y OBREGÓN: El amor es nadador
desnudo y desnudador.
El amar es, pues, nadar,
desnudar y desnudar.

LA CAPONA y LA VAQUERÍA: Los amores, madre,
son como güevos:
los pasados por agua
son los más tiernos.
Leandro en tortilla,
estrellada Hero,
los pobres perdidos,
los ricos revueltos.
Los celosos fritos,
asados los necios,
los pagados dulces,
los sin blanca güeros.

MÓSTOLES y OBREGÓN: El amor es nadador
desnudo y desnudador.
El amar es, pues, nadar,
desnudar y desnudar.

que ha de estar el pito mudo,
porque estén de su manera,
siendo el cómitre desnudo,
dice a todos "¡Ropa afuera!".

ADENTRO:

¡Ay, que me anego,
bajelito nuevo!
¡Ay, que me ahogo,
y me matan las velas
a puros soplos!

J. REDONDO y SANTURDE:

Haz tu curso, niña,
si es que navegas;
no de puerto en puerto,
de puerta en puerta.

CORRUJA y PIRONDA:

No navegues nunca
con los Levantes,
que Ponientes de casa
son Buenos Aires.

C., P., S. y J.R.:

Aires mejicanos,
venid y llevadme,
que los aires sin blanca
son malos aires.

TODOS:

¡Ay, que me anego,
bajelito nuevo!
¡Ay, que me ahogo,
y me matan las velas
a puros soplos!

MAESTRO:

Al agua nadadores;
nadadores, al agua;
alto a guardar la ropa,
que en esto está la gala.

TODOS:

El que cumple lo que manda,
anda, anda, anda, anda.
Quien de ordinario socorre,
corre, corre, corre, corre.
El que regala y no cela,
vuela, vuela, vuela, vuela.

(3-6)

ENTREMÉS.

((Salen DOÑA ANZUELO, tapada, tirando del brazo a DON TENAZA).

TENAZA: Tira más quedo, ganapán tapado;
que tengo el brazo ya desencajado,
y es persona que, viendo lo que pasa,
siente mucho estar fuera de su casa.
¡Oigan, y lo que tira! Ya se enmienda.
Parece que le mides en la tienda.

ANZUELO: ¿De esto se queja?

TENAZA: Belcebú te enmiele;
de esto me quejo, que es lo que me duele.

ANZUELO: ¡Qué tierno!

TENAZA: Como un agua soy de tierno.

ANZUELO: ¡Qué delicado que es para el infierno!

TENAZA: ¿Luego vamos allá?

TENAZA: ¡Jesús, amigo!

TENAZA: Mas ¿qué pregunto yo si voy contigo?

ANZUELO: ¿Tan diablo soy?

TENAZA: No sé, por lo encubierto,
si este nombre mereces;
mas, ¡por Dios!, que en las garras lo parece

ANZUELO: ¡Que le he agarrado un brazo, majadero!

TENAZA: Pues ¿qué habías de agarrarme?

ANZUELO: ¿Qué? El dinero.

TENAZA: Mentó el Malo. ((Hace que se va y detiénele).

ANZUELO: ¿Se va?

TENAZA: No, sino voyme.

ANZUELO: Espere. ¿Qué le ha dado,
que el color le [illegible]tierra?

TENAZA: Soy forastero, y pruébame la tierra.

ANZUELO: ¿De dónde bueno es?

TENAZA: Si es que he de darte,
yo no soy bueno de ninguna parte;
mas quita la antipara de delante,
no seas pedigüeña vergonzante,
y por otro lenguaje
córrele al frontispicio el cortinaje;
y si no me declara este vocablo,
digo que desavahes el retablo,
desterrando tu mano mantequilla
esa nube de lustre de Sevilla;
que quiero ver cómo te va de cara,
sin nube, cortinaje ni antipara.

ANZUELO: Que me place. ¿Soy fea?
Diga.

TENAZA: Bonitamente lo pelea.

ANZUELO: Espere. ¿Qué es aquello que relumbra
en el dedo menor?

TENAZA: La gatatumba.

ANZUELO: ¿Es sortija?

TENAZA: Solía.

ANZUELO: ¡Valiente diamantón, por vida mía!
¡Con qué gracia su luz la vista ofende!

