Revolutionary Trends: Theatre for children and young people in México City 1890-1938

By

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Contents

Abstract

In this study I chart the history of theatre for children and young people in México City immediately before, during and after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The study will compare pre- and post-revolution themes and aesthetics performed for children and young people in the context of the particular ideological concerns about children, childhood, and performance in the historical moment. The research is based on an examination of primary and secondary resources, on-site archival research, and interviews that focus on professional and amateur theatre for children and young people in México City. The study seeks to find thematic and aesthetic trends that defined the theatrical activity for children during this transformative period of Mexican history. The study focuses on the following guiding questions: What were the thematic and aesthetic manifestations of theatre for children and young people in México City before, during, and after the 1910 revolution? What do stasis and change in thematic and aesthetic choices tell us about particular ideological concerns of the historical moment and the role of government on the genre of theatre for children and young people in México City? What were the aesthetic and thematic limits of theatre for children and young people immediately before, during, and immediately after the revolution? In what ways did theatre for children and young people in México City work to maintain the status quo and/or operate as a revolutionary force for ideological change?

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Introduction

In July of 2013, I attended a musical adaptation of *Guillermo y el Nagual [William and the Nagual]*[1] at the Julio Jiménez Rueda Theatre in México City with nearly one hundred third and fourth grade school children. The play was originally written by Emilio Carballido[2] in 1957, but musically adapted and directed for this production by Emmanuel Márquez; it is a classic in the canon of Mexican theatre for children and young people.[3] Maria Teresa Adalid describes the tone of the piece:

> The author creates a familiar theatre [for children and young people] one that is full of myths and Mexican traditions, where the '*nahuales'* are played by puppets. Likewise, the music was dominated by indigenous rhythms of the *chachachá*, the *huapango* and the *Danzon*. (Adalid 2011)

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[1] Unless noted, all translations from Spanish to English are my own.

[2] For more on Carballido's life and work, see Peden.

[3] The broad term *teatro infantil* [children's theatre] was used in México from the early nineteenth century until the 1980s when the term "*teatro para niños y jovenes"* [theatre for children and young people] came into common use by both professionals and academics in the field. While many lay people still use the term *teatro infantil* today, professionals in the field rarely do so because it "artificially and narrowly defines the form and its audience. It also can be sometimes thought of as pejorative as well" (Guerrero 2014). I define theatre for children and young people as "all theatre done by, for, and with children, including process and creative drama projects at school or church, professional theatre for youth performed by adults, and theatre for children performed by children (Ages 3-18).

Like the "*boogie-man"* or the "*chupacabra*," *nahuales* figure primarily in Olmec[4] folklore but also appear in other Mesoamerican indigenous tales to frighten children out of misbehavior. *Nahuales* often shape-shift into animals, cause natural disasters and disease, and kill people and livestock. In *Guillermo y el Nagual*, Guillermo finds a *nagual*, befriends it, and decides to keep it in his basement as a pet, feeding it with corn from his parents' field. As the *nagual* grows, it requires more and more food until eventually his parents discover that the *nagual* has consumed nearly all of their crops. At many points, the character Guillermo directly addresses the audience, taking applause polls about what he should do next in the story. At the end of the play, Guillermo and his friends realize that they can use the *nagual* for good—to bring sunshine and dig tunnels, and eventually to find and extract petroleum (which conveniently saves the farming family and the surrounding community from a life of poverty). The overarching moral of the play is that one should be a friend with those who are different, in spite of negative stereotypes and, moreover, that one should pay attention to the lessons found in indigenous folklore. The production reinforced that latter sentiment through a song entitled "Listen to the Spirits," which instructed children to "hear the wisdom" passed down through the generations.

All of the songs were accompanied by music played onstage by an indigenously costumed musician, and with indigenous instruments played by the

[4] The Olmecs were the first indigenous civilization of México, found in what are today the states of Tobasco and Veracruz in south-central México. For more on Olmec civilization see Diehl.

other performers. Many other didactic songs were included throughout the play, instructing children how to “say please and thank you” and “to not judge a book by its cover.” The design elements were abstract, yet drew on identifiable Aztec, Olmec, and Mayan iconography, using indigenous instruments in the music, and native plants to create the puppets. The non-realistic lighting was fantastical and included short bursts of color as a motif every time the *Nagual* moved or spoke.[5] The *Nagual* puppet figured heavily in the play, growing and growing, until it was too large for the stage. At that time, the adult actors (many of whom played children) spoke to the *Nagual* as if he were in the sky, high above the theatre. All that could be seen of him onstage was a giant clawed foot that nearly covered the entire stage, presumably flown in from the riggings behind the proscenium arch. At that time, spectacular pyrotechnic effects, coupled with smoke and sound, gave the impression that the *Nagual* truly was in control of the natural world. The children and adults in the audiences “ooohed” and “aahed” and one child sitting next to me buried her face in the vest of her school uniform, simultaneously afraid yet giggling with delight at the grand spectacle that we were witnessing.

Productions that seek to reclaim “uniquely Mexican” traditions are not uncommon in the canon of Mexican theatre for children and young people. In

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[5] Examples of indigenous iconography included a projected Aztec calendar and pyramid; the shapes used in the set, as well as the *Nagual* puppet that appeared much like a Mayan demon “*wahoob.”* For more on Mayan iconography, see Stuart.

reviews of the play, the director was often praised for his inventive use of puppets and for “planting such a rich metaphor which reclaims our [Mexican] roots and traditions” (Adalid 2011). After seeing many shows in the capitol and throughout the republic, I came to recognize a number of characteristics typical of contemporary Mexican theatre for children and young people: adults play children, visible indigenous performers in “typical dress” play indigenous music onstage, didactic content reinforces a blending of cultures and traditions, the actors regularly break the fourth wall and use direct address to encourage audience participation, and there is a notable emphasis on puppetry and spectacular effects.

These themes and aesthetics of the genre, however, did not develop in a vacuum. The desire to create a didactic theatre that promotes “Mexican-ness,” and an appreciation of blended European and indigenous aesthetics developed in response to the political and ideological circumstances of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Before the war the theatre that children and young people attended was quite different, as it too was responding to the material and political circumstances of its time. After the Revolution of 1910, both the content and aesthetics of theatre for children and young people shifted dramatically. During the period after the fighting, defining what was truly “Mexican” and what was not became a principal concern of revolutionary era philosophers and ideologues. As *Guillermo y el Nagual* demonstrates, several aspects of these post-revolutionary shifts have endured into the present.

Very little has been written about the effects of the Mexican Revolution on the field of theatre for children and young people. However, in order to truly understand the origins of thematic and aesthetic shifts, one must also look to the transformative years that defined the form immediately preceding, during, and following the Mexican Revolution (1890-1938). This study provides a historical account of theatre for children and young people in México City from 1890-1938. The years 1890 to 1910 led up to the revolution. While the exact dates of the revolutionary period have been much debated, most scholars agree this period began at the end of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship (1910) and continued until 1934 when President Lázaro Cárdenas took power and redistributed land to the poor, satisfying perhaps the largest of the revolutionaries' principal political goals.[6] Fours years after in 1938, for the first time the entire community of practitioners working in theatre for children and young people in México came together for a congress in México City at the Palace of Fine Arts to discuss the future of the form, marking the beginning of the field's professionalization.

From 1910-1934, theatre was infused with the political discourse of the time period and plays were highly politicized and patriotic, exploring what Alan Knight calls "social themes" (148). Cultural scholar Beatriz Urías Horcasitas argues that from 1910 onward, an "ideological change" swept the nation towards a "revolutionary" ideology that came to define the "scopes of education and

[6] For a more detailed explanation of the dates of the "revolutionary period" see Alan Knight (1990), Edwin Williamson (2009), Frank Tannenbaum (1968), James Cockcroft (2010).

culture" (27). It is widely understood that immediately following the end of the revolution in circa 1928 a cultural renaissance occurred across the country that was supported and enforced by government *"Secretarias"* [Secretariats][7] in México City, which emphasized education in Mexican history and a new uniquely "Mexican" culture for youth. The political commentator and writer Carlos Fuentes has argued that the most lasting consequence of the revolution was "the cultural transformation and nationalist self-discovery that came in its wake" enforced by these new federal secretariats (qtd. in López 95).

During my investigation, the following questions steered my research and shed light on the scope of the study: What were the thematic and aesthetic manifestations of theatre activities designed for children and young people before the 1910 revolution? How were these manifestations materialized during the revolution? How did that change after the revolution, and why? What are stasis and change in thematic and aesthetic choices, and what do they tell us about the changes in the dominant ideological concerns of the historical moment, and the role of government? Ultimately, how influential have the changes caused by the 1910 revolution been on contemporary theatre for children and young people both thematically and aesthetically? All of these questions illuminate what Mexican theatre for children and young people *was* at various key points in

[7] Federal Departments such as the Secretariat of Education and Fine Art, the Secretariat of Culture, etc.

Mexican history, and explains many of the common characteristics of the contemporary form.

Methodology

Until moving to Madison, Wisconsin to begin my doctoral studies, I spent the majority of my adult life living and working in diverse parts of Latin America. I have worked directly with children for ten years as part of an educational theatre project in the Mexican *altiplano* (the central highlands) and during this time I made many contacts in the fields of education, theatre for youth, and Mexican Revolutionary History. The work in the *altiplano* helped make me fluent in the language and customs of academic research in México. Furthermore, working with children and directly within the national education system for several years provided me the vocabulary (both linguistic and cultural) to carry out this research. Every year I have taken children to see touring productions of theatre for children and young people, the great majority of which are companies based in the capital. Likewise, I have made many trips to see festivals and productions in México City.

Because decisions made in the capitol affect the entire country in almost every cultural, political, and economic aspect, I limited the scope of the study to México City. Government educational and cultural policies for the entire country have been (and largely still are) debated and decided in México City. During the revolutionary period, teachers, social workers, and other government employees

who work with children were trained in the capitol and then dispersed these new policies into the states. México City, then and now, still has the largest concentration of companies creating adult theatre as well as theatre for children and young people in the country and many of these companies tour throughout the republic and internationally. While I encountered many interesting histories, companies, and figures from other states and regions in my research, they have been excluded from this study for reasons of scope.

I use a qualitive approach that focuses on primary source material from the field, contextualized in terms of secondary sources in order to establish the material-cultural circumstances in which Mexican theatre for children and young people was created and received in México City. Using primary and secondary source material, I outline the evolution of thematic content and aesthetics of Mexican theatre for children and young people, as well as the material and ideological circumstances of theatre for children and young people and companies in México City from the end of the Díaz dictatorship in the late 1890s to 1938. I selected this time period specifically, because it is both narrow enough for an in depth study while at the same time allowing enough time to form thorough analysis about stasis and change before, during, and after the revolution (beginning with the Mexican theatre for children and young people that came immediately before the revolution during the last years of the Díaz dictatorship, which ended in 1910). Following this, I explore theatre for children and young people during the most violent years of the revolution (1910-1924)

when the entire country was engaged in a brutal civil war characterized by political chaos and social upheaval. Continuing my exploration into the post-war period, I seek to define the trends in the field from 1924-32, when President Obregón and President Calles built a system through which to officially put much of the revolutionary ideology into practice. I end the study by looking at the theatre that children and young people saw and participated in during the years immediately following the end of the revolution (circa 1928) under the reforms of President Cárdenas, ending in 1938 with the First Congress of *Teatro Guiñol,* marking the onset of professionalization in the field of theatre for children and young people in México.

