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Producción de Teatro Linea de Sombra y México en Escena

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CURATOR’S NOTE

A reporter from the East Coast asked recently why it is important for us to present a work like *Amarillo*.

The excellent *contextual essay* written by Arizona State University scholar Tamara Underiner for this engagement provides a thoughtful first response. She discusses the timeliness and challenge of “staging the border” and evoking the stories of normal people, who grapple daily with what surely seems like an arbitrary line drawn in the sand. After watching the presidential campaign grind to a halt due to Hurricane Sandy, we were reminded how the well-being of average people actually can trump the socio-political driven headlines that are normally mistaken for what’s really going on.

Director Jorge Vargas and his collaborators in Teatro Línea de Sombra use the conventions of contemporary performance to give voice to the plight of individuals without succumbing to the temptation of realism and straightforward narrative. After all, the stakes such stories elaborate are highly complex. Accordingly, the ensemble’s poetic blend of text, movement, sound and media achieve a certain gravitas while sketching stories that are instantly recognizable but that have plenty of space for interpretation.

Over the past several seasons, we have featured several innovative companies from throughout Latin America. *Amarillo* will be the fifth production from this part of the world that will be featured on OntheBoards.tv. Thanks to a grant from the Mid-Atlantic Foundation, we plan to screen the film at a handful of venues in rural communities on both coasts through organizations that serve large Spanish speaking constituencies.

Lane Czaplinski

*PS - Many thanks to Ruth Wikler-Luker for gathering and translating the contextual materials.*
NOTA DEL CURADOR

Un periodista reportero de la costa Este nos preguntó recientemente porque es importante para nosotros presentar obras como Amarillo. Este ensayo contextual escrito por Tamara Underiner estudiante de la Universidad del Estado de Arizona provee una respuesta bien razonada.

Habla sobre el tiempo y desafío actuales de crear un escenario de la frontera y evocar historias de gente común y corriente que se encuentra diariamente lidiando con lo que por cierto es una línea arbitraria en la arena. Después de ver como la campana presidencial fue paralizada por el huracán Sandy esto nos hizo recordar como el bienestar de la gente común y corriente puede sobrepasar en importancia a los titulares socio-políticos que son normalmente considerados como la realidad actual. El director Jorge Vargas y sus colaboradores del Teatro Línea de Sombra usan las convenciones del teatro contemporáneo para darle voz a la lucha de la gente sin sucumbir a la tentación del realismo y la narrativa directa. Después de todo, la apuesta que esas historias elaboran son altamente complejas. De acuerdo a eso la mezcla poética del texto, movimiento sonido y los medios del elenco alcanzan una seriedad mientras dibujan los bosquejos de estas historias que son instantáneamente reconocidas pero con amplio espacio para la interpretación.

En temporadas pasadas hemos presentado varias compañías innovadoras de Latinoamérica. Amarillo será la quinta producción de esa parte del mundo que se presentará en OnTheBoards.tv. Gracias a una beca de la Fundación MidAtlantica, vamos a presentar un film de escenarios de comunidades rurales de ambas costas a través de organizaciones que trabajan con constituyentes hispano hablantes.

Lane Czapinski
WHO WE ARE
from Teatro Línea de Sombra

A theater company created in 1993 with an interest in exploring the contemporary theater scene. It is one of the most renowned Mexican companies due to their creations for visual and multidisciplinary theater and for putting on stage works written by important contemporary playwrights.

Awarded twice as Mejor Teatro de Búsqueda (Best Research Theater) in México (2000 and 2005), Línea de Sombra has made international coproductions with companies like Mime Omnibus, Canada; Théâtre du Mouvement, Francia and Akhe Theatre, Russia. They have also produced plays like “Das Winterreise”, 2007, directed by Yoshi Oida (Japan); “Quién se Ríe de Mis Angustias” (“Who’s Laughing at my Anguish”), 2008, directed by Zbigniew Szimuski (Poland) and “Mujeres Soñaron Caballos” (“Women Dreamed Horses”), 2009, directed by Daniel Veronese (Argentina). The company has also been a participant in festivals and performed in theaters in Montreal, Saint Petesburg, Moscow, Nice, Rosario, London, Paris, Edinburgh, and is permanently touring Mexico.

For the last 11 years, they have been organizing TRANSVERSALES, ENCUENTRO INTERNACIONAL DE ESCENA CONTEMPORÁNEA (TRANSVERSALES, INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTER OF CONTEMPORARY SCENE), where international artist that represent the new trends in contemporary theater meet.

