

pathsofthewesterntheatre

Written by Bárbara Heliadora

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Rua Duque de Caxias, 04
Centro Histórico
Curitiba PR Brasil
CEP 80510 200 | Tel 41 3225 6232
info@solardorosario.com.br

www.solardorosario.com.br

Coordenação do projeto (Lei Rouanet): Regina de Barros Correia Casillo,
Lucia Casillo Malucelli e Liana de Camargo Leão

Supervisão editorial: J. Guinsburg

Revisão dos originais: Claudia Braga

Preparação de texto: Maria Cristina Daniels

Revisão: Márcia Abreu

Iconografia: Helen Marcia Potter Pessoa

Capa e projeto gráfico: Sergio Kon

Produção: Ricardo W. Neves, Sergio Kon, Raquel Fernandes Abranches,
Luiz Henrique Soares, Elen Durando e Mariana Munhoz

Paths of the western theatre

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This is a short version of the Portuguese content.

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INTRODUCTION

The intent of this book is to present to those thinking of pursuing a career in theater, as well as to curious viewers of an art they appreciate, an overview of the path taken by theater in the West from its inception in Athen, until the second half of the twentieth century. As for the new century, I do not think there is yet the minimum of that objectivity necessary for any valid comment, which only time gives.

Of all the arts, the dramatic is the only one devoted exclusively to human behavior, and I believe that because of this, by reflecting the habits and customs of the moment in which it is created, theater gives us a faithful portrayal of the path of the Western world, since he was born. I have tried to follow the guiding principles of the continuous development of theater, along which playwriting and stage have challenged and nurtured each other, always reflecting - voluntarily or involuntarily - the environment in which it is created, as it is, as Hamlet says, a Mirror of nature.

Theater, that is, the set of text and staging, is a fleeting art because, unfortunately, it ceases to be theater even when it is faithfully documented, or when it is adapted for film or television. For this very reason, the history of the theater is more the history of the dramatic text than of the spectacle, a sadly lost richness, thanks to its very essence. This does not preclude the need to always bear in mind that the languages that compose it are many, and that in all the great moments of its history, the theater has lived a balance of them, without text or staging being dominant in the show. If in the complex art of the theater of the past we only have the texts and comments of critics or viewers, we must not forget that the good authors always bring in their works information and suggestions about what their scenic life would be, and what it is. It is good to keep this in mind when reading a play.

This book is really just an introduction; each of the periods that form it deserves, in itself, several volumes, when it is intended to make a faithful and integral portrait; but I hope that the reader, with the information given, will be able to read plays with greater pleasure, knowing a little more about the conditions that led to that particular dramaturgy.

I am pleased to express here my profound gratitude to Regina de Barros Correia Casillo and Lucia Casillo Malucelli, great guides for the various and remarkable activities of Solar do Rosário; their encouragement, perseverance and patience are largely responsible for the realization of this old dream of telling the history of the theater to a wider audience. I also want to thank Dr. Liana de Camargo Leão for the many conversations that made clear the path to be taken, and Dr. Claudia Mariza Braga for organizing, preparing the notes, and carefully revising the book's final text.

I am aware of the omission of many authors of significant works, but I had to opt for the most representative of the paths theater has taken to express the transformations the Western world has undergone in these twenty-five centuries. And I am sorry if I failed to attribute in the text or bibliography any source or work cited; With so many years of reading, as well as teaching of History of Theater, I can no longer know what would have, far away, caused the beginning of some line of thought. To all of them, however, I am equally grateful.

Bárbara Heliodora



I – North America

The early days of the theatre in the USA is interesting because in the English colony the occupation of new territories at first focused on the region where the State of Virginia stands nowadays, and spread to the Southern region. Farming and cattle-raising flourished in the hands of a few land and slave-owners, and the derelicts mentioned in the colonization of Brazil were also sent to that part of the world. People that got rich had dreams of reproducing in the colony the life in England with the same type of sophistication and recreational activities. In the late seventeenth century, greatly contrasting with the Southern amenities, the territory that was still unoccupied and the colder regions were settled by a different breed of colonisers – the self-exiled Puritans that fled from the English monarchy in 1660, bringing with them the Anglican religion, settling in the northeast region of the USA that is still called New England. They lived life strictly by the Bible and any form of recreation, such as the theatre, was considered a sin and an abomination. In the east coast that would be part of the North-American territory at a later period, the Spaniards introduced a kind of religious theatre (similar to what Anchieta introduced into Brazil), but it had no influence in establishing the theatre as a regular activity.

What makes the cultural climate of the northern hemisphere actually different from all Latin America, even in terms of the less educated and more adventurous population, is the great wealth of playwrights it inherited from the English settlers. The first North-American play in the records dates from the seventeenth century (written by an inhabitant of the colony while living there). In any case, there was always some kind of theatrical activity held by the settlers, and later immigrants from other cultures that were also rich in theatrical traditions were welcome.

It was only after the Independence of the United States of America (1776) that North-American characters emerged in plays. The first was the ‘Yankee’ – a somewhat rude, clumsy, sentimental, stingy character, a great teller of anecdotes, with a regional accent, very patriotic and with the ‘smarts’ typical of simpletons, such as Schweik. This character was very popular until the twentieth century, and it was the strong suit of actor Will Rogers, who was a hit both on stage and cinema because of his criticism – his trademark quip was “All I know is what I read in the papers”. The Yankee persona was taken up by many actors and was particularly suitable for comedians that used it in monologues and plays.

Later, the myth of the noble savage emerged on the stage, but the great event was in 1825, when actor T. D. Rice started to copy the way an old black man that would hang out near the theatre where he worked talked and how he would tell anecdotes. This was the birth of the minstrel show, which many believe to be a black tradition but was actually created by the white man with his face painted black. The blackface was introduced to the stage and the cinema in the twentieth century by Al Jolson, who was the actor of the first talking motion picture.

The theatre had such a huge development in the nineteenth century that not even the Civil War was able to interrupt it, and there was at least one family with theatre tradition – the Booths – where only the father, Junius Brutus, was English. The three sons were remarkable: Edwin was the most famous, followed closely by Junius Brutus Jr., while the unstable John Wilkes became famous for killing Abraham Lincoln.

The theatre was already part of the life of the North-American people, who were so

passionate about it that in the end of the century in Philadelphia two famous English actors were producing “Macbeth” at the same time, leading to a conflict that got twelve people killed.

Acting was so disseminated at the turn of century that cunning Charles Frohman organized a so-called ‘Union’, which was really an agency for theatre actors. His organization controlled the theatres, actors and the booking, thus putting an end to old permanent companies. In 1896, he already controlled thirty important theatres and a few smaller ones; in 1903, directly or indirectly he controlled from coast-to-coast seventy theatres and determined the booking for 700 halls. The Union was accused of being only concerned with the box-office, favouring simple comedies, and Frohman’s dubious taste was favourable for the Schubert brothers to open their organization, which exists to this day. It also manages actors and produces plays, but it is more concerned with the quality of the plays it stages. In order to guarantee their success, the Schuberts would import from London to New York the best productions or the most successful ones, combining profit and prestige.

In the early years of the new century, similar to what occurred in Europe amateur and semi-professional theatre companies were formed in North-American with the purpose of competing with English productions, presenting repertoires of better artistic quality and encouraging North-American dramaturgy. In 1904, the idea of creating a National Art Theatre for America was brought forth and some years later it was put into practice under the direction of Winthrop Ames. His first play was “Anthony and Cleopatra” by Shakespeare, with the famous Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothorn in the leading roles. The New Theatre where they were playing had terrible acoustics, and because the rest of the cast was not very talented, it was a flop.

Dissatisfaction with the poor quality of the theatre greatly increased in the second decade of that century, especially compared to foreign companies that toured the USA: Abbey Theatre of Ireland performed in 1911, and Max Reinhardt’s company in 1912. Granville Barker’s English company performed for a whole season (he would later move to the United States) in 1915, and Jacques Copeau’s company – the Vieux Colombier – played in 1917. All these companies made it quite clear that the theatre could be both an accessible type of entertainment and a pleasant and enriching artistic experience.

As part of this movement, amateur companies started to emerge everywhere inspired by the Chicago Little Theatre created in 1912. In 1914, the Washington Square Players produced Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw, as well as North-American playwrights, and finally in 1916 the memorable company Provincetown Players produced “Bound East for Cardiff”, the first play by Eugene O’Neill (1888-1953) to be staged. The prolific O’Neill deserves to be studied separately: for many decades he was revered as an exceptional playwright; and even if nowadays we are more aware of his limitations, his importance cannot be denied.

O’Neill lived a painful and chaotic life, living with his mother (addicted to morphine) in New York when he was twelve. He had a hectic school life, but perhaps because he was an avid reader he wrote in different styles on a variety of themes. Self-deceit, illusion and the disastrous consequences this brought to people’s lives were the core theme of his creativity since his first success, “Beyond the Horizon”. O’Neill was influenced by his older brother, who in his youth took him out drinking and to spend a lot of time in brothels; it seems he lived his life convinced that all prostitutes had a golden heart, such as in “Ana Christie”.

It is impossible to give a satisfactory overview of O’Neill’s career that lasted decades: he used expressionism, masks, and tried his hand at techniques such as those used in “Strange Interlude”; however, there is a series of plays where O’Neill explores his own colourful experiences. These plays are more spontaneous and satisfactory, leading to his true masterpiece at the end of his life – “Long Days’ Journey into Night”. The play portrays

a sad picture of family life during a summer in Groton, in Connecticut, where his mother succumbs to the addiction again.

In 1919, members of the defunct Washington Square Players founded the first professional company dedicated to a theatre with high artistic quality – the Theatre Guild. It is still operating and became important because it brought to Broadway plays that old producers rejected for the commercial theatre. The Actors Equity was created in 1919 as a bona fide union for actors after a strike that paralysed the theatres (backstage technicians were already unionised since 1891). They agreed on a minimum contract with better wages and conditions, both for rehearsals and performances.

Musicals were becoming popular around that time and will be addressed separately. Hence, we will cover the fate of the comedies, and plays with lines, straight or legitimate. When the Great War ended, the famous Roaring Twenties were the consequence of the frenetic post-war days and easy money, so easy that it led to the Prohibition, the criminal empire of gangsters and the crash of 1929. During this decade the most significant factor for the development of the North-American theatre was barrage of successive openings of plays by the abovementioned O'Neill.

Dramaturgy and acting underwent an evolution; in 1920 the historic “Richard III” was produced with John Barrymore, who two years later had an even greater success with “Hamlet”; after a very good season in New York he repeated the feat in London. It should be noted that like in the 1930s in Brazil, where Brazilian actors took on a slight accent of Portuguese spoken in Portugal, until the early 1940s all North-American actors adopted something similar to British English to produce better quality plays in order to be accepted as bona-fide actors.

Another great encouragement for better productions was when the Art Theatre of Moscow toured the USA in 1923, for even when spoken in Russian the team work was strong enough to leave the imprint of the Stanislavski method on the way how actors would perform from then on. Two of its members – director Boleslavsky and actress Maria Ouspenskaya – stayed in the USA and carved a career for themselves both in the cinema and the theatre. They were joined by Michael Chekhov, the playwright's nephew, who became a successful actor and teacher.

Soon after the American Repertory Theatre opened and produced plays by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov and even “Cyrano de Bergerac” by Rostand, among other non-commercial works. Actress Eva Le Galienne created her own company – the Civic Repertory Theatre – with a seasoned cast and produced “The Three Sisters”, which in defiance to all expectations and the lack of interest of all critics kept the company going for six years and 34 productions.

The Theatre Guild was the most successful and long-lasting company, and its cast was directed by the famous couple Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. They were the most important sponsors of Shaw's plays in the USA, and also discovered “The Adding Machine”, a satirical Expressionist farce based on Elmer Rice's play about an old accountant that loses his mind when he learns he will be replaced by an adding machine. Rice later became famous for his super-realistic play “Street Scene” that shows a life lived in poorness and a kind of prison. George Kelly became famous in 1925 with his play “Craig's Wife” that won a Pulitzer Prize; it is a criticism to American women who value things and money over human compassion.

Around this time a more sophisticated type of comedy started to emerge, which did not focus on the Yankee and other regional characters. The same Kelly draws a critical but loving picture of the rich of New York in “Holiday”. He had a very long career, and in 1939 he wrote his most famous comedy – “The Philadelphia Story” – starred by Katherine Hepburn

on stage; she had the foresight of buying the right to the play and produced the film that was co-starred by the two biggest matinee idols of those days: Cary Grant and James Stewart.

It was yet in the 1920s that one of the most prominent playwrights started his career – George Kaufman – who as a rule preferred to collaborate with other playwrights and created a series of hits. Perhaps the most popular of his plays was “You Can’t Take It with You” of 1928, which became an iconic film directed by the remarkable Frank Capra.

The so-called ‘serious theatre’ also advanced greatly in the Roaring Twenties; in 1924 Maxwell Anderson in collaboration with Laurence Stallings wrote “What Price Glory?”, considered by critic George Jean Nathan as one of the best plays ever written about WWI. In that same year O’Neill wrote “Desire under the Elms”, and yet another playwright would depict the American way of life – Sidney Howard – who in 1924 wrote “They Knew What They Wanted”, and later “The Silver Cord”, both great hits. One sign that these plays were reaching out to the North-American culture is the fact that they were made into films.

It is important to talk about the climate during the time of the Crash of 1929 and the ensuing crisis; the Russian Revolution and the dissatisfaction with “the war that would end all wars” – as the 1914-1919 war was defined – led to a wave of concerns with social and political issues. Added to the 1929 crisis, the ascension of Mussolini in Italy still in the ‘20s, and Hitler in Germany in the early ‘30s created the restlessness that deeply affected the theatre in the USA.

Of the many significant dates, it was in the twenties that a company called Harlem Renaissance was created, producing plays written and performed by a black cast, such as the famous “Green Pastures” by Marc Connelly depicting the oneiric vision of God, Heaven and life in Paradise of an impoverished black community. ‘De Lawd’, the artifice the playwright used to express how the blacks in the south would say The Lord, wears a frockcoat, just like the preachers of the churches where they worshiped. The play shows that those people imagined Heaven based on their day-by-day but a bit more comfortable; their humble aspirations were expressed in the idea that De Lawd smoked a ‘ten cent cigar’, which was too expensive for them. The same company produced “Emperor Jones” by Eugene O’Neill starring the unforgettable actor and singer Paul Robeson.

As part of the Work Progress Administration scheme created by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was elected in 1932 to rebuild the economy of the USA, the Federal Theatre Project was implemented. It sponsored classical plays, good new European and North-American playwrights. The latter were committed to exposing social issues, and thus FTP was encouraged to create the “Living Newspaper” – a drama format that presented factual information on current events to a popular audience. The popularity and the freedom of the FTP were also opposed by the Republicans in Congress, who succeeded in passing a law closing it in 1939.

The theatre of the times of crisis also repudiated a great number of plays imported from England and those that were written in the USA emulating the latter. The most significant movement was called the Group Theatre; it was founded in 1931 by Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg and Cheryl Crawford based both on its commitment to social issues and a deeper knowledge of acting, which until then had very little published material. A good example was the Moscow Art Theatre and the type of acting created by Stanislavski, whereby he became quite strict in educating actors, revealing scores of performers and playwrights. Among the latter, one of the most important was Clifford Odets, whose first hit was the play “Awake and Sing”, depicted the fight of the unions in “Waiting for Lefty” and the damage cause by ambition in “Golden Boy”, where the main character abandons his violin for boxing, disregarding all the sacrifices his family had made in order to find success and easy and destructive money.

The '20s ended with the Crash of 1929, and the '30s ended with the beginning of WWII in Europe in 1939. The United States joined the war only in 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, and gradually it became part of the life of the North-Americans. It was in the '30s that the theatre in the USA actually became North-American. In 1934 an important playwright joined the ranks of North-American playwrights - Lillian Hellman, who amazed and shocked the New Yorkers with her play called "The Children's Hour", the story of a mean girl who destroys the career and even the life of two teachers, spreading the rumour that they are lesbians. The theme was so shocking for those days that when it was filmed in Hollywood the name was changed to "These Three", and the accusation was that one teacher seduced the other's fiancée. In 1937, Hellman wrote "The Little Foxes", and as would be expected from a radical leftist, she denounced the worse greediness of capitalism. Thanks to her first plays, Lillian Hellman was called the North-American Ibsen or Strindberg. She had a long career, and translated plays such as Anouilh's "The Lark", wrote the delightful adaptation of Voltaire's "Candide" with music score by Leonard Bernstein, as well as countless film scripts. In the fifties, when Senator McCarthy of the House Committee of Un-American Activities called the shots, Hellman was immediately blacklisted with other actors, actresses, playwrights and directors who lost their jobs.

Not long after that, Clare Booth Luce - a playwright that was in no way committed to political issues - portrayed in her play "The Women" the new rich who joined high society, called the café society, in a fun and malicious manner; this play was successfully produced by Dulcina in Rio de Janeiro.

In the late '30s and especially in the '40s, the North-American theatre produced a magnificent crop of playwrights. A very popular play in Brazil that was produced in the early days of O Tablado was "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder, often times considered the most read and most produced play of all North-American dramaturgy. Using anti-realistic resources, few concrete elements and a lot of mimicry, Wilder tells a simple story of life in a small town through a cast that covers different activities and ways of life. In the early 1940s he wrote "The Skin of Our Teeth", a wonderful story of humanity in three acts, where the first takes place in the Ice Age, the second in the Noah's Arc and the third during the War.

The most important playwright of the 1940s was Arthur Miller (1915-2005), a brilliant follower of Ibsen with a solid and well elaborated realism applied to themes and issues for which he did not offer any solutions, but rather, challenged his audience. Miller opened in 1944 with a huge flop - "The Man Who Had All the Luck" - about a neurotic young man obsessed by the failure of other people, who is fixated on the idea that something horrible is about to affect the success of his business and his marriage. In 1947 Miller was somewhat successful for the first time with his play "All My Sons", about responsibility and guilt: young Chris almost goes crazy during the war when he finds out that in order to increase his profit margin his father makes defective airplanes for the Air Force. When twenty one pilots die, he still tries to blame his partner. Chris' despair reaches its highest point when he learns that his brother, also a pilot, is lost in action; he commits suicide trying to expiate his father's crime, who also ends up killing himself.

Miller became famous in 1949 with his nowadays iconic "Death of a Salesman". Willy Lohman, who spent his whole life believing in the American myth that a salesman is successful when everybody loves him, raises his two sons living by the myth of popularity. Happy has a very restless lifestyle as a womanizer, and former football star Biff cannot hold a job. Willy is about to go on the road again but he is exhausted and does not want to face the fact that other salesmen with new ideas are leaving him behind. When Biff and Happy have another impossible dream, Willy tries to get salary advancement from his boss to finance

his boys only to find out that he is about to be fired. What was supposed to be a celebration dinner becomes a nightmare and Willy remembers when he lost Biff's trust, who caught him with a prostitute in a hotel room. Feeling cornered, Willy kills himself in a car crash for the family to collect the life insurance, pay off the debts and start anew. When dedicated Linda, who always backed Willy up despite his mistakes and limitations tells her sons that they have a clean slate, Happy decides to head west to work on a farm, but Biff stays in New York to make Willy's dream come true.

In 1953 Arthur Miller wrote his masterpiece and one of the most important plays of the twentieth century, "The Crucible". It is extraordinary for many reasons, where denouncing McCarthyism in an extremely objective manner was not the least of them. Based on facts that took place at the time of the Puritan fathers of New England, Miller defends the freedom of thought and denounces the cult of appearances and hypocrisy in a plot that is universal because it is absolutely self-sufficient, and becomes an exemplary story because it is exclusively a work of art and not the medium of moralizing formulas. The anti-communist hysteria used to misguide the uneducated population when identifying the real roots of the problems affecting the American way of life is remarkably depicted by the teenagers that claim to be under demonic possession so everyone forgets the real transgressions of the Puritan ritual, the dancing in the woods under the moonlight with slight touches of the sensual Jamaican voodoo. The resulting sacrifice of the good citizens shows the tentacles of lie embracing the whole village, covering lie with lie. The significance, the scope and the quality of "The Crucible" are attested by the many productions it has merited in the four corners of the world.

