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Jorge Huerta

When Sleeping Giants Awaken: Chicano Theatre in the 1960s

The term "Chicano" is as politically charged today as it was in the 1960s, when contemporary Chicano Theatre was born. No one can trace the etymology of the term, which is neither Spanish nor English, but it was adopted as a self-identifier by mostly urban, politicized Americans of Mexican descent during the period. To call oneself "Chicano" meant that you were neither Mexican nor "American" but, rather, someone who recognized the various forms of oppression your communities were suffering. Then, as now, Chicanos scorned people who identified themselves as "Mexican Americans," dismissing them as middle-class conservatives who were more comfortable "blending in." On the other hand, Mexican Americans shunned "those Chicanos" as rabble-rousers and troublemakers with undue grievances. There was a class distinction at play in which working-class Chicanos criticized middle-class Mexican Americans as "sell-outs."

To further complicate matters, recent émigrés from Mexico were Mexican, people with a clear cultural and national identity who had difficulty understanding why these two subgroups did not simply call themselves "Mexicans" and speak Spanish correctly. Although their issues were sometimes distinct, there was no discernable difference to their oppressors, and Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos often found themselves the brunt of discrimination based solely on the color of their skin. (For this reason, I use the term "Mechicano" when discussing issues that pertain[ed] to all three subgroups.) Sociopolitical and identity issues fostered theatrical interventions in Chicano theatre of the 1960s, and representatives of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos are often found in the theatre of the Chicanos. Reflecting the colonial gaze turned inward, these subgroups search for a sense of "home" in a land that used to be home, a land in which they were the majority and Spanish was the official language, not a forbidden tongue.

Chicano theatre has its roots in the Spanish-language theatre produced (since 1598) in what is now the United States.[1] In addition to the religious folk theatre performed for centuries in most Spanish-speaking churches and communities in the Southwest, secular performances began to develop in the eighteenth and nineteenth

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Jorge Huerta holds the Chancellor's Associates Endowed Chair III as Professor of Theatre at the University of California, San Diego. He is also a professional director and a leading authority on contemporary Chicano and Latino theatre. Huerta's latest book is Chicano Drama: Performance, Society and Myth *(Cambridge University Press, 2000).*

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centuries. New Mexicans, for example, delighted in historical plays/pageants on horseback that demonstrated their military prowess over their enemies. One play frequently cited is the outdoor spectacle on horseback *Los Comanches*, which dramatized the Spanish defeat of the Comanches between 1777 and 1779.[2] In the mid nineteenth century, *Los Tejanos* (*The Texans*), a play that ridiculed Texans, was also popular among the New Mexicans.[3]

Although records indicate that most Spanish-language plays produced before 1960 were not overtly political, there were instances of plays produced for the purpose of raising audience consciousness about social injustices. One notable example of early twentieth-century political theatre in the Spanish-language community was a (lost) play, titled *La vida y proceso de Aurelio Pompa* (*The Life and Sentence of Aurelio Pompa*), produced in the 1920s by a touring theatre group, Cuadro Mexico-España, to bring public attention to the trial of a Mexican man, Aurelio Pompa, whom they believed should not be tried for killing another Mexican who had attacked him.[4] The troupe performed the play during Pompa's trial in Los Angeles and passed a petition around after each performance, asking for the public's support. Though Pompa was convicted and hanged, the theatre company can be termed an early example of Chicano theatre in that they used theatre to educate the people about social injustice. The protagonist was Mexican, as were the players, but the audience was undoubtedly a hybrid mix of Mexicans from Mexico and those born or raised in the United States.

Several scholars have observed that the Mexican *carpas* (tent shows) offer early examples of a people's theatre that questioned authority and gave a sense of community to the dislocated refugees of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917).[5] *Carpas* were popular vaudeville-like performances that flourished on both sides of the border in the 1920s and 1930s. Mexicans, who found themselves living in an alien nation on land that used to be Mexico, were now considered "traitors" back home and "outsiders" in the United States. Many *carpa* sketches deal with this sense of dislocation, making fun of the "Gringos" as well as of those Mexicans who attempted to "fit in" by denying their culture and language.[6] All of these early examples of political theatre in the barrios were performed primarily, but not solely, in Spanish, thus presaging the bilingual expressions of Chicano theatre.

