

BUILDING A BASIC
SPANISH AMERICAN
THEATRE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ronald D. Burgess
Gettysburg College

BIBLIOGRAFIA DEL TEATRO HISPANOAMERICANO CONTEMPORANEO (1900-1980). Volumes 1 and 2. Compiled by FERNANDO DE TORO and PETER ROSTER. (Frankfurt: Klaus Dieter Vervuert, 1985. Pp. 699 in 2 vols. \$50.00 set.)

THE INDEPENDENT MONOLOGUE IN LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE: A PRIMARY BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH SELECTIVE SECONDARY SOURCES. Compiled by DUANE RHOADES. (Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood, 1985. Pp. 242. \$45.00.)

Publishing bibliographies is a thankless task. No matter how useful the information, someone will dislike the format, someone will disapprove of the scope, and several someones will point out what was not included but should have been. In spite of all that, bibliographies are still produced, although in some instances it takes time for the process to begin. Such has been the case for Spanish American theatre. The plays have existed for centuries, but virtually no adequate material on them was available until some ten years ago. In that decade, however, between the publication of the first truly comprehensive bibliography by Leon Lyday and George Woodyard in 1976 and the appearance of Fernando de Toro's and Peter Roster's complete two-volume set in 1985, the degree of interest, energy, and production has risen dramatically. By 1987 the available materials are still quite uneven, but it is possible for the first time to create a basic utilitarian bibliography to facilitate the study of Spanish American theatre. This article will propose a minimal set of such materials, thus providing the opportunity to comment briefly on the contribution of some of the books and articles currently available. The focus will be on Spanish America as opposed to Latin America because materials on Brazil are covered rather unevenly in the available bibliographies.

Before beginning, a few statistics might help to provide an overview of the development of this bibliographical corpus over the last few

years. One simplistic measure comes from comparing the number of listings in the bibliography section of Lyday and Woodyard's 1976 book with that of Toro and Roster. In ten years, the count rose from twenty-five to eighty-two bibliographic works. Even taking into consideration the possibility of different criteria for the listings, this trend represents startling growth.

Another simple measure is to compare the fifty-six bibliographical entries chosen from the two volumes mentioned and from the "Materials Received" section of the *Latin American Theatre Review*. The selection for comparison was limited to items related specifically to theatre (excluding more general bibliographies of "literature") and items considered accessible in most university libraries. The fifty-six titles can be divided into three categories: bibliographies devoted to individual playwrights, those pertaining to a single country, and those dealing with Spanish American theatre in general. The earliest listing is dated 1940; taking 1976 as a turning point produces two periods, 1940–1975 and 1976–1985. Looking at all works yields numbers similar to those based on the comparison of the 1976 and 1985 bibliography lists: thirty-two articles and books in the first thirty-six years versus twenty-four in the last ten. Thus almost half of the extant bibliographical work has been accomplished in only one decade. A good indication of the direction that this work has taken comes from comparing the number of bibliographies dedicated to individuals (eighteen works), countries (twenty-four), and theatre in general (fourteen). Two of the eighteen individual studies have appeared since 1975, ten of the twenty-four country-specific studies, and twelve of the fourteen dealing with theatre in general. Even given the limited and somewhat arbitrary base, the trends are clear. Bibliographies are moving away from focusing on individuals toward a more general view. The emphasis on separate countries is also increasing.

Obviously, then, bibliographical work is a growth industry, and because this area was neglected for so long, much remains to be done. What has emerged to date provides a good foundation, however, and this corpus of bibliographical studies will be discussed in more detail. It is now possible to assemble a group of materials that provide access to Spanish American theatre production from a variety of angles with some hope of keeping current.

The most broadly based and up-to-date Spanish American theatre bibliography is Peter Roster's and Fernando de Toro's two-volume *Bibliografía del teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo (1900–1980)*. The first volume consists of original works. In Section A, authors and their plays are listed alphabetically by dramatist, with each of the 6663 entries including publication information (or a referral to the anthology section) and country. Section B lists names of anthologies along with the plays

included. The final section is devoted to translations. The second volume contains critical works, divided into books, articles, and doctoral dissertations (2505 listings in all), interviews, reviews of anthologies and some individual plays, reviews of books of criticism, and an admittedly brief listing of commentary on theatre festivals. Another section is devoted to bibliographies and a final section to miscellaneous materials. All information is presented alphabetically by the name of the critic. Roster and Toro's bibliography is the most complete available on twentieth-century Spanish American theatre because it covers primary and secondary sources, includes eighty years of production, and compiles most of what was available previously.