The golden era of Miller's career would still produce the memorable "A View from the Bridge", which in Brazil had a historical production by TBC. Miller used his flexible form of realism, mixing the order of the lawyer's narrative, who followed what took place and its consequences. Eddie Carbone, married to Beatrice, raised their niece Catherine that is now seventeen and with whom he is in love not realising the incestuous nature of his feeling. When Beatrice receives two Sicilian cousins as houseguests, illegal immigrants waiting for their forged papers to come through so they can make a living in the USA, Eddie becomes crazy with jealousy when Rodolpho and Cristine fall in love.

Not wanting to face the truth behind his reactions, Eddie is against their relationship and accuses the boy of being a homosexual, and when he does not succeed in breaking them apart, he denounces the two Sicilians to Immigration. The situation is saved by a quick marriage, but Marco who only wanted to make money to send home will have to return to Italy. Indignant with Eddie's betrayal, Marco confronts him. The niece and her husband are afraid the worst might happen and want to prevent Marco and Eddie from running into each other; in the thick of the crisis Beatrice loses it and forces Eddie to admit his feelings; Eddie's indignation and revolt against himself are so great that he rushes to meet Marco and to be killed by him.

These plays were the best of Miller, who continued to write plays, but less frequently and never again with the same brilliancy.

Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) was also a product of the '40s. Like Miller, he also started his career with a flop, but in 1945 his first hit was produced - "The Glass Menagerie" - exploring grounds not yet covered by the North-American theatre: a melancholic portrait of the decadence of the south of USA, where sex was addressed candidly but poetically. The well-disguised sexual repression of the South, in conflict with a world that abandoned niceties and hypocrisy arise even more strongly in his next play - the famous "A Streetcar Named Desire" that was produced many times in Brazil. Throughout his career Tennessee

Williams was faithful to a world suffocated by sexual problems, frustration, repression and homosexuality, whether blatant or not.

His father used to call him “Miss Nancy”; he was born of the marriage between the prudish daughter of a Protestant preacher and an incurable womanizer. Thus, this was always the universe that inspired Tennessee Williams. In 1948 he wrote “Summer and Smoke”, and in 1951 “The Rose Tattoo”. “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof” dates from 1955; “Orpheus Descending” and “Suddenly Last Summer” from 1958; and “Sweet Bird of Youth” from 1959. He abandoned the South as a theme in 1961, writing “The Night of the Iguana” that takes place in Mexico, and later, in 1963 “The Milk Train doesn’t Stop Here Anymore” that is set in Italy. From then on Williams continued until his last days to write about sex as redemptory or destroying, and his career went into decline; even though he never stopped writing he never again achieved a real success.

One aspect of the North-American theatre of the twentieth century that should be noted is the sheer number of plays that were written. They were the heirs of the theatre tradition of England and were writing plays since the eighteenth century; in the nineteenth century their production increased, but in the twentieth century there were hundreds of playwrights: in the movie, the radio and television the market for drama was huge and the realistic format was conducive to this increase. In Broadway there are scores or even hundreds of playwrights dedicated to the day-by-day theme, most of which focusing on the North-American reality. Throughout the comprehensive career of a playwright such as Neil Simon (1927), whose technical competence and wit are undeniable, they are speaking from one North-American to another, collecting box-office hits. However, unfortunately since the ‘60s, Broadway became a business and much of what is produced includes the kind of plays dedicated to the ‘tired businessman’.

Actually, part of the mediocre Broadway productions can be blamed on the different unions that determine to a certain extent that Shakespeare’s “The Tempest”, for example, should be classified as a musical because there were songs that last over 4 and half minutes, and other such nonsense. As a musical, as well as hiring musicians to play during the presentation, it is mandatory to have a second orchestra with a certain minimum number of musicians that just sit around waiting to be called to replace a peer in case of illness. It is paranoia at its highest when the union demanded that a small orchestra should be hired even when they played taped. Similar absurdities from the unions make Broadway productions prohibitive; where they are sold out or empty and have to cancel (the rate of three-day flops is very high).

It was thanks to this situation that a new format was created –‘off-Broadway’ and ‘off off-Broadway’ productions. The former can include theatres actually located in Broadway, but that do not exceed 199 seats, whereby the unions waive a series of requirements. But all the actors belong to the Equity Association, which means they are unionized. The ‘off-off’ performances are held in small venues and the cast is partially amateur.

The truth is that nobody can afford to produce experimental plays when it costs millions of dollars to stage them, and maybe that is the reason why the North-American theatre has such a low number of formal experiments. However, Broadway is still the venue where one can best observe certain theatre-related phenomena, dividing the panorama into three well defined categories: comedy that caters to the tired businessman, that keeps up with the same rhythm regardless of what is happening; thus, musicals are taking up more and more theatre halls; while a small and stubborn parcel still offers high-quality plays, these are always conditioned to the playwright being famous, to a stellar cast or by being an off-Broadway hit.

Off-Broadway productions were conducive to exposing a generation of new playwrights, such as Edward Albee (1928). Albee is a weird case: his first play called "The Zoo Story" was rejected by everyone, even off-Broadway, and it was first produced in Germany. Only then it was produced off-Broadway in the USA, similar to "The American Dream" of 1961, which has called a lot of attention and won many prizes. In 1962, with the prestige of his past plays, Albee opened in Broadway with his masterpiece "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" where he depicts a marriage preserved only by verbal abuse, crisis and reconciliation, and by the myth of an existing son. With exceptional clarity of dialogue and a brilliant and concise timing, the play was a worldwide success both on the stage and the silver screen.

Albee's career was very bumpy: soon after "...Virginia Woolf" he wrote "Tiny Alice", a peculiar attempt at symbolism that nobody can make any sense, but in 1966 he excelled again with "A Delicate Balance". Then he did not write for a long time, but scored a hit when he returned with "Three Tall Women" and his career is still going strong.

The lack of experimental forms, however, did not prevent North-American dramaturgy, even what made it to Broadway, from undergoing the relevant social changes: the euphoria of the end of WWII slowly dwindled, the Korean War in the '50s put a damper on the high spirits, but it was the Vietnam War that definitely changed the tone, set the disenchanting and sombre climate that became the trademark of all the best emerging North-American playwrights.

David Rabe (1940) for example, wrote about the war: "The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel" is about the violence that hardens the recruits that were humiliated and tortured by sadistic sergeants that claimed they were educating soldiers for the war. Then "Sticks and Bones" starts with a family accepting and signing for their son's coffin who died in Vietnam. The most surprising and clearly shocking of this change was the production of "Hair" by James Rado (1931) and Gerome Ragni (1942-1991), which opened off-Broadway in October 1967, and in Broadway in 1968. It was a huge hit worldwide, but in the USA it had an especial meaning because the plot revolved around burning the draft card in protest against the unfortunate war.

More recently, the theme of profit as the only goal where any type of human value is sacrificed is also a big favourite and it is addressed in plays such as "Other People's Money" by Jerry Sterner (1938-2001), which was also produced off-Broadway in 1989. The play portrays the indifference of company takeovers that buy bankrupt business just to liquidate them and sell components and equipment separately, paying no heed to the people that are losing their jobs. His justification is that shareholders demand profits and that there is no room for sentimentalism when dealing with third party money, which lends the name to the play.

There is no limit for the format or the themes of the new North-American theatre, if not for the fact that its productions and the acting are always exemplary; even so, some 70% of the plays that open in Broadway are shut down after three days. The line of acting in the USA is less sophisticated than in England, where the latter are better in period plays and the former are unparalleled in realism. The high quality costs the jobs of a large number of professionals in the industry. In his acceptance speech when he won the Oscar, Dustin Hoffman said it involves a lot of luck, opportunity of getting a role and of being noticed. He dedicated his Oscar to all the actors he believes to be as talented as he is but that simply did not have the same luck he did.

One should also note that there are many playwrights, but I believe that there are two that stand out. Sam Shepard (1943) has been both highly praised and scored low in the box office. He is very critical of the North-American culture and has addressed a wide range of his favourite themes: the Wild West, family conflicts, the American dream, appearance and

superficiality. Shepard has been very successful as a movies actor and scriptwriter, but his career as a playwright has been irregular.

In the last years of the last century David Mamet (1947) stands out, strongly criticizing the North-American value: it is a brisk and agile dialogue that was the trademark of his first success - "Sexual Perversity". "Glengarry Glen Ross", another big hit, portrays a scary scenario of dishonesty and treason in the quest for success by the realtors who work in the same company. Mamet is relentless and his career is skyrocketing. Both playwrights are already part of the twenty first century outside the scope addressed hereunder.

The musical genre is one of the most important formats of the North-American theatre in the twentieth century, and the main Anglo-American contribution for the theatre in general. The musical theatre is actually the product of a ban imposed in the seventeenth century: after the Restoration of the English Monarchy in 1660, only two theatres in London could stage plays. The only road for whoever wanted to join the entertainment milieu was to produce musical plays, which became very popular. This is how the English and the American music-hall were born in the nineteenth century; when the privilege of the prose drama was taken away, songs were linked to the plot.

Confirming the old and dubious saying that every cloud has a silver lining, in 1866 a French ballet company learned that the theatre where they were to perform in New York had been destroyed by fire; a smart agent gathered the dancers and put together a cheap melodrama called the "The Black Crook", which told the story of a crook who makes a pact with the Devil to deliver one soul every year. The bright lights, dancers in leotards and fantastic sets made it a great hit and it was named "the first American musical".

One should also remember the success of the operettas in Europe, which were frequently produced in the United States in the original language or translated: in 1906 the "Merry Widow" was translated and became a great hit. During the first half of the century the music-hall in many acts, with dancing and singing, which was called revue or vaudeville (staged annually covering events for that period), were very popular.

It seems unavoidable confuse the genres when going from one country to another; in France, its country of origin, the vaudeville was a farce where rather irrelevant musical numbers were introduced, but in the USA the name was used to refer to a variety act - quite unrefined - that was presented in cafes for all-male audiences and usually in red light districts. Over time they became more sophisticated both in form and content until it became the favourite form of entertainment of the North-American middle class. Reed Albee, Edward Albee's foster father for example, was a major partner of a chain of vaudeville theatres. One should also remember that this is where the greatest comedians emerged, such as W. C. Fields, Eddie Cantor, George M. Cohan, and Will Rogers, and after some time they became respectable venues where talents such as Alla Nazimova and Ethel Barrymore would grace the stage, not to mention the magnificent Lily Gantry.

In the '20s the musical was making great progress both in form and content, and soon the songs were not only part of the plot but were also an important element. In the 1910s composers such as Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg authored iconic hits like "Rose Marie", "The Vagabond King" and "The Desert Song", which were almost operettas; but in the '30s everything had already changed completely. Jerome Kern (1885-1945) adapted a novel by Edna Ferber and created the "Showboat", a classic that has been produced time and time again, from which old favourites came to stay, such as "Old Man River", "Make Believe", "Can't Help Loving that Man of Mine" and "Why do I love you?".

In 1924 the Gershwin Brothers wrote "Lady Be Good", starred by Fred and Adele Astaire. George (1898-1937) and Ira (1896-1983) Gershwin composed the music and the lyrics to

many hits, collaborating with many playwrights and their plots. With George Kaufman, for example, in 1931 they wrote “Of Thee I Sing”, the first musical to make a political criticism, and in 1935 “Porgy and Bess”, more than a mere musical, which is nowadays part of the repertoire of the Metropolitan Theatre and other opera houses.

Also at that time, Richard Rogers (1902-1979) started his career by establishing a memorable collaboration with Lorenz Hart, which only ended when the latter died in 1943 and he struck a new partnership with Oscar Hammerstein (1895-1960), equally successful. The social commitment of the ‘30s found its way to the musical milieu with “Johnny Johnson” of 1936, a pacifist and expressionist play by Paul Green with music by the recently-immigrated Kurt Weill. In ‘38 Weill composed the songs for “Knickerbocker Holiday” – Maxwell Anderson’s only musical adventure – the most American of all songs composed by a German – the “September Song”. In 1941 Kurt Weill wrote the music for the “Lady in the Dark”, a splendid psychoanalytical musical with Gertrude Lawrence on the stage and Ginger Rogers on the silver screen (where Danny Kaye was much missed, as on stage he sang a hilarious number called “Tchaikovsky”).

In 1943, Rogers and Hammerstein made history with the opening of “Oklahoma!”, which many believe to be the real birth of the so-called American musical. The story is based on a novel by Lynn Riggs called “Green Grow the Lilacs”; it is an elaborate plot that takes place in the west – a veritable theatrical drama. And it was not just the music that was integrated to the action; the usual arbitrary dance number was replaced by Agnes de Mille’s choreography that was also in sync with the plot. “Oklahoma!” would break every record, with 2,248 performances in Broadway and 1,500 in London. In 1949 Rogers and Hammerstein created “South Pacific”, which broke the record of the longest standing play.

At this point the great Cole Porter (1891-1984) was already famous; he had written his first musical comedy in 1916, but was an important addition to the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s, where some of his most famous songs were “The Gay Divorcee” in 1932, “Anything Goes” in ‘34, “Kiss Me Kate” in ‘48, and finally “Can-Can” and “Silk Stockings” in the ‘50s. He was born to a wealthy family and graduated from Yale, and the years he spent in Europe helped impart the kind of sophistication that took the musical industry to the next cultural level.

In the 1960s the musical genre took on a new direction when Stephen Sondheim (1930) joined the scene and gave us the lyrics for “Westside Story” with the score by Leonard Bernstein and some collaboration from William Shakespeare. He also wrote the lyrics for “Gipsy” (1959), and in 1962 he wrote a whole musical single-handed – “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum” – inspired in Roman playwright Plautus. Sondheim’s most outstanding characteristic was his courage to experiment both in form and content: in “Company” of 1964 he makes a kind of a collage of songs and situations about modern marriage in New York. In the “Follies” he puts together a group of veterans from the musical theatre to ponder about how age can influence career and private life. In 1973 he created “A Little Night Music” and did what until then was considered impossible in modern American musicals: the whole score was composed in $\frac{3}{4}$ ¹ time. In 1976 Sondheim composed “Pacific Overtures” about the arrival of Westerns in Japan in the nineteenth century, where he borrowed some aspects of the Kabuki theatre, making a lot of people wondering in terms of musical. Nowadays, the play is produced in European opera houses. And in terms of improbable themes for a musical, in 1979 he wrote the phenomenal “Sweeney Todd”, based on a Victorian melodrama where a barber (that suffers with existential anguish in the musical) kills his patrons and become

1 Ternary metric pattern. The $\frac{3}{4}$, known as ‘simple ternary metric’ is not usually used in musical songs.

the supplier of a meat pie baker. Also in 1979, Sondheim tried his hand at investigating the process of artistic creation with “Sunday in the Park with George”, where the painting of a Sunday afternoon outing by Post-Impressionist painter Georges Seurat materializes on stage. In “Into the Woods” of 1987 Sondheim tried to demystify classic fairy tales, and he has made it into the new century still composing.

It would be impossible to have an idea of the scope of North-American experience with musicals and to leave out the aforementioned “Hair” by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, with music by Galt MacDermot; there is a reason why they are so famous. As mentioned, despite starting in the off-Broadway circuit, fame and success moved it to Broadway and then to the rest of the world. “Hair” became the icon for the movement against the Vietnam war, for the hippies and counterculture, proving that a musical can do it all – it can be as expressive as the written text provided it has a current content and goal.

The ‘50s saw the rise of great musical productions such as “My Fair Lady” and “The Sound of Music”, and to a certain extent the demise of experimentation with musicals. “Hello, Dolly!” of 1964 and “Man of La Mancha” of 1965 opened the door to a fact that is becoming the norm: the pure and simple cost of production makes the musical genre more and more dependent of a full house for many years before it reaches the bottom line. To this end “Cabaret” and “Barnum” are relatively simple, but the talk out there is of hundred thousands of dollars. The North American formula was already popular in England for some time, where its musical roots originated, and Broadway brought from across the big pond amazing hits like “Cats”, “Phantom” and “Les Mis” (adapted from a French musical), “Miss Saigon” and similar productions. The only way they make it is by running the plays year in year out, and exporting their ‘clones’ to the four corners of the world.

For the North-American stages the cost is translated in a great number of revivals: the Antoinette Perry Award, generally referred to as ‘The Tony’, has a ‘Best Revival of a Musical’ and ‘Best Revival of a Play’ category, which are almost a guarantee of success – almost because neither the entrepreneurs nor the Broadway angels investors have found a crystal ball to know for sure which plays will be a hit and which will flop.

Canada’s cultural identity is hindered by two major hurdles; on the one hand, the proximity to the United States, especially in that both countries share the same language, which causes many talented actors from the former country to move to the latter, mainly to New York and Chicago; on the other hand, the strong presence of English and French in Canada has been a hindering factor as both languages are official and have to be included in documents in alternating paragraphs. Hence, Canadian theatre is obliged to have both languages, whereby a series of small theatres spread throughout that huge country has brought about playwrights that address particular local themes.

Older references to the theatre in Canada are made by Captain Edward Haies during his journey in 1583 as part of the expedition led by Sir Humphrey Gilbert, where he states: “Besides for solace of our people, and allurements of the savages, we were provided of Musike in good variety not omitting the least toys, as Morris dancers, Hobby horses, and Maylike conceits to delight the Savage people, whom we intended to winne by all faire means possible.” The savages were – of course – the indigenous people of that vast area that is now Canada, the rites of which were preserved for a long time and later related and executed by dancers using costumes and masks. These masks were carved in wood and were often so big that they could open up to reveal a second mask, where the performance was enriched by monsters that flew on the stage.

The European theatre was brought by the settlers to the ‘New France’ in the seventeenth

century, where the first traces of the English theatre can be found only in the eighteenth century. Also, the on-going wars between France and England prevented a more harmonious development, and it is not surprising that the first performances in English were staged in barracks. In 1760, when New France was defeated, plays staged by the military and groups of the so called 'gentlemen amateurs' were also performed in Quebec and Montreal, although the local population was mostly French-speaking.

There was another crucial conflict that affected the English-speaking theatre of Canada - after the Independence of the United States in 1776 hundreds of thousands of Anglophile settlers that remained faithful to the English monarchy moved to the north and increased the population and helped to make the colony prosperous, concentrating in the Ontario region. It did not take long before groups of English-speaking amateurs became well-established and for plays that were at first staged on the halls of the Assembly House, from where the township administration was run, built their own theatres - the first was built in 1789 in Halifax by the English military. There are records about the production of over one hundred plays in Halifax in the last fifteen years of that century.

The newly-built theatres started the regular touring of English and North-American companies to Canada and in the early nineteenth century the most famous names of the English theatre, i.e. Edmund Kean, Charles Kemble and George MacReady performed on the stages of the most important Canadian cities. Companies formed by the military, usually by officers, had a sophisticated repertoire and catered to the more educated audiences; however, at the same time different small professional companies were formed, usually headed by an actor and an actress that catered to a wider public. They usually toured throughout the Canadian territory during the summer and in the winter would stay in growing towns along the lakes' region, as it was impossible to travel in the cold months.

Professional companies that became a permanent fixture of a given theatre enabled the occasional Canadian playwright to emerge, but if the truth be told, since of the middle of the century the theatre was basically supported by English or North-American companies that would bring well-known stars to guarantee a successful season. Theatrical activities in Canada increased rapidly and around 1879 there were theatres that could sit two thousand spectators in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. These cities would stage both drama and opera performances, while the 'gold rush' in the west started theatres and companies in the Pacific coast. However, the development of local talent was still in want, especially due to transportation that was becoming more accessible. During the last decades of the nineteenth century until the Great War of 1914 the panorama changed because instead of touring different plays for a longer season, companies would invest on a single great production that would tour the country, similar to the modern 'domestic companies' that tour with the great Broadway hits.

Two elements that hindered the development of the Canadian theatre during the early twentieth century were the Great War that prevented English and French companies from travelling regularly and kept many theatres in business, and the novelty of the cinema that spread like bush fire, as it was able to provide entertainment anywhere without having to bear the costs with actors, sets and props. From that time on Canadian talents would take their trade to North-American stages or the silver screen, while small companies were bravely fighting for the right of performing a repertoire of serious and superior plays in order to promote the rare Canadian playwrights.