I have conducted extensive research in México City at the *Biblioteca Nacional* [National Library] as well as the *Hemeroteca Nacional de México* [National Periodical Library] located at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, the largest national archives in the country. Likewise, I spent many hours in the archives of the *Centro de Investigación Teatral Rodolfo Usigli* searching for primary and secondary theatrical sources. I spent nearly a week combing *Calle Donceles,* the famous street of used bookstores in México City's historic center, which revealed many treasured titles no longer in print, and not found in the library. The *Biblioteca de la Revolución* [Library of the Revolution] was a useful archive for material about the revolution as was the *Biblioteca Vasconcelos* for educational materials from the revolutionary period and material about José Vasconcelos himself. Two theatre spaces proved to be useful sources of

evidence: the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* [Palace of Fine Arts] in México City, as well as the *Teatro de la Paz* [Theatre of Peace] in San Luís Potosí. Both are examples of theatre architecture created immediately following the revolutionary period and today both theatres function as active performance spaces and historic sites, complete with museum exhibits and small archival collections, tours, and relevant period information that exemplifies how theatrical space was literally transformed by the rise and fall of the dictatorship.

Of all of these sources, the most helpful was the personal archive and resources of the late professor and career *teatrista,* Josefina Brun[8]. Brun took over the editorship of the theatre magazine *La Cabra* in 1971, which later became *Artes Escénicas* in 1990 (Aguilar, Z.). Brun was an active *teatrista*, and professor of theatre at the UNAM (National Autonomous University of México) for over thirty years. After having her own children, she became aware that there was little scholarship written about Mexican theatre for children and young people and she applied for and received a large grant from the Department of Art and Culture (CONACULTA) to complete a comprehensive history of the form in the late 1980s. Enlisting a team of graduate students, friends, and colleagues, she set to work creating a catalog of all the theatre events created for children and young people in the country since Mexican independence from Spain. Later,

[8]In México, the word *teatrista,* signifies a “theatre professional” or “a person dedicated to the theatre.” Often this term implies that the person functions in many capacities of theatrical production and/or theatrical criticism.

she contextualized this catalog into her landmark publication, *El Teatro Para Niños y Jóvenes en México: 1810-2010*[9].

Near the book's completion in the summer of 2010, Brun and I met to discuss this study. The Mexican federal government organized many events and exhibitions to celebrate the centennial celebration of the Mexican Revolution that year, which coincided with my visit. The conservative PAN party, led by President Félipe Calderon, organized these events, which represented the revolution largely as a political uprising focusing on Francisco Madero's overflow of the Díaz dictatorship and on constitutional law; it downplayed the agrarian, labor, cultural, and indigenous goals of the revolution. Many of the 2010 state sponsored exhibits, publications, and events glorified the wealthy moderate politician Francisco Madero as the foremost leader of the revolution, in spite of the fact that many contemporary scholars and revolutionary historians today see Madero's contribution as merely a catalyst that set the revolution's wheels in motion. These federally sponsored exhibits downplayed the contributions of other more radical figures such a Emiliano Zapata, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Victoriano Huerta, and Álvaro Obregón who are oft championed by the poor and working classes today as the "heroes y líderes verdaderos" [true leaders and heroes] of the revolution (Guerrero 2010). For example, in the grand *Monumento de la Revolucíon* [Monument of the Revolution] where many revolutionary heroes are

[9] Unless otherwise noted, all citations in this study from Brun are from *El Teatro Para Niños y Jóvenes en México: 1810-2010.*

entombed, the interior of the structure was converted into a museum of artifacts from the revolutionary period. Of the four small glass corridors full of revolutionary artifacts, one entire case was dedicated to Madero's life, political papers, and memorabilia. In contrast, the heroes who were engaged in the agrarian, worker, and indigenous movements shared only a corner of a single case. As patrons entered the museum, quotes from Madero's speeches were carved into the concrete structure throughout. While the remodeling and subsequent grand opening of the museum was perhaps the largest event dedicated to the centennial celebrations, many smaller traveling exhibits toured schools throughout the Republic, replete with similar content. Lampposts near historic sites as well as those along major thoroughfares in the capital were adorned with large flags proclaiming the centennial celebration of the revolution, complete with a prominent figure of Madero's face in the background. For many contemporary Mexicans, this representation exalting Madero and the political goals of the revolution over those issues that affected the poor, indigenous, and working classes was understood to be the position of sitting President Félipe Calderon and the conservative party (PAN) members in control of the federal government at that time. This conservative spin on the historical revolution fomented many "*manifestaciones"* [protests] by workers, indigenous groups, and liberal politicians; these occurred in and around the state sponsored centennial monuments and events.

At the time Brun's book went to press (backed with federal funding), Brun commented that there was "much" about the revolutionary period that she "felt [that she] could not include in her book" because of the "complicated politics" that surrounded contemporary perceptions of the revolution (Brun email 2012).

Just after her book was published, Brun died suddenly of cancer. Shortly thereafter, I received several boxes from her estate containing relevant research from the revolutionary period, as well as other material that she was unable to use in her book. Brun's family included a note that she had set this collection aside for me after my initial visit. Brun's research was not organized and I spent many months reading, translating and organizing her material chronologically and thematically. Together with the data from other primary and secondary sources I found in Mexican archives, libraries and bookstores, these materials began to reveal the nature of theatre for children and young people in México City during the revolutionary period.

The Mexican Revolution

John Womack, in his book *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, neatly illustrates the chaos of the Mexican Revolution, noting that, "The revolutionaries won. The question was: Which revolutionaries?" (Womack 14). The Mexican revolution is the stuff of legend and cultural myth with colossal figures such as Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Venustiano Carranza, all of whom appear on Mexican currency and whose names adorn important streets and plazas

throughout the country. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the revolution for the development of a political ideology in México which in many ways continues to this day. The term "*gobierno revolucionario*" (revolutionary government) is still used in contemporary discourse to describe the present government; it is an affirmation of the time that in many ways defined Mexican political ideology. The concept of revolution in México implies an end to corruption and bad government, associated with recovering a uniquely Mexican identity and *mestizo* culture.[10] While I will give a much more detailed explanation of the events of the revolution later, I offer some historical contextualization below to give a better understand the framing of this study.

As I've established, most historians date the beginning of the Mexican Revolution to 1910, when Francisco Madero began the process of ousting the long-standing dictator Porfirio Díaz. Díaz held almost total control of all the governmental departments and was a master of pleasing interest groups in order to get his own way (Williamson 378). Díaz was in his seventies, and the old regime had to find a way to transfer power without losing it. There was a division between the progressive liberal *científicos* who favored centralization and the traditional *caudillos* who favored regionalism. There was a major economic crisis with massive inflation and workers across the country staged strikes. Foreign investment, championed by the elite class of the liberal *científicos,* was seen by

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[10] A *mestizo* person is of mixed European, Indigenous, and African races (will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3).

them as selling out, particularly to the imperialistic United States. *Hacienderos,* [plantation owners] who in the wake of the industrial revolution owned virtually all of the agriculturally viable land in the country, were under tremendous economic strain. As the plantations continued to grow albeit with limited land, the *hacienderos* often forced smaller farmers off their land through blackmail and bribery of corrupt public officials. This forced former landowners to find other means of employment, most often on the *hacienda* itself [estate—usually with a plantation, mine or factory], rendering the workers dependent on the *hacendero* for virtually everything. This, coupled with the recession, the workers' strikes in the north, and anxiety about further U.S. annexation of Mexican northern territories fueled popular unrest, which ultimately helped Madero to topple the Díaz regime.

Despite U.S. and popular support, Madero was not able to establish control, and in 1913 the counterrevolutionary General Victoriano Huerta took power. While there were several smaller armies, the three largest competing forces were led by Francisco Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and Vestuiano Carranza, all of whom attempted to seize power until Carranza ultimately defeated Huerta in 1914. President Carranza was shot in 1917 and, after three years of continuous fighting, Álvaro Obregón, a former general, became president in 1920. The stated goals of the revolution were consistently, "the elimination of poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition" (Wilkie xi). In light of this, Obregón's government completely restructured the Mexican educational system

and championed the rights of the working class. Later, President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) expanded the government bureaucracies in order to establish financial ties between newly formed interest groups and the ruling party, which ultimately led to rampant corruption. Calles controlled three unsuccessful presidents through extortion, none of whom completed a full term until Lázaro Cárdenas won the presidential election in 1934. For many historians, the revolutionary period ends at the beginning of Cárdenas's term, when he enacted his populist agenda redistributing land to the poor under a state-sponsored communal farming system (*ejidos)*.[11]

Historians of the Mexican Revolution seem to fall into two camps. Alan Knight, following the tradition of Frank Tannenbaum and other early historians, characterizes the movement as a truly popular one, rooted in heroic tales of agrarian uprising. Revisionist writers, such as Mariano Azuela, Héctor Aguilar-Camín and Lorenzo Meyers, argue that the revolution was primarily about the individual ambitions of bourgeois leaders and the function of class politics. Of course, neither position is truly antithetical, and taken together they provide the most accurate view of the revolution, for the purposes of this study.

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[11] *Ejidos* were agrarian farming communities. They were part of the post-revolutionary land redistribution scheme of Presiden Lázaro Cárdenas. (For more, see Knight, Suchlicki, and Tannenbaum).

Revolutionary Theatre for Children and Young People in México City

Immediately before and during Díaz's dictatorship, *espectáculos* [big shows] dominated the kind of theatre that children and young people saw. *Espectáculos* were highly commercial in nature, and spectacle was the principal component of production. As we will see in more detail later, these shows were driven by private enterprise and their motivation to include children and young people in their audiences was largely an effort to increase ticket sales and draw a larger audience. Mostly presenting stories that were episodic in nature and/or drawing from western European traditions (circus, puppetry, magic shows, etc…), these troupes often shifted thematic content to meet the needs of their changing demographic. The famous Rosete Aranda Brothers Company was located in México City at this time (Merlin 227). This puppet company was typical fare for children and young people immediately prior to the revolution. Fairy tales, accompanied with music and dance, were also common. Children were not encouraged to attend opera or other theatrical events for adults; these often came as tours from Spain and other parts of Europe, however children and young people were in attendance at many "popular" theatre events that occurred at religious festivals throughout the year (Merlin 227).

Alan Knight and Sabina Berman show that adult theatre events during the revolution took on the discourse of "social" themes reflecting the competing ideologies of the period; however this study is the first to illustrate how this ideology permeated the field of theatre for children and young people (Knight

148). During the revolutionary period, children became an important part of the revolutionary ideology; no longer individuals bound only to their fathers, children became symbols of the future transnational generation with responsibilities to the community and nation. At the end of the revolution, children became the centerpiece of the new government's educational goals, and the Secretariat of Education was greatly expanded. As Elena Jackson Albarrán and many other scholars, such as William Beezely, Rick López, and Beatriz Urías Horcasitas have illustrated, the shift in the Mexican thinking about children and childhood is revealed in the educational and cultural policies of the period after the violence. *El Primer Congreso Mexicano del Niño* [The First Mexican Congress of the Child] and the Pan-American Child Congresses are evidence of the "explosion in the number of agencies and institutions designed specifically to socialize and perfect the child" (Albarrán *Children* 37). For the first time in Mexican history, children's welfare, education, and socialization became the responsibility of the nation. The campaign for the "Revolutionary Child" was an attempt by the new government to "construct universal childhood through a common set of [Mexican] experiences and a [new] standard measure of normalcy" (*Children* 37). New "child specialists" worked in the intellectual tradition of the *positivistas* educated during the *Porfiriato* two decades before.[12]

[12] *El porfiriato:* referring to the time period of the Porfirío Díaz dictatorship (1876-1910).