In the tumultuous 1960s, Chicanos began to take on a national profile as activists, artists, and scholars. There is no monolithic or essential "Chicano experience," but the period was a crucial moment in the development of a Chicano consciousness, a consciousness that led to the sociopolitical Chicano Movement, of which Chicano theatre was an integral component. Similarly, it is impossible to discuss Chicano theatre without considering the politics that fostered that theatre.

The decade of the 1960s was a coming of age for the nation, as it was for my generation of college and high-school students.[7] It was impossible to watch the country change as social unrest in the marginalized communities gained

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visibility and prominence and not get involved. For many Mechicanos, the decade began with two important events: the birth of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. Kennedy's presidential campaign was the first to recognize Mechicano presence and contributions to the history and evolution of the United States, and hopes were high that recognition would mark the end of centuries of being an "invisible minority." During this period, many educated and progressive working-class Mechicanos also watched Castro's Revolution with great interest, eager to see if Castro could, indeed, rid his island of corruption, even of capitalism.[8]

Encouraged by liberation struggles in Latin America as well as by the Civil Rights movement, Chicanas and Chicanos began to demand equal opportunities and access to the so-called American Dream. A young Luis Valdez was among the first group of college students to visit Castro's Cuba in 1964 as a member of the first *Venceremos* ["We will overcome"] Brigade. Valdez and Roberto Rubalcava issued a mimeographed précis titled "*Venceremos!* Mexican-American Statement on Travel to Cuba," which unequivocally itemized their support for Castro and all revolutionary movements, especially in Latin America: "That Cuba is an example of social revolution for all Latin America. . . . That we support Fidel Castro as the real voice of Latin America, declaring to the world with dignity that social justice must be given to Latin America."[9]

As the 1960s progressed, the country entered perhaps its darkest hours, as politicians and what we termed the "Military-Industrial Complex" increasingly involved the country in Vietnam. By 1965, the United States government and many Americans were fully committed to the Vietnam War, and activists all over the world expressed their anger and frustration. As the Civil Rights movement gained momentum, the war abroad was mirrored by various wars at home. Chicanas and Chicanos entered colleges and universities, joined antiwar efforts, and began to search for their own intellectual and political foundations. Many of these students were the first members of their families to graduate from high school; thus their struggles were exacerbated by leaving their homes and communities for the first time.

Most Chicano historians mark César Chávez's unionizing efforts as the beginning of Chicano activism in the 1960s. By 1965, Chávez's United Farm Workers (UFW) Union began to gain international recognition by initiating a worldwide boycott of grapes, in an effort to get California growers to sign union contracts. Contemporary Chicano theatre was also born in 1965, when Luis Valdez approached Chávez and Dolores Huerta about using theatre to educate and organize farm workers.[10] Valdez and the members of the resulting Teatro Campesino are universally credited with creating the Chicano theatre movement, a movement that would reach its apex in the 1970s.

In the fall of 1965, Valdez gathered a group of striking farm workers and asked them to talk about the strike, the scabs, and the conditions they dealt with

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every day. As a former farm worker himself, Valdez was no stranger to the players in the daily drama that was fieldwork, and had brought along signs that immediately identified its characters; yet these were not really characters, but real people demonstrating their trials and tribulations as farm workers and striking union organizers. Valdez asked people to demonstrate what happened on the picket lines or in interactions with scab farm workers, and the less timid in the audience delighted in acting out their ridicule of the strikebreakers. Using the farm workers' basic improvisations, Valdez guided the group toward the creation of what he termed "*actos*," skits or sketches that had their roots in various sources that had influenced Valdez as a student and as a member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

Yolanda Broyles-González has rightly noted that Valdez was not alone in the creation of the Teatro Campesino.[11] She argues that theatre historians have neglected to give credit to the striking farm workers with a talent for improvisational performance who composed the first Teatro. There were other influences on the young director and playwright, however, and his work with the San Francisco Mime Troupe and his understanding of Bertolt Brecht's performance and political aesthetic were particularly important ones. Indeed, when Valdez wrote in 1966 that the Teatro Campesino was "somewhere between Brecht and Cantinflas," he was, in effect, honoring both the Spanish *carpa* tradition and the German playwright and theorist.[12] In a way, Valdez had encountered the best of both worlds: his studies and performance experiences had introduced him to great thinkers and theatre artists, while his actors had maintained that necessary link with the community's roots in vaudeville, *carpas*, and the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. Valdez guided them with his knowledge of formal theatre practice, while they contributed their sense of theatricality to the creative process. Valdez's brother Danny and Augustin Lira were singers and musicians whose original strike songs and traditional Mexican music enhanced every performance and connected it to the homeland.