It is difficult to achieve an exact definition of what is it that theater demands nowadays from us and, furthermore, of what is it that us, as theater workers, are interested in proposing to theater. Our most solid basis is keeping the sensation of awe form that first day when we discovered theater and from what we later saw, read and learned from actors, directors, teachers and memorable stage works.

We regard theater as a home and a shelter to keep safe a certain essential condition of human existence. A shadow line in the sense of a radical border to a territory of theatrical traffic. Also as a place where reality is transformed into more substantial, precise and vital shapes. We are not looking for something spectacular or innovative, we are looking for life on stage in any of its ways to approach theater.
BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO
TEATRO LÍNEA DE SOMBRA

1. Teatro Línea de Sombra is a Mexican theater company which was founded in 1993 by a group of artists committed to exploring contemporary theater. They have unquestionably succeeded, and are currently regarded as one of the most renowned Mexican contemporary theater companies, being awarded the Best Research Theater of Mexico in both 2000 and 2005. The company has collaborated with an international cast of directors, performed in theaters and festivals around the world, and is permanently touring Mexico.

2. *Amarillo* is directed by the prominent Mexican director, Jorge A. Vargas. Vargas started engaging in political theater when he was studying at the University of Mexico in the 1970s. After graduating from university, he moved to France and studied under Jerzy Grotowski, a seminal director known for his development of ‘poor theater’, which focused on stripping theater down to its essential elements: the actor, the audience, and the theater space, in order to purify and revivify the theater (especially in the wake of film). However, for Vargas, his time abroad was influential but not in line with his interest in directing political theater and *Amarillo* is a return to his original directorial passions.

3. One of Vargas’ goals as a director is to “create actions – not stories”. In a quote from an interview Vargas states: “An actor who constructs, does not interpret- the actor is not trying to be dramatic”. There is physicality—a constructive exploration and signification at play in Vargas’ work. He gives the example of someone taking clothes and using them to build ‘bodies’. The construction, he says, gave form to the dead.

4. The objects used in the staging of *Amarillo* are inexpensive objects, like water jugs, sand, and candles. The jugs refer to water stations in the desert, where water drums or jugs are left for border crossers along known passages through deserts along the border. Some of the objects used in the show are part of the ‘kits’ people use to illegally cross the border into Mexico. Kits commonly consist of a back pack, running shoes, tuna, lemons, pain killers, water and a loaf of bread. The border crossers sometimes walk up to 80 kilometers a day with just these kits for survival.

5. Teatro Línea de Sombra has performed *Amarillo* in the US only a few times before—too bad, since it offers such a powerful and pertinent interpretation of US/Mexico border politics. On this international tour that takes Amarillo through South America, the US, France and Finland, Seattle is one of only four lucky US cities who can see *Amarillo* performed this fall!
GUIA PARA PRINCIPIANTES DEL TEATRO LÍNEA DE SOMBRA

1. Teatro Linea de Sombra es una compañía de teatro Mexicana fundada en 1993 por un grupo de artistas dedicados a explorar el teatro contemporáneo. Sin duda alguna ha tenido éxito y es considerada como uno de las mas reconocidas compañías Mexicanas de teatro contemporáneo y fueron otorgados el premio de Mejor Teatro de Investigacion de Mexico en el 2000 y 2005. La compañía a colaborado con un elenco internacional de directores, a hecho presentaciones en teatros y festivales alrededor del Mundo y se encuentran de tour permanente en Mexico.

2. *Amarillo* esta dirigido por el director prominente Mexicano Jorge A. Vargas. Vargas empezó a hacer teatro político cuando estaba estudiando en la Universidad de Mexico en los 70’s. Después de graduarse de la Universidad se mudo a Francia y estudio con Jerzy Grotowski, un director de seminario conocido por el desarrollo del teatro pobre que se enfoca en desmantelar el teatro hasta llegar a sus elementos esenciales, el actor, la audiencia, el espacio teatral para purificar y revivir el teatro (especialmente con el advento de film.) Sin embargo, para Vargas el tiempo que estuvo en el extranjero fue influyente pero no en línea con su interés de dirigir teatro político y *Amarillo* es el retorno a su pasión directiva original.