Historian Ricardo Pérez Montfort argues that the new nationalist identity was rooted in “rural, provincial, poor, and marginal” people, who comprised the “majority” of society after the revolution (40). This idealized Mexican identity championed the notion of the culturally blended “*mestizaje,”* an idealized racial and cultural blend, sometimes translated as “ideal Mexican-ness.” Contemporary scholars often look to the influential philosopher and politician José Vasconcelos’s 1925 treatise on *mestizaje*, *La Raza Cosmica* [*The Cosmic Race*], which describes an “American race” made up of all the others, that he thought would lead to a utopian “Universópolis.” Vasconcelos denounced social Darwinism and sought to elevate the Mexican “depressed race” by proposing one elevated race, found uniquely in México, which would lead human society, culturally and philosophically. Lopéz argues that cultural anthropologist Manuel Gamio’s *Forjando Patria* [Forging the Fatherland] was far more influential at the time (153). Gamio’s essay explains *mestizaje* not as one absolute race, but in “degrees of indigenousness” (Gamio 37).

Mary Kay Vaughn has defined mestizaje as “the browning of the nation,” using the term “*ethnicization*” to illustrate the indefiniteness and problematic process of incorporating and excluding diverse indigenous traditions with European ones, while simultaneously denouncing African and Asian customs almost completely (qtd. in Velázquez 95). As López explains in detail, the definition of the term “*mestizaje”* evolved during the revolutionary era. At the beginning of the revolution, intellectuals and politicians initiated a process of “de-

Indianization," epitomized by the *Misiones Culturales* [Cultural Missions] that traveled across the country using theatre and process drama to teach poor and indigenous children Spanish literacy and the importance of health. However, by the 1920s and 1930s, the ideal "*mestizaje*" had shifted to necessitate a "re-Indianization" of México, through an appropriation of indigenous values and aesthetics in popular culture. This process was expedited by the development of the Department of Extracurricular and Aesthetic Education (a division within the larger Secretariat of Education), which fostered the development of a "uniquely Mexican voice" in education and the fine and performing arts, including theatre projects for children and young people in México City. These theatrical projects, as I will explore in later chapters, sought to unify a new *mestizo* generation, and drew heavily (and often problematically) on indigenous aesthetics and cultural traditions.

After the most violent years of the revolution came to an end, public education in México City was greatly expanded and children's cultural activity (plays, letters, art) entered the historical record in unprecedented quantities. Theatre became a pedagogical tool used most famously by *Teatro Guigñol* and others, which participated in the "Cultural Missions" that brought educational theatre (largely about hygiene, literacy, and "Mexican" history) to the *masas* [masses].

Before the revolution, Felipe Haro was the first private company to create plays professionally for children on a small scale, as well as the first to use the

term "*teatro infantil"* [children's theatre] in 1906. Thereafter, the term *teatro infantil* entered the discourse as a term to describe theatre and drama productions/activities written/organized explicitly for children and young people. After the revolution, the Secretariat of Education would take over virtually all cultural production for children. Ideologically didactic in nature, theatre for children and young people increasingly became a pedagogical tool of the state.

Later, during the Calles government, the Department of Extracurricular and Aesthetic Education greatly expanded and *teatro infantil* productions in the capitol increased. As I will explain in later chapters, many well-known artists from other forms began working in theatre for children and young people, chiefly in school or state sponsored performances of *teatro de masas* [mass theatre]. At this time they also started to participate in drama and applied theatre techniques in poor districts of México City and indigenous areas. During the Calles government, these campaigns grew in number, and included those led by Marco Antonio Montero and Rosario Castellanos, who focused on indigenous education and brought performances from México City to remote areas in the South and the Yucatán (Merlin 227).

At this time, theatre for children and young people took on the aesthetics of Porfirian *espectáculos* but with a new markedly socialist ideology written and performed *for* children specifically. Circus clowning, indigenous acrobatic acts, acrobatics, and puppet shows reverted to big spectacle, though at the same time they employed socialist themes and new decidedly "Mexican" aesthetics that

reinforced the *mestizaje* message and other changes in ideology and government. Many artists had fled to Europe at the end of the Calles presidency and when they returned much of their work shared aesthetic and thematic characteristics with the European avant-garde. Examples of this work include the work of Angelina Belhoff, who worked in educational spaces teaching theatrical "crafts," and the *Teatro Periquillo* puppet company who with its expressionist aesthetics would eventually join the first government sponsored program explicitly for children, *Teatro Guiñol*. The Rosete Aranda puppet company, now in its fourth generation and under new management, continued its popular programs but worked to emulate the new ideological aesthetic and thematic content that the government and the public demanded. Literature programs sponsored by the Secretariat of Education such as "*teatro en revista*," began to publish short scripts for young people to perform in children's magazines including published interviews with famous *teatristas* working in the field of the time.

While there are very few texts specifically about the history of theatre for children and young people in México, there are some useful volumes that provide historical contextualization. In *Teatro de Evangelización en México durante el Siglo XVI,* Jerome Williams sets the stage for theatre for children and young people in his analysis of the didactic plays staged by missionaries during conquest and colonization. In Maria del Carmen Soto de Benchoff's study, *El Teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcon y las Preceptivas Dramaticas*, Benchoff

discusses childhood and youth in México in the late fifteenth century. Although that period is outside the scope of this dissertation, both Williams and Benchoff confirm that early theatrical activity by, for and with children in México was religious in nature and remained so until the late eighteenth century.

There are many general texts about Mexican theatre history in both English and Spanish; Don Enrique Olvarría y Ferrari's multi-volume tome, *Reseña Historica del Teatro en México*, provides a fundamental background of adult theatre in México from the *conquista* until 1961. Antonio Magaña Esquivel's book, *Imagen y realidad del teatro en México (1533-1960)* is perhaps the text most widely used to teach Mexican theatre history at the university level both in the United States and in México. *200 Años del Espectáculo en la Ciudad de* México [200 Years of 'Spectacle Shows' in México City] written by Sabina Berman, and edited by María Cristina García Cepeda is an exhaustive collection of primary source material illustrating the many forms that grand *espectáculos* have taken in México City; narrated by Berman, the book highlights the most famous shows, performers, spaces, and companies. Many books have been written about a shift that occurs in the theatre during and after the 1910 revolution. For example, Ruth S. Lamb's book, *Mexican Theatre of the 20th Century*, echoes what many other authors argue in smaller (era specific) volumes about the change that occurred in this period. Gabriel Careaga's *Sociedad y Teatro Moderno en México* [Society and Modern Theater in México] is a sociological approach to understanding the theatrical movements in México.

Careaga studies the ideology of the theatre makers and the audiences from a cultural materialist perspective. *Contemporary Theatre in Mayan México,* by Tamara L. Underiner and *Arte de Nezahualcóyotl,* by Josefina Estrada, both offer historical and cultural context for indigenous performance.

In all of my research, I have found only three books that examine Mexican theatre and children specifically and together: Josefina Brun's landmark text, *El Teatro Para Niños y Jóvenes en México: 1810-2010,* [*Theatre for Children and Young People in México: 1810-2010*], *Teatro para la Educacion Especial en el INBA* by Socorro Merlín and Leticia Ángeles, and *Rueda la Historia: El Teatro Rodante Universitario como Herramienta Pedagogica en el Contexto de la Ley de Reforma Universitaria de 1942 (1940--1950)* by Maria Collazo Rivera. Merlín and Ángeles's text is basically a study of a single drama and education program enacted with special education students from 1977-1985. While their content is also outside of the scope of my study, the bibliography is rich with monographs about the history of childhood in México, alternative pedagogy, and the history of Mexican drama and education that are to date not available in the United States. In Collazo Rivera's text, she discusses "*las Misiones Pedagógicas*" that traveled from México City into the states using theatre explicitly to teach. Collazo Rivera's work is also the revolutionary period, but her study is useful insofar as it provides a clear example of revolutionary ideology in practice just two decades after the end of the revolution.

Recently, coordinating with the centennial of the revolution, many documentary DVDs and CD-ROM archives were issued by ASSITEJ México and CITRU specifically about the Rosete Aranda puppet company, the most famous company producing work specifically for children in this period; *Teatro Carpa Rosete Aranda, Empresa: Carols V. Espinal e Hijos (1900-1961), Empresa Nacional Mexican de Autómatas Hermanos: Rosete Aranda (1835-1942), and Érase una vez… una histora de títeres,* all of which show the puppets and puppet building process, the company's scripts, biographies of principal players, as well as sociopolitical commentary highlighting the company's ideological "nation building" goals. Another work, *Época de Oro del Teatro Guigñol de Bellas Artes (1932-1965)* is a CD-ROM collection of images and scripts from the *Guigñol* Company's touring marionette shows in the 1930s, complete with images, plays, scholarly articles and a rich bibliography.

There is no shortage of books on general Mexican history. As T.R. Fehrenbach has argued, "there have been many Méxicos," depending on who was writing the history (i). Enrique Florescano's book, *National Narratives in México: A History,* deconstructs popular narratives of Mexican history and offers what is essentially a critique of accepted Mexican historiography of the period beginning before the arrival of Cortez until the present day. Fehrenbach's popular history, *Fire & Blood: A History of México,* is the best book I have found written from the perspective of the common people rather than from those of the great characters of Mexican history. Brian Hamnett's *A Concise History of México*

offers a history in broad strokes that focuses on several recurring themes in Mexican history. Alicia Hernández Chávez's *Brief History* offers a counterpoint to many histories of México, and in so doing illustrates that Mexican history should not be characterized by historians as one of violent change, but rather one that has "tended more toward stability and political collaboration." Taken together, these books provide a foundation for my understanding of the sociological, political, and economic context in which theatre for young audiences was created historically in México City.

Similarly, there are many useful texts on the Mexican Revolution available in English, Spanish, or in translation. Alan Knight's two-volume *The Mexican Revolution* builds on the work of Frank Tannenbaum, the author of one of the first histories of the revolution, *Mexican Agrarian Revolution. Revolutionary México: The Coming and Process of Mexican Revolution*, by John Hart, is a history that highlights the importance of United States's role in the conflict. Héctor Aguilar-Camín and Lorenzo Meyer's *La Sombra de la Revolución Mexicana* (In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution) is a revisionist work that covers the revolution and the effects of the revolution on a history that in the twentieth century becomes increasingly knitted with that of the United States. Frank McLynne's *Villa and Zapata: A History of the Mexican Revolution* is a comprehensive reconstruction of the revolution written through the biographies of Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata, that builds on John Womack's earlier work, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*.