In college, Valdez had read many plays as an English major, from the Greeks and Romans to the works of Brecht and other progressive playwrights and theorists. He was particularly taken by Roman comedy. In 1986, he told Guillermo E. Hernandez, "There are certain playwrights that appeal to me, I think of them as Chicanos. Plautus, for instance . . . who used to be a slave and wrote comedies. . . . I liked the fact that he was a slave that became a playwright. That's me!"[13] Further, Valdez told Hernandez, "The cunning slave is one of the classic figures; [the character] starts with the Greeks, goes into the Romans, goes into the Renaissance; is [evident] throughout" (33). The style and characterizations of the *actos* reflected many western European influences, but the themes were strictly farm-worker issues, calling for justice in the fields through unionization.

The *acto* was the quintessential form of Chicano theatre in the 1960s. Few individuals had written and produced plays about the Chicano experience up to

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that time, so the collective creation of *actos* became the mainstay of the period.[14] According to Valdez, the *acto* had to provide (or at least hint at) a solution to the problems exposed in the brief comic statement. As with any good political theatre, the *acto* should also "satirize the opposition" and "inspire the audience to social action." [15] Because the *actos* were based on the participants' personal experiences, they had an immediacy that was palpable.

The first three *actos* that Teatro members created have not survived,[16] but *Las dos caras del Patroncito* (*The Two Faces of the Boss*), created in 1965, has been published and gives a good idea of the conventions and effectiveness of the form.[17] In this three-character, fifteen-minute *acto*, the grower, wearing a pig-faced mask, is ridiculed and exposed as just an ordinary man, despite his big house and luxury car, his blonde wife (in a mink bikini), and his acres of vineyards. In typical, unreal, and farcical fashion, the grower changes roles with the farm worker in an effort to demonstrate how his troubles overshadow the humble farm worker's "easy life." Once the farm worker wears the pig-faced mask, however, he becomes just as oppressive as the grower, while the grower, calling for César Chávez and the union to help him, is carried offstage by his hired guard.

The *acto* form was and is the perfect vehicle for anyone who wants to expose a social problem. It is portable, economical, and relies on nothing more than the "two boards and a passion" Lope de Vega called for in the Spanish Golden Age. Because the initial *actos* were sometimes performed on a flatbed truck, at the very edges of the fields, the form had to be exaggerated, bawdy, and bold. There was neither room nor need for psychological realism under those conditions; as in the medieval morality plays, the villains and heroes were always clearly defined.

By 1967, Valdez realized that he and the Teatro members would have to separate from the union in order to function autonomously, free of the daily burdens of union organizing. They needed time to collectively create their *actos* and they also needed to create *actos* and other forms of theatre that addressed problems of the majority of Chicanos who were, in fact, urban and working class. In Valdez's words, "When it became clear to us that the UFWOC [United Farm Workers Organizing Committee] would succeed and continue to grow, we felt it was time for us to move and to begin speaking about things beyond the *huelga* [strike]: Vietnam, the barrio, racial discrimination, etc."[18]

Los vendidos (*The Sellouts*), first produced in 1967 in East Los Angeles for a Brown Beret gathering, signaled the Teatro's move away from strictly farm-worker issues.[19] The premise of the *acto* is that a Mexican-American secretary, who calls herself "Miss JIM-inez" (mispronouncing her own last name to "American-ize" it), comes to "Honest Sancho's Used Mexican Lot" looking for a "Mexican-type" for then-Governor Ronald Reagan's administration.[20] In the process of selling her the appropriate model of Mexican, Honest Sancho

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demonstrates three stereotypes: the farm worker, the *pachuco*, and the Mexican revolutionary. None of these "models" will do, but when Sancho introduces her to "Eric Garcia," another sellout, Miss JIM-inez is mesmerized and buys him. Once she has handed over the cash for her purchase, however, "Eric" and the other "models" come to life and frighten her away. As the *acto* ends, "Sancho" is revealed to be the "model," and the other "models" to be real young men, "ripping off the Man."