3. Una de las metas de Vargas como director es de “crear acciones,” no relatos. En una cita de entrevista Vargas dijo: “El actor que construye no interpreta – el actor no esta tratando de ser dramático.” Existe una fisicalidad- una exploración constructiva y significado en juego en el trabajo de Vargas. Usa por ejemplo alguien que toma ropa y las usa para construir cuerpos. La construcción, dice el, da forma al muerto.

4. Los objetos usados en el escenario de *Amarillo* son objetos baratos, como botellas de agua, arena y velas. Las botellas simbolizan estaciones de agua en el desierto, donde las botellas son dejadas para los que cruzan la frontera en las rutas conocidas en el desierto. Algunos de estos objetos usados en la obra son parte de los kits que la gente usa para cruzar la frontera ilegalmente en Mexico. Los kits generalmente consisten en una mochila, tenis o zapatillas, atun, limón, pastillas para el dolor, agua y pan. Los que cruzan la frontera a veces caminan 80 kilometros al dia con solo estos kits para sobrevivir.

5. El Teatro Linea de Sombra a presentado *Amarillo* en USA solo unas cuantas veces previamente – que es una lastima, ya que esta obra ofrece una interpretación importante y pertinente sobre la política fronteriza de USA y Mexico. En este tour internacional que lleva Amarillo a Sudamerica, USA, Francia y Finlandia, Seattle es una de las cuatro ciudades en USA que verán *Amarillo* en este otoño.
I look to the North, but the North doesn’t look at me.

I am a ghost, and that’s what I don’t tell them.

What do you see in me if I am nobody?

I told her I would come back. I told her that.
I told that to her.

What is the measure of the human spirit?

When she was governor of the State of Arizona, now-Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano offered a succinct answer:

“Show me a 50-foot fence,” she said, “and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder.”

And yet, if getting there/here were simply a matter of one more foot, one more step, one more footprint in the sand—which, in Amarillo, signifies so much—“the border” wouldn’t be the charged symbol it now is for the people who live on both sides of it. Cross that fence, take that step, and there are still days more of desert to cross, one footprint at a time. Even those who make it across enter a life that is lived, now more than ever, in the shadow of laws designed to keep them out and send them home.

What is the measure of the human spirit then? What does it take to keep putting one foot in front of the other, through a geographical desert and into a social one that can seem just as arid and unforgiving?

ENSAYO

Yo miro al norte, pero el norte no me mira a mí.

Yo soy un fantasma y eso no les digo.

Qué me ves si yo no soy nadie?

Yo le dije que regresaría, se lo dije.
Se lo dije, yo se lo dije.

Cómo se mide el espíritu humano?

Cuando era gobernadora del estado de Arizona, EEUU, Janet Napolitano, la actual ministra de la Seguridad de Patria (Homeland Security) ofreció una breve respuesta:

“Muéstrame una valla de 50 pies,” dijo Napolitano, “y yo le mostraré una escalera de 51 pies.”

Y, si llegar hasta allí/aqui fuese simplemente un asunto de un pie más, un paso más, una huella más en la arena—la cual, en Amarillo, significa tanto—“la frontera/the border” no sería un símbolo tan cargado como lo es ahora para la gente que habita en ambos lados de ello. Cruce esa valla, dé ese paso, y faltan todavía muchos días más de desierto para cruzar, una huella tras otra. Aún para el que llegue a cruzar, otra en una vida que se vive, ahora más que nunca, en la sombra de leyes indicadas para excluirle y mandarle para casa.

Entonces, como se mide el espíritu humano? Que es el esfuerzo que requiere el dar un paso y otro, atravesando un desierto geográfico para después llegar a un desierto social, que a veces puede parecer igualmente árido e implacable?
I look to the North, but the North doesn’t look at me.

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What is the measure of the human spirit then? What does it take to keep putting one foot in front of the other, through a geographical desert and into a social one that can seem just as arid and unforgiving?
Artists who explore this question are faced with an enormous responsibility to address it well. And with that responsibility comes risk, for every artistic choice has its own consequences. As scholar Daniel Enrique Pérez put it, for performing artists “staging the border(ed) is undoubtedly one of the most political acts in which one can engage, especially during a period in the United States that has experienced one of the most heated and controversial debates regarding borders and migrants.” In this context, it is indeed a challenge to find the right theatrical language to encompass the complexities of the situation. How to best address the multiple motives and forces that drive emigration on the one hand and restrict immigration on the other, as well as the effects on individuals and families who make the decision to go (or stay behind)?

