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Incomplete balance for a theater year
Yinett Polanco

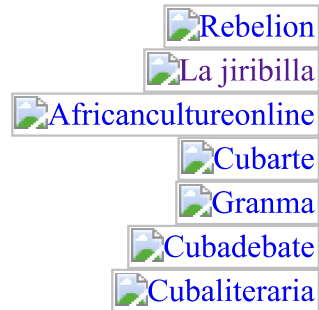
It will be difficult to find words to describe the 2007 theatre year. At least if we are talking about theatre for grow ups.

On one hand, if we think in the number of theatres there are in Cuba, it has been a year with only a few, numerically speaking premieres. A little more than twenty new plays have been on stages until nowadays in the Cuban theatres and some of previous successful premieres have return to the stages, some of them are: Santa Camila de la Habana Vieja (this time starring Susana Pérez); Chamacos (by Argos Teatro, the group of Carlos Celdrán); Vientos huracanados (by Julio Cid and María Elena Soteras) and Las relaciones de Clara (by Teatro el Público of Carlos Díaz).

On the other hand, most of the premieres and revivals are in Havana, since normally the theatre lists in the provinces is only animated if there is a festival on that particular place, such as the Camaguey Festival, the Matanzas street Festival or the Monologue Festival of Cienfuegos and in these cases, many of the plays that are performed in this festivals, are already seen in Havana or are seen in the capital during the year. That is the case, that out of all the premieres, only two were made outside the capital city, El vuelo del gato, premiered in Matanzas by the Icaron group, based in the novel by Abel Prieto and Romanza del Lirio, by Norge Espinosa premiered at the Circle of the Craftsmen of San Antonio de los Baños by Estudio Teatral La Chinche.

Norge, according to my point of view, is, together with Amado del Pino, at the head of the theatre writes who have consolidated themselves as authors in the Cuban theatre: with a long trajectory as dramaturgue and theatre critic, both are, undoubtedly, part of the group of national authors who have left or are leaving a recognized mark in the stages of the island.

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The Cuban theatre has also been characterized this year (and I would dare to call it a phenomenon with a long history) by, although even the most suffered tragedies are spatter with humor, unlike the national cinema, there are not many comedies in theatre. During 2007, the only comedies on stages were *Las viejas putas* by Juan Carlos Cremata (the known director of *Nada y Viva Cuba*) and the monologue *Aquícuálquier@* of Osvaldo Doimeadiós; apart from the show *Jura decir la verdad*, at the Karl Marx theatre, by the group of the TV program with the same name.

Even though some critics demand the need of a bigger presence of the monologue on our stages, a criteria I personally do not share, it must be taken into account the fact that almost half the premieres were monologues; several reasons could explain this phenomena and probably the first one of them is the economic reason, the monologues are usually more centered in the expressive and / or interpretative capacity of the actor than in a complex and worked scenography.

Remembering the titles, we have the already mentioned play of Doimeadiós; *Suite para Katherine sola*, by Antonia Fernández and starring Gema Castro; (by August Strindberg, with José Ramón Vigo playing the main character) and *En Falso* (a text of Amado del Pino, starring Mariela Bejerano), both presented by Vi-tal theatre; *Fátima, reina de la noche* based in a story of the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet presented by Raúl Lima; *Muerte por agua* by Norge Espinosa, presented by Teatro Pinos nuevos; *El contrabajo* of Patrick Süskind, starring Roberto Perdomo and directed by Susana Pérez and *Conversación en la casa Stein sobre el ausente señor Von Goethe* of the German dramatist Peter Hacks, directed by the Argentinean Miguel Pittier with Susana Perez as the star.

Here we can mention another line of work of the Cuban theatre, the exchange with foreign theatre creators, a positive current, since it gets the public closer with the international theatre work and it is useful for the own Cuban theatrical in their work. In this sense we can mention, apart from the two already mentioned works of Susana Perez, the premieres of *La más fuerte*; *Los soles truncos* of the Puerto Rican René Marqués, directed by Doris Gutiérrez and *El deseo* of the Mexican dramatist Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda, presented by María Elena Soteras, both plays by the theatre company *Compañía Teatral Hubert de Blanck*. Another work presented is *Arte*, of the Algerian dramatist Yazmina Reza, presented by the theatre group *El Publico* and it was also premiered – as part of the tribute organized by the Casa de las Americas to the painters, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo- the show of the Mexican actress Ofelia Medina, *Cada quien su Frida*.