Los vendidos is significant because it tackles the issues of the sellout and stereotyping in a humorous way, demonstrating the stereotypes and prejudices of people within and without the Mechicano community. It also demonstrates a subversive, economic act perpetrated against the System, however metaphorically. Ms. JIM-enez and Eric, negative stereotypes of Mexicans, recall the early *carpa* characters who ridiculed those Mexicans who tried to be Anglo by rejecting anything that had to do with Mexico and Mexican culture. When Miss JIM-enez asks Eric for a political speech, he spouts the usual Mexican-American rhetoric about Mexicans being "lazy and stupid."

Like any of the *actos*, *Los vendidos* can be performed anywhere, in any situation, by even the most inexperienced actors. When the Teatro's anthology of *actos* was first published in 1971, *Los vendidos* became one of the most popular *actos* for other emerging *teatros* to perform. The issue of identity was and is central to most Chicano theatre precisely because of the marginalized position of its participants, both on- and offstage. Unlike the farm-worker *actos*, however, *Los vendidos* does not and cannot offer an easy solution to the problems it exposes. This *acto* infers that stereotypes of Mechicanos are constructions of the dominant society (Hollywood imagery at its worst) even as they are also reflections of the colonized subject's internalized self-hatred. It is now a classic *acto* that continues to resonate over thirty years after its creation.

The UFW's efforts and the larger antiwar movement led to the Chicano Movement, spurred, in part, by student unrest in high schools and universities in the late 1960s. Chavez's refrain, "*¡Ya basta!*" ["We've had it!" or "That's enough!"], echoed throughout the barrios, especially among students and their teachers. By 1968, high-school students in various southwestern cities and in Chicago staged walkouts, protesting the lack of Chicana and Chicano teachers and subject matter relevant to their history.[21] Concurrently, government programs, such as the Educational Opportunity Program, enabled thousands of Chicana and Chicano students to access a higher education and, seemingly overnight, college and university administrators found themselves confronted by angry students asking for a piece of the pie.

As students became involved in the Chicano Movement throughout the Southwest and Midwest, they searched for ways to reconnect with their Mexican heritage, shunning "American" icons such as George Washington or any of the so-called Founding Fathers. Their search for an identity that had been virtually

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erased led to demands for cultural-studies classes that focused on Chicano and Mexican history, and on folkloric dance and music. Muralists began to follow in the footsteps of the great Mexican painters, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, and others, painting their history on barrio walls. This was a cultural reawakening unmatched in the history of the Chicano, an awakening that resonated with Mexican symbols, music, dance, and performances. For culture, the students turned to Mexican folkloric dances. For culture and politics, they turned to murals, Mexican music, and *teatro* Chicano.

By the end of the decade, the Teatro Campesino and its members had planted the seeds of a national *teatro* movement. According to Bernard F. Dukore, writing in 1970, "As of August 1969, there were nine Teatro Chicanos: three in Texas, three in southern California (two in Los Angeles, one in San Diego), two in Arizona, and one in New Mexico."[22] Four years later, the number of *teatros* had swelled. Elizabeth C. Ramírez documented all Chicano theatre groups she could find in 1973 and listed sixty-four active groups.[23] Of the groups founded before 1970, only four were still active, revealing that many student *teatros* formed and folded within an academic year. Ramírez's chronological listing of *teatros* from 1965 to 1973 is a valuable document of the period, but, because she only lists extant *teatros*, no one can really know how many "overnight" groups formed and dissolved (after a political rally or other community event) prior to 1973. What is certain is that the Teatro Campesino had, almost single-handedly, fostered a theatre movement.

