WESTERN EUROPEAN STAGES

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The brand-new Zurich Schiffbau. Photo: Marvin Carlson

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To The Reader

As we begin our thirteenth year of publication, the world begins a new century and a new millennium. It therefore seemed most appropriate that we mark this beginning by devoting our annual special issue this year to a comprehensive country-by-country survey of the theatre scene in Western Europe. This was by far the most ambitious project this journal has ever undertaken, seeking informed reports from every country that we have covered in the past thirteen years, from Iceland to Greece and from Finland to Portugal, down to smaller theatre cultures that have never yet appeared in our pages. Finding qualified and available reporters for the twenty-two different countries covered in this issue was a monumental task, and we are deeply grateful to the group of international scholars who have generously given of their time to create these highly informative reports, surely the best survey available anywhere of the current theatre situation in this part of the world. Our special thanks and a warm welcome go to those European contributors whose work appears in this journal for the first time, Christina Thurner and Jörg Wiesel from Switzerland, Sophie Proust from France, Thoralf Berg from Norway, and Erik Exe Christoffersen from Denmark.

Western European theatre enters the new century very much in flux. In much of the continent, the late twentieth century was dominated by great directors: Ingmar Bergman, Giorgio Strehler, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Patrice Chereau, Peter Stein. Most of this astonishing generation is still, to our great benefit, involved in production, and still plays a major role in the European scene, but clearly this era is drawing to a close, and another picture is emerging. The two generations that have appeared since the 1960s and early 1970s have certainly produced brilliant directors, but there is now a clear shift toward companies, cooperatives, and other kinds of theatrical activity.

Other interesting trends are also suggested by this wide-ranging survey. A shifting economic scene has almost everywhere caused major changes both in how theatres are organized and how they are funded. The old standard state-subsidized repertory theatre system is still fairly firmly in place, but commercial and social pressures are everywhere forcing significant adjustments to it. New experimental work, often connected with the use of the electronic media, suggests another new direction, as does a growing interest among even the well established major theatres in unconventional spaces like the converted industrial complexes opening the new century at the Zurich Schauspielhaus and the Teatro di Roma, both under innovative new directors.

For Americans interested in the theatre of Western Europe, one of the most striking and welcome new developments is the mass of information now available on the internet. In the early issues of this journal, just over a decade ago, we often included programs of upcoming seasons at major theatres, since this information was then so difficult to obtain. Today, every major theatre and hundreds of minor ones provide such information at accessible websites, and in several countries national search engines allow one to find the current activities of any particular theatre artist. The reader will thus find a list of current websites following the essay on each country, well over 1000 of them in all.

There is also one important feature of the Western European theatre as it enters the new century that is to some degree hidden by the very organization of this special issue. It is clear that the old nineteenth century practice of each European nation having its own more or less autonomous and individual theatre and theatre tradition is becoming less and less operative. The influx of immigrant populations, the economic merging of Europe, the ease of travel, the rise of international artists and companies, the growing importance throughout Europe of international festivals of theatre, all are contributing to the growing importance of what Marion Holt in his report on Spain characterizes as "Eurotheatre," no longer with clear roots in any particular country.

So important is this development in Europe today that it seemed to us, even as we were preparing the present special issue, organized along traditional national lines, that our next issue should be devoted to this alternative model, the Eurotheatre, to the works and the artists that are seen, and see themselves, in these new internationalist terms. We therefore hope to focus upon this in the special issue for Winter of 2002 and we would be delighted to receive proposals or suggestions for such an issue. As always, we thank our readers for their continued interest, and warmly encourage contributions from any reader.

Subscriptions and queries about possible contributions should be addressed to the Editor, *Western European Stages*, Theatre Program, Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016 or email mcarlson@gc.cuny.edu.

Monaco and Beyond

Marvin Carlson and Phyllis Zatlin

The smaller states of Western Europe—Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, and the Vatican State—are almost always, in our pages as elsewhere, completely overshadowed by their much larger and more influential neighbors. We were therefore very pleased to receive recently, from Phyllis Zatlin, our first report on a production in one of these smaller states. Although her review of *Cecilia* is not, like the others in this special issue, a survey article, but follows our more normal format of a detailed report on a single interesting production, we have included it here to serve as this introduction to this brief survey of the theatrical offerings of these seldom remarked locations.