Lyday and Woodyard's *A Bibliography of Latin American Theater Criticism, 1940–1974* focuses on a shorter time period and limits itself to critical works. Its three parts are a list of bibliographical materials, an alphabetical list of 2360 works listed by critic, and a cross-referenced index. Charles Carpenter added some six pages of entries in an article in the *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía* (1980). Even after publication of the newer Roster and Toro bibliography, Lyday and Woodyard's work remains an important cornerstone of any basic theatre library for several reasons. First, not all listings are the same in both books. Having both books allows a system of double checking for additional entries. Second, some entries in Lyday and Woodyard's book are usefully annotated. Finally, their index is extremely valuable. Because the main listings are presented by critics' names, it is difficult and time-consuming to construct a complete list of books and articles about a particular play or playwright. This difficulty is nicely resolved in the index, where one can simply look up a dramatist's name and find numbers referring the reader to all materials devoted to that name in the main bibliography.

Using similar logic, it would be useful to have a companion piece to Roster and Toro's first volume of primary works, one in which plays are listed by country for the benefit of those seeking easy access to a national literature. Erminio Neglia and Luis Ordaz's *Repertorio selecto del teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo* (1980) is a step in that direction. Although the authors have limited their scope to the more important authors of the past fifty years (up to August 1977), the logical organization of the 1874 entries makes them easy to use. Main groupings are by country, under which authors appear alphabetically with their works listed chronologically, followed by date of publication (unpublished works are also listed). This arrangement provides much helpful information plus a sense of the extent of a given country's production. The *Repertorio* makes a nice starting point for a national or individual study and a cross-reference to Roster and Toro's more extensive listings.

With multiple access to primary and secondary sources, the three books described here constitute a good basic set of references, with the

addition of one other work, Frank Dauster's *Historia del teatro hispanoamericano, siglos XIX y XX* (1973). Although not strictly a bibliography, this book contains information on an astounding number of plays, including a concise descriptive and critical comment on nearly every play mentioned. Furthermore, authors are grouped chronologically and their works presented within a framework of historical commentary about their nation's theatrical development. This kind of qualitative and quantitative information on such a wide range of primary sources is simply not available anywhere else. Dauster's book therefore remains an essential standard in the field.

As is evident from the statistics mentioned earlier, the amount of information devoted to Spanish American theatre is growing rapidly, and any bibliographical work is doomed to be out-of-date as soon as it appears. This trend requires some method for keeping current. The Modern Language Association's annual *International Bibliography* provides one means, but more specific sources of information also exist. The *Handbook of Latin American Studies* devotes a section to theatre giving a brief exposition on recent materials instead of a mere listing. The final section of every issue of the *Latin American Theatre Review* lists all newly received material, published and unpublished, twice a year as opposed to the annual or biennial information in other sources. The book review sections of the *Latin American Theatre Review* and the new journal *Gestos* also provide biannual up-dates on newly published books.

Given all of these materials, the field of Spanish American theatre is in relatively good shape as far as general bibliographical information. The same cannot be said for bibliographies on individual countries, unfortunately. Although at least one bibliography (or some sort of critical work) exists on the theatre of every Spanish-speaking country in the hemisphere (with the apparent exception of Paraguay and the Central American countries), the quality is uneven, and in many cases the available material is out-of-date.

Brief comments will now be offered on what is available for each country. On Argentina, Virginia Ramos Foster's "Contemporary Argentine Dramatists: A Bibliography" (1971, 1972) and Perla Zayas de Lima's *Diccionario de autores teatrales argentinos, 1950-1980* (1981) provide a reasonable amount of information about authors and plays. For Bolivia, Mario T. Soria's *Teatro boliviano en el siglo XX* (1980) contains a bibliography. Colombia has some of the most complete information available in Hector Orjuela's *Bibliografía del teatro colombiano* (1974), with a few additions in *Materiales para una historia del teatro en Colombia* (1978) by Carlos José Reyes and Maida Watson Espener. Nothing has been published on Chile since the early 1960s. The most accessible work on Cuba is Eugene Skinner's "Research Guide to Post-Revolutionary Cuban Drama"