No one story can stand for all of the stories carried with every person who crosses; yet the pursuit of the universal through the particular has long been a valid artistic strategy. On the other hand, taken together, many of these individual stories fall into patterns that reflect larger movements of history, economics, and politics that are beyond the control of any one person—and that is a story worth telling, too.

But the choice to tell the story of one such individual and his or her personal circumstances and motivations runs the risk of collapsing history into biography or psychology—where one’s success or failure can be viewed as a matter of individual character, will, talent, or luck. And the choice to tell a story ripped from the headlines and full of impossible-to-ignore statistics runs the risk of impressing, but not moving, our audiences.

It seems, then, that stage realism may not always be up to the task of representing “the border,” though many important border plays have opted for realistic, and even documentary, approaches. Other plays, from both the U.S. and Mexico, have experimented with forms like satire, expressionism, allegory, performance ethnography, and dark comedy to capture the surreality produced by this particular exodus—one characterized by too many fences, too many dreams, too much sun, and too little water.
Amarillo adds to this ongoing search for the border’s dramatic expression. Through its distinctive visual vocabulary, Teatro Línea de Sombra reminds us of the impossibility of discerning where the real, the lived, and the imagined Mexico (or for that matter, any of the countries in what we now call the Americas) ends, and El Norte begins. When so many loved ones are already there/here, what is the significance of that official line in the sand?

In Amarillo, Teatro Línea de Sombra has created its own hard, lovely, and chilling aesthetic response to these pressing questions. Here is a piece about a human-in-history, a protagonist of many names and many stories, each granted his or her own gesture of remembrance. Here, there is more than one border to cross, and the geopolitical one may not be the most important. Here, the stories of those left behind—most often women and children—are rendered visible, troubling (together with experiences of women who do cross) the narrative of the border crossing being a “hero’s journey” only.

Here, a winged heart is pierced and bleeds sand. Its flight is at once painful and beautiful to behold, taking another measure of the human spirit, on its wordless ascent into other realms.

--Tamara Underiner

Tamara Underiner is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies for the School of Theatre and Film at Arizona State University, where she directs the Ph.D. concentration in Theatre and Performance of the Americas; oversees the Performance in the Borderlands series of theatre performances, lectures and workshops; and teaches in the areas of theatre history and culture studies. She is the author of Contemporary Theatre in Mayan Mexico: Death-Defying Acts (University of Texas Press, 2004), and has published on USAmerican, indigenous and Latina/o theatre, border performance, and critical pedagogy in Theatre Journal, Signs, Baylor Journal of Theatre and Performance, TDR, and critical anthologies from the University of Arizona, Routledge and McFarland Presses. She is active in the Latina/o Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and the American Society for Theatre Research. She also serves on the Board of the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics (based at NYU). She earned her Ph.D. in Drama from the University of Washington in 1997, and joined the ASU faculty in 2001.
**Death**

by Harold Pinter

Recited in Amarillo

Included by Pinter in his Nobel Lecture, Art, Truth, & Politics, 2005

Where was the dead body found?
Who found the dead body?
Was the dead body dead when found?
How was the dead body found?

Who was the dead body?

Who was the father or daughter or brother
Or uncle or sister or mother or son
Of the dead and abandoned body?

Was the body dead when abandoned?
Was the body abandoned?
By whom had it been abandoned?

Was the dead body naked or dressed for a journey?

What made you declare the dead body dead?
Did you declare the dead body dead?
How well did you know the dead body?
How did you know the dead body was dead?

Did you wash the dead body
Did you close both its eyes
Did you bury the body
Did you leave it abandoned
Did you kiss the dead body

**Puerto**

por Harold Pinter

recitado en Amarillo.

Incluido por Pinter en su ponencia al recibir el premio Nobel: El arte, la verdad, & la política, 2005

¿Dónde se halló al cadáver?
¿Quién encontró al cadáver?
¿Estaba muerto cuando lo encontraron?
¿Cómo encontraron al cadáver?

¿Quién era el cadáver?

¿Quién era el padre, hija, hermano,
tío, madre, hijo,
del cadáver abandonado?

¿Estaba muerto el cuerpo cuando fue abandonado?
¿Fue abandonado el cuerpo?
¿Quién lo abandonó?

¿Estaba el cuerpo desnudo o vestido para un viaje?