The panorama remained unchanged until the end of World War II in 1945, when Canada underwent a strong and exciting artistic movement. In 1931 Canada was practically independent politically, a fact that stimulated the development of national awareness in

terms of the Arts milieu resulting in the Massey Report. The document acknowledged the important role played by the Arts in the life of Canada, which called for the federal government to provide the right means to develop it. The result was the creation of the Canada Council in 1957, followed by the creation of the regional Arts Councils in different provinces. Gradually, clusters of high-quality theatres were set up in different places, as well as organizations such as the New Play Society, the first fully dedicated to Canadian playwrights.

Since then, the progress of the theatre in Canada has been slow but constant, where there is a good balance between visiting companies, new playwrights and actors, and the unavoidable defection of talents in search of success in the United States. Also in French Canada the recipe is similar, but in this case importing French companies and where talents do not defect to other countries, unlike what occurs with English-speaking ones.

II - Central America

The process of how the theatre came to be in Hispanic America was at first quite similar to what occurred in Brazil, where it was part of the evangelisation process, especially where the Company of Jesus operated, but it was not necessarily the embryo for subsequent development. Although Spain had considerable theatrical tradition and the colonization process started on the second half of the Golden Century, this was not actually a determining factor for the theatre in the New World. The most important factor is to acknowledge that after the theatre was introduced from Europe it underwent major changes in order to play out its designated role, i.e. to reflect the society in which it exists. It is true that in a globalised world the cultural differences are often forgotten, but in the days of the discoveries they were quite real, and the theatre had to adapt in order to meet the needs of this new audience.

Of all the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas, Mexico was the one with the greatest and most constant theatrical production. Only in Mexico the evangelisation theatre of the Jesuits did not remain an isolated factor. The force of the Aztec culture – despite the Spanish domination – was rich enough in dance and music for the native elements to merge with the culture brought by the conquistadores for any theatrical production, although it failed to attain individually a significant development. One should always keep in mind that the evangelisation zeal led to the tragic annihilation of a rich and sophisticated culture.

On the other hand, constant communication with Spain where the theatre was living its heydays, brought regularly to the New World theatrical companies from the outset. In the mid-sixteenth century Fernán González de Eslava (a.k.a. Padre Fernán, c.1534-c.1601) emerged as the first playwright born in the Americas, writing light-handed dialogues, interludes and apologies effectively dedicated to the theatre, despite the strong religious orientation of his plays.

The seventeenth century brought a surprise for Central America dramaturgy – the unexpected talent of Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695), the author of autos sacramentales (sacred plays) such as “The Divine Narcissus” but also of comedias similar to the ones created by Lope and Calderón, such as “Love is a Labyrinth” or “The Obligations of a Home” (Los empeños de una casa), which suggests a pun of the title used by Calderón playing with the words ‘casa’ and ‘acaso’, “The obligations of chance” (Los empeños de un acaso). However, no new playwright emerged in Mexico in the eighteenth century, but the theatre remained strong.

The early nineteenth century, from 1810 to 1821, was dedicated to the fight for Independence and there was no room for artistic manifestations. Still in the early part of the century the European Romantic movement reflected in Mexico as an independent cultural manifestation called costumbrismo, which is a typical literature of Hispanic America, where some European themes are used as countryside habits, customs and costumes of obvious regional nature. The actual characteristic of the Romantic movement is evident in the works by Fernando Calderón (1809-1845), addressing European Medieval scenarios, and more interesting, Ignacio Rodríguez Galván (1816-1842), who in his brief life addressed traditional tales and legends of the New World, where the best piece of his promising but short career is *Muñoz, Mexico Visitor*, the first historical plays about the Americas. There are some more realistic plays from the end of the century, but no significant playwright. If truth be told, the wealth of the Spanish theatre and the close contact between the old colony and Madrid held back the development of the Mexican theatre, providing ample material that ensured that a good number of plays were always staged. Political conflicts, or the ill-fated reign of Maximiliano and Carlota would only become the theme of plays in the mid-twentieth century.

Not the political and economic stability proclaimed by Porfirio Díaz in the early years of the new century nor the Mexican Revolution of 1910 had greater consequences for the theatre that was still under the Spanish influence; however, in the late 1920s when the Revolutionary period and World War I were over a new wave of enthusiasm took over as the quest for local themes, manifesting as many witty and amusing *sainetes* and *zarzuelas*, with the Teatro del Murcielago promoting sidewalk events of indigenous dancing, singing and old rituals.

Considerable progress was made when a series of playwrights that formed the Grupo de los Siete (The Group of the Seven) broke away from old-fashioned conventions, such as remarks directed to the audience, and finally Mexican Spanish was accepted as a valid medium for plays. These facts were conducive to creating a more authentic dramaturgy, where “*Merchant Father*” by Carlos Díaz Dufoo (1861-1941) became the first play written by a Mexican playwright worthy of being produced for a season of one hundred presentations.

In the second half of the century, given the progress of communication media, Mexico faced a new wave of external influence from important European directors and set designers like Gordon Craig, Reinhardt, Piscator and Brecht, who both improved the quality of the plays and stimulated dramaturgy. At that time Xavier Villaurrutia (1903-1950) came into scene, addressing mainly the problems of the Mexican middle class and creating a series of plays under the name *Autos Profanos*.

However, the most important playwright at that time was Rodolfo Usigli (1905-1979) – poet, actor and director. Usigli had been writing since 1930 and got a grant to study in the United States; upon returning to Mexico he translated and produced many North-American plays. In 1943 he wrote “*Crown of Shadow*”, which he considered ‘anti-historical’ as it took place in the crazy mind of Empress Carlota. As a purely fictional work, the playwright depicts Carlota as ambitious and self-centred, while Maximiliano was portrayed as truly well-intentioned and having Mexico’s best interests at heart. Just before he was executed the unfortunate emperor hoped that his death would bring some advantage to Mexico. But Usigli’s masterpiece was “*The Gesticulator*” (1938), with a complex plot about a loser teacher that goes into early retirement and moves to the countryside, where he is mistaken for a hero of the Mexican Revolution. Thanks to this he builds a successful political career and when he is threatened by an old enemy who is going to reveal his true identity he prefers to be murdered. Then Navarro, who ordered his death, comes forth as his successor and with good chances of being elected.

In the second half of the twentieth century Mexican theatre had many productions, where a growing number of Mexicans participated in productions by the Instituto Nacional de Belas Artes that stimulated new playwrights that preferred costumbrismo or an Expressionist strain. The most important name of this movement was Emilio Carvallido (1925-2008) that portrayed the Mexican way of life in “Rosalba and the Llaveros”, a play about the conflict of a city girl and her simpleton relatives. During this same period another playwright was outstanding – Guatemalan Carlos Solórzano (1919-2011), well-integrated in the Mexican culture, he wrote some short plays and delved into the issue of individual freedom in “The Sorcerer” of 1954 and “The Hands of God” of 1957.

In the last decades of the twentieth century the influence of North-American playwrights like Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams was a strong inspiration for a new and a more realistic dramaturgy committed with social and political issues, more and more associated to finding a national reality.

The same process occurred in other countries of Central America: religious plays enacted by orders committed to converting the indigenous populations to Christianity; the rule of Spanish dramaturgy over the local theatre; some form of theatre after the independence; the slow progress with the advent of the Romantic movement; and in the twentieth century greater development with emphasis on political and social themes.

Cuba is the only country with a somewhat different and more active aspect since before the Spanish colonised the island it already had the areytos – a form of dance-theatre that expressed positively the wealth of the native culture and religion, and that for this very reason was prohibited by the Spaniards. Cuba was occupied by the English and was settled by French refugees in the first few years after it was discovered; in the eighteenth century there was an abundance of theatres but virtually just to stage Spanish plays. The most interesting exception is the so-called ‘father of the Cuban theatre’ – Francisco Covarrubias (1775-1838) – actor, playwright and entrepreneur who became famous with his character ‘negrito’, who performed with his face painted in black, years before the blackface North-American minstrel shows.

On the turn of the twentieth century Cuba was under the rule of the United States for four years, undergoing a series of corrupt administrations that resulted in the advent of dictator Fulgêncio Batista, who was in power from 1934 to 1959. The first attempts to set up the theatre during the first decades were thwarted by the country’s progressing political, social and moral decadence.

The Revolution led by Fidel Castro brought about a new climate for Cuba, whereby the theatre and other arts were backed by the government, although there was a strong ideological control on any creation. The first outstanding playwright was Abelardo Estorino (1925) who became well-known for his first play called “The Theft of the Piglet” of 1961, about the tense climate before the Revolution. Then came Antón Arrufat (1935), who in 1957 wrote a play in the absurd genre called “The Case Investigates Itself” and was censored because he displayed counter-revolutionary notions, similar to “The Seven Against Thebes” of 1968. After 14 years of being forbidden to publish his work Arrufat started writing plays again regularly but not very successfully. The only playwright that had international repercussion was José Triana (1931) with the play “The Night of the Assassins” of 1965, where three youngsters create and play different characters for themselves during the night when the plan to kill their parents. The play was produced in many countries, but Triana only went back to writing plays after 1980 and he lives nowadays in Spain, where he published remarkable academic books about the Spanish theatre.

However, most of the theatre activity in revolutionary Cuba has been carried out by a

great number of companies of youngsters with government orientation that are dedicated to local customs and traditions, rich in singing and dancing. Adult theatre, including companies comprising factory workers, was always restricted to ideological parameters, and despite the legion of playwrights, none are outstanding or have a style that could go beyond its borders.

III - South America

In South America the general process whereby the theatre came to be is similar, but in some countries there was greater development, typically associated with the country's political evolution. In Colombia there are records of the performance of a short critical comedy called *Laurea critica* in 1580, written by Fernando Fernandez de Valenzuela, as well as certain religious celebrations. In 1790 the Coliseo Ramirez was built to stage the zarzuelas, but theatre as such was not significant until the end of the Colonial period. As usual, independence would bring a period of enthusiasm that would lead to the emergence of playwrights, the majority of which were costumbristas. José Maria Semper (1828-1888) wrote the play "An Old-fashioned Mayor", which is a kind of zarzuela addressing the typical conflict between traditions and innovation in a society that is undergoing significant changes.

The twentieth century was lukewarm until the end of World War II, when Brecht's influence was cultivated by all leftist movements that were stimulated by the Soviet Union. Many productions of Brecht's translated plays were part of movements embraced by youngsters not only from Bogota but other cities as well, usually marked by a strong political bias and influenced by Cuba. One good example is the Teatro Experimental de Cali of Enrique Buenaventura, an exponent of the renovation of the Colombian theatre, who both as a playwright and director was famous in his country and the neighbouring Spanish-speaking estates. Colombian theatre has been more consistent but is yet to produce a really notable play.

Political unrest that results from a series of corrupt governments and dictators can be explained by the fact that Venezuela took longer than other Latin American countries to develop a more solid national theatre. Venezuela underwent the same colonizing process as the other countries in the continent, but apparently there was no important even in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the first half of the last century the number of performances and the quality of productions improved considerably, but only in the case of foreign plays. It was only in the 1950s that the first playwrights emerged reflecting the growing awareness of an independent culture.

The first name that stands out is César Rengifo (1915-1980), who made a kind of revision of the history of Venezuela in a series of trilogies about the different periods in the '40s and '50s. But it was in the following decade, after the influence of the theatre of the absurd, of Artaud's notions and Brecht's plays that three significant playwrights came into the picture, which were called the 'Holy Trinity' - Isaac Chacrón (1930-2011), Román Chalbaud (1931) and José Ignacio Cabrujas (1937-1995). The first wrote a great number of plays, founded the main drama school of Venezuela, created literary fiction and essays, and called himself "a Jew, a homosexual and a writer". The second turned his back to the theatre after participating intensely in the movement for renovation and became the most important actor of the Venezuelan cinema industry. The third was remarkable for his erudition and wit, participating in all theatre-related areas, including in disseminating the opera via a brilliant radio program. In 1966 the three playwrights collaborated in a play

called “Triangle”. Since then Venezuelan drama production has been quite constant, always depending on the frequent political crisis that imposes greater or lesser censorship. Of the playwrights that were active in the ‘80s José Gabriel Nuñez, Rodolfo Santana and Mariela Romero stand out. However, Venezuelan theatre is still a domestic cultural manifestation.

In terms of Pre-Colombian theatre, Peru has the most theatrical activity according to remarks that are old enough to be trusted, but there are no traces of those possible works. This seems to be backed by the fact that there were theatrical manifestations of possible Inca origin in the religious theatre during the Colonial period of Catholic evangelisation. This fact did not prevent the profile of Peruvian theatre to be perfectly similar to other Latin American countries. They all share the Spanish language and culture and the serious social problems created by the gap that separated a small elite of Spaniards from the rest of the population that was vastly comprised of indigenous people. Similar to other countries, the theatre became stronger in the mid-twentieth century, first with shows and then with plays strongly associated with social conflicts and protesting against dictatorships.

Starting in the 1970s, a group of playwrights emerged in Peru that had little or no concern with the techniques of playwriting or its aesthetics, creating the so-called ‘brand-new theatre of Peru’. Their plays had a strong social nature, where all themes and actions were based on a single conflict between ‘us’ – members of the working class and farmers, and ‘them’ – the rich capitalists that according to the new playwrights were continuously responsible for death in Peru, as their behaviour kept the population captive of the vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, alcoholism and sexual exploitation.

The most famous of those playwrights is Gregor Diaz (1933-2001), who wrote “The Strike” in 1968; he is considered far too local both on terms of themes and format to have any international appeal, and this would not have interested him given his commitment to drive social changes in his own country. His first play *Los del cuatro* (1966) is actually too long to be popular but covers all the themes that Diaz held close to his heart, and the many plays he wrote from then on were powerful in that they encouraged the target audience to fight the injustice that he withstood for such a long time. Julio Ramón Ribeyro (1929-1994) and Alonso Alegria (1940) were also outstanding Peruvian playwrights.

In 1975, Quechua was recognised as one of the official languages of Peru, and the Teatro da Universidade de San Marcos created an award for plays written in the language; by the end of the century there were a small number of such plays, but they were finding their way to the stages of Peru. Actually, there are only a handful of Peruvian authors that are also playwrights, and Mario Vargas Llosa (1936) who has been living abroad for some time wrote in 1981 “The Young Lady from Tacna” and in 1983 “Kathie and the Hippopotamus” that are less known plays from his vast body of works.

Compared to Peru, Bolivia until the end of the century had not yet found its cultural identity in terms of the theatre. During the Colonial period the religious plays reflected the presence of the culture of indigenous people, which was sometimes staged in three different languages: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara. The settlers imported Spanish plays, and the Independence in 1825 did not sever those ties nor was able to establish a minimum of social or political stability. Few playwrights emerged in the nineteenth century, all of which created artificial plays that were copied from Spanish authors. In the early twentieth century theatrical activity picked up its pace but still failed to have a true national expression. Antonio Diaz Villamil (1897-1948) emerged at that time and would have a long and fruitful career as a writer. Villamil was the first one to write plays about local themes and for the

first time adopted the language actually spoken by the Bolivian people instead of the pure Spanish of Europe.

The Chaco War (1932-1935) resulted in a stronger national identity, and in the '50s some playwrights would start to write about historical events. Political unrest that was expressed via countless and successive dictatorships and coups throughout the century were not conducive to artistic expression. But Raul Salmón (1926-1990) became a very important player in the cultural and political life of Bolivia, and in 1969 he wrote "Three Generals", which is an interesting reflection about the influence of the political past in the present days of Bolivia. Salmón authored many plays, wrote soap operas for the radio and remained active until the end of the century. There were some other authors but the country still lacks good infrastructure before it becomes better established.

In Chile, the Spaniards found indigenous people that were less evolved than those of Peru and Mexico, but who were willing to bravely fight the Spanish invaders; despite losing the fight, their courage inspired plays that told about the heroic araucos. However, in general the history of the theatre of Chile is similar to its sister countries, where the presence of Spanish plays was the rule throughout the centuries of colonization, with a slight period of enthusiasm in the years that followed their Independence in 1818. The first permanent theatre was inaugurated in 1820, and in the first few years of the new era the theatre milieu of Valparaiso was livelier than Santiago, and it was Bernardo O'Higgins (1778-1842) - the great national hero - who worked hard to further the theatre in his homeland.

Another important playwright was Andres Bello (1781-1865), a Venezuelan that lived in Chile and became president of the most prestigious university of the country, which he founded and that nowadays is named after him. Bello was a great humanitarian and was the mind behind an enlightened educational reform; he penned some plays in the Neoclassic-Romantic style. The second half of the nineteenth century was uneventful, except for plays about local themes, such as "Ernesto" (1842) by Rafael Minvielle (1800-1887), which was a success. It did not take long before the costumbristas emerged writing scores of plays about popular characters, often used to criticize the habits and customs of that time; however, there was no masterpiece worthy of mention.

The twentieth century brought about great changes and a strong international presence in the country's economic development. On the one hand, this was conducive for translated English and French plays to be produced; on the other, eventually plays about the social problems ensuing from the economic situation emerged.

The great change started gradually with the creation of the Teatro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile (directed by Pedro de la Barra (1912-1976) since it opened in 1941 until 1958. The name was later changed to Instituto de Teatro de la Universidad de Chile (ITUCH) when it was influenced by Piscator, Antoine and Stanislavski. It was visited by Louis Jouvet and his company, which were trying to raise funds for the Free France Movement in World War II, and also helped strengthen the new Chilean theatre. The Catholic University of Chile created in 1943 the Teatro Experimental de la Universidad Católica (TEUC), and the theatre of Chile was greatly stimulated because of the quasi-rivalry between the two institutions. As part of a surprising event in the theatre of Chile, in 1966 Pablo Neruda had his only experience as a playwright with an intriguing play called "Splendour and Death of Joaquin Murieta", but no other outstanding author emerged.

The Allende regime encouraged the young Chilean theatre, which was active in the social and political processes; he was overthrown in 1973 in a dramatic climate. Pinochet's dictatorship was a period of repression and censorship that greatly set back the development

of the theatre and other expressions of art. However, many playwrights continued to write about Chilean themes despite officially silenced. Starting in 1976 the theatre gradually stepped up and was able to find that it could present relevant plays.

But the danger was not over, and in 1978 Marco Antonio de la Parra's "The Raw, the Cooked and the Rotten" that was scheduled to be produced by the company of the Universidade Católica was censored one day before the opening night under the excuse that they used coarse language. During those years when the theatre was virtually an underground activity countless collective creations were produced resulting in informal meetings of companies that protested against the dictatorship regime. By the late twentieth century a more traditional and constant body of plays emerged, and with the end of the old regime and the reinstating of democracy the Chilean theatre has been putting forth plays more regularly.

The cultural activities of Uruguay are so strongly associated with those of Argentina that it is practically impossible to talk about the theatre in the former country without addressing the latter as well. The first significant actor was José J. Podestá (1858-1937), who created a character called Juan Moreira based on a popular novel by Argentine writer Eduardo Gutiérrez: an idealised and ethical gaucho that was persecuted by the authorities, hired by the North American Circus in Argentina, and whose success is a good example of the cultural melange of both countries.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century the most important playwright of Uruguay and probably of all South America was Florencio Sanchez (1875-1910), the creator of a series of popular plays in all the Hispanic countries, but who always lived in Argentina where his plays could be produced and staged for a big audience. In the twentieth century Uruguay followed the same model as its neighbours in terms of theatre development, but always perfectly aligned with Argentina, where playwrights, directors and actors would routinely find success.

Argentina has the most solid artistic panorama of all the Hispanic South America, especially in terms of music and theatre, even more so than Brazil. However, in its general trajectory everything was very similar in every aspect involving all the countries of the continent. There is recurring mention of supposed drama manifestations by the indigenous people, but they are not proven, as the first ones are of religious nature introduced by the missionaries and the settlers that imposed the Spanish culture as the model for the development of Argentina; it actually never had all the silver that gave the name to its most famous river - Rio de la Plata. The oldest records of theatrical activities did not take place in Buenos Aires, which at the time of its Independence in 1816 was still a small and insignificant town, but there are some records of the Jesuits in Cordoba, from which theatrical manifestations spread to other towns.