TENAZA: Pues mejor se defiende.

ANZUELO: Déjemele probar. Alargue el dedo.

TENAZA: Está clavado a él, y ansí, no puedo;
que, como soy un poco descuidado,
porque no me la claven, la he clavado.

((Prueba a quitársela y defiéndese))

ANZUELO: Yo la desclavaré.

TENAZA: Podrá perderse.

ANZUELO: La mano extienda.

TENAZA: Es ruin para extenderse.

ANZUELO: Pues ¿de qué tiene miedo?

TENAZA: De tenella.

ANZUELO: ¡Qué pegada que está!

TENAZA: Nací con ella.

ANZUELO (aparte): Este hombre es don Tenaza.

TENAZA (aparte): Doña Anzuelo es esta hembra.

ANZUELO: Mas él picará en mi nombre.

TENAZA: Mas yo la iré dando cuerda.

ANZUELO: Si no le pesca mi anzuelo,
no me llamen buena pesca.

TENAZA: Si blanca diese Tenaza,
atenaceado muera.

ANZUELO: Esta es mi casa, galán.

TENAZA: Sea muy en hora buena.

ANZUELO: ¿Quiere entrar en ella un poco?

TENAZA: Sí haré, si me dan licencia.

ANZUELO: Por aquí se entra.

TENAZA: No quiero
saber por dónde se entra,
sino por dónde se sale.

ANZUELO: De aquí allá, tiempo le queda.
¡Niñas!

TODAS (dentro): Señora...

ANZUELO: Salid.

(Salen todas las mujeres).

TODAS: Salimos por la obediencia.

TENAZA: Esto se llama embarcada;

mas también hay contratreta.

ANZUELO: ¿Qué le parece a vuested?

TENAZA: Que avenidas de belleza
derribarán por el suelo
la más fuerte faltriquera,
a no haber este reparo.
¡Niños!

Slópez-Castro
Gurrola Ibáñez
-PUMAR-

TODOS (dentro): Señor...

TENAZA: Salid fuera.

(Salen otros tantos hombres, que serán los bailarines

TODOS: Por la obediencia salimos.

ANZUELO: Celada se llama ésta.

TODAS: ¿No se sientan vuesastedes?

TODOS: Si vuesastedes se sientan. (Siéntanse).

ANZUELO: ¿Son hijos?

TENAZA: ¿Pues no los ve?

ANZUELO: ¿Cuántos?

TENAZA: Más que yo quisiera.

ANZUELO: Dios se los guarde a vuested.

TENAZA: Así lo hace, mi reina.

ANZUELO: Luego ¿no está muy contento?

TENAZA: ¿Qué alma ha de estar contenta
con oír cada semana:
seis reales de lavandera;
escriban la ropa sucia;
cuatro tablas de la mesa;
diez cosidos de rodillas;
tres pares de servilletas;
dos camisas de señora;
seis pañales; dos talegas;
diez toquillas de la cara,
que valiera más perdellas,

aunque desto ya se tienen
cuidado las lavanderas;
aquello de si se enjuga,
si se tiende, si se trueca,
si hay cosido de rodillas,
si hay cosido de madejas;
y tras esta barahunda,
decirme a voces la güéspeda:
"Juanico está sin zapatos",
cuando ve en mi corta hacienda
que para vestille el pie
no hay harto en una vaqueta?
¡Vive Dios!

ANZUELO: Repórtese.

TENAZA: Que es menester gran paciencia.

ANZUELO: Grande; y las que los parimos
¿quedámonos en la venta?
Nueve meses de peligros,
y luego la hora tremenda,
en que se acrecienta el mundo,
la muerte a la cabecera.

TENAZA: Antes la preñada tiene,
si hacen como yo la cuenta,
sus nueve meses de antojos,
más diez días que se lleva
de cama, más otros quince
de gallinas y conservas;
más un año de cantar
aquella maldita letra
de la mu, y el ro, ro, ro,
que tantos sueños nos cuesta,
con seis ducados de un ama,
galleguísima taberna
que, suspirando cuartillos,
si a mamar el niño llega,
le da aguardiente por leche

y un alambique por teta;
y luego tenella en casa,
por aquesta honrilla negra
del qué dirán.