There are two recent studies on Mexican childhood that are of particular note. In Sarah Cline's 2008 paper, "A Century of Childhood: *Casta* Children in Eighteenth-Century México," Cline discusses the Mexican construction of childhood in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Elena Jackson Albarrán's 2008 study, *Children of the Revolution: Constructing the Mexican Citizen, 1920—1940* illustrates a real shift in the Mexican thinking about children and childhood that transformed the previous notion of the child as that of an individual bound by the family to an individual who had responsibilities to the community, the nation, and a transnational generation.

Dissertation Organization

In Chapter 1, Theatre for Children and Youth in el Porfiriato: 1876-1910, I begin the study by describing theatre for children and young people in México City during the last years of Porfirio Díaz's regime, beginning at the end of his regime (1890s) and concluding in 1910 with his downfall. In this chapter I pay particular attention to the aesthetics and themes in the *espectáculos* and how the sociopolitical events that led up to the revolution were and were not reflected in the thematic and aesthetic content of the theatre that children saw in México City at that time. I also explore how pre-Revolutionary ideologies about children and childhood were manifested in the *espectáculos* of this period. This chapter serves as the place for later analysis about change and stasis in the larger revolutionary period.

In Chapter 2, From Porfirian Positivism to Bergson: Theatre, Children, and the Revolution 1910-1920, Theatre, Children and the Revolution 1910-1924, I discuss my findings of the content and aesthetics of the first dedicated *teatro infantil* companies in the capitol during the most violent stage of the revolutionary period. As Porfirian positivism gave way to Bergsonian thought, productions marketed to children and families followed suit or pushed back with diverse oppositional voices in a delicate balancing act that characterized all of the professional theatre in México City during this period.

In Chapter 3, The Revolution Onstage “In the Sun,” I explore how new government programs coupled with ideologies about children and childhood changed and were exhibited in theatre for children and young people of the period under President Obregón and his secretary of education, José Vasconcelos. Led by Vasconcelos, new educational and cultural programs for children were developed in unprecedented volume during this period, drawn on European and American models. Combining aesthetics of the Porfirian era with revolutionary content, grand *teatro de masas* [mass theatre] productions were staged in new performance spaces all over the capital. The children’s magazine, *Pulgarcito,* which featured scripts and interviews with famous *teatristas*, and *Teatro de Masas* productions are both prime illustrations of how Mexican theatre for children and young people operated as a revolutionary force for ideological change in this period.

In Chapter Four, A New Theatre for Children and Young People, I discuss the effects of self-exile experienced by many artists working in theatre for children and young people under the “puppet presidents” controlled by former president Calles. When President Cárdenas won the election in 1934, many artists who had left the country returned, bringing with them new thinking about the role of art in culture, inspired by the European avant-garde. In this chapter I explain the shift in thinking about childhood, which was born out of a political need to transform the educational system and how this was manifested in the specific theatre projects for children and young people of the period. Under Cárdenas, socialist reforms began on a massive scale. Given that the Secretariat of Education funded most artists working in the form, socialist ideology permeated virtually all theatre for children and young people at the time. Groups such as the famous *Teatro de Periquillo,* and *Teatro Guiñol* blended revolutionary socialist content with aesthetics taken from the *espectáculos* of the Porfirian era and the European avant-garde. The chapter ends with a discussion of the first professional congress of theatre for children and young people held at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in 1938.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Conclusions and Questions, I draw conclusions for the questions that originally guided the study. In this chapter I problematize some of the study’s findings and discuss the role of official and unofficial ideology on theatre for children and young people in México both historically and today. I end the dissertation by posing questions for further study.

Chapter 1

Theatre for Children and Youth in *el Porfiriato*: 1876-1910

El Porfiriato

From 1876 to 1910, México was ruled under the firm hand of president José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori. Like Queen Victoria in England, whose reign led to the designation of the "Victorian Period" in the English speaking world, the name of the man Porfirio Díaz came to define the era in which he ruled—*el porfiriato*. During *el porfiriato* the president controlled virtually every aspect of government. President Porfirio Díaz's economic and domestic policies affected everyone in the growing republic, most directly in México City where the policies were implemented (and sometimes tested) first. He consolidated the three branches of government, freely appointed judges, legislators, governors and local administrators all of whom enforced his "*pan y palo"* [bread and bludgeon] principle. The idea of *pan y palo* was to carefully balance persuasion and punishment—to reward those who were loyal and torture those who questioned the regime.

However punitive, Díaz's *pan y palo* approach facilitated the creation of what many historians have defined as the era of peace and modernization, "progress" and industrialization, and moreover the time period that has come to be associated with the birth of modern México. Period newspapers in the United States and Europe burst with glowing reports of the country's rising reputation as

a stable nation with good credit. Other historians, particularly those of the Mexican Revolution, and revisionist scholars such as Mariano Azuela, Héctor Aguilar-Camín and Lorenzo Meyers, write of the material inequality, social injustice, and lack of human rights under the regime that ultimately fueled the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Both positions offer valuable perspectives on the revolution necessary to understand the ideological trends of the period wherein the theatre for children and young people was produced in México City.

After over fifty years of war, (first with the war of independence from Spain in 1821 and then a war with France from 1862 to 1867) México at the end of the nineteenth century was more unified than ever before in its history. It had rapidly reconciled with its former European enemies, welcoming foreign investment from former invaders. Defeating the French had left Mexicans feeling strong and proud. Porfirio Díaz earned national fame fighting the French as a brigadier general. In 1871, he led a rebellion against President Juarez, but Juarez was still very popular from the war and he quickly defeated Díaz. Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada briefly assumed the presidency after Juarez's death, and the interim period gave Díaz time to organize his supporters and his *Plan de Tuxtepec,* which accused Lerdo of encroaching on the rights of state government, squandering public pesos, and manipulating democratic elections. Most notably the plan called for "No Reelection" for state governors or the president. The plan fueled a violent revolt that quickly and successfully yielded the government and the presidency to Díaz, a post he would not relinquish for a third of a century.

Díaz quickly pacified the country through brutal raids with the army and police force. He ordered countless assassinations through the *ley de fuga,* which was the practice of shooting the opposition while they "attempted" escape. Domestic peace fortified international commerce. European and Latin American countries maintained diplomatic relations with Díaz, but the U.S. withheld its imprimatur until 1877 because of ongoing disputes over border banditry. However, after its recognition of the Díaz presidency, U.S. investment in México surged. Land was sold to foreign investors at well below market values, even lands held by indigenous populations. When indigenous groups rebelled, they were shot on the spot or transferred to haciendas to work as slave labor. Rapidly, the U.S. became the largest investor in México and Díaz became a champion of progress and reform both at home and abroad. Andrew Carnegie called Díaz, "the Moses and Joshua of México" (qtd. in Fox 8).

At the end of his first term in 1880, the popular president put his support behind Manuel Gonzalez, a military leader. While Gonzalez was in power, Díaz traveled widely abroad. During this brief period, Díaz changed from a "crass and ill mannered guerrilla leader" to a "refined and mannerly gentleman who dressed in stylish European clothing and hosted lavish parties for his newly acquired upper-class and business friends" (Suchlicki 97). Gonzalez's government was not as successful as Díaz, and the people quickly called for Díaz's return. Elections were held in 1884 and Díaz was elected in a landslide. Soon elections became formalities and he referred to his nominees as his "herd of horses." Díaz

appointed all the state governors and generously rewarded loyalty with concessions to operate liquor, gambling and prostitution monopolies.

According to historian James Suchlicki, “The new Mexican elite was concerned less with ideas and more with action” (92). Ideologically, positivism defined the age—the notion that society can be understood scientifically through measurable, empirical study of real phenomena. In the Mexican context, positivism shared many traits with progressivism that at the same time was popular in Europe and the United States. Through empirical knowledge porfiran positivists believed that through empirical study of science, economics, technology and social organization that Mexican society would modernize--improving the living conditions of it’s citizens efficiently and thoroughly. Sociological phenomena were studied by “*científicos,*” who shaped the governmental programs of the period. Elites sought to bring order from the previous chaos in the form of a powerful central government and professional bureaucracy. “*Científicos”* created scientific plans to manage all aspects of society, including theatre and other aspects of cultural life. Frederico Gamboa notes how far *the científicos*’ policies extended:

> Every solution in public and private life has been left: from the learning of Greek and Latin to the uniform of the municipal coachmen; from the granting of divorces in cases of broken marriages to the matching of widows with foreigners sufficiently noble or royal; from border disputes between states to relations between neighbors and relatives; from the total

> figures of the harvest to the menus in each house; everything from the transcendental to the utterly trivial. (77)

This system was based on Auguste Comte's belief that human societies passed through three stages, theological (a primitive phase characterized by militarism); metaphysical (a legalistic society that relies on abstract thought); and positive (a scientific society based in technologically advanced manufacturing). The sciences of the positivist stage were divided into a hierarchy of disciplines based on the extent that one discipline was connected to another, with sociology at the top. Comte's system championed order in all things physical and metaphysical; his religion was science and of order. Leopoldo Zea explains how Mexican positivists of this era believed that their national history aligned perfectly with Comte's three stages. They were convinced that the republic during *el porfiriato* was in the nascent phase of the positivist stage[13].

Perhaps the most notable physical manifestation of this positivist ideology was the railroad. As the 18,642 kilometers of new railroad were built, investment in agriculture and mining industries grew as henequen commodities, food products, and minerals became more accessible and profitable. The number of haciendas in the country grew by nearly thirty percent (Krauze 219).[14] Electricity,

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[13] For a detailed description Porfirian positivism and its influence on Mexican philosophy, politics and ideology, see Zea.

[14] Henequen is a cactus-like plant native to México. Its fibers' have been used in the manufacture of textiles and since pre-Columbian times. It is also used to make liquor.

telephone, and telegraph lines began to crisscross the country. Radio towers were built. The *cientifico* Jose Limantour[15] managed the rapidly expanding economy. By 1910, much to Limantour's credit, Mexican silver was circulating all over the world and the national treasury had accumulated a reserve of over seventy-five million pesos.

The *científicos* encouraged all things European: European design, philosophy, and religion. This effectively relegated indigenous peoples to the bottom rung of the social ladder. Those that rebelled were punished harshly. Slavery of indigenous peoples was not uncommon. In an account from their 1908 visit to the Yucatán, two British travel writers discuss a presidential visit made to one of the Mérida haciendas. While the article has many factual errors and casts a problematic "imperial gaze" upon the situation they describe in their account, it accurately describes how hacienda owners cover up shocking working conditions with artificial "progressive" appearing structures for the visit.

In his speech at the hacienda President Díaz said:

> Only can a visitor here realize the energy and perseverance that has continued through so many years and has resulted in all I have seen. Some writers who do not know this country; who have not seen the laborers as I have, have declared the Yucatan to be disgraced with slavery. Their statements are the grossest kind of misrepresentation as is

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[15] For more on Limantour's biography and contribution to the Mexican economy, see María y Campos Castello.

> proved by the very faces of the laborers—by their tranquil happiness. He who is a slave necessarily looks very different from those laborers I have seen in the Yucatan. (qtd. in Arnold 276).

In another travelogue by an American journalist, B. Traven attempts to highlight the workers' conditions with less ambiguity. In the account, Traven gives gruesome details of how the indigenous workers in the mahogany camps of Chiapas were treated little better than livestock as well as the torture (which often led to death) inflicted on the indigenous men when they did not meet the day's quotas.