(1974). For the Dominican Republic, some bibliography is included in José Molinaza's *Historia crítica del teatro dominicano* (1984). Ecuador, surprisingly enough, boasts the most up-to-date information in Gerardo Luzuriaga's *Bibliografía del teatro ecuatoriano, 1900–1980* (1984). Perhaps equally surprising is the lack of current bibliography on Mexican theatre. Since publication of the 1962 edition of Ruth Lamb's and Antonio Magaña Esquivel's *Bibliografía del teatro mexicano del siglo XX*, the only more recent works are Francisco Monterde's republication of his earlier *Bibliografía del teatro en México* (1970) and Lamb's *Mexican Theatre of the Twentieth Century: Bibliography and Study* (1975). On Peru, see "Bibliography of the Peruvian Theatre, 1946–1970" (1981) by Arthur Natella, and *The Contemporary Peruvian Theatre* (1977) by Robert Morris. Nilda González has compiled a useful set of materials on Puerto Rico in her *Bibliografía de teatro puertorriqueño (siglos XIX y XX)* (1979). Walter Rela has consistently updated Uruguayan theatre information, most recently in 1980. For Venezuela, consult *Bibliografía del teatro venezolano* (1980) by José de la Cruz Rojas Uzcátegui and Lubio Cardozo and also Sally Greymont's more specialized "Hacia una bibliografía del teatro venezolano colonial" (1975).

As far as bibliographies of individual dramatists are concerned, the field is more uneven still. "Preliminary" listings have been compiled for a few living dramatists. Those no longer living may or may not be covered, suggesting that a dramatist's death does not seem to guarantee immediate bibliographical activity.

Finally come the "specialized" areas. As previously mentioned, critics seem to have focused on more contemporary (twentieth-century) theatre. Coverage of early material is only sketchy—Greymont's already mentioned study and Carlos Suárez Radillo's and René Acuña's work on Mayan representations. Listings have been made of translations, but little in-depth work has been done. A few critics (such as Jorge Huerta) have begun to work on Chicano theatre, but much remains to be done. One of the most complete studies focuses on the monologue. In contrast to this minimal material, Duane Rhoades's *The Independent Monologue in Latin American Theater* (1985) is complete and up-to-date. He has organized the material into three chronological periods: "unipersonal genres" and "melologues" (1550–1840); monologues (1840–1940); and "monodramas" and one-character plays (1940 to the present). Within each of these groups, plays are listed according to authors, who are in turn listed by country. The book begins with a historical introduction and ends with an appendix on unpublished plays, a secondary bibliography, and an index of authors. Rhoades's compilation covers an area that has been largely ignored up to now in an easily accessible format.

These works comprise the available bibliographical materials on

Spanish American theatre. Given all of these materials, the field is in surprisingly good shape, especially in view of the special problems that theatre materials present for bibliographers. One of the biggest dilemmas involves what to include and how to organize it. Plays may be published individually or in anthologies, or they may exist only as photocopies or single manuscripts. Are the single manuscripts (which may be impossible to obtain) equal to published versions in a bibliography? So-called *creación colectiva* often exists only as performance. How should such works be designated? If a play is to be listed, should it be by date of writing, by date of publication, by date of staging, by all three, or by some combination—and for what reasons? What is to be done if (as is often the case) the chosen date or dates cannot be determined? The staged version of a play is available to only a limited number of viewers, and each staging differs (sometimes substantially) from every other staging, and certainly from the written text. Which of these versions is *the* play? If only one version is deemed “official,” how is that choice to be justified? If all versions are equally authentic, how can several viewers or readers who have access to only one or two versions engage in a critical dialogue, given the “different” works they have experienced?

These questions and others infuse a good deal of energy into the genre, but they also complicate traditional bibliographical approaches. It is therefore not surprising that much time was required for a coherent body of work to emerge. Now that it has, however, scholars can finally identify a basic set of accessible materials that will allow work in a field that is still growing and searching for its own direction. The bibliography devoted to Spanish American theatre seems to have reached a level that will allow it to continue its growth in a more organized fashion than previously.

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