Documents dating from 1757 attest for the construction of a venue in Buenos Aires to stage shows and musicals, and in 1783 the Teatro de la Rancheria was built in a region that became a traditional venue for theatres. Before the first building was burned down in 1792 it staged a tragedy called "Siripo" (1789) by Argentine playwright Manuel José de Lavardén (1754-1801), of which all there remains is a fragment. In reality, the different manifestations of the Spanish theatre throughout the eighteenth century are actually largely documented. The sainete (a short and merry Spanish play) called El amor de la estanciera (The Rancher's Love) of 1818 is probably the model for a whole series of plays in verse taking place among the gauchos that lived in the pampas.

In the first half of the nineteenth century – right in 1817 - the Sociedad del Buen Gusto del Teatro was created with the noble objective of fostering both national dramaturgy and theatre; however, it lasted only two years because of internal unrest and censorship. Both theatre productions were regularly staged as sainetes and plays, as well as the emergence of new playwrights, where Juan Cruz Varela (1794-1839) wrote a merry and pleasant comedy when he was still a student – called *A rio revuelto ganancia de Pescadores* – which has survived until nowadays. Later he attempted to mimic a French Neoclassical tragedy with “*Dido*” (1821), which depicts the cultural climate of the middle and upper classes of those days.

During the administration of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-1853) the theatre was strongly supported by and had great development due to a significant number of costumbrista plays following the Spanish trend. Many literary authors also lent their talent to the theatre, such as Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906), where the play by Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884) called “*The Giant Poppies*” (1841) is the single and witty satire about Rosas and the myth of power. Due to its catchy humour the play triggered the emergence of many plays that were far from subtle in their criticism. At the same time of this success, the Rosas regime was harshly criticised and mocked by Pedro Echagüe (1821-1889) in “*Rosas*”.

Echagüe continued with his career during the administration of Mitre and Sarmiento, a time when few playwrights were productive given that it was a period of transition to realism. This period was marked by the frequent tours of European companies, and in general the century was conducive to building new theatres, such as the Colón, the opera, culminating with the construction of Teatro Nacional Cervantes.

By the end of the century many playwrights left a less-than-prosperous Europe to find solace in the stages of Buenos Aires; the most significant case is perhaps Maria Guerrero, who after many tours decided to make Buenos Aires her home in 1897. As a token of gratitude to the public of Buenos Aires that was so ready to welcome her and realising that the city did not have a large and improved theatre hall, Guerrero and her husband bought a large plot and fully dedicated themselves to building the Cervantes. Instead of procuring backing from the Argentine government she went to privately owned companies that made major contributions, going as far as asking for help from the Spanish king, who addressed the issue seriously and determined that Spain would provide the finishing materials. Roof and floor tiles and marble, to mention but a few of the materials, would be sent over in cargo ships that could not leave the Spanish ports to Argentina if they were not loaded with those goods, as ordered by Alfonso XIII. Nowadays it is not the same building, but there is still a Teatro Cervantes on the same venue. When the first building was completed in 1921, Guerrero opened the theatre staging the play “*The Lady-Fool*” by Lope de Vega, where she had one of the most important roles of her career.

The first decades of the twentieth century were strongly populated by foreign plays, whereby the public became used to good and modern productions compared to the Hispanic America and Brazil as well. Local playwriting – within the limits of lower quality plays – produced scores of playwrights that covered all the genres and in a greater number the so-called *sainete criollo*, where the popular form of Spanish drama was used to address local popular themes. The most significant difference between the theatre of Argentina and the rest of the continent is that in the 1930s the influence of the political and socially engaged theatre could already be perceived side-by-side with light comedy of customs. The result of this intense theatrical activity could be observed especially in Buenos Aires.

The movement called ‘independent theatre’ boosted the theatre and playwriting in Argentina. The first company that emerged in 1930 was the Teatro del Pueblo (Theatre of the

People) of Leónidas Barletta (1902-1975), where the very name points to their intention of discovering a new audience. At the same time, the company was trying to establish a stronger position for the director while it introduced new forms of production and stage technologies. Looking into the future, every new independent company that was emerging was influenced by Marxism and always addressed social and political themes. In 1933 a new company led by Juan B. Justo was formed, and in 1939 "The Mask" was staged with ideas identical to those of Teatro del Pueblo.

In all, in the following decades there were some fifty independent companies, and in such great numbers it would only be natural for so many ideas and routes to have emerged. Many were spawned by amateur companies – also known as the *filodramáticos* – from the turn of the nineteenth century. And even these young companies were not short of foreign playwrights that were associated to the more recent European movements. Roberto Arlt (1900-1942) was outstanding in this period as the most consistent vanguard playwright. He lived a relatively short life and his work stood at the border between reality and imagination, authoring eight plays where the most outstanding was "Saverio the Cruel" (1936), which is an interesting exploration of meta-theatrical techniques that address illusion and madness.

In 1949 "The Bridge" by Carlos Gorostiza (1920) emerged, addressing the tension between the Argentine social classes, actually depicting his own life history where his father abandoned his mother and two children; overnight this middle-class family was left to their own devices and had to seek work despite the young age of the playwright and his bother. In 1958 he won an award for his tragedy "The Bread of Madness" and became an important name in the realistic genre. He spent some time in Venezuela but returned to Argentina to become a director and later a professor at the university, only to be fired by Perón.

Since the 1950s there has been considerable advancement in the Argentine theatre, and playwright Osvaldo Dragún (1929-1999) stands out in 1957 with "Stories to be told"; the plot involves a series of short scenes that show how a humble worker is poorly treated and that became famous outside Argentina, reflecting Brecht's strong influence. Social and political themes have prevailed in the theatre of Argentina despite the long periods of dictatorship, where repression furthered a type of protest that depending on the censorship is more or less open, or even surreptitious.

Both Gorostiza and Dragún were fundamental in the formation of a group of playwrights, directors and actors that founded the Teatro Abierto, which had dreams of shaking the country free of corrupted stagnation. The initial project comprised twenty plays in a single act directed by different directors, presented in seven days and re-enacted weekly, where the Teatro Picadero that became the company's permanent headquarters burned mysteriously after the first week it opened. However, they did not halt their work and after a few days transferred to Teatro Tabaris.

Despite their surprising ability to produce plays regularly under an oppressive regime, with rare exceptions the theatre in Argentina has remained a domestic endeavour and not very frequent at that. Similar to the rest of Latin America, Argentina has also failed to establish a mature cultural identity conducive to the production of first-class plays. This does not mean that the theatrical activity in the country is meagre, as two of their directors made a successful career abroad directing important plays in Europe and Brazil, namely Victor Garcia and Jorge Lavelli.

Victor Garcia (1934-1982) was born to a wealthy family that owned rural properties but refused to continue with his family's tradition; first he tried his hand at painting and later the theatre. He struggled to get the means to travel to Europe, and soon after arriving in France in 1960 he produced and staged "Ubu King" by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) at the

Louvre Theatre – a good omen for a budding career. He lived in France and also directed plays in Portugal. Between 1967 and 1974 Garcia was invited by Ruth Escobar to work in Brazil, where his most important work were the “Automobile Graveyard” by Fernando Arrabal in 1967, and “The Balcony” by Jean Genet in 1968, both enacted in a crucial time in the history of the Brazilian theatre. Garcia was Arrabal’s favourite director and declared that it was not Artaud but Victor Garcia who was the great transformer of modern theatre. Victor Garcia died in Paris, where he was an important player in the whole process of theatre vanguard in the ‘60s.

Jorge Lavelli, born in Argentina in 1932 to Italian immigrants, moved to France when he was young and in that country he became a successful director. He has worked throughout Europe and after the theatre he dedicated his career to the opera in France, Italy and Austria. In Brazil he produced at least one outstanding production – “The Seagull” by Anton Chekhov – where the stage was as big as the audience of the Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro. In 1977 Lavelli became a French citizen; he still lives in his new country where he continues with his remarkable career.

I - Under the context of the Discovery of Brazil and the theatre of 'evangelization'

The role of the theatre reflects particularly well the political and social development of Brazil. The Portuguese Monarchy regarded the new colony just as a source of different natural resources, and the settlers exploited them without giving any thought to the social and cultural development of the new land. The early concession of the Hereditary Captaincies became a tradition whereby large parcels of scarcely inhabited land were granted, a system completely against the grain of the theatre as an activity, given that it requires an audience. On the other hand, Portugal did not have any tradition in the theatre that would make the settlers dream with staging plays in the new continent. The Jesuits were responsible for introducing the theatre in Brazil, ensuing from their enthusiasm as preachers and as an educational tool. The most prominent Jesuit in terms of drama was Father José de Anchieta (1534-1597). His mother came from a family of new Christians, i.e. converted from Judaism, and at fourteen years of age he was sent to study in Portugal in order to fulfil his talent and religious inclination, rather than in Spain - his home country - where the Inquisition would probably regard him with suspicion. He joined the Company of Jesus when he was seventeen and soon after was transferred to Brazil.

Ancheita's first goal was to convert the indigenous people to Christianity; hence he learned how to speak the Tupi language and wrote the first grammar for a native Brazilian language. He was an extremely skilled communicator, and as such, Anchieta used the theatre as a teaching tool to capture the heart and mind of the native populations and to disseminate the universe he dreamed of creating. His theatrical body of work is varied because of its purpose, and his talent as a communicator is obvious in how he used the four languages he knew - Portuguese, Spanish, Latin and Tupi - to write his plays. For the indigenous people he wrote short sketches in Tupi with a clear objective and simple ideas using skilfully the names of rival tribes to identify demons or evil entities. Latin was used only for ceremonies and celebrations among the religious community or advanced students of schools or seminaries. For the layperson there were the religious plays in Portuguese and Spanish, where not only the language was different but the plot as well - he would create complex stories, morals and a plethora of allegorical characters that required greater understanding.

Anchieta was already living in Brazil when he was ordained in 1635, and he simply integrated the Jesuit tradition of using drama in education; his passion for the latter stands out in the fact that he was one of the founders of the Colégio de São Paulo in 1555. During his long career in Brazil Anchieta was also associated with 'reading and writing schools' and Humanities schools maintained by the order in major settlement centres. It should be noted that the twelve aristocrats that were members of the Portuguese Monarchy were the first commanders of the Hereditary Captaincies; when they were granted their land they also received a document that explained in detail their rights and duties. It mentioned how taxes should be collected and how justice should be meted out, but there was not a word about education. Famous as educators in Europe, the Jesuits dedicated themselves to the same craft in the Colony. The Order already had a repertoire of plays that could be enacted in any venue and for different purposes - religious educational - the so-called social and moral education.

The first play that we know of written by Father José de Anchieta was enacted in 1556 - "The Universal Sermon Drama"*, of which only two small fragments survived the passing of time, and for this reason it is not possible to know their content or form. The relationship between the two characters that depict the moral standards of the 1580s, when the playwright was more adroit with the dramatic genre, are the most complete examples

of Anchieta's high education. In the play "The São Loureço Festivity"* , the characters are Saint Sebastian and Saint Lawrence, one angel, Guaixara and Aimbere – two Tamoio indigenous people who were obviously enemies that sided with the French invaders – as well as gods Jupiter and Pluto, historical figures such as Romans Valerian, Caesar and Nero, and Greek Aesculapius. It takes much talent to make such a motley crew of characters to work, but Anchieta was able to organise them all under one single conflict, i.e. being for or against the Catholic Church, which was a situation faced by the evangelizing priests at all times, not only in relation to the indigenous people but also the settlers that were not men of faith and only wanted to extract the riches from the Colony.

"The Victory Festivity"* focuses on the Colony's political situation. Mostly written in Portuguese, which was the predominant language (although some parts are in Spanish), the play reaffirms obedience to the King and his consequent ruling of the land. Anchieta's plays were essentially educational and did not intend to stimulate the theatre in Brazil; all he did was to use it as a teaching tool. At any rate, although drama was part of education for the Jesuits, after Anchieta died when the 1500s were coming to an end, there are no records of plays created in and for Brazil for a long time.

II – Scarce attempts before the theatre was implemented in Brazil

Almost exactly one hundred years younger than Anchieta and born in Salvador, in Bahia, Manuel Botelho de Oliveira (1636-1711) was the first Brazilian to have a book published (*Música do Parnaso*, Lisbon, 1705) and to write plays actually conceived as literature, or at least in theory created for the stage. He studied in Coimbra at the time when Portugal was under the rule of the Spanish Monarchy and experienced the last days of splendour of the Golden Age of Spain. Hence, it is not surprising that Botelho wrote his two famous plays following the format established by Lope de Vega: 'cloak and dagger comedies' about the urban habits of the well-to-doers.

It is also not surprising that Botelho did his writing in Spanish, given that he was born under the rule of Spain. Furthermore, it was thanks to this fortuitous union that the expeditions were taken to heart of Brazil shaping the country as we know it because they ignored the virtual meridian frontier determined by the Tordesilhas Treaty that separated the world into two parts – one belonging to Spain and the other to Portugal. Even the titles of his comedies – *Hay amigo para amigo* and *Amor, Engaños y Celos* ("A Friend for a Friend"* and "Love, Mistakes and Jealousy"*) – show how much the author was integrated with the Spanish cultural dominance of those days; it was the first response to *No Hay Amigo para Amigo* ("There Are No Friends for Friends"*) by Rojas Zorrilla. *Hay amigo para amigo* talks about love, friendship and abnegation, which were popular themes, whereas *No hay...* had a plot of very complicated intrigues, obviously inspired by the phrase "love, mistakes and jealousy" spoken by one of the characters of "The Foolish Lady"*, a play by Lope de Vega.

Therefore, it was not Botelho who started the theatre in Brazil, and the number of theatrical performances increased only somewhat in the eighteenth century. There was a total lack of Brazilian playwrights, as nowadays we no longer consider Antônio José – 'the Jew' (1705-1739) as Brazilian simply because he was born here. He moved to Portugal, where he grew up, when he was 10 years old, and is undeniably an interesting European playwright, perfectly integrated with the Portuguese culture. There is not an idea or word in his works that refer to Brazil.

Two different sources inform us about the theatre in Brazil in the eighteenth century.

The first were the foreign travellers that left their testimonial of poor quality performances of European plays staged by humble and uneducated 'creoles and mulatos'. Their tone to describe those festivities was always derisive, where they recorded popular celebrations as sad imitations of the European theatre. This blend of such different works corresponds to the start-up of cultural activities, which later would become totally separate from the two values, where festivities were downgraded to the category of entertainment for the working class; the imitation of the European theatre was restricted to local the 'aristocrats'. Considering that university education was still prohibited in Brazil, Brazilians who could afford it would go to Coimbra to study, and as a rule had a Portuguese mind-set, merely living in the Colony.

The other source is the history of the villages, where the growing population claimed for entertainment and recreation to those who could recall or had information about the cultural activities from the kingdom; there is ample documentation of the songs and dances of the popular festivities that abound in Brazil. There are records of many plays enacted, especially the French, often times staged by travelling Portuguese companies that started to visit the Colony, where many actors decided to stay in Brazil. For sure they were not the best actors, but rather those who realized that the public on this side of the Atlantic was not so demanding. There is documentation of many Spanish playwrights, and plays by Molière were enacted in the city of Cuiaba in the 1770s. The only other French classical playwright mentioned is Voltaire, and his play "Zaira" was hugely popular.

The great and popular novelty of the end of the century were the operas by Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782), whose librettos fascinated many composers and were performed everywhere, in full or only the most popular parts. Therefore, this art form was becoming more popular because musicians were important in the major cities of the Colony, regardless of how well trained or not they were. We know that the theatre is the last manifestation of art in every culture, arising when it corresponds to the expectations of society. Although the Inconfidentes – the poets, scholars and priests from Minas Gerais who opposed the exploitation of the Colony by the Portuguese Monarchy – produced prose and poetry, they lacked the mature tools that were crucial to create good quality drama; as well, the libertarian feeling was not disseminated to a greater portion of the population. The Brazilian society as such did not yet exist, and copying the European model was the common cultural ambition.

The only remaining play by Claudio Manoel da Costa (1729-1789), translator and imitator of Metastasio is "Obsequious Parnassus"*, a not very theatrical play abounding with muses and gods that he composed to greet the Governor of the Captaincy of Minas Gerais, D. José Luís de Meneses, Count of Valadares. If he ever wrote tragedies, as reported, they remain unknown. Also missing in the incursion into the theatre made by Alvarenga Peixoto (1744-1793) is his play *Enéias no Lácio*. In the absence of the tradition in drama, art wise both writers were more closely associated with Metastasio and with the social and political panorama of their lives as citizens. In terms of theatre, the eighteenth century ended silently.

III – The awareness of the nation and the birth of the Brazilian theatre

Starting in 1808, many and significant changes occurred in Brazil when the Colony was elevated to the status of ‘United Kingdom’ with the arrival of the Royal Family. The Opening of the Ports and the Monarchy that moved to Brazil created new opportunities for education, the industrial sector and cultural enrichment. This was conducive to a climate that claimed the Independence from Portugal; it was only after raising the awareness for this new horizon that the Brazilian theatre was born.

Two playwrights that were very successful in reflecting what Brazil looked like in those days are the founders of the national theatre. The most erudite is Domingos José Gonçalves de Magalhães, the Viscount of Araguaia (1811-1882), who was born in Brazil when it was still part of the United Kingdom of Portugal and Algarve. He graduated from Medicine not in Portugal but in the new School of Medicine and Surgery of the Court and travelled to Europe at the height of the Romantic Movement, which he brought to Brazil. When he got back he taught Philosophy at Colégio D. Pedro II, worked for the government of the State of Maranhão and Porto Alegre; but his most important career was in diplomacy, where he represented Brazil in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Spain, Russia, the United States and the Vatican, where he died.

Given the important role played by the theatre in the European Romantic Movement, it is not surprising that Araguaia followed this path. His play “Antônio José, or the Poet and the Inquisition”* (1838) is about the open conflict of emotions and ideas, and the national hero. It deals with a religious conflict that takes place in Portugal, where the main character is the aforementioned Antônio José. Therefore, if Araguaia was right in the Preface of his text: “I would just like to remind you that if I am not mistaken this is the first tragedy written by a Brazilian”, he is not precise when he continues his sentence by saying “and the only one addressing a national theme”.

Araguaia engendered a very complicated plot, where the lines and situations were somewhat exaggerated; hence, it is incomprehensible and unfortunate that the play has not been enacted since the days of João Caetano. To contrast with the ethical and naive Antônio José the author created Friar Gil, an evil and corrupt monk who denounces the young Jew to the Inquisition, not for his religion or because he poses a threat to Christianity, but because he wanted to win Antônio José’s beloved Mariana for himself. Thus, we have a personal situation of conflict involving jealousy associated with a greater issue – the Inquisition – which is perfect to create action and a well-established conflict at both levels.

Hence, Araguaia expresses the inevitable cultural continuity given the perpetuation of monarchy even after the Independence of Brazil. Araguaia’s educational background was Portuguese and European, and as such he reflected the strength of his cultural heritage, despite his committed devotion to Brazil. Hence, Araguaia did attain to Brazilian themes; his only other play is “Olgiate”, where heroism to uphold honour is the theme of the conflict that takes place in Europe, more specifically in the Italian Renaissance. He also translated “Othello”, not from the original but from the adaptation by a French playwright called Ducis.

The other playwright is actually the great father of Brazilian theatre: Luís Carlos Martins Pena (1815-1848), also born during the time when Brazil was a kingdom and no longer a colony. His father died when he was a boy and his tutor enrolled him with the School of Commerce and the Fine Arts Academy. He was an avid reader of both history and drama, and he studied French, English, Italian and German. Like most of the less affluent members of the middle class he held a civil servant job with the Royal Court under the Department for

Foreign Affairs. He was later transferred to London as First Class Commercial Attaché for the Brazilian Delegation. He was stationed in London from February to October 1848 when his tuberculosis worsened and he tried to come back to Brazil; alas, he died in Lisbon during the first leg of his trip.