In 1968, the second (documented) Chicano theatre troupe was born, the Teatro Urbano (Urban Theatre), founded in San Jose, California, by Danny Valdez. The younger Valdez, a member of the Teatro Campesino, formed the new *teatro* in order to address the problems of (and to work with) mainly urban Chicanos from one of California's largest Mechicano populations. According to James Santibañez, the Teatro Urbano was composed of mainly "high school and college students as well as people who have made the theater their way of life."[24] Santibañez quotes from the Teatro's self-description:

> El Teatro Urbano was formed because of the need to . . . relate to our people the racism, bias and lack of understanding which was created by the Educational System. There was also a need to relate to our people the attitude with which the police, the judges, and various government agencies (welfare, unemployment, government funded programs) were dealing with our people. (147)

Daniel Valdez is a consummate musician, singer, and composer, and both the Teatro Campesino and Teatro Urbano employed original music and traditional Mexican *corridos* (ballads) to tell their stories in song as well as through narrative. The Teatro Urbano exposed a number of problems in Chicano urban communities, and offered possible solutions. For some audience members, just seeing a satire about police or biased judges and teachers was

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enough to satisfy their frustrations; for others, these *actos* added fuel to the fires that would break out, both literally and figuratively, in state-run institutions, such as schools and prisons. Danny Valdez's influence was extensive. In 1969, for example, he taught a *teatro* workshop at San Diego State College, inspiring the creation of a student *teatro*, the Teatro Mestizo, in San Diego.

In 1968, poet and activist Guadalupe de Saavedra founded another urban *teatro*, Teatro Chicano, in East Los Angeles, California. According to Bernard Dukore, Saavedra was inspired by both the Chicano Movement and the Teatro Campesino, whose *actos* formed the aesthetic basis of their own pieces.[25] Dukore published one of the Teatro Chicano's *actos*, *Justice*, in 1971, the only *acto* to be recognized by a major scholar and printed by a major press during that period.[26]

Justice is an important example of an *acto* that, unlike the relatively nonviolent farm-worker *actos*, promotes violent revolution. The brief *acto* centers on the exploitation of Mexicans and Chicanos by "Honkie Sam," a ridiculous character in a Texan hat and undoubtedly speaking with a Texas accent, who struts around the stage lashing out at "his" Mexicans. "Honkie Sam" wears a sign around his neck, as did the characters in the Teatro Campesino's *actos*. The action is narrated by an actor who comes in and out of the story to clarify the settings, the characters, and the situation. Typical of other *actos* that would follow in the early 1970s, this *acto* demonstrates how "Honkie Sam," "the whitest dude in the universe," has gained his fortune by oppressing Mexicans. He uses his "dogs" (a metaphor for the police) to keep the people subjugated, and all fear him. Eventually, the people have had enough of the mad dogs' killings, and they kill one of the dogs, leaving "Honkie Sam" crying and wailing helplessly. After several such counterattacks against the System, an allegorical Figure in Black appears, uncovers a sign that reads "Justice," and announces:

> Yo soy la Justicia [I am Justice]
> Soy hijo de la verdad [I am the son of Truth]
> Tengo una mano de acero [I have a hand of steel]
> Para el que no quiera pagar [For he who does not want to pay].[27]

The people then drive "Honkie Sam" off the stage and, facing the audience, shout in Spanish: "Alright, people, don't give in! Organize yourselves!" (597). Then one of the women goes into labor and, posing like the Virgin Mary at Christ's birth, produces a photo of Che Guevara as the people shout "It's a boy!" As Dukore remarks, the image of Guevara points to "revolution: transforming society itself, perhaps along socialist lines" (597), and certainly, the *acto* calls for the people to resist the oppressive "dogs" by killing them.[28]

Two Texas groups may serve here as examples of the developing *teatro* movement in the late 1960s in other parts of the Southwest. According to

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Nicolás Kanellos, in 1969, Juan Chavira founded El Teatro Chicano de Austin, Texas, after he had worked with a farm-worker theatre in the Rio Grande Valley. Like the other *teatros* that were beginning to form, the Austin group comprised mainly college and university students, eager to expose social issues. Their *actos*, also inspired by the Teatro Campesino, dramatized issues of police brutality, the need for bilingual education, and the importance of voter-registration drives. Kanellos reports that the group performed as far away as Washington, D.C., invited by the Smithsonian Institution's American Folklife Festival.[29]