Upper and middle class Porfirians spent their new wealth much like their North American and European counterparts, complete with advanced medical knowledge, access to the fine and performing arts, as well as a familiarity with advances in civil engineering. The extent of what Díaz or upper and middle class Porfirians in México City knew about how fortunes were made is an area of much academic debate. México City grew into what was known abroad as "the city of palaces," including the installation of a new boulevard along Maximillian's former Imperial Drive known as the *Paseo de la Reforma,* electric lights, garbage collection, and new hygiene laws. Writer and noted historian Gonzalo Celorio noted that Díaz, brought virtually the entire city "under the sway of his aesthetic… national in purpose but French in character..." (qtd. in De la Torre 16).[16]

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[16] For a detailed account of the city's French transformation, see De la Torre.

El niño porfiriano

As Alberto del Castillo-Troncoso reminds us in his essay, “Images and Representations of Childhood in México City at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” the conception of middle and upper class childhood was very different from that of the poor or indigenous child. Del Castillo-Troncoso notes:

> The visual universe of everyday life for the Porfirian elite, exclusive and closed, was gradually overtaken by the intensification of political and social conflicts and the incorporation of new actors in society…The child of the middle and upper Porfirian classes represented an excellent symbol of innocence and natural purity whose wellbeing ought to be protected. (87)

Poor children and indigenous children were seen quite differently. Officially, Díaz seems to long for education equality across classes. In a famous interview in *Pearson’s Magazine,* by James Creelman from 1908, Díaz responded as follows to the question of what was “the greatest force for peace, the army or the schoolhouse?”:

> The schoolhouse. There can be no doubt of that. I want to see education throughout the Republic carried on by the national Government. I hope to see it before I die. It is important that the citizens of a republic should receive the same training, so that their ideals and methods may be harmonized and the national unity intensified. When men read alike and think alike they are more likely to act alike. (244)

Creelman writes glowingly of the change from “irregular and ineffective” public instruction to the national system of compulsory education that has added 800,000 students to the national roster. Creelman notes Díaz’s paternal instinct towards indigenous tribes as he “towered up with a new dignity when he spoke of them. His plan for nationalizing education is born of faith in them and their future” (255).

While the number of schools continued to increase throughout the period, like other growing social services, they simply could not keep up with the city’s rapidly growing population. In 1876, México City held 200,000 inhabitants; in 1880 it had 250,000; in 1895, 330,000; and by 1910 the city had swelled to over 470,000 inhabitants (McCaa). In 1910 only 50% of the population could read and write, down from 62% in 1895 (González-Navarro 82). Poor and indigenous children often had work and family responsibilities that were more important to their survival than becoming literate or numerate. Furthermore, church and charity schools that had seen to the education of some of the poor and indigenous had lost much of their influence during the war of the reform.

During the first years of the *Porfiriato*, “official schools” sponsored and sanctioned by the government were dependent on the municipal funding. During the early years of the *Porfiriato* there was much debate over whether education should be centralized and controlled by the federal government or decentralized and managed by the states. Throughout the era Porfirian positivism placed most of the responsibility for education in the hands of the federal government. Many

official schools became “laboratory schools” where pedagogical methods were tried and tested as the federalization of the school system took shape. Public instruction had officially adopted positivism as its philosophical foundation. This led to the teaching of radical liberal thought and significantly decreased the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on public school teaching (Arnaut 40). The natural sciences were emphasized over other subjects, which assisted in the training of the “*científicos”* who were required for the material development of the country (41). Positivism affected secondary schools more directly than primary schools, most notably in the creation of the National Preparatory School, which was founded with a curriculum that was explicitly positivist. A teacher from the period describes the importance of positivism in the classroom:

> Auguste Comte’s wise law of the three states is not only applicable to the great evolutions in the history of mankind, but also, perhaps more accurately, to the evolutions of particular individuals […] It is clear that no one will speak contrarily, and therefore individuals will folly the same laws that humanity has always followed in its development. (Hernández-Chávez 416)

Despite the positivist imperative to construct a national, centralized school system with cohesive teachers, curriculum, textbooks and methodologies during the early years of the Díaz presidency, there was little cohesion. Alberto Arnaut notes that “there was severe criticism of the municipal schools by the press” citing “a great diversity” of opinions being employed simultaneously in

pedagogical approaches, textbooks, and differing school hours and schedules that ultimately led to “fatal results.” He notes that many schools were poorly equipped and in poor repair “not appropriate for study” (49).

In 1877, President Díaz provided tools to the municipalities to enforce compulsory schooling and the registration of professionals. (Arnaut 51). On February 28, 1878 a modification to the “Rules for Primary and Secondary Schools” introduced some of the Pestalozzian principals to primary schools already taking hold in the us and Europe, and introduced character education in the secondary school (Meneses 266). In 1905, Díaz created the “Secretariat of Public Instruction and Fine Arts” headed by Justo Sierra. Justo Sierra introduced the concept of “integral education” or “education of the whole child” on a national level, inspired by the work of John Dewey in the United States. The notion that psychology, philosophy, and history could be taught with literature, sports and the arts was popular in the “progressive education” movements in the U.S. and met little resistance by Díaz and the *científicos*. Sierra inaugurated the first kindergartens in México, arguing that the first years of a child’s life were “decisive in personality development” (Brun 38).

From the early 1900s onward, “*teatro infantil”* [children’s theatre] came to be defined as all theatre done by, for and with children including process and creative drama projects at school or church, professional theatre for youth performed by adults, and theatre for children performed by children. *Teatro infantil* stands in contrast to the *“espectáculos,*” [spectacles] that had until that

time completely dominated the genre of live performances that children saw. This was true even for adult theatre of the period as well—*zarzuela* and other variety performances were preferred to "old fashioned" straight plays.[17] The word "*espectáculo,"* can be translated as "spectacle;" a word used to separate these entertainments from "*obras de teatro"* (works of theatre) in the Mexican context. Circus, puppet shows, and "Magic comedies" have often been separated from Mexican theatre history using this distinction, despite that the "spectacles" were performed in theatres, by theatre artists, and had many of the characteristics that one would associate with the "legitimate" theatre. Long before theatre became a political tool in the revolution, Justo Sierra cemented theatre activities permanently in the realm of education, yet *espectáculos* remained the dominant form of live performance that children attended until after the revolution.

Sierra was impressed with the ways in which John Dewey, William Kirkpatrick, Francis Parker, and Hughes Mearns scientifically argued for an educational system to educate what they termed *the whole child* (Arnaut 54). John Dewey was the de facto leader of this movement, and posited that schools needed to perform a larger socialization function to make up for disappearing systems of family and community control. While individual growth was important for Dewey, nothing was as important as the growth of the community. Zilversmit

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[17] *Zarzuela* was a lyric-dramatic genre imported from Spain. Both touring Spanish and Mexican companies performed popular songs of the day and selections from the classical music repertoire, interspersed with dramatic scenes and other text. For more on *zarzuela* in México, see Bryan.

reminds us that Dewey "repeatedly referred to the new school as 'an embryonic community'" (6), training a child to participate in this new community was the key to Dewey's notion of democratic social reform. This emphasis on community was very important to Justo Sierra's vision for national education in México and fit in perfectly with the new positivist ideology that would in his view would "rescue the Indian families from their moral prostration, superstition from mental abjection, ignorance from physiological abjection, alcoholism; to bring them to a better condition, though conditions will improve but slowly" (González-Navarro 250).

Like the so-called "progressives" in the United States, Justo Sierra and other *científicos* were responding to changing economic contexts. In the United States, children were no longer crucial sources of income for white middle-class families. By 1910, the U.S. child-saving movement was in full swing, attempting to save largely immigrant, black, and working-class children from exploitative child labor practices. Likewise, in México, the debate about whether children were innocents and/or arbiters of progress was not only found in homes, but was also hotly contested by policymakers, child psychologists, educators, and scientists, all of whom were involved in child welfare. Lynne Spigel explains that "policy reform movements of the progressive era fashioned an image of the child as the means to modernization: as a new generation, children linked the past with the future, tradition with progress" (113). This new child would no longer be the responsibility of private families, but the concern of the state. While Spigel writes about the U.S. context, the same can be argued of changes that were

occurring in México as the child was slowly but surely taking center stage politically.

New positivist schools were equipped with spaces for public performances and public art showings, and facilities that focused on showcasing the nation's children and bringing the community together. Arnaut and others have noted that new schools built under Justo Sierra drew on plans from Dewey and other progressives from the U.S. These new spaces, complete with the nation's first equipped kindergartens, brought with them a focus on creative play and dramatic role-play in the classroom (Niebla 102). Like their U.S. counterparts, children in new progressive classrooms were learning "in-role" and working to learn about everyday problems with playful role-play and creative drama.

Sierra argued that, through games and creative play, children would be able "to experience learning outside of their family and engage with society from a much earlier age" (Artaud 52). Sierra created the first "Normal schools" for the standardized education of teachers, arguing that the "normalization" of teachers would "save" education from the fluctuating and disruptive politics of municipal government (63). These developments occurred in México City first and then were held up, by Díaz and Sierrra, as exemplary models for the rest of the republic. It is important to note that while the process of school building and educational reform was advocated for at the highest level of government, the federalization of education had not completely taken hold all over the country, or

even all over the capitol. “Progressive education,” as Dewey and Sierra idealized it, was far from widespread when the revolution began.

Although Justo Sierra was often criticized for adopting a U.S. model, (especially of arts funding, wherein private organizations and individuals sponsored productions and funded arts program through ticket sales), Sierra was instrumental in the creation of the first non-religious educational theatre programs for public schoolchildren. In September 1904, a group of students graduating from primary school presented “*El Sitio de Cuautla*” about one of the bloodiest battles of the Mexican war of Independence in the Teatro Arbeu. In the same year, the popular adult *zarzuela* writers, Rafael Medina and Miguel F. Martínez wrote “*The Humanity and the School”* with music to be performed by over one hundred high school students. In 1905, President Díaz attended a production of “*The Ascension of Popocateptel,*” organized in the capital by the *Dirección General de Instrucción Primaria del Distrito Federal* with several hundred students. The production began with the national anthem, and featured the National Symphonic Orchestra. These programs “…diffused art and culture, that in its time together, were considered to be an ideal model for the entire country” (Brun 49).

Other childhood spaces were divided according to socioeconomic class. New hygiene laws introduced garbage trucks, procedures for the disposal of human and animal remains, and personal hygiene campaigns. However, the reality was that the new city services could not meet the demands of the growing

populace. While children of the new Porfirian bourgeoisie went to school and lived in nurseries away from adults, children in the new urban poor developments often shared rooms with seven or eight family members and did not attend school. Public and private spaces were not clearly defined in poverty stricken areas and children often took to the streets to escape the sweltering heat, oppressive smell, and cramped living spaces at home.

The quantity of unsupervised young people in the street contributed to the proliferation of children at the turn of the twentieth century, predominately in poor areas. It was not uncommon for young women to have “relations” and take a *novio* [boyfriend] when they were as young as twelve or thirteen and the men in question were in their twenties. There were many young single mothers living in México City; laws made it impossible for a woman to accuse a man of rape—only a father could accuse the man of rape, and because there were so many single women, many of them widows from the many years of war, prosecution was very difficult. Furthermore, if a woman was not a virgin when she was raped (and the man could prove it) an accusation against a man would be impossible to sustain (Speckman 30). This self-perpetuating problem caused a large increase in the numbers of poor children in already poor areas, where services were so scarce that “one out of every two children died in their first year from whooping cough, malaria, yellow fever and other contagious diseases” (Krauze 219).