For a long time Brazilians would claim and complain that the country did not have any tradition in the theatre at least until the mid-twentieth century, compared to other countries, especially France and England. However, if the role of the theatre is to ponder on nature – mainly social nature – it would be impossible for the Brazilian theatre to exist in the European classical format because we did not have a society to be mirrored in those terms. One can affirm that the Brazilian theatre started with Martins Pena because his comedies depicted the Brazilian spirit, reflecting the modesty and fragility of the cultural life of Rio de Janeiro some fifteen to twenty years after the Independence of Brazil from Portugal.

If one looks into his horrible plays – which were all phony as he did not address what he actually knew – one has to once again negate the existence of the theatre in Brazil, i.e. the failure of Brazilian playwrights to create and stage plays that could be compared to the mature European ones, both in form and content. Examining the mishaps of Martins Pena's career, ranging from "Fernando or the Accusatory Belt"*, "D. João Lira or the Repto"*, "Itaminda or The Tupã Warrior"* , "D. Leonor Teles" and "Vitiza or The Spanish Nero"* it is hard to tell which one is the worst, but easy to perceive that this autodidact had for sure studied in depth Romantic European plays. After his first, naive and wonderful comedy "The Justice of Peace in the Boondocks"* (opened in 1838) spurred by his observation, the young Martins Pena must have dreamed that his plays would be performed by João Caetano, who preferred the tragedies. However, after these five disastrous plays that were written between 1838 and 1841 he definitely realized that he was doing it the wrong way and that comedy would be a wonderful medium to express his loving and critical perception of Brazil.

It is an important fact that Martins Pena focused on the incipient Brazilian middle class rather than on the pretentiousness of the Imperial Court. Distant from the affected mannerisms and the pomp the population could adapt more easily and quickly to the hardships of the climate in apparel and customs. Martins Pena moved away from long dialogues replacing them with short sentences and informal vocabulary, all of which were better suited for the social and economic conditions of the venues where the drama would take place, different in themselves and in relation to the characters of each play.

When his first play "The Justice of Peace in the Boondocks"* opened it already revealed his budding talent both in terms of vocabulary and form, and the theme, which was a spontaneous inspiration of the vast majority of his plays – the universe of Rio de Janeiro in the 1830s and 1840s. It was written as a comedy when he was only eighteen years old and shows his lack of experience in the genre, despite his ability for creating plausible and different characters from an early age. In this early work by Martins Pena the main plot is the universe of Aninha, who wants to marry José, who is about to serve the army because he is not married; the second in the amusing portraying of the precarious Brazilian legal system in its most basic and uneducated courts of law. In order to combine and deal with both plots, the author introduces a celebration – somewhat arbitrarily – but still able to convey the strong impression of theatrics in the text. Therefore, Martins Pena's care with wardrobe and scenario was evident since his first play, in that they are inseparable from the features and traits of each character.

After two years of writing cheap drama, Martins Pena, who was already twenty seven, found the medium to express his true talent. In "The Two or the English Engineers"* he depicts a new side of the life in Rio, and for the first time criticizes the Brazilian habit of looking

up to all things foreign. The title naturally refers to the Imperial confidence with which two English scammers take advantage of the Brazilians, and it should be noted that the term 'engineer' is used in the sense of finagling or wangling; but the playwright also attacks with great efficiency the *Negreiro*, which in Portuguese means 'slave dealer'. It is amazing how Martins Pena was able to denounce slave trafficking by subtly using the resource of praising it in a country that did not have any drama tradition, where the character came across and mean but not stating it openly.

In the naive environment portrayed by Martins Pena it is possible that the Englishman that was after Brazilian funds for his enterprise would be successful, where cow bones would be transformed into sugar, and then to produce a machine that would make different ready-to-eat roast beef, boots, combs etc. Gainer, the Englishman, insists that everything he is aiming to do will cost him great personal sacrifice and that he only has Brazil's progress at heart... He presents his business proposal to Felicio, promising him a fifty percent profit, who is very interested; however, Felicio shows that he is not so naive when he says: "That is how foolish you were..."

Then, Martins Pena would write one of his most famous plays "Judas on Holy Saturday"* , where he had full command of playwriting and the plot unfolds with total coherence. The play confirms his fame as an avid reader in that the different female characters have distinctive temperaments, i.e. one is modest, the other is flirtatious, as in Molière's comedies, while Shakespeare seems to be in his mind in the letter sent by 'an admirer', which is reminiscent in tone and style to the letter sent by Hamlet to Ophelia. In his "Judas" one can also clearly perceive the playwright's concern with the scenario, as shown in the beginning of the play:

The living-room of José Pimenta. Door at the back to the right, and to the left, a window. As well as the door to the right there is a Jacaranda wood dresser, on top of which there is a glass dome and two plated candle holders. Some chairs and a table. When the curtain is raised, this is the tableau: Chiquinha seated at the table sewing; Maricota by the window; and at the back of the room, to the right of the door there is a group of four boys, and two of the kids have just finished putting together a Judas dummy that is leaning against the wall. He will be dressed in a tailored velvet coat and vest, riding boots, large brimmed hat adorned with a red feather (every item well worn), a long mustache, etc. The boys are jumping with excitement and glee around the Judas.

As the Judas dummy is crucial in the plot, the introduction is carefully made in order to lead the play to the correct performance. The action focuses on the behaviour of two sisters and their cousin Faustino, his choosing of a bride – the modest girl, as well as being responsible for blowing the whistle on the corruption that runs rampant in Brazil, which is one of the favourite themes of Martins Pena. Chiquinha delivers one of the most memorable lines: "When my father worked his trade and had journal, he could not make a living; nowadays, he does not have trade or journal and he does not want for anything. Capitain Ambrósio is so right when he says that nameless trades are more lucrative". 'Journal' in this case means salary, but the weird term does not detract from the force of the line.

It is not possible to talk about the twenty three comedies by Martins Pena, and some, such as "The Mishaps of a Child"* and "Married Couples Need Their Own Home"* have been eventually enacted. This is also the case of the playwright's masterpiece called "The Novice"* that denounces both the greedy Ambrosio, who wants to send the three sons of widow Florencia to join the Church when he marries her; he is in cahoots with the Church that will also get a cut of what Ambrosio will get of their inheritance. This play was perfectly constructed,

where the playwright further displays his great knowledge of the great playwrights of the modern times in the monologue delivered by Ambrosio at the opening of “The Novice” – it is the perfect equivalent of the prologues typical of Plauto’s comedies.

It is Carlos, the rebellious novice of the title that delivers a brilliant line, invaluable not just because it addresses the particular situation of the youth, but also because it pertains to a more comprehensive issue that affects the Country. When his beloved Emilia says that when children are forced to follow careers they do not want, they claim that they end up getting used to them, to which he replies:

Getting used to it over time! That is the reason why there are so many absurdities and incongruities among us. This one looks like he could be a cobbler – then he should go to Medical school... Excellent physician! That one has the inclination to be a comedian; very well sir, he shall be a politician... Well, so be it. This other one could be a bricklayer or a wall painter; no way, these trades are no good... he will be a diplomat, messing up everything they do. That other one calls attention for his propensity to stealing; common sense dictates that he be punished, but that will not happen: he can be the treasurer of the department, supervisor, and there goes the coffers of the nation... This one is very lazy and indolent and would only be suited as the layman in a convent, however, we believe he would do very well as a civil servant, eating with his hands resting on his belly and giving orders to the nation.

In his criticism Carlos includes the despicable way how artists are treated, noting that in Brazil writers die in poverty. “The Novice” is a sophisticated comedy, both in form and content, and should be staged more often.

Martins Pena was unfortunately an isolated phenomenon; it is ironic that when Brazil had his first good playwright with constant production the first great Brazilian actor – João Caetano (1808-1863) – had an untimely death by tuberculosis. He wanted to be known as ‘the Brazilian Talma’ and preferred to perform in poor French ‘adaptations’ of Shakespeare. But João Caetano should not be criticised for that, as his concern with the Brazilian theatre led him to create in 1833 a company of Brazilian actors specifically with the purpose of removing foreign actors from Brazilian stages, namely the Portuguese. He also created an award to encourage Brazilian playwrights.

João Caetano was unanimously praised throughout his career, but that does not mean that it was free of hurdles. The first great Brazilian actor had to overcome the uncouth public, unprepared for serious plays, the prejudice actors suffered and the lack of intelligent encouragement from government. For many years he performed in the amateur theatre, where he finessed his acting; it seems he took acting very seriously and would read anything about drama he could lay his hands on. Since he did not have any competition in tragedies nor a theatrical tradition where critics gave their expert opinion, what we know about João Caetano is based on his own perception of both the theatre and performance in his book *Reflexões Dramáticas* (“Dramatic Thoughts”*) and *Lições Dramáticas* (“Dramatic Lessons”*). The critical perception of João Caetano of his own acting as a youngster is particularly interesting, in that he took his trade as an actor seriously. Even if his lessons are not completely original, at least they reveal that he read all there was to be read about the theme, which in itself is a positive stand in relation to his art.

IV – The nineteenth century: perseverance in discontinuity

It is regrettable that the flourishing of both plays and performance that occurred after the Independence of Brazil did not continue. However, despite not being a regular activity, in the mid nineteenth century new names arose that would be remembered in the Brazilian dramaturgy, which as a rule were better known for their literary work than their dabbling in the theatre. They were mostly influenced by the Romantic Period, but already showed signs of concern with Brazilian themes.

The first playwright that stands out is Alvares de Azevedo (1831-1852), whose “Macário” is not actually drama, but which according to Azevedo was influenced by different playwrights of the Spanish Golden Age and English Elizabethan Period.

It would be perhaps possible to accept that where most of the text addresses Macario’s dream, who arrives at the tavern exhausted, the young playwright relies on the genre of comedy within comedy; however, there lacks dramatic restraint to the unruly encounters that question life, death, love and other issues that perturbed the author. Fresh out of his adolescence, Alvares de Azevedo died when he was twenty one years old and left the legacy of Macário as the mere possibility of a dramatic talent that exceeded the poetic possibility.

Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) was more dedicated to the theatre, obviously influenced by the success of Victor Hugo. When he was still a student in Coimbra he wrote two comic melodramas, where the protagonist and the antagonist represent good and evil in action, following the Shakespearian example in French. The small number of characters – five in the first play and four in the second – suggests more a Neoclassical than a Romantic influence; however, the variety of venues is more in accordance to the latter than the former. Not even “Patkull”, that takes place in Poland in 1707, nor “Beatriz Cenci” that takes place in Italy in 1598, were ever performed on stage; further to the lack of sophistication of the play, it is possible that both were negatively affected by the playwright’s chronological, geographic and cultural distance, together with complicated situations of treason triggered by opposed loved and matchmaking imposed by parents on daughters. “Beatriz Cenci” that is the better of the two plays was almost staged, but the myopic censorship of those days banned it for alleged moral reasons. This would not be the first nor the last evidence of the sad interference of censorship in the theatre, the art that always seems to be the most threatening whenever it comes close to performing its essential role, e.g. to mirror nature and to observe and clarify human behaviour.

A few years later when he was writing “Leonor de Mendonça”, Gonçalves Dias showed considerable evolution in his skills to tackle the dramatic structure, and the passing of time does not affect someone so intimate with the Portuguese culture. In that he was more integrated to the Romantic Period, Gonçalves Dias abandoned the Classic influence in his characters and increased the scope of his field of action, which enabled him to connect the characters of the plot with their universe of origin, determining the profile of D. Jaime, Leonor and Alcoforado. It is probable that this was influenced by Victor Hugo, as well as the play’s tone and structure and the idea that he wrote a Prologue where he presents his aesthetic and ethical view on the theme chosen for his new incursion into dramatic literature, which this turn was successful and did well on the stage.

In the Prologue of “Leonor de Mendonça” there are echoes of Aristotle when Gonçalves Dias states that his characters have no vices but only flaws, and when he affirms as ‘fatality’ the relentless logic of cause and effect, where each character is actually responsible for whatever befalls them, always ensuing from their own actions. Conditioning these actions

to the circumstances of conventions of the moment is precisely what makes them plausible, and the social scenarios where the characters live validate the actions of each character. By formulating an overall framework that includes all of these requirements, Gonçalves Dias created his masterpiece play – the only that matched the high quality of his poetic work.

It is an amazing fact that when Gonçalves Dias returned to drama four years later with his “Boabdil” he once again addressed an exotic culture – the Arabs that dominated Spain and that were being driven out of the country by the Christians. Similar to his first attempts in drama, the result is a phony and tedious play where the characters deliver long explanatory lines that have nothing in common with the performing arts.

At that time, the most dedicated playwright was Joaquim Manuel de Macedo (1820-1882), an interesting character in his own right. He went to Medical School in Rio de Janeiro but taught Geography and the History of Brazil at Colégio Pedro II; he was a state representative, a member of the Historic and Geographic Institute, of the National Industry Aide Society, of the Board of Directors of Public Education, and member of the Drama Conservatory of Rio de Janeiro. As a man of his time, Macedo was carried away by the dramatic genre, but not even in “The Blind”* that disapproves the tyrannical matchmaking of parents, or “Cobé” that condemns the enslavement of indigenous people, nor “Lusbelá” that similar to the “Dame of the Camellias” deals with the expiation of a seduced woman, was he able to attain an acceptable degree of theatrical form and content.

However, Macedo’s comedies were much more successful in that he followed the steps of Martins Pena, both in “The Cousin from California”* that denounces with humour the cult of appearances, and “The Neighbour’s Monkey”* that involves an eminent adultery that is thwarted when the husband realizes he cannot pay more attention to his canaries than to his wife. The highlight of his plays denounces the adoration of everything foreign, which Martins Pena had already shown so well in “The Two or The English Engineer”*. At the heart of the amusing criticism presented in “The Tender for the Steeple”* (1863) there are two unemployed Brazilian wise guys who introduce themselves as English engineers to a village, where the mayor imposes a condition for whomever wishes to be contracted to build the church’s steeple. The incompetence of the two pseudo-Englishmen and the police that are looking for them are part of the happy ending, where they escape precisely when it is announced that a young Brazilian engineer will supervise the construction of the steeple, and who will naturally marry the object of his desire that until then was unattainable.

In the comedy, the competition is used to denounce both the corruption and the ignorance of the politicians, and to ridicule a middle-aged aunt that is still looking for romance. Macedo also authored other comedies, and one should keep in mind that despite lacking greater merit his plays marked a clear stage in the development of Brazilian dramaturgy because the playwright let go of the passionate actions typical of the Romantic Period. He undertook to write about his own time and became known for his ‘tailcoat plots’, named after the clothes they wore. Despite not being topnotch plays it is possible to find signs of the Brazilian way of life in his work.

One also needs to remember the talented José de Alencar (1829-1877) from the state of Ceara. It is a sure fact that his plays have such strong elements of the Brazilian temperament because he did not study Law in Coimbra, but in São Paulo. He had a solid career as a civil servant but was famous for having written romantic novels like “The Guarani” and “Iracema”, to mention but a few. It should be noted that he dedicated at least part of his talent to writing plays, which proves that he was a popular or prestigious playwright in his time. Paradoxical for our days but apparently acceptable then, Alencar was also worked as censor for the Brazilian Drama Conservatory that stimulated the theatre but at the same

time imposed a strict moral censorship upon it.

Actually, the two first dramatic plays by José de Alencar were his best works: “The Familiar Demon”* in four acts, staged in 1857, was part of Alencar’s campaign to abolish slavery, which in this play is presented in a very interesting manner: Pedro, a young slave boy causes one disaster after the other that leads to all manner of chaos; but in the end he cannot be held responsible for anything because he is a slave and was not educated to think or to be accountable. Therefore, because he is so clumsy when he ‘obeys’, in the end he is ‘condemned’ to freedom, where this word is used to convey that it implies responsibility associated with understanding and thinking. The play was not staged accordingly; the very relevance of the theme gives it a certain didactic and moralising tone that hinders the text as a whole, but that was absolutely very significant at that time.

The comedy in two acts “Rio de Janeiro – Verse and Reverse”* of 1857 was more amenable and amusing, where a native of São Paulo goes to Rio and during the first act can only see what is wrong with the city. He falls in love with a girl from Rio and in the second act he recognises the many charming aspects of the life in the Court. The play was written in light and fun verses, where there is a variety of characters and especial local flavour that certainly reveals Alencar’s strong ‘Brazilianity’.

From the first years when he was writing plays there is a ‘comic opera’ called “The Night of São João” with music by Elias Alvares Lobo, and that was staged at Teatro Provisório on December 1860, when José de Alencar was already writing dramatic plays.

“The Credit”* provides the picture of a new aspect of life in the Court, where the plot addresses the economic changes when the concept of credit is introduced, and how it affects society, not just because it can facilitate a life based on appearance but also basic ethic issues. Business and love are both influenced by credit; the notion of irresponsibility boosted by ignorance is now presented in terms of the poor education of women that have no idea how much it costs to maintain the luxurious lifestyle they want to live, among other things. It is a typical ‘tailcoat drama’ based on equally moralising French plays.

The concern with moral values occurred frequently in most of Alencar’s plays from that time onwards. “The Wings of An Angel”* was yet another Brazilian contribution for the fall and redemption of a ‘dame of the camellias’ of sorts. In this play and its continuation called “The Expiation”* the moralizing tone, where a repressed life becomes eternal punishment, has a negative effect on the play because of its moral lessons and the characters as well, the role of which is weakened in the plot. It is a curious fact that the first time the play was successfully enacted was at Ginásio Dramático, but there is no record of a second production.

Among the two last plays of 1860 is “Mother”*, which addresses the theme of slavery again, but this time emphasizing racial prejudice. The character of Joana, the black slave that sacrifices herself for her son is not well seen nowadays, some one hundred and fifty years later, as she is humiliated and hides until her dying days so her white-skinned son can deny his black ascendancy, repudiating his origin thanks to his mother’s demise. It is undeniable that José de Alencar took a stand against slavery and racial prejudice in the time and place where he lived.

Alencar’s last play – “The Jesuit”* – had censorship problems, but its greatest merit was actually to introduce a character that defended the Independence of Brazil from Portugal in 1759. The conflict between the Jesuits and the Marquis of Pombal is presented as a bold plan, whereby the former would have to make Brazil a free land for all religions, which is was unlikely to happen as it involved the Company of Jesus. Furthermore, the lines about what could not be put into action are long and tedious. “The Jesuit”* led to much discussion

in its days between Alencar and Joaquim Nabuco, where the former bitterly complained that the public was not interested in the play, which he admitted was poorly produced and not rehearsed enough. J. Galante de Souza wrote: “despite condemned by the Conservatory of Drama, the play opened on 19 September 1875”, but it would be hard to resist the passing of time.

Another great playwright of the Romantic Period that lent his talent to the theatre was Antônio de Castro Alves (1847-1871), basically because of his love for Eugenia Câmara (1837-1879) who was an actress with whom he lived for some years, and for whom he wrote “Gonzaga or the Revolution of Minas”*. It was staged for the first time at Teatro S. João in Salvador in 1867 by a group of amateurs, and later in 1868 in São Paulo by professional actors. Although he wrote a ‘comic drama’ called “A Page from the Realistic School”* and a play in three acts, of which only one was published, “D. Juan or the Offspring of Saturn”*, only his romantic play about the Rebellion of Minas Gerais (Inconfidência Mineira) is worthy of any merit. The main character of Castro Alves’ play is Thomas Antônio Gonzaga, and the plot includes both the themes of Independence and the abolition of slavery, highlighting the republican convictions of the Rebels. This is the only bona fide dramatic play that associates Castro Alves with the Romantic Period of the past, more so than the Realism that was already the dominant tone of the incipient national theatre.

Joaquim da França Junior (1838-1890) was older than Castro Alves but more contemporary in his writings; he was a brilliant journalist and like his fellow-playwrights also had a career as a civil servant. He wrote some fifteen plays and not once did he resort to the dramatic genre, keeping faithful to the comedy of customs. It is interesting to observe that at this point Brazil already had a playwright completely aligned to Brazilian themes, weather in terms of personal relationships, such as in “Moving in Mysterious Ways”*, “The Brazilian Type”* or “You Don’t Get Something For Nothing”*, or in his plays criticizing politics in his time: “The Ministers Were Deposed”*, “The Three Candidates”* or “How a Representative Used to be Created”* – which made França Junior famous; his criticism of electoral corruption and the ignorance of constituents are well conducted in terms of comedy.