The Teatro de los Pobres (Theatre of the Poor) was founded in El Paso, Texas, by Joan Quarm in 1969 as a research project at the University of Texas at El Paso.[30] Their first production was a play titled *Las codornices* (*The Partridges*), which they described as a "one-act one-hour comedy."[31] The group also performed the Teatro Campesino's acto *Quinta temporada* in their first year, demonstrating their debt to the Teatro Campesino's aesthetics and politics. Unlike other *teatros* in the early period, however, and certainly because of El Paso's large Spanish-speaking population, this *teatro* also produced plays entirely in Spanish, and toured them in the border region of El Paso and to Juarez, Mexico. In their response to Elizabeth C. Ramírez's questionnaire, Teatro de los Pobres stated: "Our group is *not* university affiliated and never was officially,"[32] though many of the members were students or professionals. By the early 1970s, the group was producing collective creations as well as previously produced Spanish, Mexican, and North American plays, in Spanish, English, or both languages.

No one is certain how many *teatros* there were in the 1960s—probably between nine and fifteen groups. Wherever I travel today, however, I "discover" a *teatro*, and it is likely this was the case in the sixties as well. What is certain is that the Teatro Campesino was the only full-time troupe, allowing its members to achieve the artistry and develop the techniques that served as a model for so many other individuals and groups. Records show that all other troupes comprised students and/or workers, people with other obligations and "real" jobs. The majority of these *teatro* members were not theatre students and had no intention of making *teatro* their way of life. For most, *teatro* was a means of expressing political goals, a way of being involved in the community. Similarly, with the exception of Luis Valdez (and to a lesser extent, Danny Valdez), none of those who directed *teatros* during the 1960s has maintained a national or international profile. For the most part, then, the *teatros* served the development of Chicana and Chicano consciousness, inspiring many people to get politically involved, to demand social justice for Mechicanos, and all peoples.

By 1970, when the War in Vietnam was at its apex, most of the *teatros* were creating *actos* protesting both that war and the wars that were being fought daily in the schools, in the courts, and on the streets. Ironically, as I finish this article on 29 August 2001, I am sadly reminded of the Chicano Moratorium on

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the War in Vietnam of 29 August 1970. That event, a massive march in East Los Angeles, designed to demonstrate the Mechicanos' opposition to the war, ended in a "police riot," in which the people were trapped by fully armed Los Angeles County sheriffs, seemingly eager to "bust some heads."[33] Several *teatros* from all over the Southwest were present that day, but their performances were cancelled when the violence erupted. Rather than silencing the Chicanas and Chicanos, however, this event crystallized their opposition to the power structure and fueled the fervor of the 1970s.[34]

Although there is no longer a Chicano Movement to speak of, there are *teatros* in every major center of Mechicano population, all inspired by the *teatros* of the 1960s and 1970s. While professional conditions have changed over the past generation, as more actors, designers, directors, and playwrights are trained by and graduate from formal theatre programs, the socioeconomic condition of the Mechicanos has not improved as much as the pioneers of *teatro* would have liked. Further, with the exception of the War in Vietnam, all of the issues that were exposed in the 1960s remain relevant and urgent, and today's *teatros* continue to expose them.[35]

For all its accomplishments, however, it would be negligent to romanticize the Chicano theatre of the 1960s. As current Chicana and Latina scholars have made clear, the *teatros* were male-dominated, mirroring the Chicano Movement, and few Chicanas, if any, were in leadership positions in the 1960s.[36] Though women were participants, it was (and still is) very difficult for young Chicanas to tour with a theatre troupe. Some Mechicano parents were loath to let their daughters leave home to attend college, still more to let them join an itinerant, political theatre troupe. Further, within the community's patriarchal system of values, fueled by the Roman Catholic Church, gay and lesbian issues were not discussed openly in *teatro*, except through comic characters. Women's issues had to wait until the late 1970s to be heard, and Chicana playwrights' voices did not become prominent until the late 1970s and early 1980s. Controversial gay and lesbian themes had to wait until the late 1980s to be seen onstage.[37]

Though most *teatros* formed during the 1960s were aligned with educational institutions, those institutions did not necessarily sanction them. Student organizations, such as United Mexican American Students (UMAS) and Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán (MEChA) had to take matters into their own hands on campuses throughout the nation, demanding courses in Chicano Studies and often fostering their own *teatros*. Unfortunately, by the early 1970s, student groups began to fall apart, usually over Marxist-versus-nationalist agendas. To their credit, many of the *teatros* survived these fractures and continued to produce and perform. Some remained a part of the student organizations that engendered them, whereas those that sought autonomy (as had the Teatro Campesino in 1967) managed to develop free of the commitments and demands of political organizations.