¿Qué le hizo declarar muerto al cadáver?
¿Fue usted quien declaró muerto al cadáver?
¿Qué tan bien conocía al cadáver?
¿Cómo sabía que estaba muerto el cadáver?

¿Le cerró ambos ojos?
¿Lavó el cuerpo?
¿Enterró el cuerpo?
¿Lo dejó abandonado?
¿Besó al cadáver?
ARTCAMP
(History/Mission sourced from artcamp.com.mx/)

HISTORY
The municipality of Taxco is one of the most concentrated centers of craft artisans in the Americas. We are from villages around Taxco, mainly Tecalpulco and Taxco El Viejo. In the 1970s and 80s, our town created the abalone jewelry set in alpaca metal… The markets collapsed in 1990 and suddenly our pieces were no longer considered valuable… The 1990s were very difficult, given that the traditional markets for Mexican artisan crafts were inundated with all kinds of products, including artisan crafts from China, India, Bali, etc… We were able to survive by working very hard…

MISSION
Our goal is to connect traditional artisan crafts from our villages with today’s global markets in order to be able to sustain our families and find ways to create lives of dignity for our children. We hope that when we are ultimately successful, our cooperative will become a model for Mexico and other countries, and that we will be able to share what we have learned. This new commercial world is extremely difficult for artisans, but it will not overcome our strength and skill…

As Mexican women, we are Indigenous… Our ancestors come directly from the Aztec tribes who governed these lands… Our people have a long history and tradition in artisanal crafts… We are an artisan women’s cooperative, and our mission is to preserve our traditions; another of our vital functions is to sustain our families, and this has been difficult over the years. Most of our husbands left for the United States awhile ago; there, they work for low wages, without any rights or benefits of any kind. We hope they will return, but it is not so easy; many of them have already been absent for a long time. This is the meaning and reason behind our association; this is the way in which we are trying to sustain ourselves through this work, to sustain our families.

ARTESANAS CAMPESINAS
(History/Mission sourced from artcamp.com.mx/)

HISTORIA
El municipio de Taxco, es uno de los centros artesanales más concentrado de las Américas. Somos campesinas de pueblos alrededor de Taxco, principalmente Tecalpulco y Taxco El Viejo. En los 70’s y los 80’s nuestro pueblo creo la joyería de abulon colocado en metal de alpaca… Los mercados se colapsaron en 1990 y de repente nuestras piezas ya no fueron consideradas valiosas… Los años de los 90’s fueron muy difíciles ya que los mercados tradicionales de artesanías mexicanas se inundaron de todo tipo de productos incluyendo artesanías de China, India, Bali, etcetera….Logramos sobrevivir trabajando muy duro…

MISIÓN
Nuestra meta es conectar las artesanías tradicionales de nuestros pueblos con los mercados mundiales de hoy en día para poder mantener nuestras familias y encontrar maneras para crear vidas dignas para nuestros hijos. Esperamos que cuando finalmente tengamos éxito, que nuestra cooperativa se convierta en modelo para México y otros países, y que podamos compartir lo que hemos aprendido. Este nuevo mundo comercial es extremadamente difícil para artesanos, pero no supera nuestra habilidad…

Como mujeres mexicanas somos Indias… Nuestros antepasados vienen directamente de las tribus Aztecas gobernando estas tierras… Nuestro pueblo tiene una enorme historia y tradición en artesanías… Somos una cooperativa de mujeres artesanas y nuestra mision es preservar nuestras tradiciones, también una funcion vital nuestra es mantener nuestras familias y esto ha sido dificil a traves de los años. La mayor parte de nuestros hombres se fueron a los Estados Unidos hace tiempo, alla, ellos trabajan barato sin tener derechos ni recibir beneficios de ningun tipo. Nosotras esperamos que regresen pero no es muy facil; muchos de ellos han estado ya ausentes por mucho tiempo. Este es el significado y razon de nuestra asociacion; es la manera en que estamos tratandode mantenernos a traves de un trabajo para mantener a nuestras familias.
Hope/Esperanza  Faces/Rostros
Wall/Muro
Preparation/Preparación
Sand/Arena
Trains/Trenes
Journey/Viaje
Exodus/Éxodo
Boots/Botas
Water/Agua
Thirst/Sed
Anonymous/Anónimo
Death/Muerte
Separation/Separación
Leaving Behind/Dejando Atrás
Mothers/Madres
Promises/Promesas
Waiting/Esperando
Hope/Esperanza