ANZUELO: Qué darán,
fuera pregunta más buena.

TENAZA: No entiendo aquese lenguaje.

ANZUELO: Niñas, haced que lo entienda.
¿Qué piden vuestras razones?

TODAS: Doblones.

(Levántanse y hacen una reverencia

ANZUELO: En gloria descanse el alma
que os enseñó tal respuesta.

TENAZA: Escuche otra responsión,
como motete de iglesia.
Niños, ¿qué dais por regalos?

TODOS: Palos.

(Levántanse y hacen una reverencia)

TENAZA: Bendición en tales picos.

ANZUELO: Tábanos en tales lenguas.
Proseguid, mozas, y ¡a ellos!

TENAZA: Proseguid, mozos, y ¡a ellas!

ANZUELO: ¿Qué queréis más que el vivir?

TODAS: Pedir. (Como arriba).

TENAZA: ¿Qué queréis antes que dar?

TODOS: Reventar. (Hacen lo mismo).

((Cantando y bailando).

NIÑA: ¡Qué donaire que ha tenido!
¡Qué gracioso y qué galán!

((Un voladillo y vuélvense a su lugar

TENAZA: Si son tiros a la bolsa,
¡vive Dios, que es por demás!

NIÑA: Una merienda siquiera
todas aguardando están.

TENAZA: Si ha de ser a costa mía,
no les hará mucho mal.

NIÑA: Desdígase, o le amenazo,
en nombre de las demás.

TENAZA: Pues, niña, lo dicho, dicho,
y vuélvome a mi lugar.

((Cantando y bailando).

TODAS: "En el real de las hembras
grandes alaridos dan".

TODOS: Los hombres los dan mayores,
porque les piden el real.

NIÑA: ¿Qué responde Cupido?

TODAS: Pido.

TENAZA: ¿Si me piden ribete?

TODOS: Vete.

NIÑA: ¿Qué ha de dar un hidalgo?

TODAS: Algo.

TENAZA: Quien la bolsa no guarda...

TODOS: Arda.

A todos nos acobarda
pido, vete, algo y arda.

NIÑA: Mocitos pelones, pues nada nos dais,
a todo desaire, sufrid y callad.

((Repiten todos).

TENAZA: Mozuelas golosas, que a todos pedís,
al no que os volvemos, callad y sufrid.

NIÑA: Ya es viejo en los hombres el no que nos dan.

TENAZA: Y nuevo en las hembras dejarnos en paz.

ANZUELO: Tormento de bolsas habéis de llevar.

TENAZA: A muy pocas vueltas dirán la verdad.

ANZUELO: ¿Por qué en regalarnos tan duros estáis?

TENAZA: ¿A quién no endurece quererle estafar?

NIÑA: Mocitos pelones, pues nada nos dais,
a todo desaire, sufrid y callad.

TENAZA: Mozuelas golosas, que a todos pedís,
al no que os volvemos, callad y sufrid.

CARRASCA: En los bailes desta casa
se advierte a todo cristiano
que han de sacar las mujeres,
y el hombre ha de ser sacado.

TODAS: Son mis guitarras y sones
doblones y más doblones.

CAPONA: El son que yo he de bailar
es el que hace contar
y tomar y más tomar;
que todo esotro es sonar
narices de mocarrones.

CARRUJA: No porque salgo después
menos pido y menos bailo;
sacaros a todos quiero
real a real y cuarto a cuarto.

PIRONDA: Ya que mis dos hermanitas
a sacar se adelantaron,
mientras os sacan las dos,
yo, como indigna, os sonsaco.

VAQUERÍA: Hágase rajas conmigo
en un baile de contado
el más pesado de pies
y más liberal de manos.

MARIPIZCA: El que quisiere aprender
la destreza verdadera,
en este poco de cuerpo
vive quien mejor la enseña.

TODAS: Son mis guitarras y sones
doblones y más doblones.

JUAN REDONDO: Sacarme de mis casillas
ha podido vuestro encanto;
mas sacarme mis doblones,
hijas, es negocio largo.

SANTURDE: Para con voastedes
yo soy de Ocaña;
mas para con voastedes
soy de la guarda.

MOSTOLES: Tiene mi morena
los ojos negros;
téngase ella sus ojos,
yo mis dineros.