The World Premiere of *Cecilia*

Even within the world of opera, the premiere production of Charles Chaynes's *Cecilia* is outstanding for its high level of international collaboration. The libretto for the French composer's fourth opera, based on the nineteenth-century Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés,* was written by Cuban-French playwright and novelist Eduardo Manet. The production was directed by Jorge Lavelli, a native of Argentina who has long been a major force in French theatre and opera. Although the majority of the singers were French, the title role was created by Marisol Montalvo, who was born on Long Island but is of Puerto Rican descent, and another American, Nebraska-born tenor David Lee Brewer, created the role of José Dolores Pimienta. First performed at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo in the principality of Monaco in May 2000 with that opera house's orchestra—under the direction of the Belgian conductor Patrick Davin—*Cecilia* is a co-production of the Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine in France and the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Liège, Belgium. The sets and costumes were made in Belgium; the shoes and wigs came from Italy. Performances were scheduled in Nancy and Liège, respectively, in January and February 2001.

Chaynes's earlier operas include *Noces de sang* (1988), based on the play by the Spanish playwright Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). When the composer revealed that he would like to write an opera on a Latin American theme as well, Manet suggested the classic anti-racism novel from his native Cuba. *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde (1812-94), with its dramatic emphasis on the clash of cultures and its tragic love story, had served as the source of inspiration for a famous *zarzuela* (Hispanic operetta) by Gonzalo Roig (1890-1970). The proposal was one to which Manet had already given considerable thought. In the 1960s while living in Havana, he was a film director in association with the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos. At that time, he planned to adapt the novel for the screen and had prepared the synopsis. The film had not yet been made by 1968 when he returned permanently to France, where he had studied in the 1950s. He believes that his outline for a film script was the point of departure for the 1982 Spanish-Cuban movie, *Cecilia*, directed by one of his former students, Humberto Solás. For Chayne's project, Manet transformed that same synopsis into the requested opera libretto (Personal interview, 24 May 2000). The continuing appeal of the Cecilia Valdés story is also evidenced in *Parece Blanca* (1994), a play by Cuban author Abelardo Estorino; *Parece Blanca* has been performed at Repertorio Español in New York City for the past several seasons, starting in 1998-99.

In his episodic libretto, Manet opted to capture the essence of Villaverde's long, complex novel by simplifying the story, shortening the time span of the action (with emphasis on three holiday celebrations: Midsummer Night, Christmas and Carnival), and reducing the cast to six: Cecilia, a beautiful young mulatto woman; Leonardo (Jean-Marc Salzmann), the young white man who seduces and ultimately betrays her; José, the black musician who truly loves Cecilia; Don Candido Gamboa (Alain Fondary) and Rosa Gamboa (Anne Salvan), Leonardo's wealthy Spanish parents; and La Fatalité (Marthe Keller), a speaking role in which Fate functions as narrator. In performance, the opera ran under two hours, without intermission. Lavelli believes that the abbreviated version, which also played down the villainy of the Spanish men, particularly of Leonardo, avoided the risk of turning the tragedy into melodrama (Telephone interview, 23 May 2000). In the Chaynes-Manet opera, Leonardo and Cecilia are star-crossed lovers. They are separated by race and class and also by the fact, eventually revealed to Leonardo but forever concealed from the young mulatto whose mother died in childbirth, that they are brother and sister. In seducing Cecilia, Leonardo has unwit-

Jean-Marc Salzmann as Leonardo and Marisol Mantalvo in the title role of *Cecilia.* Photo: Opéra de Monte-Carlo

tingly repeated his father's story.

In his stage directions, Manet suggested a minimalist approach; the result he wanted was a light, movable set that could facilitate cinematographic fluidity. He was delighted with the work of noted set designer Agostino Pace. In his theatre, Manet has always avoided heavy, realistic stage sets and has often incorporated filmic strategies and codes. He has also consistently shown a strong love for music, most notably in his as yet unstaged *Viva Verdi.* His enthusiastic participation in the creation of *Cecilia* is thus not surprising.