The last play by França Junior was “The Doctors”* of 1889, where one can already tell that he belongs to a modern generation, as the telephone that had been installed in Rio de Janeiro for the first time in the 1883 is part of the plot. On the other hand, the playwright is blatantly conservative in that he openly condemns that idea of women being educated or having a profession, which for sure was the predominant mindset of society of then. Thus, the play shows how it was ridiculous for women to learn anything other than social graces, as it was preposterous to even consider that they could have any mission in life other than being wife and mother, as education would take them away from their biological destiny. One can question the narrow-mindedness of França Junior, but for sure he reflected the mindset of the society of those days.

Brazil was living restless times; the Abolition of Slavery in 1888 and the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889 were crucial events to affirm the cultural Independence denied in 1822, which was after all a dynastic continuity. It would not take place in full, and it would be foolish to deny that the influence of the Portuguese past held sway for a long time in the cultural and artistic development of Brazil, and also the strong association with French culture. Therefore, if the Brazilian theatre was born soon after the Independence of Brazil, the abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the Republic marked the economic and political rupture that transformed the country and consequently the theatre. However, despite not having a wealth of repertoire until then, the Brazilian theatre has a precious bridge that connects it to the nineteenth and twentieth century: the very prolific Artur Azevedo (1855-

1908).

During the turn of the century when he lived, badmouthing the Brazilian theatre was a common practice, claiming that it was in decline; however, one must admit that no matter how hard one tries to find it, the 'golden age' of theatre or playwrights imagined by some is nowhere in sight. The problem always seemed to be the same: there was always a small and exclusive group of intellectuals who would complain about the quality of the plays enacted in Brazil; but the theatre would insist – as it still does – in doing what it always does, i.e. to mirror society with precision. A very large number of the population lacked the education that it took to enjoy what foreign playwrights such as Ibsen or Strindberg wrote about; they were not to blame, but rather, the poor quality of public and private education; one must remember that by the late twentieth century Brazilian students could go through primary and secondary school without ever hearing the word 'theatre'.

Under those conditions it would not be possible to prepare an audience for anything different from the type of entertainment that had been attracting the public since the 1890s and the first decades of the twentieth century: vaudeville, skits, parody, and féerie. The main reason for this preference was that a French company called Bataclan came to Brazil in the early 1920s, bringing talented musicians and dancers, fantastic wardrobe and scenery, and even using the so-called 'artistic nudity' – the audience of Rio de Janeiro was amazed and local vaudeville companies were influenced to improve their quality and to mimic the French troupe. But we will address these companies at a later time.

Artur Azevedo, the biggest advocate the Brazilian theatre has ever had, made a living by writing different genres, and it is incredibly unfair to accuse him of compromising with a less sophisticated public. The theatre exists to cater to the public that stems from the society where it is inserted, and it only failed when it tried to be serious. On the other hand, it was always hugely successful when plays were lighthearted and fun, such as the comic parodies of French operettas: *La Fille de Mme. Angot* became "The Daughter of Mary Porridge"* (a pun with Angot in French and Angu in Portuguese, which means porridge), or yet "Abel, Helena" as a parody of *La Belle Hélène*, where the plot and characters took on completely Brazilian characteristics.

Trying his hand at different genres, he wrote comedies similar to the French ones in both structure and development, such as "The Jewel"* – the plot is about how the well-to-do would mimic as much as possible the European lifestyle, especially the Parisian. In his "Vaudeville of the Year"* he gives an amusing description of the life in Rio through many mythological characters who are efficient in providing comic relief, narrating with intelligence and verve what was going on in the Capital city of Brazil.

Some of Azevedo's most brilliant, delicious and totally Brazilian plays were the vaudevilles. "The Federal Capital"* was written in the very late nineteenth century, dealing with humour and affection the old theme of a family that moves from the countryside to the scary big city. In "The Travelling Circus"* of 1904 he portrays the hardships of the theatrical life in Brazil by painting a brilliant picture of society; he uses the nomad nature of the group to show the opposite, i.e. people from the capital city becoming familiar with the simple habits of people from other parts of the country.

Vaudeville plays by Artur Azevedo and other successful turn-of-the century playwrights depended on how much money a patron could afford to produce them; in the case of both of Azevedo's aforementioned plays the scenography was sophisticated and expensive. "The Travelling Circus"* required over ten different settings – both indoor and outdoor, such as the back alley of a dry goods store where the band meets in the beginning of the play and the coronel's house with its many doors, the train that is about to leave and the popular

Divine Holy Spirit festivities. Artur Azevedo calmly made all this part of his plays knowing that they would be sponsored as soon as he finished writing them. As the great advocate of the Brazilian theatre that his was, Artur Azevedo would for sure lament its conditions one hundred and twenty years later – at least in his Rio de Janeiro – where vaudeville is no longer produced, at least not as richly as it deserves to be.

V – The twentieth century – dramaturgy and the theatre until the 1940s

In the early twentieth century, many new playwrights tried to write plays with a more significant content. One of which was Julia Lopes de Almeida (1862-1934), who wrote “The Inheritance”*, a manifesto protesting against the conditions of the Brazilian women. There was also Coelho Neto (1864-1934), whose best piece is called “Evil Eye”*, where the theme is the conflict between the city and the countryside – a theme that had already attracted Martins Pena – but that was more successful in the comedies such as “The Ugly Duckling”*, to mention but a few.

However, the most important event of that decade was the result of the tireless fight of Artur Azevedo for a truly Brazilian theatre. An imposing temporary theatre was built for the 1908 National Exhibition that celebrated the centennial of the Opening of the Ports, dedicated to staging plays by Brazilian playwrights. It was demolished after the event ended despite the successful season. Another aspect of his tireless advocacy in favour of the Brazilian theatre was that Artur Azevedo led the campaign to build the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro. Unfortunately he did not live to see the opening of the new theatre – a veritable opera house – in 1909, which ironically was inaugurated by a foreign company and followed by many more. It was the victory of those who only thought in terms of European culture, totally ignoring Brazilian plays in the early years of the Municipal Theatre.

The general scenario gradually changed, not because it wanted to, but because of the so-called Great War of 1914. Because of the conflict in Europe, foreign companies could no longer come to Brazil; in the beginning, a few fake French companies were improvised, made up by the French or pseudo French residents of Rio de Janeiro; but it was unavoidable that the domestic product would become more in demand and supported given the shortage of the foreign one. The war affected different sectors, hindering or making it impossible to import the simplest commodities, such as butter and biscuits, whereby the incipient local industry finally was able to market its wares; even Brazilian fabric were used to create the most elegant dresses.

There were a few true attempts to create a more serious dramaturgy in the first two decades of the twentieth century, where the most dedicated playwright was Roberto Gomes (1882-1922), who wrote blurry plays that were downright phantasmagoric and that did not survive. His most famous play is called “The Closed House”* – mysterious in tone with claims to being serious, but that fails to be anything but a modest melodrama and to depict characters from a small town. From that time, one play that could be interesting to be produced nowadays is “Flowers of Shadow”* written by Cláudio de Souza (1876-1954) in 1916, dealing with the purity of the countryside and the corruption of the big city; this time the problem is represented by the choice between two girls in an environment of simple but intelligent people instead of the obvious backward versus sophisticated milieu.

João do Rio (Paulo Barreto, 1881-1921), on the other hand, tried to be up-to-date with Europe in another manner by adopting a sophisticated dialogue: in his hilarious play “What a Pity to be Just a Thief”* there is a dialogue between a thief and the prostitute in whose

bedroom he broke in by mistake; he feels sorry for the girl and gives her ‘the fruit of his labour’, but explains that he will not go to bed with her “because he’s married and never sleeps out”. However, the most famous play by João do Rio is “The Beautiful Madame Vargas”*, a plot that follows the social criticism and humour of Oscar Wilde. This play could merit to be produced nowadays, even after one hundred years or so since it was written. One cannot fathom how the theatre of those days could have such productions, with realistic scenery so rich in details.

While that, Coelho Neto had been writing since before the Great War and was the first playwright to venture out and make a living exclusively from writing, showing clearly the influence from Ibsen in his play “The Wall”*, where the main character is pushed into the arms of a rich family friend by her own husband and his mother because the millionaire would save them from bankruptcy. She is horrified and goes to her father for advice, who also recommends that she should follow her husband’s wish. Ibsen’s influence can be perceived in that the main character decides to leave her husband rather than going against her own principles, and when she declares to her mother-in-law when asked where she is going, that work will be the answer for her life. That was a step forward for the Brazilian theatre, although the dramaturgy of the play was somewhat stiff. Coelho Neto did better in his comedies, such as the aforementioned “The Ugly Duckling”* than in his dabbling into serious drama, even though “Evil Eye”* was his best work.

However, the desire of being important was sometimes so exaggerated that there was no objectivity in the ambitious projects that were presented; at that time Rio de Janeiro was far from being a big city and its population was uneducated, which did not make it possible to compete with the European theatre. In 1916, Gomes Cardim (1865-1932) created in Rio de Janeiro the Theatre of Nature, and actress Itália Fausta (1879-1951) was the main star of the company. A huge outdoor amphitheatre was set up at Campo de Santana with 70 boxes, 1000 numbered seats, over 1000 chairs and standing room for over 1000 spectators. The repertoire included “Oedipus the King” and “Antigone” by Sophocles, as well as plays by famous Europeans, classical and contemporary. It raised the curiosity of the people and was more successful than was anticipated; however, due to the genre of the repertoire and the typical summer downpours in Rio de Janeiro it did not last very long.

After giving up the high ambitions of the Theatre of Nature, Itália Fausta became the first actress of another company organised by Gomes Cardim, and in 1917 she opened with “Madame X” from French playwright Alexandre Bisson (1848-1912), a triumphant melodrama that became the ‘flagship’ of Itália Fausta’s career. Melodrama was always to the liking of the Brazilian public.

If one pays attention to the dates of the Theatre of Nature and “Flowers of Shadow”* of 1916, one will notice that as usual the theatre still mirrored the society at hand and the cultural life of Rio de Janeiro; as mentioned above, for five years WWI made it impossible for European companies to perform in Brazil. However, the change in the theatre milieu did not take place overnight: Brazilian plays were only staged at the Municipal Theatre for one night in the second season and for a few more days during the first ten years of existence.

Over time, the opening of the Municipal Theatre and the end of the war enabled complete opera companies to visit Rio de Janeiro, when they would head to Buenos Ayres during the European summer for longer seasons; the capital city of Argentina had a much stronger European influence than Rio or São Paulo, and in 1920 the best in opera there was to be seen came to Brazil. During the centennial celebration of the Independence of Brazil, for example, one of the greatest maestros of those days – Weingartner – conducted Wagner’s tetralogy “The Ring of Nibelung”. Italian tenor Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) performed in Brazil

countless times and by the late twentieth century opera seasons were long and varied.

A few years after the inauguration of the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro, an opera house was also built in São Paulo, just a notch less imposing than the first one; it would only hold performances when plays performed in Rio travelled to São Paulo. A falta, no entanto, era só de atividade profissional, pois já haviam aparecido em São Paulo, desde cedo, companhias filodramáticas de imigrantes Italianos, who missed the cultural life of their homeland. These companies were dedicated to performing serious and modern plays, introducing new playwrights who were a hit in Europe and bringing with them the first signs of political awareness, which resulted in some Brazilian plays using that bias.

While that the Brazilian people in general were attending different forms of musical performances: burlesque, vaudeville, parodies, etc., in the 1920s, the musical comedy genre ruled the theatre. Teatro Trianon in Rio de Janeiro was the most important stage, always performing to a full house of comedy lovers. Plays by Gastão Tojeiro (1880-1965) and Armando Gonzaga (1889-1954), very prolific playwrights, were performed in this theatre: both created scores of plays – most of which were not very creative – often times ‘inspired’ by well-known works, or in other words, taking comedies by other playwrights and making small changes. But one must not forget the enchanting “Where the Thrush Sings”* by Tojeiro. Both him and Artur Azevedo authored parodies of films: there was a movie called “Felisberto’s Café”* that gave rise to Trojero’s “The Café’s Felisberto”*. His career was sufficiently long for the comedy he wrote in the days of the silent films called “The Fans of Raoul Walsh”* to be produced twenty years later under the name “The Fans of Robert Taylor”*, who was the matinée idol of those days. The play “Dona Estela’s Boarding House”* was very successful; but the plays “My Mother-in-Law is With the Police”* or “Sherlock Holmes’ Rival”* are a far cry from literary or dramatic pieces...

Armando Gonzaga had a great career as journalist and wrote many plays – farce, burlesque, comedies in one or three acts; he copied and translated the théâtre de boulevard and even French classics from 1912 to 1945. He wrote scores of plays, e.g. “The Supreme Court Justice”* of 1921, and “Shut Up Etelvina”* of 1925, which was his greatest hit. It is undeniable that his plays were the assurance for a full house.

In the mid-1920s and especially in the 1930s a new playwright came into the picture – Oduvaldo Vianna (1892-1972), who had a more refined type of comedy. This was a sign that the cultural life of Rio de Janeiro was improving and that comedies could have more elaborate dialogues to reach the middle class rather than cheap humour. He wrote many plays, but the most famous were “Seller of Illusions”*, “Love”* – that established him as a great playwright – and “Sunny Mornings”*. “Love”* opened in São Paulo in 1933; in 1934 it inaugurated Teatro Rival. It is not the play’s technical complexity, which requires different places of action, that would make it difficult to find a producer nowadays; the plot about the delirious jealousy of Lainha, who times each of her husband’s activities and call him all the time in order to control him is well supported and could still be amusing, but there is a huge number of parallel activities involving religion and morality that render the play outdated and long-winded. Nevertheless, Oduvaldo Vianna still shows that local dramaturgy was taking positive if small steps.

Still in the 1920s and 1930s we had actors that became famous, which had not happened since João Caetano in the early nineteenth century. The first one was Leopoldo Fróes (1882-1932), who had been to Europe and seen examples of good productions of the théâtre de boulevard; he looked for roles, both foreign and national, where he could parade his good looks and dapper appearance. Following the traditional formula, Fróes became the first actor of a theatrical company and there is no doubt that his immersion in civilization during

his European experience yielded good results for his work in Brazil. It was Fróes' striking figure that attracted the public, just as much as his repertoire, if not more so.

It was in Fróes' company that two of the most outstanding actors of the Brazilian theatre of twentieth century made their debut. One was Procópio Ferreira (1898-1979), who would also make his career taking advantage of his physical appearance, but in different ways, as he had the physique du rôle for comedy; he would later become famous as the hobo in "May God Reward You"* and as Arpagão in "The Miser"* during the 1930s and 1940s. Procópio Ferreira's case is quite peculiar. He was still acting when amateur companies started to show significant disquiet that resulted in the birth of the modern Brazilian theatre that called for a better repertoire and performances delivered in a more intimate and modern manner. However, he was never even mildly interested in taking part in those changes and remained faithful to the mannerisms of the old days, condemning himself to a melancholic end of career, performing in insignificant venues in the boondocks where the new style had not yet arrived and his name alone would guarantee a full house. This fact is even more unfortunate because Procópio Ferreira was a very talented actor.

Another great talent from Leopoldo Fróes' company was Dulcina de Moraes (1908-1996), who had started her career in the burlesque theatre, but that with Fróes became a comedy actress, where she excelled for almost three decades. As she only became the first actress some ten years later, she will be addressed at the time when she became famous.

Dulcina de Moraes and Procópio Ferreira were peers of other great actors and actresses such as Alda Garrido (1896-1970), Dercy Gonçalves (1905-2008) and Jayme Costa (1897-1967), all of which very successful in their careers and with a huge number of faithful followers. To have an idea of how strong the French influence still was, one should remember that even among the most popular actresses Alda Garrido had her greatest hit as "Madame Devil-May-Care", a comedy by Victorien Sardou about Napoleon's cheeky laundress, which was a great success in Paris with the famous French actress Gabrielle Réjane. Dercy Gonçalves, who chose plays that suited her very personal style and who outlived all of her peers, kept on acting on the stage and later on television. Jayme Costa was as against change as Procópio: there is a notorious episode where he sent a letter of protestation to Paschoal Carlos Magno (1906-1980) stating that Sergio Cardoso (1925-1972) and his group did not have the right to call themselves professional actors and actresses when they created the company called Teatro dos Doze; according to Jayme Costa, in order to deserve this title the young troupe would have to undergo a long period of learning under famous and established professional companies, which would be the only path to become a professional.

The dates of events often times depict the irony and paradoxes of the history of our theatre: in 1922, when World War I had already ended, the Modern Art Week took place in São Paulo, obviously influenced by European modern movements. We know about everything that changed in the fine arts, but there is not a word about the theatre. The correct way to interpret this fact is that until then the Brazilian theatre was so incipient that there was no critical stand that could claim it academic. The only redeeming event that tried to associate theatre to the advent of modernism was a play written by Renato Vianna (1894-1953), staged at the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro, with music by Villa-Lobos, which had the pompous title "The Last Incarnation of Faust"* . It was a grand flop that was booed and did not have the slightest significance.

However, it would be unfair not to mention Renato Vianna, who passionately dedicated his whole life to the theatre. He was a frustrated playwright that failed to make the box office, not even when he gave his plays catchy names like "Sex"*, or "God"*, or "Jesus is knocking on our door"*, or yet "The silent Man with glass eyes"*. What he lacked as a play-

wright was actually talent, but there were few people in Brazil who worked as hard as he did to stimulate the development of the theatre. He led many movements in favour of Brazilian playwrights, which also had weird names: “The Battle of Chimera”* in 1922; the “Hive”* in 1924; the “Magic Cave”* in 1927 and the “Art Theatre” in 1932. In 1934, he created a ‘Drama School’. But first and foremost, Renato Vianna created the Escola de Arte Dramática de Porto Alegre, and in Rio de Janeiro he was the principle of the oldest drama school of the city, dating from 1908 – Escola de Teatro Martins Pena.

On the other hand, still in 1922, the aforementioned French burlesque company Bat-clan came to Rio de Janeiro, showing to the Brazilian public for the first time what a féerie was all about – a very successful theatrical genre in France in the nineteenth century. Much glitter, lights, good choreography and skimpy costumes changed the city’s nightlife. In fact, the season was so lucrative to the French company that the next year they even brought along the famous actress Mistinguette (1875-1956). Furthermore, the French transformed the Brazilian musical theatre, where the Vaudeville of the Year format that existed since the days of Artur Azevedo was replaced with skits and song and dance, where the setting was posh and glittery, the costumes were skimpier but in good taste, with much lighting so it was properly ‘féerie’ and amazing. The Brazilian were fast in learning the lesson, where companies such as Cia. Tró-ló-ló and later Ra-ta-plan copied the French-sounding names, the glitter and skimpy costumes.

However, some dreamed of something better, and in 1927 the couple Álvaro (1888-1964) and Eugenia Moreyra (1898-1948) created a company called Teatro de Brinquedo. They intended to create “the kind of theatre where one could play, and dream and think”. All of its members were very active in Rio’s intellectual milieu, and the group opened with “Adam, Eve and Other Family Members”*. This interesting play was written by Álvaro Moreyra based on the expressionist influence that depicted the bohemian and underworld aspects of Rio, where it was fashionable to do... cocaine. Teatro de Brinquedo was caught unprepared for the huge success they were greeted with, where nobody had thought about what they would do later, and after a brief and bumpy ride, the company disassembled.

There were different significant moments in the 1930s: the aforementioned Dulcina de Moraes that was part of Leopoldo Fróes’ company in São Paulo moved to Rio de Janeiro and joined the company she created with her parents, actors Átila (1885-?) and Conchita de Moraes (1885-1962), and her husband Odilon de Azevedo (1904-1966). They produced “Love”*, one of Oduvaldo Vianna’s most iconic plays that would make her famous. Despite the fact the Vianna left the company and returned to São Paulo, the play was such a hit that the new Teatro Rival where they opened was leased to the company until the end of the 1930s. In 1936, Dulcina and Odilon travelled to the United States, and continued to stage their boulevard plays when they came back, but now in much better productions. Dulcina made come true an old dream when she became successful, i.e. to create a drama school – the Fundação Brasileira de Teatro that operated in Rio de Janeiro for many years before it was transferred to Brasília, where it still exists and now offers superior education courses.