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In 1970, the Teatro Campesino hosted the first Chicano theatre festival, in Fresno, California, bringing together fifteen *teatros* from the Southwest, Mexico City, New York City, and Puerto Rico. In effect, Valdez and his troupe were "calling the disciples home," not in a paternalistic way, but in an effort to foster the continued artistic and political growth of the younger groups. The following year the Teatro Campesino hosted the second festival, this time in Santa Cruz, California, with seventeen groups participating. Following the second festival, a group of directors and representatives gathered in the Teatro Campesino's headquarters in Fresno and founded El Teatro Nacional de Aztlán (TENAZ, The National Theatre of Aztlán) as a coalition of *teatros.*[38] TENAZ remained a driving force in the Chicano theatre movement well into the 1980s. The coalition sponsored yearly festivals and minifestivals, conferences, workshops, a newsletter, and other services dedicated to the evolution of the *teatro* movement. Although TENAZ no longer exists, the coalition was the result of the efforts of the pioneers of the 1960s, a decade of struggles and sacrifices, but also of aesthetic and political accomplishments. Chicano theatre continues to be a vital force in Mechicano communities and underscores the triumphs and the failures of the past for a new century.

Endnotes

1. On 30 April 1598, the Spanish colonizer Juan de Oñate and his followers crossed the river into what is now El Paso, Texas, and performed a (lost) play about their travels. See Winifred Johnson, "Early Theater in the Spanish Borderlands," *Mid-America* 13 (October 1930): 125.

2. See Aurelio Espinosa, "*Los Comanches*," *Bulletin of the University of New Mexico* 1 (December 1907): 18. According to A. L. Campa, "The drama of *Los Comanches* no doubt was written by some unknown soldier upon his return from the campaign . . . but the original manuscript is now lost." A. L. Campa, "*Los Comanches*: A New Mexican Folk Drama," *University of New Mexico Bulletin* 376 (1 April 1942), Language Series, vol. 7.1: 15.

3. Aurelio M. Espinosa and J. Manuel Espinosa, "*The Texans*: A New Mexican Spanish Folk Play of the Nineteenth Century," *New Mexico Quarterly Review* 13 (Autumn 1943): 300.

4. The script to *La vida y proceso de Aurelio Pompa* is lost. For a Spanish–English transcription of a *corrido* telling Pompa's story, see Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 103–07. See also Nicolás Kanellos, "The Flourishing of Hispanic Theatre in the Southwest, 1920–30s," *Latin American Theatre Review* (Fall 1982): 40 n. 15.

5. Yolanda Broyles-González, *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas, 1994), chap. 1.

6. For examples of *carpa* sketches (in Spanish), see Nicolás Kanellos (ed.), *Mexican American Theatre: Then and Now* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1983), 8–16.

7. I entered college in the fall of 1960 and thus lived through that period first as a college student (B.A., M.A., 1960–1966), then a high-school drama teacher (1966–1969), and then as a community college teacher during 1969–1970.

8. Kennedy's authorization of the ill-fated invasion of Cuba, the "Bay of Pigs," stands as one of the many contradictions in terms of Kennedy's high standing among Mechicanos generally, and the growing mistrust among Mechicano intellectuals and artists of his Latin American policies.

9. Stan Steiner and Luis Valdez, eds., *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 217–18.

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10. Beth Bagby, “El Teatro Campesino: Interviews with Luis Valdez,” *Tulane Drama Review* 11 (Summer 1967): 74.

11. Broyles-González, 131–33.

12. Luis Valdez, “Theatre: El Teatro Campesino,” *Ramparts* (July 1966): 55. See also Yolanda J. Broyles, “Brecht: The Intellectual Tramp, An Interview with Luis Valdez,” *Communications from the International Brecht Society* 12.2 (April 1983): 33–44.

13. Guillermo E. Hernandez, *Chicano Satire: A Study in Literary Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 32.