Pace's design for *Cecilia* featured three movable walls covered with alternating patches of an opaque surface that simulated dark stone and a shiny material that both reflected the lighting (designed by Dominique Bruguière) and, at appropriate moments, functioned as a mirror. In the opening scene, only the two side walls were in place. Upstage, behind a scrim, were three doorways through which the audience could catch glimpses of couples dancing during Midsummer Night festivities. (The dancers, students from the Académie de Danse Classique Princesse Grace, did not remain for curtain calls.) Later in the action, after Cecilia is threatened by Don Candido with imprisonment because of her liaison with a white man, the two side walls formed an angle, thus visually suggesting her entrapment.

The walls provided flexibility in another way. They were constructed of movable blocks that could be turned to form window openings or be used as doors for rapid exits. In one scene, several of the windows open at once and white faces (actually white masks worn by black stagehands) stare out disapprovingly at Cecilia. Pace's design included additional, unexpected doorways that facilitated fluidity of motion. The location of a love nest to which Leonardo takes Cecilia is established by a red velvet drape. His parents first enter the

stage by being rolled on in a closed box that Lavelli describes as a wardrobe, appropriate for storing museum pieces from a decaying aristocracy. Both the drape and the box contained hidden openings through which characters exited as the action quickly shifted to a new scene.

Manet states that the ingenious box device was Pace's idea. The playwright had merely suggested that chairs be moved on stage for the older couple but Pace decided to place them and their elegant, throne-like seats in a rollaway compartment. On the other hand, the projection of a map of Cuba on the back wall was part of Manet's stage directions. The choice of an historic and therefore somewhat inaccurate map was Pace's. Lavelli was dismayed that the map did not properly show the shape and location of Florida, but most spectators would not have noticed. The projection, with points of light against a dark background, was not only aesthetically pleasing but also clarified Cuban geography: Cecilia dances about the stage to celebrate a letter from Leonardo, who has left Havana to spend Christmas in Camaguey, while José tries in vain to tell her of the letter he has received announcing the chance for him to direct an important orchestra in Santiago. The three cities are highlighted on the map.

Another device that facilitated audience appreciation was the projection of the French lyrics throughout the sung passages. Lavelli explains that two months of rehearsal were not sufficient to erase the foreign accent of the American singers and that, in any event, opera lyrics are always hard to understand. In that Chaynes's opera is not melodic, the difficulty was enhanced. Chaynes's work belongs to the current of contemporary, classical French music. Unlike Bizet, whose *Carmen* has long set the stereotype for "Spanish" music and temperament, Chaynes avoided the temptation of trying to create folkloric Cuban music. The exception is his use of quasi-Cuban rhythms in the percussion that underscores the narrator's speeches. His music, however, effectively captures the characters' wide range of emotions. Similarly, the women's dresses designed by Dominique Borg are in a more European than specifically Cuban style although Leonardo's white suits are in keeping with Cuban custom.

A notable aspect of this staging is the emphasis on white, deep red, and black—colors that connote race and class. In our telephone interview, Lavelli told me that I am perhaps overemphasizing the symbolism of the color scheme, but Manet believes that the costume designer did intend a metaphorical interpretation for her choice of colors, which were in turn enhanced by the lighting design. In the opening scene, on Midsummer Night, the innocent Cecilia is dressed in a lovely white gown, while Leonardo is wearing a tobacco-colored suit. Coinciding with the beginning of the love affair is the death of Cecilia's beloved grandmother; the young woman, now in mourning, wears black and Leonardo appears throughout the rest of the opera in white. The black/white dichotomy is further emphasized by white face make-up worn by the three white characters. Deep red, in combination with black, is associated with the wealthy landowners. The bed in the love nest, located in front of the red velvet drape, is covered by a red and black spread. The interior of the Gamboas' rollaway compartment and their costumes are red and black. When Cecilia meets Don Candido, she has a red shawl over her black dress. The color combination points to her possible inclusion in his class and culture; that momentary hope is dashed when, still not knowing that he is her father, she refuses his offer of money and his plea for her to leave Leonardo. In the final, oneiric scene, after she has gone mad and José has killed Leonardo in revenge, Cecilia is encased in a white psychiatric ward gown with closed sleeves. In her hallucinations, she is reunited with Leonardo, who appears dressed in his blood-stained white suit.