OBREGÓN: El quitarme el dinero
y enamorarme
no es matarme de amores,
sino de hambre.

PERICO: Bien sin alma quedas
esta jornada,
pues tras mi dinero
se te va el alma.

TODOS: De las Sonsaconas
el baile es éste
y ésta es la costumbre
de sus tinientes.

TODAS: Tan, tan, tan, tan;
tan pobres los tiempos van,
que piden y no nos dan:
dan, dan, dan, dan.

Después de música

PERICO: Están ya nuestros meneos
tan traídos y tan sucios,
que conviene que inventemos
novedades de buen gusto.
Los movimientos traviesos
estoy haciendo discurso
de quien los aprenderemos
más vivos y menos burdos.
¿De los locos?
No me agrada.
¿De los bravos?
Abernuncio.

CAPONA: Yo de los endemoniados
lo más que he bailado estudio.

MÓSTOLES: No en balde te hacen guerra
exorcismos y conjuros.

OBREGÓN: Si se han de estudiar meneos
ademanes, despachurros
nuevos de risa y picantes,
con tembladeras de muslos,
yo digo que los tomemos
de las cosquillas por hurto.

SANTURDE: Yo le sigo,

MARIPIZCA: yo lo apruebo.

VÁQUERÍA: Yo concurro, yo concurro.

JUN REDONDO: Pues no hay sino cosquillar,
cosquíllese todo el mundo,
Hijos, tocad a cosquillas,
que ya las siento y me punzo.

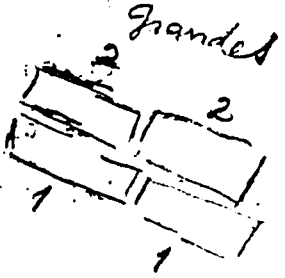
Canto de cosquillas

MAESTRO: Todo hombre es concebido
en cosquilla original;
quien no las tiene en los lados,
las tiene en el espaldar.
Hay cosquilla cabriola,
hay cosquilla mazorral,
del concomo y del gritillo,
con su poquito de ay.
Para lo que se ofreciere,
adcierta todo mortal
que no sufrimos cosquillas,
y las hacemos saltar.
.....
Con la muerte de estos vientos
el mundo se quedó en calma;
mas toda pluma es ventosa
y todo alguacil la saja.

3er acto

500

Un Lujoso Sólido
con el agua









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APPENDIX C: Clippings

Clippings courtesy of Nancy Cárdenas

Sixth Program
Clippings: 1, 2, 3 502

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Provoca una Crisis Las Criadas

Más de ciento cincuenta personas abandonaron el Teatro Fábregas, durante la premier de la obra de Jean Genet Las Criadas.

El público abandonó la sala en señal de protesta. Algunos por la incongruencia de la obra, otros alegando que es una pieza muy majadera, y uno que otro por ser una pieza incomprensible.

Los espectadores que aguardaron hasta el final prodigaron a la obra y a los intérpretes una calurosa ovación.

Esta reacción del público parece que afectó también a la honorable Oficina de espectáculos, ya que contrastando con su espíritu mojigato de las últimas semanas, extendió una autorización a los empresarios del Teatro Fábregas para que la pieza pueda ser presentada para adolescentes y adultos.

1

Cuando un país produce jóvenes de la calidad de José Luis Ibáñez, no tiene de qué preocuparse. México cuenta en la actualidad, con una de las generaciones más brillantes de su historia. Quien lo dude ya puede ver "Las Criadas" de Genet que desde el 24 de julio se estrenó en el Fábregas.

Aun el que no guste de la obra en sí —bellísima a mi modo de pensar— tendrá que reconocer que el trabajo del director Ibáñez denuncia una madurez artística fuera de lo común a los 26 años de edad.

La obra, la dirección y la actuación, merecen comentario aparte.

2

Las críticas adversas a LAS CRIADAS abundan. Nos parece sin embargo, que la mayor parte de ellas son producidas por razones ajenas a las calidades de la obra misma.

3

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[1]In scrapbook collection of Gurrola.

[2]All personal interviews were conducted in Mexico City with exceptions noted.

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C. Scripts

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[1]Sample list. Undated productions were presented after 1971.