Del Castillo-Troncoso points out that Porfirian aesthetics “consciously avoided aspects of reality that left a bitter taste on the aesthetic palate” (89).

Images of upper class white children dominated magazines, newspapers and media for children. These images attempted to make children look asexual and androgynous (particularly through choices in clothing and hairstyles) while toys (predominately imported from Europe and America) were designed to highlight gender differences. Del Castillo-Troncoso notes that poor and indigenous children were seen as a "scar on society that could not be hidden," often photographed in profile or with backs to the camera in contrast to upper and middle class children who were photographed unashamedly from the front (91). Indigenous children were readily referred to as "primitive" or "animal like" which stood in stark contrast to rhetoric that regarded the "little angels" and "precious dolls" of white upper and middle class parents (Del Castillo-Troncoso 83-112). The images of children in media reinforced cultural attitudes about race and the pseudo-science of positivism reinforced racist stereotypes.

The circus, science fiction stories, and puppet shows drew on upper and middle-class values in both content and aesthetics. For example the cover for a collection of "*Comedies for Children or Puppets"* published in1900 highlights a play *"Los celos del negro Don Folías,[The jealousies of the black [man] Mr. Folías]* (Posada Cover). The illustration reinforces Porfirian positivist generalizations about race and class. The illustration is a crude drawing of a black man stabbing a white man in a top hat. Behind the two figures is a soldier dressed in a nineteenth century uniform cheering. The black figure's face is grotesquely drawn beneath a *sombrero* (a hat used at the time by indigenous

and former slave laborers in the fields), one hand holding the knife high and the other in a tight fist. The white clown has both hands reaching out, arms stretched, one hand holding a pistol and the other wide open as if he is about to catch himself before he falls. The title of the piece is revealing as well. Spanish *folias* or recurring musical themes (often played on the guitar) were popular features in the *zarzuelas* of the day. In essence the title of the play is a pun, and, when taken together with the image, suggests that brutal violence is a "theme" among dark skinned people.

El espectáculo: The Circus, Science Fiction, and Puppet Shows

The railroad transported more than goods and people throughout the growing Mexican republic. It served as the principal mode of travel for cultural institutions from other states in the republic, port cities on the Atlantic cost, and the United States, bringing theatre, opera, operetta, *zarzuela* and the circus to the new cultural "palaces" in the capital. "In México City, 'shows' marked social stratification perfectly" according to Berman (198). Bull fighting was for everybody; circuses, dramatic plays and variety shows for the middle class; opera and classical music for the wealthy.

While there was much of what we might today call "popular" entertainment to be had throughout the republic, one must note that México is a large country and, given the heterogeneous geography and limited infrastructure at the turn of the twentieth century, small towns were relatively isolated. This affected the

matter of traveling entertainment. Most troupes made stops in the capital, but popular entertainments of all kinds could only afford to travel a few times a year, usually during festivals and saints' days, and not during seasons of inclement weather or during yellow-fever epidemics (Beezley 99). Any novel entertainments certainly would have drawn mixed crowds of adults and children, all hungry for amusement. In the capitol, there were many entertainments marketed to families, as well as to children and young people. Likewise, there were events geared toward mixed audiences of adults and children. It is important to note that children were most likely present at many theatrical manifestations, even productions that were not marketed specifically for them, or for "family audiences." Furthermore, due to the lack of surviving scripts and reviews, it is difficult to ascertain to what degree the productions that were marketed to children and families were actually tailored for young audiences specifically. There were many innovators in *teatro infantil* during this period and it can be argued that the genre of "theatre for families" was eventually absorbed by *teatro infantil* entirely—genres not to be separated again in México until the twenty-first century.

The developing streetcar system brought México City's divided Porfirian society together in many places in the city, but it did so most strikingly in the main square, or Zócalo. The Zócalo has been the central meeting place for Mexicans since the pre-Columbian area when the site served a similar function for the Aztecs of the great city of Tenochtitlan. The plaza, once bordered by the palaces

of Moctezuma, featured the national palace (the president's home and seat of government), a great cathedral, benches and gardens, and a bustling streetcar station. The Zócalo became the city's cultural hub too, offering government sponsored concerts every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Fairs, street entertainers, and traveling circuses set up in the Zócalo and the Zócalo was one of the few places where the social classes mixed freely and often.

Circuses often featured acts from abroad and headlined trends popular in Europe, such as "Chinese jugglers" or "Bohemian clowns." On a poster from a 1909 Circo Teatro Variedades, Empresa Florencio Tlaltipaque advertised that their show was "the only place in México where the public can have fun in the European and American tradition without taking any vacation..."(Circo Teatro).

Other public spaces were more exclusive. The Almeda Central Park was one such fashionable place to see and be seen under the new electric lights. Even though the Almeda was a public space, maintained by the government, admission was charged by the city, and the police enforced a strict dress code (Berman 174). The Almeda was the site of many *espectáculos* as well as a place for impromptu street performances. The meeting center of the 1884 Universal Exposition located in the Almeda was converted into a "meeting center for children" where dances and puppet performances were regularly held (174). In 1892, a permanent carnival opened with a carousel and a small roller coaster. Children could ride in carts pulled by sheep or goats, and older children could rent donkeys and ponies to ride through the park. For ten pesos (about two U.S.

dollars in today's money)[18], one could ride the "Great Rotating Wave" that promised to make it feel as though one were riding on the ocean (*La gran ola giratoria* Ticket). Although roller-skating had already been introduced in 1877, its popularity was renewed in the late 1890s. It was popular for middle class teenagers to roller skate at the Tívoli del Eliseo (located in the Almeda). Separate gender-bound rules were customary for the period: "Females could only skate on Monday and Wednesdays from ten in the morning until one in the afternoon…Males began at four in the afternoon and could skate until late in the night" (Berman 183).

The two largest theatres of the period, El Nacional and El Principal, both began to offer musical *tandas* or variety shows. By 1880, El Principal had changed its façade to look more French and offer more fare influenced by Europe and the United States. The upper class attended plays by touring Spanish artists, European opera companies, as well as other European authors such as Shaw, Ibsen, Moliere and Shakespeare.

It is clear from reviews and gossip columns that upper class children attended performances for adults at respectable theatres. Carlos Lago, a society reporter for *El Diario del Hogar* noted in 1896, that Jose Gamboa's *Un día vendrá* [*A Day Will Come*], produced in 1905 at the Teatro Arbeu had "a surprising number of fine children seated with their parents in the balcony;" he continued to

[18] Based on a calculation done on BajoEco.com that calculates the historical value of the Mexican Peso in U.S. Dollars.

note that “The children appeared to enjoy the fine work of the artists as much as their elders” (22). On the other hand, the philosopher and poet Manuel Gutiérrez Nájara suggested that the French operetta companies were becoming more and more daring with each performance, which “was fine in Paris where they had theatre exclusively for adults, but not in México, where the theatre is a family activity” (qtd. in Gutiérrez 252). Brun shares an anecdote about Alfonso Reyes, (an important author and philosopher of the period) who saw Dumas’s *Camille* at a very young age and, while he didn’t completely understand the play, “he was touched from then on by the magic of theatre” (38). Thus, there is evidence that upper class children were in attendance at many adult plays throughout the city.

Circuses traveled all over the republic, but were ultimately drawn to the possibility of larger and more profitable shows in the capital. As Reyes de la Masa notes, “Circus has always been for the family in México…with something for everybody” (48). The promise of considerable ticket sales led to an abundance of circus companies in México City and competition for ticket sales was intense. Critics often compared circus acts in periodicals and some companies formed partnerships in order to cut costs and increase profits. At the height of circus popularity in México City in 1901, The Century Circus organized “the great circus parade” with artists from all the circuses in the capital, featuring over 4,000 performers (Cárdenas 8).

While there were many other circuses, the most popular circus of the period was the Circo Orrin. One journalist from the period writes of the importance of the Circo Orrin:

> The Circo Orrin is not a business, it is a public institution. It is a custom as ingrained as *semana santa* [Easter holy week] or *las posadas* [Christmas processions]. It is the backbone of the happy tradition of the Mexican people… (qtd. in Berman 192)

Edward and George Orrin were acrobats from the U.S. who were hired by the Chiarini Circus in 1873. In 1878, they separated from the Chiarini and set up their own tent in the Plaza de Seminario, next to the Cathedral in the Zócalo.

In 1882, 23-year-old Ricardo Bell, a clown performer who worked for the Chiarinis came to work with the Orrin brothers. Ricardo Bell was the most famous clown and circus performer of the age. In 1886, Bell and his children performed in the less prestigious Plaza de Santo Domingo (behind the Zócalo) with the Circus Orrin. Theatre critic Armando de Maria y Campos wrote that Bell in 1900:

> …was at his peak. He had a funny appearance. His hair was blond—red crested, pulled up which matched the strange shape of his head…in his white face paint a thick blonde mustache emphasized that it was joining at the mouth—the lip painted vermillion and extended in a straight line artificially sideways. (María y Campos, *Tandas* 351)

Bell was famous for using puns and slang common in everyday Mexican speech. He was also noted for adapting his material based on who was in the audience. It

was often said Bell was a “clown between clowns. A favorite with the public and a friend of the president” (Berman 197). Bell gained so much notoriety in high society, that he was befriended by the president’s family, famous poets and writers, and was accepted as a member of the very prestigious (and exclusive) Jockey Club.[19]

Ricardo Bell was constantly inventing new ideas for circus shows. *La Acuática* featured a waterfall and a lake. In the performance, Florentino Carbajal, a little person, who was advertised as an “*enano*” known as “El Pirriplín,” swam around in the lake like a fish, doing acrobatics in the water. Carbajal was an important part of the Circo Orrin, and he presented many musical numbers and short plays with his family, also little people. A period writer explained the “classy nature” of the Carbajal performances: “Laughter rose triumphantly, frankly delightfully of ridicule without gall, of irony without venom, of sarcasm without violence, of wit without obscenity” (qtd. in Berman 193).

In 1888, Ricardo Bell founded “The Little Peoples Company” made up of people with dwarfism and their children, as well as adults of short stature. Their first performance was of the Grimm Brothers’ *Cinderella*. It was so popular that the group subsequently adapted *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp,* which also drew

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[19] The Jockey Club is a house in México City, originally built in 1737 to house the fifth Countess Del Valle de Orizaba. In the late nineteenth Century it became the capital’s most exclusive social club for politicians, intellectuals, and businessmen. The club was the setting for some of the revolutionary period’s most dramatic political scenes. For more about the Jockey Club and life in Porfirian México, see Beezley’s *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian México.*

large crowds. In 1901, they presented *The North Pole*, which featured a set covered in snow. Snow fell from the sky onto the audience and the cast of little people skated the show on ice skates.

In 1906, Bell and his children separated from the Circo Orrin and opened a new space on the Avenida Juarez. During this period, Bell dedicated most of his time to the administration of the new enterprise. In 1911, while traveling to see circus performances in New York, Bell suddenly died; the new circus on the Avenida Juarez did not reopen after his death.