Manet's synthesized libretto incorporates a creative use of irony and careful preparation for the unfolding action. When Cecilia looks at her reflection and that of Leonardo in a mirror, she notes a resemblance that she attributes to their love; she cannot love José, however, because he is like a brother to her. Don Candido initially enters his meeting with Cecilia with good intentions. She is, after all, his daughter; he will separate her from his son but he will not leave her destitute. The spectators are not unprepared for his sudden turn to cruel anger because of a previous scene with his wife. To her dismay, he tells her that if Leonardo does not settle down to his law studies, his punishment will be military service in Spain, where the garrisons are virtual prisons.

Lavelli's fluid, theatricalist staging, in keeping with Manet's introduction of a narrator, included a number of Brechtian elements. Among these were the visible interventions of the several stagehands, all but one of whom appeared to be black. Their race became significant in one scene in which they struggle to pull a heavy rope across the stage. Suddenly the stagehands are seen as slaves condemned to hard labor. Both Cecilia and

Rosa cling in desperation to that same rope, conveying a sense of their entrapment in a racist and sexist society. The stagehands, who were not identified on the program, appeared with the cast to receive the audience's applause.

All five of the singing roles were performed to perfection, but the success of *Cecilia* may be attributed in large part to the versatility and talent of Marisol Montalvo. In appearance, she clearly looked the part of the beautiful Cuban mulatto, and her acting skills rose to the challenge of her role. Rather than add another singer to the cast, Manet wrote in a scene in which Cecilia relates a dialogue with her grandmother by playing both parts herself. Marisol Montalvo performed the scene brilliantly. She conveyed all of the complex, changing emotions of her character from joyous innocence to anguished love, from righteous anger to madness. The physical demands of the role had her dancing about the stage, writhing on the floor, and singing from a prone position. In the final mad scene, she moved gracefully in a circular motion while rotating a framed scrim that contributed to the image of her alienation and the dream-like appearance of Leonardo.

Manet reports that he counted thirty-five curtain calls on opening night, 19 May. When I attended the second performance, a Sunday matinee, there was an almost full house and an enthusiastic response that elicited repeated curtain calls. In view of the success of the opening performances, plans were underway for airing the production on French television in July 2000 and for eventually staging it in Paris at the Opéra Comique, a theatre directed by Jérome Savary who, like Lavelli, was born in Argentina.

Theatre in Monaco

As Zatlin suggests, by far the most important theatrical venue in Monaco is the opera, housed in the elegant Garnier Hall, built in 1892 and designed by the same architect who created the famous opera house in Paris. Its current director, Johan Mordler, cooperates with other theatre directors and artists across Europe to present the sort of international work of which *Cecilia* is an outstanding example. This theatre is also home to the internationally known Monte Carlo ballet. Monte Carlo also has two theatres devoted to the spoken word. The major one is the Princess Grace Theatre, opened in 1936 and lavishly remodeled in 1981, which offers a combination of local and traveling productions under the direction of Patrick Hourdequin. There is also an open-air summer theatre, opened in 1954 on the grounds of the early eighteenth century Fort Antoine.