Besides the mentioned titles, in 2007 there were also premiered the following plays of Cuban dramatist: *Pájaros de la playa* by El Ciervo Encantado group, based in the novel written by Severo Sarduy just before his death in 1993 and *Puerto de coral* written by Maikel Chávez and premiered by the *Palpito* theatre group.

A boost the Cuban theatricals are carrying out in the last years is the recovery of the musical theatre, lest remember the premiere in 2004 of Sonlar, a dance and percussion show created and directed by René de Cárdenas, which in 2007 had another season at the Mella Theatre in which they make their 100 show and in 2006 the new presentation of Pedro Navaja by Nelson Dorr. This year there was the premiere of another musical show, Macbeth vino montado en burro, a text written in 1966 by Jose Milian and premiered this year by the el Pequeño Teatro de La Habana group. This presentations plus the reparation of the old (Teatro Musicla de la Habana) Havana Musical Theatre, are signaling a gradual recovery of the once famous Cuban genre.

I have intentionally left to the end the adaptations to the world theatre classical texts, since when these texts appeal to the values and problems of the human race, they validate the permanent dialogue of the public with any theatre text far beyond the time, such is the case of the own Macbeth...; Fedra, by Jean Racine, presented by the theatre group EL Publico; La Olla of the young dramatist Jorge Alba, based in the Latin comedy Aulularia, by Tito Maccio Plauto and presented by the theatre group Buendía and of the almost legendary Los siete contra Tebas, by Antón Arrufat, directed by Alberto Sarraín and presented by the Mefisto theater group.

The remaining months of the year, seems to be promising regarding premieres. So far its has been already announced the play Makarov, by Edgar Estaco, with the artistic direction of Pedro Ángel Vera for the EL Circulo Theatre; Woyzeck, with the direction of Flora Lauten for Buendía thatre group; El Cerco de Leningrado of the Spaniard José Sanchís Sinisterra, with the artistic direction of Julio César Ramírez for Teatro D'Dos; ; Compañía of Eduardo Rovener for the same theatre group; Frida, yo soy María by Ulises Rodríguez Febles, with the artistic direction of Alejandro Palomino for Vi-tal Teatro; La cacatúa verde, with the artistic direction of Luis Brunet for the Compañía Teatral Hubert de Blanck; Extraños en la noche, of Esther Suárez Durán, with the artistic direction of Juan Carlos Ramos for the Océano theatre group and La querida de Enramada, by Gerardo Fullera León, with artistic direction of Fernando Quiñones Posada and the presentation of Compañía Teatral Rita Montaner. The public will also be able to enjoy the new version, by the latest company, of Mi socio Manolo by Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, with the version of Sarah María Cruz and José Ignacio León.

It is obvious to say that as everywhere there have been groups and plays most in the avant-garde than others, out of whom it was a great expectation and the result was not impacting as it was expected. What probably needs the Cuban theatre, apart of increasing the number of premieres, is the active recovery of the musical, a greater experimentation (lets put as example, Relaciones de Clara, transgressor in several sense) and a greater number of plays that reflect our daily life, as it was the play Chamacos, it means without vulgarities and common places, appealing to the intelligence and the reflection capacity of the public.

Doing a summary we can see some groups that have been able to establish clearly their style than others, among whom it is worth to highlight the EL Publico Group, directed by Carlos Diaz, who have managed to maintain a rhythm of premieres and full houses in the presentations without making concessions to quality in any case, actually the contrary, assuming a wider topics in their presentations, allows the director and the actors, not to repeat themselves and obliged them to constantly look for ways of communications with the public. Even though the drama is the most represented genre, the dialogue with foreign dramatists and the difference of characters and interest among the nationals, it is possible to see a healthy variety in this type of presentations, therefore, if I had to find some words to describe the year 2007 for the Cuban stages I would say 2007 is a year of development and growing.

*The author is a specialized journalist in cultural topics.

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