Circus was not the only form popular with family audiences. Adaptations of science fiction novels were very popular fare for Porfirian family audiences during this era, particularly the novels of Jules Verne. The pseudo scientific nature of these books was in concert with the *científicos'* positivist ideology. Contrary to the naturalism of Ibsen and Chekhov, fantastic adventures between man and nature in a new utopian world built through rationalism and scientific observation became wildly popular themes in the new genre. An adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, originally published in 1872, was opened by the Constant Lecuyer Company in the new Teatro Arbeu with the same *mise en scene* and text as the original Paris production of 1892. Enrique Guasp de Peris and his company mounted an unauthorized version by a Spanish author, Mariano Larra, with music by Barbieri y Rogel at El Principal shortly thereafter. The second version was very different from the original adaptation and the original Verne text; however, the spectacle offered by the incredible scenery, working machines, and

futuristic costumes made it the crowd favorite among the versions. Cultural historian and period writer Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari wrote that these productions were “the most important of the last third of the nineteenth century,” as a quintessential example of the positivist zeitgeist onstage (Olavarría 2029).

Felipe Haro, a Mexican actor, broke with the vogue of theatre for family audiences. As an early pioneer of theatre specifically created for children, Haro developed scripts and productions with themes and aesthetics specifically designed for child audiences. While many groups were creating theatre for “family audiences,” or were marketing plays to children (but not necessarily tailoring the thematic and aesthetic content for children), Haro was unique insofar that he only created works for young people. Haro belonged to a small “but growing group” of upper class intelligentsia that believed that it was not necessarily important to produce theatre for children and young people for financial benefit, but rather because “it was important to offer children cultural alternatives to work produced for families and adults” (Brun 47). Haro began by showing children’s films at The Salón Verdi, a private event center with rooms for social gatherings popular with middle-class Porfirians. Later, the children who came to see the films began rehearsing and performing short scenes inspired by the films for the stage. The productions grew in length and in complexity, and by 1908 adults and children were performing together in scripts written by the young people in his group. As word of his work spread, Haro’s young audiences grew

until he finally erected his own permanent tent in the Almeda called, “The Arabian Nights,” and advertised his productions as *teatro infantil.*

While the aforementioned genres flourished in Porfirian México City, no form was as popular across classes or as influential as the puppet theatre. The genre was always for mixed audiences, however, puppet shows were some of the first live performances in México to tailor performances directly to young people. “*Pequeño Espectáculos*” literally, “small shows,” were first organized, directed and performed by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano who created the first variety puppet entertainments in theatre spaces that were not as well known or sophisticated, most notably the Teatro America. Gutiérrez Nájera notes that the Teatro America was so small and so dirty that audience members had to be careful not to touch anything for fear of getting dirty (251). Brun maintains that the shows were so good that even the “drunks that were accustomed to drinking there now showed up with a clean neck and with their children to see the puppets” (39). While the veracity of Brun’s anecdote is hard to confirm, William Beezley, the celebrated scholar of twentieth century Mexican history and culture argues that puppet shows were accessible to most of society and that “during the nineteenth century, helped create popular memories of history, geography, society, and culture that together constituted national identity” cutting across generational, racial and class boundaries” (*Mexican* 98). Puppet shows were popular for families because tickets were inexpensive, they offered something both aesthetically and thematically for children and for adults, and the variety

nature of the production made it possible for families to leave a performance early should a child become restless.

It is vital to understanding that *pequeño espectáculos* were performed many times from early in the afternoon until late in the evening, often in small and dirty places like the Teatro America or other such places like converted taverns. Brun comments that one company might have performed "five or six times in a given day" and that as the evening wore on, the shows became "more intense--depending on the audience—and how much everybody had to drink" (Brun email 10/2011). The puppet performances "early in the day" were more "appropriate" to the larger numbers of children in the audience, and as the evening wore on, adult themes or "entirely new stories" were told for the adult audience (Brun email 10/2011). Likewise the refreshments such as coffee and soft drinks, lemonade and candy for sale in the afternoon would be replaced with tequila, beer and *chicharrones* [pork rinds] in the evening. Beezely maintains "For puppeteers, the audience provided the final and only judgment. Consequently, they knew that the performance…mattered. Creating and meeting popular interest remained the constant challenge" (*Mexican* 99). Early in the day when children figured heavily in the audience, the show would be tailored on the spot for them. As night wore on, shows would reflect coarser language, characters, and adult themes. Considered "inconsequential," puppet shows were even able to "mock political, religious and social authorities" without censure because the "authorities generally ignored their activities" (Beezely *Mexican* 107). According to Brun,

> These companies were incredibly flexible in their repertoire. As they had many stories ready it was easy to adjust the program to meet the needs of the changing audience. If a joke was too vulgar for the little ones they would not tell it at an early performance. However, at a later performance, the same show might have been quite bawdy, obscene or political…. There were shows for kids and there were shows for adults. They were businessmen after all. (42).

While the Altamirano company was the first company to achieve notoriety with variety puppet performances marketed especially for family audiences, no puppet company was as popular or as well known as the Rosete Aranda Company. The Rosete Aranda Company's roots are found many decades before, but in the new "progressive" society, the company experienced its zenith. The company grew out of a rural tradition of doll play that formalized in the hacienda context in the early nineteenth century. A priest in Humantla asked the Aranda brothers to build a manger for a Christmas Nativity display; the brothers built the figures and the sisters made the costumes thus initiating the family's work with puppets. Neighboring haciendas called on the family to share their creation. An Italian immigrant, Margarito Aquino, showed the family how to transform their figures into marionettes and manipulate them with strings. Soon they were touring widely and invited to perform at the presidential palace. The company was very popular in rural areas and it grew and stylized rapidly with the growing

economy. The Rosete Aranda puppets represented everyone in society, and had changeable costumes made in miniature.

In 1880, the company renamed itself the Companía Nacional de Autómatas Rosete Aranda. During the Porfirian age, the company gained national notoriety, in part because the railroad allowed them to tour to great distances, and, because their puppets were from all sectors of society, they were able to relate to many audiences. At the height of their popularity they were offering six variety shows between three in the afternoon and eleven in the evening at the Teatro de América, in addition to touring nationally and internationally (Berman 197).

To illustrate their popularity, Enrique Olavarria y Ferrari offers the following quote from an article comparing the Gran Compania Fantastica (a puppet company) to the Rosete Aranda company:

> On the 27th of June in 1891, the Teatro Principal was taken over by the gentlemen [sic] Ricardo Zane, director of the Gran Compania Fantástica as they call in our programs. And it was nothing but a display of stick puppets magnificently dressed and with beautiful decorations… Of that there was nothing to admire: the puppets were moved with much less of the perfection to those of other Mexican companies that to which we have become accustomed; that are unsurpassed in this genre. (198)

For comparison, Ignacio Manual Altamirano wrote in 1884,

> You would love to see the Aranda puppets (that's what these artists from

> Humantla call themselves). They surely are a hidden treasure and luckily [they] have come to brighten our great city… The castle [in the set] looks just like the [professional] theatre and the perspectives are quite well done. But what is most surprising is their ability to capture so precisely (with what are only imitations) the precise movement of humans and animals. (198)

Given the popularity of the Aranda puppet shows, the Nacional and the Principal theatres both regularly featured the company in their offerings.

The puppet shows brought Mexican traditions that were popular in the countryside to life onstage with typical music. A certain nostalgia for the past pervaded the puppet shows, with historical dramas constituting the bulk of the company's repertory of this period. This is reflective of the company's history of traveling in the country where literacy and history books were scarce. Gutiérrez-Nájera notes that "through the puppets they [the rural townspeople] knew folk customs" from other regions of the country (251). Gerson Orozaco García notes that they were "the minstrels of their time… they made a real impact" (qtd. in Silva 2008).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the company had built thousands of marionettes and was performing all over the country. They had performed in the newly constructed Teatro Arbeu, El Principal, and other major houses in México City. As their popularity increased, they used their new wealth to better their productions with more spectacle, music, and variety bringing them more in line

with the tastes of Porfirian ticket buyers. Eventually they established themselves as the house company of the Teatro America, and renamed it Teatro Novedades. The Rosete Aranda also had a permanent presence in the Callejón Betiemitas, a street where the majority of the principal puppet companies worked in the city. Their permanent headquarters in the capital provided an anchor for the company's national and international tours. The most popular show performed in small towns and in the capital, much aligned with the positivist ideology of the time, was *The Parade of Peoples* that featured folk archetypes from all over the republic that danced and sung to traditional music.

While the company competed with other minor puppet companies, their main competition was the Circo Orrín in México City who also had begun to tour nationally. In order to remain competitive, the Rosete Aranda Company produced a version of the Circo Orrín with marionettes, "This involved complicated and elaborate actions to manipulate the marionettes. For example, it was necessary to use 16 strings for the human cannonball, and 36 strings to maneuver a ballerina puppet through her graceful performance" (Silva *Época* N. pag.). A review of the performance said that "even thought there were lots of strings that were sometimes distracting [that] the overall effect was even more spectacular than the [human] performers from the Circo Orrin" (qtd. in Silva Época N. pag.). Shows like those performed at the end of the nineteenth century; characterized by elaborate grand spectacle, a great number of individual puppets performing intricate dancing or other complicated stage tricks; ultimately came to define the

Rosete Aranda company's popular aesthetic. Even though they performed many kinds of shows of varying sizes and complexity, it was the colossal shows that became the company's popular hallmark well into the twentieth century.

Perhaps the largest and most famous Rosete Aranda show was performed for President Díaz himself. On the 15th of September in 1897, the Rosete Aranda Company was invited to perform at the Chapultepec Castle to celebrate México's independence and Díaz's birthday. They performed their new piece, *The September 16th Military March*, wherein six-hundred marionettes in full military uniform marched in front of the assembled guests and the president's family. Later this piece toured the country on the railroad, taking all the puppets, costumes, music, scripts, players, automobiles, and wagons with them as far as the United States in the north and Guatamala to the south.

To date, the most celebrated puppet play by the Rosete Aranda Company is *Vale Coyote*. The title character *Vale Coyote* was one of the Rosete Aranda company's most successful characters, and *Vale Coyote* has become one of the classics of Mexican theatre. After several self-deprecating yet essentially egocentric opening remarks, the puppet, clad in peasant's clothing with a thick country accent, begins a speech directed towards the ironically named "fellow sweat-izens." Beezely writes that el Coyote, "spoke for the desires and sentiments of the people" (*Mexican* 109). The main portion of his speech uses "irony, reference, and allusion" to describe "the stratification of society and the historical explanation for [Mexican] independence, and reflect[s] the general

contempt for high government and church officials" (127). Beezley, who is not a performance scholar, notes that the structure of *Vale Coyote* is less like a conventional drama and more based on "priests' homilies from the mass and sermons given on fiesta days," capitalizing on rhetorical strategies and aesthetics of "distortion, exaggeration, antithesis and exempla" (111).

Scholars and critics of *Vale Coyote* have long characterized the piece as theatre for adults, but is important to note that given the nature of puppet shows as well as the uneven distribution of "popular entertainments" available to children at the time, puppet performances like *Vale Coyote,* would have most likely been performed for mixed audiences of adults and children. Furthermore, the degree to which the Coyote was vulgar or political may have shifted based on how many young people were in the audience, the time of day, or other factors.