Theatre in Luxembourg

By far the most active theatrically among the smaller countries of Western Europe is Luxembourg, doubtless due not only to its greater size (more than four times that of the other four combined) and population (more than six times that of the others combined) but also because of its location, bordering three countries with very active theatre cultures—Belgium, France, and Germany—which provides an opportunity for much international cooperation. An excellent example of this is the theatre at Esch, founded in 1949. Its most recent season opened with a new play in the Luxembourg language, *Botz,* by the nation's leading contemporary dramatist, Guy Rewenig, created by the National Theatre of Luxembourg, now in its fourth season and directed by Frank Hoffmann. The second production was Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*, presented in French, a co-production of the French Théâtre Populaire de Lorraine. Next came another Rewenig play, *Ventilation*, directed by Paul Kieffer and presented, as has become increasingly popular in Western Europe, not in the theatre but in an abandoned factory. The season's fourth production, again in French, was *The Tempest*, a co-production of the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne, then a double bill of *Waiting for Godot* and Müller's *Der Auftrug.* The next production was one of the theatre's most ambitious, the world premiere of a new Botho Strauss play, *Lotphantasie,* directed by Luc Bondy, who did *Godot* here in a previous season, with decor by Gilles Aillaud. The production subsequently toured to France, Switzerland, and Austria. The season ended with the last play of Tankred Dorst, *Grosse Szene am Fluss*, directed by Eva Paulin, the second production of this play in Europe (its premiere was in Munich in late 1999).

Aside from the Luxembourg National Theatre, which sometimes does productions with the Théâtre d'Esch, Luxembourg also is the home of a popular amateur theatre company, TOGO, which performs in the Dutch language. The title stands for the words Tot Ons Genoegen Opgericht (founded for our pleasure) although the company jokes that the letters may also suggest the phrase Tot Ons Geld Opraakt (until we run out of money). The company was founded in 1991 by ten amateur actors and has since produced one new work a year, mostly modern comedies (like Jack Popplewell's *Darling, I'm Home* in 1992) or thrillers (like Francis Durbridge's *Deadly Nightcap* in 1996), but

with an occasional classic (Molière's *Imaginary Invalid* was offered in 1998).

Theatre in San Marino

The state theatre in San Marino offers a strong annual season more or less evenly divided between Italian works and European and American classics. The current (2000-2001) season includes among the Italians works from Goldoni, Manfredi, Pirandolli, De Benedetti, Guido Morra, and Maurizio Fabrizio, along with *Cyrano de Bergerac, The Master Builder, Romeo and Juliet,* and *A Streetcar Named Desire.* On the more experimental side, the interdisciplinary theatre company Giardini Pensil, founded in 1985 and directed by Isabella Bordoni and Paci Dalò, is one of Europe's leading laboratories for multi-media performance.

Theatre in Andorra and Liechtenstein

The tiny state of Andorra, in the Pyrenees, with a population of only a little over 5000, still manages to support a communal theatre in its capital, Andorra la Vella, offering a season combining local productions with the work of visiting companies from France and Spain. Liechtenstein, smaller still but with a somewhat larger population, actually attracts theatre enthusiasts from neighboring Switzerland and Austria to its popular co-operative enterprise, the Theater am Kirchplatz in the town of Schaan, which offers both native productions and touring companies. Every year there is also a full season of operetta organized by local operetta societies and alternating between the capital Vaduz and Balzers.

The Theater am Kirchplatz in Liechtenstein

Theatre Internet Addresses in Andorra

Andorra

Theatre of the Comú	**http://correu,andorra.ad/comuns/andorra/A520FERT.htm**

Theatre Internet Addresses in Liechtenstein

Schaan

Theateer am Kirchplatz	**www.tak.li**

Theatre Internet Addresses in Luxembourg

Esch-sur-Alzette

Theatre d'Esch	**www.esch.lu/theatre**

Limpertsberg

Theatergroep TOGO	**http://members.tripod.lycos.nl/togo/main-en.htm**

Luxembourg

National Theatre	**www.sol.lu/TNL/tnl.html**

Theatre Internet Addresses in Monaco

Monte Carlo

Festival du Théâtre Amateur	**www.monte-carlo-online.mc**
Theatre Princess Grace	**www.monaco.gouv.mc/dataweb/gouvmc.nsg**
Opera de Monte Carlo	**www.montecarloresort.com/opera**

Theatre Internet Addresses in San Marino

San Marino

Giardini Pensili	**www.giardini.sm/theatre.htm**
San Marino Theatre	**www.sanmarinosite.com/stagione%20teatrale**