In 1937 Getúlio Vargas became dictator and created the so-called New State, bringing in its wake censorship that affected most directly the burlesque theatre. As an artifice against censors, actors would present in the ‘censorship rehearsal’ a particularly more shocking piece that would be ‘cannon fodder’: censors would trim the offending parts that were smartly created by the actors and would approve exactly what the producer wanted to show to the public. Another form of inferring the government’s interference was the sponsorship of skits about Vargas, ostensibly including jokes about him that only made him more popular. The great producer of those days was Walter Pinto (1913-1994).

VI – Os Comediantes – A Phenomenon Called Nelson Rodrigues and the Establishment of Modern Drama

In the late 1930s, however, there was a lot brewing in the theatre milieu. Both in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro amateur theatre groups were fighting for a better theatre, and in the case of Rio, which was the Federal Capital city of Brazil, it had a head start. In 1938, Paschoal Carlos Magno, a diplomat recently back from a two-year tour in England, founded the Teatro do Estudante do Brasil and invited Itália Fausta to rehearse “Romeo and Juliet” because he had seen such great results by great directors. It opened with pomp and circumstance in the Municipal Theatre and had great repercussion.

Even more significant was the opening of a company called Os Comediantes in 1939, in the early stage of World War II. Its members were from the high-society of Rio and were particularly integrated with French culture and knowledgeable of the best international productions. The interruption of the flow of European visitors to Brazil because of the new war was a relevant factor, but even more determining was the fact that Brazil became more ‘Brazilian’ and wanted to affirm its cultural independence. With the huge success they had with the production of “Desire Under the Elms” by Eugene O’Neill, Os Comediantes was immortalised with the production of “The Wedding Dress” by Nelson Rodrigues (1912-1980) in 1943. Polish director Ziembinski (1908-1978) stated that it was a Brazilian play that could meet the European standards – it became a hallmark of the Brazilian theatre. Os Comediantes was formed by amateur actors and actresses who dabbled in drama as a parallel activity, where most of them had no intention of embracing it as a career. Hence, when its members realised that the theatre could really be a calling they went professional; many important individuals moved on and the company did not last much longer. The new generation of actors and actresses came from different amateur groups, dedicated to plays and acting modelled on the best theatre of Europe and the United States.

With the success the “Wedding Dress” Nelson Rodrigues became a first-quality star in the Brazilian theatre panorama. He had already staged his first play – “The Woman without Sin”, that failed to be the hit he expected at first, but later went through different productions with a first-class cast. But “The Wedding Dress” was completely different. It was for sure that many people claimed to be shocked by the fact that Alaíde exaggerated in her admiration for the cocotte Mme. Clessy; but Rodrigues’ play is truly exceptional and fortunately fell in the hands of Zbigniew Ziembinski, a competent Polish director and actor who had just arrived in Brazil and insisted that the Brazilian company produce the play. The setting by Santa Rosa and the tricks with lights made it perfectly possible to identify when the characters were dealing with the present, the past and fantasy, supported by a good plot.

After his huge hit Nelson Rodrigues did not write for a couple of years, and then produced a series of plays considered iconic. They were very controversial because they addressed themes that a part of society thought ‘shocking’, but did not compare in quality to the two first ones, possibly because the playwright did not create a plot that took place the Rio de Janeiro that he knew so well. His plays “Family Album”, “Black Angel”, “Our Lady of the Drowned” and “Dorotéia” lacked a solid framework and a defining meaning: death, incest, and sexual aberrations are spread out in actions that fail to convey the purpose of the play.

The monologue that Nelson used seemed to be ideas he had for “The Wedding Dress” and left out; hence, with “Waltz No. 6” he found his way back and inaugurated the heyday

of the carioca tragic dramas: “Golden Mouth”, “The Deceased Woman”, and his new masterpiece called “The Kiss of the Asphalt”. Amidst these exemplary plays is the mediocre “The Seven Kittens”, and after a period of extraordinary works he created other less amazing plays but along the same format, such as “Forgive Me For Your Betrayal”, “Otto Lara Resende or Pretty but Ordinary” and “Widow But Honest”. However, after another period of unproductivity, his new plays are not as significant as his previous admirable body of work. Nevertheless, if one would take into account the fact that Nelson Rodrigues was a syndicated columnist who wrote about soccer, chronicles like ‘life as it is’ and some novels, it is almost a miracle that he still found time to borrow some of his brilliancy to the theatre.

Not long after the end of WWII there was a decisive event that shaped the development of professional theatre in São Paulo. Décio de Almeida Prado (1917-2000), the most important theatre critic Brazil has ever had, was directing an amateur group at USP, while Ronald Ealing had another group with Brazilians and British expats that lived in São Paulo. Taking advantage of these roots and based on the fact that a city as big and important as São Paulo needed to have a regular and good quality theatre milieu, captain of industry Franco Zampari (1898-1966) founded in 1948 the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia (TBC). The cast was put together by selecting the best actors and actresses in São Paulo and then in Rio, which lost some of its best talent because TBC offered a tempting work environment. The first TBC directors were Luciano Salce and Bollini Cerri; it only made sense that Zampari would scout for talent in Italy as he was more familiar with its theatre background. Both, however, soon went back home and another Italian called Adolfo Celi (1922-1986) was brought from Buenos Aires, who proved to be enormously significant for the Brazilian theatre. With Celi as artistic director, the TBC saw its zenith in that it wisely alternated classical plays and famous modern ones with other plays with a measure of quality and very well staged, but more accessible to the less sophisticated audience – they enabled the company to balance their cash-flow by having box office hits.

TBC harvested talent such as Sergio Britto (1923-2011), Fernanda Montenegro, who was just starting her career (1930), and Fernando Torres (1927-2008), who had already worked with Maria della Costa. It was also the ‘home’ of one of the greatest icons of the Brazilian theatre – Cacilda Becker (1921-1969), who had her first theatre experience in Rio de Janeiro at Teatro do Estudante do Brazil acting in the play “3200 meters high”*. Her triumphant career will be forever linked to TBC. New talent was also discovered by TBC from the amateur theatre, such as brilliant Ítalo Rossi (1931-2011). A major exception often made to TBC’s remarkable contribution to the Brazilian theatre was its lack of interest in producing the work of Brazilian playwrights – the only one who was regularly produced was Abílio Pereira de Almeida (1906-1977), who catered to the elite of São Paulo.

But the theatre of Rio de Janeiro did not die, and in 1948 one of the grandest plays of all times of the history of the Brazilian theatre was produced in Rio de Janeiro – “Hamlet” with Teatro do Estudante do Brasil that was directed with a romantic perspective by German Hoffmann Harnisch, revealing talents such as Sergio Cardoso, Sergio Britto and Maria Fernanda, to mention but a few. The public was delirious and both the production and the acting, especially Sergio Cardoso’s, were praised to high heaven. For this reason, many members of the group soon went on to becoming professionals and created the Teatro dos Doze.

However, the successful TBC of São Paulo started to have problems because it employed too many actors and actresses. It gave origin to the CTCA that comprised Adolfo Celi, Tônia Carrero (1922) and Paulo Autran (1922-2007), who had his debut with “Othello”; Cia. Sergio Cardoso-Nidia Lícia that opened with “Hamlet”; later, the TCB (Teatro Cacilda Becker), with Cacilda, Walmor Chagas (1930) and Cleyde Iaconis (1924), as well as Ziembinski,

opening with “Long Day’s Journey into Night” by Eugene O’Neill. The last great company that came from TBC and the only to be established in Rio de Janeiro was Teatro dos Sete, with Fernanda Montenegro, Fernando Torres, Sergio Britto, Ítalo Rossi and the outstanding director Gianni Ratto (1916-2005), who had also co-opted from TBC. The company opened with an outstanding production of “The Travelling Circus”* by Artur Azevedo. The names and titles alone can give an idea of how amazing the Brazilian theatre was in the 1950s.

Another significant fact in the São Paulo of the 1950s was Maria della Costa (1926). Alongside her long and successful career in the company she owned with her husband Sandro Polônio (1921-1995), who was the nephew of Itália Fausta, one should note that the couple was responsible for bringing from Italy in 1954 director Gianni Ratto, whose first work in Brazil was the historical production of the “The Skylark’s Song”*, where Maria della Costa played Jeanne d’Arc. Similar to Polish director Ziembinski, who ‘discovered’ a national playwright for Os Comediantes with “Wedding Dress”*, Italian Gianni Ratto found an important play to produce when he was part of Maria’s and Sandro’s company – “The Moratorium”* by Jorge Andrade. For his production, Ratto persuaded Maria della Costa to give the main female role to Fernanda Montenegro. As well as “The Moratorium”*, one must remember that Jorge Andrade is the memorable playwright of the play “Road to Salvation” that had an unforgettable production by TBC with Raul Cortez (1932-1996) and Cleyde Yáconis.

At the same time when TBC was having an outstanding performance in São Paulo, a company called Artistas Unidos from Rio de Janeiro worked non-stop and with success; the main actress was Henriette Morineau (1908-1990), a much-awarded actress from the Conservatoire de Paris, who was rediscovered by Louis Jouvet living in Brazil as a housewife and lured back to stage. Artistas Unidos had a good repertoire, where most plays were by French playwrights. It produced for the first time in Brazil the plays by Jean Anouilh, and was the first to stage “A Street Car Called Desire” by Tennessee Williams, which they translated as “A Street Called Sin”. Madame Morineau, as she was called, had a marvellous career and was regularly on the stage of the Copacabana Palace Hotel theatre; this identification was so strong that it determined the genre of the plays staged at that theatre until its last days.

One should remember that it was on the late 1940s that Silveira Sampaio (1914-1964) came into the picture – the paediatrician who depicted the peccadillos of the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro in some of the most brilliant comedies of the Brazilian theatre, especially the wonderful “Trilogy of the Grotesque Hero”*: “Of the Inconvenience of Being a Wife”*, “Of the Need of Being Polygamous”* and “My Husband’s Love Nest”*, as well as two memorable productions of one-act plays, namely “There’s Stuff on the Cables”* and “The Crook”*. Silveira Sampaio was a brilliant actor and critic who overnight left the theatre to become an exceptional showman on television.

It is very difficult to talk about the theatre of fifty years ago and not to focus on Rio and São Paulo. However, one should remember that popular forms of theatre have been preserved in the northern city of Recife, not to mention the Teatro do Amador do Recife presided over by family leader Waldemar Oliveira (1900-1977), who was amazingly consistent in staging a solid repertoire, including having guest directors in the production of plays staged during especial events.

Another fact worthy of mention is that in the mid-1950s the Teatro Jovem do Recife launched the “The Compassionate Play”* by Ariano Suassuna (1927), one of the rare classic plays of the Brazilian theatre, which is a masterpiece where the author brilliantly combines the format of popular story-telling of the northeast with medieval theatre. “The Compassionate Play”* has been performed numberless times in the four corners of Brazil, both by ama-

teurs and professionals, and immortalised with the same measure of success in the cinema and television.

At the same time, there were movements to start the theatre in Rio Grande do Sul, which planted the seed for the current and constant artistic activity in that state. Ruggero Jacobbi (1920-1981), who had been part of TBC, was better as a professor than director and was responsible for implementing drama as a subject in the schools of Porto Alegre, well before the education reform of Rio, for example. In the field of education, one must mention the Escola de Arte Dramática (EAD) of São Paulo, which was virtually supported by Alfredo Mesquita (1907-1986) in the beginning, where some of the greatest talents of the theatre of São Paulo were born. It was only after Mesquita's death that EAD was housed by USP, which for this reason runs two drama courses, where one is a secondary school course and the other a university course at Escola de Comunicação e Artes (ECA).

VII – The End of the Twentieth Century: Perspectives for the Next Millennium

The closer we get to the modern times, the harder it is to draw an understandable panorama, however superficial, of the theatre. The 1950s witnessed both the maturing of the lessons learned since the “Wedding Dress” and the rise of a lot of novelty from different lines. The only solution is to try to follow the master lines that mark modern Brazilian theatre and accept the fact that a lot of good and important material will not be part of this analysis.

Let's start by digressing from the point via the theatre for children, as there are no words that can accurately express the importance of the work carried out by Maria Clara Machado (1921-2001) and her company Tablado. Before her time, children's plays in Brazil were appalling in terms of quality and production. When families moved from houses to flats it became clear that children would need to have more options of entertainment, but everything that was offered to this specific target audience was makeshift and slapdash – horrible. Plot, settings, costumes and acting did not even deserve to be called as such. A whole new world was born with the play “Pluft, the ghost”* when the curtains of the Tablado opened and the audience saw a beautiful setting on the stage created by Napoleão Moniz Freire (1928-1971) and Pluft turns to Mamma Ghost and asks her: “Do people exist?”. The difference was so great, and the clamour for Tablado's intelligent and well-produced plays was so intense that its mere existence forcibly improved the quality of the theatre for children in general; hence, it is not an exaggeration to affirm that the company was of stellar importance. Maria Clara Machado's career abounded with hits, but “Pluft, the ghost”* is nowadays a classic Brazilian play.

In São Paulo, on the other hand, the raising of political awareness determined the creation of the Teatro de Arena in 1955, essentially ‘anti-TBC’ in that it favoured national plays with socio-political concerns. Teatro de Arena attracted the public's attention for its format; although it had only 130 seats, it staged plays with national repercussion and some of the most radical and significant events of the Brazilian dramaturgy took place there. However, there are some incoherent aspects involved with its creation. This company that focused on national plays and had social concerns did not have a national or political start: its first production was *Voulez-vous jouer avec moi?* (Do you want to play with me?) by French playwright Marcel Archad, directed by José Renato (1926-2011).

Teatro de Arena affirmed itself as a solid company by producing a play that became an icon of the Brazilian theatre: “They Don't Wear Black-Tie”* by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri (1934-2006), followed by other new works, such as “Chapetuba Football Club”* by Oduvaldo

Viana Filho, a.k.a Vianinha (1936-1974) and the “Farce of the Perfect Wife”* by Edy Lima. The company had held a seminar on dramaturgy that launched Guarnieri, Vianinha, Chico de Assis (1933), Augusto Boal (1931-2009), and many other playwrights, as well the famous plays from the series “Arena Sings...”*. In the same year, the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro staged “Gimba, the President of the Brave”* by Guarnieri, which was directed by one of the most prominent directors of those days – Flávio Rangel (1934-1988).

In 1958, another company was created by José Celso Martinez Correa (1937) in São Paulo – the Oficina – which was outstanding more for the research phase of the plays, as in the case of the “The Candle King”*, but that in their first productions followed the format of realistic social concerns, such as in “Awake and Sing!” by Clifford Odets, and the outstanding “The Philistines” by Gorki. The most important production of the Oficina for the Brazilian theatre was the stellar production of “The Candle King”*, which was written by Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) in 1929, but that was only staged in 1967 by José Celso and his company. Oficina was strongly influenced by the epic plays by Brecht and produced his “Galileo” and “In the Jungle of Cities”. Brecht veritably ruled over an era: Maria Della Costa produced “The Good Person of Setsuan”, Lélia Abramo was “The Mother”, and even the SNT’s Teatro Nacional de Comédia staged “The Caucasian Chalk Circle”.

In those days, the theatre of Rio lived its heydays when the company Teatro dos Sete produced the memorable “The Travelling Circus”* by Artur Azevedo, and continued to produce unforgettable hits like “A Flea in Her Ear” by Feydeau, “The Kiss of the Asphalt”* by Nelson Rodrigues and “Comedy Festival” presenting three one-act comedies by Molière, Cervantes and Martins Pena.

The military regime that took over Brazil in 1964 made censorship even stronger and had an acute impact on the theatre when Institutional Act n.5 of 1968 was passed and brought in its wake great abuse. Despite being persecuted by censorship, important plays were still produced, such as “Liberty, Liberty”* and “The Straw that Broke...”* that were iconic of those days with a handful of other plays, all speaking about a Brazil for the Brazilian people via indirect lines. Still, the worse consequence of censorship was not banning plays but killing careers of already famous playwrights that quit writing, or other authors that could not even begin writing because of the hurdles posed for playwrights.

During those days when censorship was the rule, the theatre suffered in many fronts, not only because of the cuts and prohibitions made by the most arbitrary and ignorant civil servants one can imagine. There is a famous incident, for example, where a policeman was ordered to “arrest Sophocles” when “Antigone” was produced and directed by Antônio Abujamra (1932) with Glauce Rocha in the main role. Glauce, by the way, was not only talented but a brave advocate of freedom when censorship ran rampant; regrettably, she died of heart problems when she was 38 years old.

The truth of the matter is that even when there was censorship and despite it and the strong reaction against it the theatre was very active in the 1960s: suffice to remember, for example, the repercussion of plays such as “Life and Death Severina”* by João Cabral de Melo Netto (1920-1999) produced by a company called TUCA, from the University of de São Paulo.

In 1964, Antunes Filho (1929) directed a production of “The Taming of a Shrew” to commemorate Shakespeare four-hundred year anniversary. From 1966 the plays to be remembered are “Oh! What a Lovely War!” directed by Ademar Guerra (1933-1993), and especially “Damn if You Do, Damn if You Don’t”* by Vianinha and Ferreira Gullar, directed by Gianni Ratto. And it was also in 1966 that an icon of the Brazilian theatre was staged for the

first time: “Two Lost in a Filthy Night”* by Plínio Marcos (1935-1999).

Despite censorship, in 1967, at least two iconic plays in the history of the Brazilian theatre were staged: the aforementioned “The Candle King”* by Oswald de Andrade that had the most famous direction by José Celso and outstanding settings by Hélio Eichbauer (1941), a remarkable example of ‘tropicalisation’ of the theatre; and the equally monumental “The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat As Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of The Marquis de Sade”, also known as “Marat/Sade” by Peter Weiss, with the stellar direction by Ademar Guerra with Rubens Correa (1931-1996) and Armando Bogus (1930-1993) in the main roles.

Long titles were trendy and soon Antônio Bivar’s (1939) play “Open the Window and Let the Fresh Air and the Morning Sun In”* directed by Emilio di Biasi was staged. However, the playwright’s previous play “Cordélia Brazil” was more successful.

While that, in Rio de Janeiro the Teatro dos Sete continued its brilliant career; after their extraordinary debut with Artur Azevedo they produced “Mrs. Warren’s Profession” by Bernard Shaw, and then passionately focused their talent on a new Brazilian play called “The Christ Proclaimed”* – despite written by a talented playwright called Francisco Pereira da Silva (1918-1985) it was a confusing plot and the public did not take to it; after only twelve days it was cancelled. It was a crucial moment, so Ratto looked for a play he had already directed in São Paulo for Maria della Costa: “A Flea in Her Ear” by Feydeau. The brilliant direction and settings by Ratto, amazing wardrobe designed by Kalma Murtinho (1920), and a precious cast made the play one of the greatest hits of the company. Another play that had to overcome struggles with censorship was “Razor in the Flesh” by Plinio Marcos, in 1968; Tônia Carrero did a great job playing the main role in Rio de Janeiro.

In São Paulo, there were two important plays in the late 1960s, both directed by Argentinian Victor Garcia: “The Automobile Graveyard” by Arrabal, and “The Balcony” by Jean Genet. To stage the latter Ruth Escobar (1935-2011) practically demolished her theatre and the stage was transformed into a big circle made of clear plastic that could go up and down and stop alongside the level of the three circular galleries that limited its expanse. Furthermore, the floor of the theatre was dug out so the cast would rise from below.

By mentioning these last plays we have to go back and remember the successive blows that almost destroyed the theatre of Rio de Janeiro: when the Federal Capital was transferred to Brasilia and Rio lost political clout and the transient population of visitors who had dealings with the federal government; as if that were not enough, the military government hitched the prosperous State of Guanabara to the bankrupt State of Rio de Janeiro with serious economic consequences to the old capital city until the State started to collect oil royalties.