14. Luis Valdez’s first play, *The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa*, was first produced at San Jose State College where he was a student in 1964. In 1969, the Teatro Campesino produced Valdez’s surreal vision, directed by the playwright, but the play was not published until 1982 and thus could not have influenced imitations or collective efforts unless it was witnessed. The play is published in Jorge Huerta, ed., *Necessary Theater: Six Plays about the Chicano Experience* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1989), 142–207; and in Robert Hurwitt, ed., *West Coast Plays 11/12* (Berkeley: California Theatre Council, 1982), 1–61. No full-length plays by Chicanos were published in the 1960s.

15. Luis Valdez, *Early Works* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1990), 12.

16. See Bagby, 75, for a brief description of these actos: *The Conscience of a Scab, Three Grapes,* and *Papellacion*.

17. Valdez, *Early Works*, 15–27.

18. Ibid., 10.

19. Ibid., 40–52. The Brown Berets were militant young Chicanas and Chicanos who attempted to organize their communities around social issues. Some observers have compared them to the better-known Black Panthers, although their trajectories and results were distinct.

20. Ibid., 41.

21. See Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 3d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 333–38. Although Acuña cautions the reader not to attribute the Chicano Movement to the students, he describes in detail the walk-outs and protests that occurred in various cities and states throughout the U.S. See also Juan Gomez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise 1940–1990* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1990), Chapter 3.

22. Bernard F. Dukore, *Documents for Drama and Revolution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 220 n. 3.

23. Elizabeth C. Ramírez, “The Annals of Chicano Theater: 1965–1973” (master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1974), 1.

24. James Santibañez, “El Teatro Campesino Today and El Teatro Urbano,” in Ed Ludwig and James Santibañez, eds., *The Chicanos: Mexican American Voices* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), 147.

25. Bernard F. Dukore, *Documents for Drama and Revolution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 596.

26. Ibid., “Teatro Chicano,” 589–98.

27. Ibid., 592. All translations are mine.

28. De Saavedra also founded the Teatro Popular de la Vida y Muerte (Popular Theatre of Life and Death) in Long Beach, California, in 1969. According to Ramírez, the group originally dealt with educational themes and, later, “began dealing with inter-cultural and political themes” (Ramírez, 186). De Saavedra left the group soon after its founding to initiate other *teatros*. See Dukore, 220.

29. Nicolás Kanellos, “Folklore in Chicano Theater and Chicano Theater as Folklore,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 15.1 (January–April 1978): 21–23.

30. In 1971, during my first year in doctoral studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I sent out a questionnaire to all of the *teatros* I could locate. The information here is from groups’ responses through the winter and spring of 1971. See also Ramírez, 133.

31. From the groups’ responses to my questionnaire, winter and spring of 1971.

32. Ramírez, 133.

33. My wife and I and other *teatro* members from the University of California, Santa

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Barbara, were at the Chicano Moratorium of 29 August 1970 and witnessed the sheriffs as they came off buses and proceeded to force the people into a corner of the park where the march had ended. For more on this event, see Acuña, 345–50.

34. In 1990, the Latino Lab, in residence at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, collectively created a docudrama about the Chicano Moratorium and its fallen hero, journalist Ruben Salazar. The play, titled *August 29*, premiered on the twentieth anniversary of the Moratorium, 29 August 1990, in Los Angeles. See Jorge Huerta, *Chicano Drama: Performance, Society and Myth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85–88, for a discussion of the play.

35. In the 1980s, playwrights began to emerge who wrote from a more personal, psychological base. See Jorge Huerta, "Professionalizing Teatro: An Overview of Chicano Dramaturgy since *Zoot Suit*," *Ollantay* 4.1 (1996): 91–102; and "An Overview of Chicana/o Theatre in the 1990s," *Latin American Theatre Review* 34.1 (Fall 2000): 217–28.

36. For critiques and historical reconsiderations of the role(s) of women in Chicano theatre, see: Alicia Arrizón, *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Broyles-González, chap. 3; and Elizabeth C. Ramírez, *Chicanas/Latinas in American Theatre: A History of Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

37. For a discussion of gay, lesbian, and bisexual themes and characters in contemporary Chicano drama, see Huerta, *Chicano Drama*, chap. 4.

38. Aztlán is the legendary home of the Aztecs, the land to the north, which Chicanos adapted to designate the U.S. Southwest.

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