This does not mean to say that the theatre in Rio was finished, but rather, that it had to fight even harder and had to rely on smaller productions. In a broader sense, one can recall the many good plays that were staged in Rio despite the hurdles and hardship: the work by Amir Haddad (1937) at MAM; the play “Liberty, Liberty”* by Millôr Fernandes and Flávio Rangel that was a huge hit and opened the door to a whole range of collages, with or without music, acknowledging that singing was necessary and made way for precious ways to let out the steam. The Teatro dos Sete, directed by Fernando Torres, staged the memorable “The Kiss on the Asphalt”* by Nelson Rodrigues right when the political problems were arising, i.e. when President Jânio Quadros renounced and people did not have money in the till not even to buy a ticket. The play was transferred from Teatro Ginástico to Maison de France and had a beautiful season.

There is another company that should be noted: in 1968, Rubens Correa (1931-1996)

and Ivan de Albuquerque (1932-2001) opened Teatro Ipanema producing Chekhov, and that venue immediately became the centre of cultural attention of Rio. Rubens Correa will always be remembered as an outstanding actor in “Marat/Sade”, “Diary of a Madman” or “Artaud”, to mention but a few. He and Ivan promoted a series of significant plays, the most important of which were “The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria” by Arrabal, with Rubens and José Wilker (1947), and the explosion of love and unforgettable joy of “Today is Rock Day”* by José Vicente (1945-2007) that affected the audience with a beautiful ray of hope. Another gem of the history of acting in Brazil was the performance by Rubens Correa in “Kiss of the Spiderwoman” adapted from a book by Manuel Puig (1932-1990), a perfect and deeply touching role, with José de Abreu (1944) brilliantly playing the supporting role.

The Teatro dos Sete did not survive the political-economic instability, but took a bow en beauté with an irrepressible play – *La Parisienne* (The Parisian Woman) by Henri Becque (1837-1899), with Fernanda Montenegro, Sergio Britto and Ítalo Rossi, directed by Fernando Torres. When the company members went their separate ways they took with them the know-how of having produced a series of hits: Sergio Britto for a long time was director of the defunct Teatro do SESC, where he taught many courses, directed Eva Todor when she tried her hand at a more dramatic text, and acted in the unforgettable “Endgame” by Samuel Beckett, directed by Amir Haddad.

Fernanda and Fernando played the main characters in Millôr Fernandes’ outstanding comedy “It Would be Comical if It Weren’t Serious”* and remained faithful to the playwright, producing with great success “It Is...”*, and amusing the audiences of Rio for months on end with “The Lover of Madame Vidal”. Unfortunately, the change of times forced Fernanda Montenegro to dedicate a large part of her time to television, but in 1995/6 she performed in the fabulous “Happy Days” by Beckett, directed by Jacqueline Laurence (1932).

One of the members of the Teatro dos Sete was Ítalo Rossi – in 1975 he won the Molière Award for his performance in “That Championship Night”, and after a few years away from the stage he came back full-force and won the Molière Award again in 1985 for “Fernando Pessoa”, reciting poems with Walmor Chagas. If that were not enough, in the following year he won once again the award for “When Blaise Pascal Met Rene Descartes” with Daniel Dantas (1954), and finally in 1987, he was the only actor to win three times in a row the award with the play “Four Times Becket”*.

For those who think that there is no such thing as the theatre in Brazil, that it is done and dead and that nothing happened in this country, this comprehensive outlook is a lesson learned. There were yet even more outstanding productions in the 1970s; the Tablado, specialized in plays for children, staged a modest performance of “The Dragon”, a wonderful fable by Yvonne Schwartz – and a brilliant criticism to heirs of dictatorship powers – a play that was forbidden in the Soviet Union, his homeland; a new company called Asdrúbal Trouxe o Trombone ‘deconstructed’ “Ubu the King” by Alfred Jarry.

In the late 1970s, another memorable play was staged in Rio, outstanding both for its plot and the production, as well as for the fact that the gods of theatre granted it safe passage from censorship: “The Straw that Broke...”* by Chico Buarque (1944) and Paulo Pontes (1940-1976), the favela version of the legend of Medea, directed by Gianni Ratto, and the historical performance given by Bibi Ferreira (1921). At that same time, “Heart Rending”* (1974) by Vianinha, which was awarded by the SNT competition, ran into the narrow-mindedness of the censors and was produced only in 1979, five years after it was written, and was hit.

The 1970s did not end before giving another iconic play of the Brazilian theatre, the extraordinary “Macunaíma” directed by Antunes Filho. This huge hit was a four-hour play

and was heart-rendering from start to finish, where the director was concerned with integrating plot with setting, finding the hues and forms that would reflect the book, all of which made “Macunaíma” a landmark in the development of acting in Brazil. Antunes continued his journey in the theatre with his Centro de Pesquisa and course for actors, with some hurdles, but staging wonderful plays like “Road to Salvation, Nelson Rodrigues – The Eternal Return”*, and recently “Medea” and “Gregory’s Song”*. Not enough can be said about Antunes, who is still performing brilliantly both as an actor and as a tutor.

In the 1980s, it seems that the theatre took another path: it is possible that the industry was exhausted of trying to swim up river against censorship. The fact of the matter is that almost overnight a delightful play was produced, the likes of which had not been seen for a long time: Naum Alves de Souza (1942) wrote and produced “The Dawn of My Life”* that takes the audience back to schooldays, when all was fun and easy. The play was a huge success and opened the way for a more individual phase of creation. It was a wonderful experience and a relief for those who knew that “Pathetic”* by João Ribeiro Chaves Neto, inspired in the Herzog case and taken place in a circus had been censored at that time.

Other important factors were also taking place: in 1985, in Rio de Janeiro, Luiz Antônio Martinez Correa (1950-1987) produced “The Brazilian Musical Theatre – Parts I (1860/1914) and II (1914/1945)”* that was ground-breaking for popular music. In 1983, in Porto Alegre, a company from Rio Grande do Sul scored a great hit with “I Was Left Out”* by Júlio Conte (1955), where youngsters reflected about their parents with irony; in 1979 they opened in São Paulo the over-the-top “Who Is Afraid of Itália Fausta?”* by Miguel Magno (1951-2009) and Ricardo de Almeida (1954-1988), a bit like the ancestor of a new genre that will be addressed hereunder, which would become very popular in Rio. It was a genre similar to “Miss Margarida’s Way” by Roberto Athayde (1949), which triumphed with Marília Pêra on stage (1943), directed by Aderbal Freire-Filho (1941).

Fast forward and it is 1985, one year after two significant but totally different plays were produced. The aforementioned “Four Times Beckett”* was the first work by Gerald Thomas (1954) back in Brazil. With the collaboration of Rubens Correa, Sergio Britto and Ítalo Rossi, the director had a wonderful material to work with and he was able to show his great skilfulness both in directing and lighting. Soon after Thomas directed the “Quartet” by Heiner Müller, with Tônia Carrero and Sergio Britto, which was also a huge success. Since then is a playwright; his career could be compared to a roller-coaster, so to speak – successes, flops and disputes.

In that year there was also a dramaturgic event: from the hands of Vicente Pereira (1949-1993), Miguel Falabella (1956) and Mauro Rasi (1949-2003) a new and somewhat naughty generation of the traditional format of the Brazilian comedy of customs was born, usually staged as a series of skits, which was definitely called ‘potty-type humour’. It is a form of criticism finding reference in the theatre itself and in the very specific society it depicts, trying to conceal as much as possible any significance it might have. It does not mean to say that potty-type humour is a genre laden with profound meaning, but surely one can affirm that it intends at the same time to criticize and amuse, as well as to deliver fast-paced and intelligent lines.

Of the three abovementioned playwrights, the first had an untimely death, but Miguel Falabella, who also worked for the television, went from writing monologues like “Blond, tall, single looking for...”* and “How to fill a bikini”* – to plays like “The Will”* and “The Submarine”* , and finally musicals like “Carmen Miranda” and now the “Empire”*. Mauro Rasi also left us too soon, but of the three he was the best playwright, and his trilogy of reminiscences is memorable. He actually started with his second play – “The Goodbye Ceremony”*,

when he had the remarkable idea of including Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir as characters via their books, so they could take part in the conflict of generations in Bauru, his hometown. His first play came later – “The Home Goddess”* with Marieta Severo, Tuca Andrade and Sergio Viotti, where reality and imagination were fantastically blended, influenced by amateur cinema and theatre. The last play of the trilogy was the less-than-satisfactory “Incident in Forli”*. Rasi also wrote “Masquerade Ball”* and later his triumphant “Pearl”* that takes place in the city of Bauru in homage to his mother, which was a great hit throughout Brazil.

One needs to understand that after so many coups and prohibitions the theatre had to start anew once censorship was over – practically from scratch; potty-type humour, which was often bad-mouthed, was a brilliant way of bringing the public back to the theatre, as they were lured by the fast-paced lines and close rapport. Alas, Mauro Rasi’s brilliant career was cut short, and regrettably there is yet much to be said about Brazilian playwrights from the late twentieth century: my only excuse for these omissions is the amount of material to be documented.

However, we must mention yet the first plays by Moacyr Góes (1961), which were challenging for their settings; the works by Aderbal Freire Filho at Gláucio Gill, terribly uneven but the cradle of his first adventure in staging a romance – “The 22 Year-Old Women of Rio”*. Anyway, it is weird to remember that both the company *Intrépida Trupe* from Rio and *Grupo Galpão* from Minas Gerais had great productions ‘a century ago’, e, certamente, não foi perdido um século que, além de tudo o mais que já foi dito aqui, nos deu, do grupo mineiro, os wonderful “Romeo and Juliet” and “The Street of Sorrow”*, both directed by Gabriel Villela (1958), who returned to his homeland to show how a classical play can be produced with the great flavour of popular theatre – the trademark *Grupo Galpão*.

The theatre of Rio gave birth in 1998 to one of the most creative plays of the new century: the musical about the famous Batista Sisters, Linda (1919-1988) and Dircinha (1923-1966), exploring well how their life and career intertwined. The songs and dancing were well performed, revealing the great wealth the theatre had to explore, where the public has been able to enjoy the best in Brazilian popular music from a repertoire that has been revived, evoking the Rio of the past. In the late twentieth century Cláudio Botelho (1964) and Charles Moeller (1967) started their brilliant career as directors specialized in musicals.

To some extent, the circle was closed: the century started with burlesque and vaudeville, but around the 1930s music disappeared from the theatre, except in vaudevilles, which starved to death somewhere in the 1950s. In the second half of the century, music came with North-American clones: “My Fair Lady”, “Sound of Music”, “How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying”; “Hello, Dolly” and “Promises, Promises” – in the traditional format, and “Hair” as an explosion of protest of the 1980s. Despite being produced locally, they were mere ‘tourists’, as they were so Yankee in their nature that they did little to encourage local productions.

I stand to be corrected, but I believe that the only attempt of creating a Brazilian musical following a typically North-American format was: “I Took a Steamboat from the North”* by Haroldo Barbosa (1915-1979), enacted in the defunct *Teatro Mesbla*. The successful story of the Batista Sisters had a few traits of a ‘musical’, but it also evoked “The Brazilian Song”* and “Silk Doll”*, as well as “The Drunk”* that Gilda de Abreu (1904-1979) and Vicente Celestino (1894-1968) staged in the 1920s and 1930s. But the turn of the century showed that musicals were finding their way back to the stage.

The twentieth century ended with great promises for the future of the Brazilian theatre, which was finally living what Louis Jouvet affirmed to be necessary some sixty years

ago: for the Brazilian theatre to exist, there must be Brazilian playwrights. And they were finally coming into the picture, in greater numbers and more aware of what was going on around them. In other words, the theatre that was often on the verge of extinction over the last one hundred years in Brazil was ready to come back to life, as usual, under new formats, ready to take on the challenges posed by the new century.

Glossary

name of updated works

A Batalha da Quimera	The Battle of Chimera
3200 metros de altitude	3200 meters high
A Aurora da Minha Vida	The Dawn of My Life
A Bela Madame Vargas	The Beautiful Madame Vargas
A Canção Brasileira	The Brazilian Song
A Capital Federal	The Federal Capital
A Casa Fechada	The Closed House
A Deusa do Lar	The Home Goddess
A Expição	The Expiation
A Filha de Maria Angu	The Daughter of Mary Porridge
A Garçonnière do Meu Marido	My Husband's Love Nest
A Joia	The Jewel
A Moratória	The Moratorium
A Mulher Carioca de 22 Anos	The 22 Year-Old Women of Rio
A Muralha	The Wall
A Noite de São João	The Night of São João
A partilha	The Will
A Pensão da Dona Estela	Dona Estela's Boarding House
A Rival de Sherlock Holmes	Sherlock Holmes' Rival
A Rua da Amargura	The Street of Sorrow
A Torre em Concurso	The Tender for the Steeple
A Última Encanação (sic) de Fausto	The Last Incarnation of Faust
A Vigarista	The Crook
Abre a Janela e deixa entrar o Ar Puro e o Sol da Manhã	Open the Window and Let the Fresh Air and the Morning Sun In
Adão, Eva e Outros Membros da Família	Adam, Eve and Other Family Member
Amor	Love
Amor com Amor se Paga	You Don't Get Something For Nothing
Amor, Engaños y Celos	Love, Mistakes and Jealousy
Antônio José, ou, O Poeta e a Inquisição	Antônio José, or the Poet and the Inquisition
Arena Canta...	Arena Sings...
As Asas de Um Anjo	The Wings of An Angel
As Desgraças de uma Criança	The Mishaps of a Child
As Doutoradas	The Doctors
As Fãs de Raoul Walsh	The Fans of Raoul Walsh
As Fãs de Robert Taylor	The Fans of Robert Taylor
Auto da Compadecida	The Compassionate Play
Auto da Pregação Universal	The Universal Sermon Drama
Baile de Máscaras	Masquerade Ball
Bailei na Curva	I Was Left Out
Bonequinha de Seda	Silk Doll
Caiu o Ministério.	The Ministers Were Deposed
Cala a Boca, Etelvina	Shut Up Etelvina

Canto da Cotovia	The Skylark's Song
Caverna Mágica	Magic Cave
Cerimônia do Adeus	Goodbye Ceremony
Chapetuba Futebol Clube	Chapetuba Football Club
Colméia	Hive
Como rechear um biquíni	How to Fill a Bikini
Como se Fazia um Deputado.	How a Representative Used to be Created
D. João Lira ou O Repto	D. João Lira or the Repto
D. Juan ou a Prole dos Saturnos	D. Juan or the Offspring of Saturn
Da Inconveniência de Ser Esposa	Of the Inconvenience of Being a Wife
Da Necessidade de Ser Polígamo	Of the Need of Being Polygamous
Deus	God
Deus Lhe Pague	May God Reward You
Direito por Linhas Tortas	Moving in Mysterious Ways
É...	It Is...
Eles Não Usam Black-Tie	They Don't Wear Black-Tie
Farsa da Esposa Perfeita	Farce of the Perfect Wife
Fernando ou o Cinto Acusador	Fernando or the Accusatory Belt
Festival de Comédia	Comedy Festival
Flores de Sombra	Flowers of Shadow
Gimba, o Presidente dos Valentes	Gimba, the President of the Brave
Gonzaga ou A Revolução de Minas	Gonzaga or the Revolution of Minas
Gota d'Água	The Straw that Broke...
Hay amigo para amigo	A Friend for a Friend
Herança	The Inheritance
Hoje é Dia de Rock	Today is Rock Day
Império	Empire
Incidente em Forli	Incident in Forli
Itaminda ou O Guerreiro Tupã	Itaminda or The Tupã Warrior
Jesus está batendo à nossa porta	Jesus is knocking on our door
Judas em Sábado de Aleluia	Judas on Holy Saturday
La Dama Boba	The Foolish Lady
Liberdade, Liberdade	Liberty, Liberty
Louro, alto, solteiro, procura	Blond, tall, single looking for...
Mãe	Mother
Manhãs de Sol	Sunny Mornings
Minha Sogra é da Polícia	My Mother-in-Law is With the Police
Ministro do Supremo	The Supreme Court Justice
Morte e Vida Severina	Life and Death Severina
Na Festa de São Loureço	The São Loureço Festivity
Na Festa de Vitória	The Victory Festivity
No Hay Amigo para Amigo	There Are No Friends for Friends
O Avarento	The Miser

Glossary

name of updated works

O Café do Felisberto	Felisberto's Café
O Canto do Gregório	Gregory's Song
O Cego	The Blind
O Crédito	The Credit
O Cristo Proclamado	The Christ Proclaimed
O Demônio Familiar	The Familiar Demon
O Ébrio	The Drunk
O Felisberto do Café	The Café's Felisberto
O Homem silencioso dos olhos de vidro	The silent Man with glass eyes
O Jesuíta	The Jesuit
O Juiz de Paz na Roça	The Justice of Peace in the Boondocks
O Macaco da Vizinha	The Neighbour's Monkey
O Mambembe	The Travelling Circus
O Noviço	The Novice
O Patinho Torto	The Ugly Duckling
O Primo da Califórnia	The Cousin from California
O Rei da Vela	The Candle King
O Submarino	The Submarine
O Tipo Brasileiro	The Brazilian Type
O Vendedor de Ilusões,	Merchant of Illusions
Onde Canta o Sabiá	Where the Thrush Sings
Os Dois ou o Inglês Maquinista	The Two or the English Engineers
Parnaso Obsequioso	Obsequious Parnassus
Patética	Pathetic
Pérola	Pearl
Pluft, o fantasma	Pluft, the ghost
Quatro Vezes Beckett	Four Times Beckett
Quatro Vezes Beckett	Four Times Beckett
Que Pena Ser Só Ladrão	What a Pity to be Just a Thief
Quebranto	Evil Eye
Quem Casa Quer Casa	Married Couples Need Their Own Home
Quem tem medo de Itália Fausta	Who Is Affraid of Itália Fausta?
Rasga Coração	Heart Rending
Revistas do Ano	Vaudeville of the Year
Rio de Janeiro – Verso e Reverso	Rio de Janeiro – Verse and Reverse
Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come	Damn if You Do, Damn if You Don't
Seria Cômico se Não Fosse Sério	It Would be Comical if It Weren't Serious
Sexo	Sex
Teatro de Arte	Art Theatre
Teatro Musical Brasileiro – Partes I (1860/1914) e II (1914/1945)	The Brazilian Musical Theatre – Parts I (1860/1914) and II (1914/1945)
Tem Treco nos Cabos	There's Stuff on the Cables
Tomei Um Ita no Norte	I Took a Steamboat From the North

Três Candidatos	The Three Candidates
Trilogia do Herói Grotresco	Trilogy of the Grotesque Hero
Uma Página de Escola Realista	A Page from the Realistic School
Vereda da Salvação	Road to Salvation
Vereda da Salvação, Nelson Rodrigues – O eterno Retorno	Road to Salvation, Nelson Rodrigues – The Eternal Return
Vestido de Noiva	Wedding Dress
Vitiza ou O Nero de Espanha	Vitiza or The Spanish Nero

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PERSPECTIVA

A figura de Barbara Heliodora gravou-se no movimento do teatro brasileiro com dois cunhos específicos: a da mais insígne shakespeariana de nossa cultura dramática e a de crítica rigorosa, destemida, que jamais pactuou com correntes, ideologias ou obras que não fossem de sua própria opção. Entretanto, seria parcial e injusto limitar o espectro de seu temário, de suas buscas e de seu pensamento a essa dupla de assuntos. Pois, como a presente viagem pelos *Caminhos do Teatro Ocidental* demonstrarão insofismavelmente ao público leitor, Barbara Heliodora esteou todo o seu longo e profícuo diálogo, debate e atuação – no palco teórico, opinativo e avaliativo – em um conhecimento e erudição histórica e dramatúrgica do maior e melhor quilate, constituindo este livro, não só uma rica contribuição à nossa bibliografia teatral, como um testemunho que fala da qualidade de sua autora. E a editora Perspectiva sente-se realmente honrada por ter tido a preferência de poder inscrevê-la em seu catálogo, no qual, como se sabe, o teatro ocupa o lugar de honra.

J. GUINSBURG

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