The company made a specialty of both critiquing and supporting *el porfiriato.* The Coyote was able to challenge Díaz, in part because the character was perceived as a mere marionette, and this theatre, with its simple child-like aesthetics, was considered benign and often ignored by the government. (Beezley *Mexican* 107). It lay outside the scope of censure, in spite of thematic content that criticized the government and shed light on the conditions of the poor and working classes. Using the aesthetics of child's play—doll play, marionettes, and puppetry, the Rosete Aranda company was able to openly perform a stinging, raucous satire of the regime and society in the years immediately prior to the Mexican Revolution. The religious origins of the Rosete

Aranda repertoire further protected their work from Porfirio's *palo*. The small family business that would become the famous Compañía Nacional de Autómatas Rosete Aranda grew from humble beginnings creating puppets to disseminate Catholic dogma, religious aesthetics, and morality. That such an organization was able to engage in the dissemination of subversive content suggests that, for audiences of such a respected institution, which offered wholesome entertainment, familiar and comforting fare, the appearance of Vale Coyote was beyond reproach. Many period newspaper articles, such as those in *El Universal* and *La Democrata*, note the importance of such pieces for young audience appreciation of Mexican cultural heritage. A 1908 note from *El Universal* in the "In Theatre" section notes that "The Rosete Aranda puppet company transported the audience to every corner of our great republic with incredible accuracy as the dances of yesteryear and today came alive with typical songs and indigenous ballads….Many children from the audience were dancing and singing in the street outside the tent as we left; still rapt with the magic that the Rosete Aranda company cast on its audience." ("En Teatro" N. pag.). Reviews cast the Compañía Nacional de Autómatas Rosete Aranda in this rosy light—seen ostensibly as nurturing wholesome fare that used its "magic" to aggrandize the republic (see e.g., *Érase*, Empresa, Silva). Díaz commended the company after the 1897 performance at the presidential palace, congratulating them on "a magnificent effort," and calling the company a "national treasure" (qtd. in Silva *Teatro* N. pag.). It was one of the only companies and certainly the oldest

and most famous one, with a history long enough to support parents and grandparents taking their children to see the same puppet shows that they saw when they were children. Perhaps this cast a protective layer of nostalgia around the company that seems to have shielded it from much official scrutiny regardless of the content of some of its later performances like *Vale Coyote:*

> This was a time when scores of people saw the true nature of their own time reflected in puppet theater. In that fictitious environment, both the tragi-comical reality of a country governed by scoundrels and thieves…and the paradigm of México's political class found a mirror that wittily reflected their own paradigms. (De Ita 19)

The popularity of *Vale Coyote,* coupled with its short length (less than fifteen minutes performed), allowed it to be easily included in the Rosete Aranda repertoire alongside other acts that may have been more or less political, juvenile, or diverse in scale. Probably due to the limited number of venues, reviews and performance records indicate that the Rosete Aranda Company often performed year after year in the same place. Fernando de Ita notes that in small communities without access to mass media, where "70 percent of the population lived in the countryside and those individuals could not read or write" that puppet performances may have been one of only a few select popular entertainments that was accessible (19). It is clear that the company was a respected cultural institution across classes. Puppet audiences were in many ways the physical embodiment of the Mexican mestizo identity. Cultural

anthropologist and artist Manuel Gutiérrez-Nájera went as far to say that that in order to see the Mexican *mestizo* identity clearly in the Porfirian era, “one must go to the puppets which is the last entrenchment” (252). Accessibility and notoriety helped ensure large mixed audiences.

De Ita confirms that puppet audiences were comprised of “many generations” including adults, children, and young adults. It is possible that the same children, and young adults may have seen popular Rosete Aranda pieces many times over the course of several years (19). This would allow for the possibility that children and young people may have seen pieces rife with political messages (such as *Vale Coyote)* many times, at various stages of their development in the years that immediately preceded the Revolution.

Ten to fifteen years after attending *Vale Coyote*, some of the same lower and middle-class children may have seen an afternoon production (or several productions) in Teatro America. These same children may have taken up arms against their government in what would come to be called the Mexican Revolution. It is impossible to know precisely what the children and young adults in the audience took away from *Vale Coyote* and other puppet performances; however, it is important to note the possibility that the inherent complexity of satire may have sent mixed ideological messages to young people. What was crafted to be funny or ironic for adults may have had completely different ideological implications for the young people in the audience.

The Porfirian ideology that defined so much of the changing cultural landscape had many consequences for the live performance that children and young people (together with adults) attended in this period. While there was much political rhetoric to revive an “authentic Mexican” voice in the arts, the greater part of the material investment spent by companies was on “modernizing,” based on European and U.S. models. Furthermore, the overarching emphasis on growing the economy drove many theatre makers to the capital, increasing competition between companies and stimulating innovation. In reality, very little effort was placed on developing the “uniquely Mexican” voice in theatre for children and young people with the singular exception of the work of Felipe Haro whose work might be seen as the first attempt to truly serve the child audience with children’s themes and aesthetics. However, Haro’s theatre was performed by children for children, and because of this it may have been seen as a “lesser” theatre.

Another consequence of Porfirian ideology on the live performances that children saw was the appraisal of spectacle and entertainment value over education or thematic content in producing productions for children and young people as well as in productions marketed for families. Additionally, these “spectacles” often featured foreign acts that were billed not for their unique skills and talents but for their appearances. Maria y Campos notes “Bohemian Clowns” were dressed to look stereotypically “Bohemian” and speak with exaggerated accents. Drawing directly from the American circus phenomenon of the “freak

show" (occurring at the same time) those with physical differences were often used onstage as seen in the work of Florentino Carbajal, or Bell's "Little People's Company." Bell often traveled north to meet American circuses and bring back these aesthetic "innovations" to México.

In the reviews of shows from the period, it is the technical or acrobatic skill that interests the crowds and reviewers. Circo Treviño drew crowds with its death defying lion and tiger acts and the Circo Pubillones featured a daring "automobile jump." The spectacular production of *Around the World in Eighty Days* that featured functioning machines and futuristic costumes clearly outdid another adaptation of Verne's book that used a more conventional approach at the Teatro Arbeu. There exists no record of text from the famous Rosete Aranda puppet show that featured hundreds of puppets, just a description of impeccable dress and virtuosic manipulation. Likewise, the review of the Gran Compania Fantastica tells us little about the content of the production, but rather criticizes subpar execution of spectacular effects.

This emphasis on a production's spectacular aesthetics is consistent with the official Porfirian ideology of the period. When President Díaz went to Mérida to inspect working conditions, the hacienda owners went to great pains to construct freshly white-washed houses, complete with modern furniture and new electric sewing machines for the homes that Díaz would inspect. When children were photographed for advertisements, it was always clean, white children in the newest clothes. On the rare occasion when indigenous or poor children were

photographed, they were usually photographed from the side or in the shadows, almost always with upper class children giving them gifts, or upper class white women teaching them lessons. The *Avenida de la Reforma* (Avenue of the Reform) was lined with monuments to the future, and architectural design of Europe and the United States. In keeping with the trend, theatre facades were torn down and replaced with new ones that looked French. In the theatre, as Gutierrez Nájera writes, it did not matter if somebody did not understand the play or opera in German or English, “it was more important to be seen in attendance” (223). To make it easier to be seen, President Díaz ordered all street vendors and vagabonds to be removed from the porticos of public theatres in 1886 (Berman 193).

At the end of the Porfirian era, as in most places around the world, there was little separation made between the theatre created explicitly for children and young people and theatre created for adults. Many *espectáculos*, like circus and magic shows were implicitly for family audiences with children. At the end of the Porfirian era, performances explicitly for children begin to emerge, largely because of the influence of positivist ideology that focused on child rearing and child development. This is most clearly seen in Justo Sierra’s efforts in the growing Secretariat of Fine Art and Education. For the first time, at the nation’s first normal schools, Sierra was training teachers in progressive educational principles that included opportunities for dramatic play and creative drama. Felipe Haro’s early projects drew on similar principles of dramatic play which later grew

into the first semi-professional "*teatro infantil"* in México City. The growing band of intellectuals working with Haro to create scripts to be played by and for children and young people were emblematic of a shift that was occurring. The conventions of performance were shifting from *espectáculos* that championed spectacle and adult themes to productions specifically designed for children's thematic and aesthetic sensibilities. In a sea of spectacular shows, circuses and puppet shows, a movement towards a professional theatre for children and young people had begun. As we will see, the influence of the *espectáculos,* and Porfirian positivist ideology would have a lasting influence on the field.

Chapter 2

From Porfirian Positivism to Bergson: Theatre, Children, and the Revolution 1910-1920

A bloody battle

Revolutionary ideologues like Miguel Cabrera, Ricardo Flores Magón, and the moderate presidential candidate, Francisco Madero (who is often credited with the official beginning of the revolution) had been fomenting opposition to Porfirio Díaz and his regime for many years, leading up to the spring of 1910. By the end of the first decade of the new century, economic pressures created an "alienated citizenry" (Hart 239). "*La revolucíon es revolucíon* [Revolution is revolution]," expounded Luis Cabrera in 1910, arguing that the fundamental purpose of the revolution was to "change the laws, customs, and the existing social structure in order to establish a more just arrangement" (Meyer 61). Ultimately, whether the armed rebellion he described was just or not remains as hotly debated by scholars today as it was then. Laborers were unemployed, the middle class suffered high inflation, and a growing class of newly affluent families had no political power. This, combined with the poor health of Porfirio Díaz, "who limited power but did not abolish it," an anachronistic feudal agricultural system, and new philosophies imported from Europe that would challenge the positivist thought of the Porfirian era galvanized otherwise sociologically diverse groups who were poised for change (Shorris 201).

The series of civil wars that would eventually come to be called the "Mexican Revolution" would ultimately create a demographic catastrophe unlike anything seen in the Americas, north or south, in the twentieth century (McCaa). Over 1.3 million Mexicans died in the war, and many more emigrated as refugees. Women suffered miscarriages, and parents lost children to preventable disease during the chaotic interwar period that began in the spring of 1910. As Robert McCaa notes, "the human cost of the Mexican Revolution was exceeded only by the devastation of Christian conquest, colonization, and accompanying epidemics, nearly four centuries earlier."

In 1915, us consul William O. Jenkins called the revolution "the war of the factions" and wrote a gory tale describing the intensity of the fighting to citizens in the United States (reprinted in Joseph 358). Jenkins's story is problematic on many levels—he oversimplifies the generals' motivations (a typical trait of the writing of most foreigners of the period), his writing evokes racist undertones, and he offers many overly simplified solutions for Mexican affairs.[20] In spite of its problems, in his article, "México has Been Turned into a Hell," Jenkins was able to describe the essence of México during this period, a country that in his own words had "degenerated now into a war of pillage and destruction… " (reprinted in Joseph 358). Jenkins continued to communicate the paradox of the Mexican

[20] Jenkins recommends that México should have allowed much more foreign intercession to resolve the conflict; as if México, having just ousted the French from the country not yet a half century earlier would have welcomed external involvement from yet another imposing power from abroad.

Revolution, citing "…the greatest evils which it started out to cure and the reforms it was to establish have been lost sight of in the maze of changes that have taken place, and the longer it is allowed to go on, the worse it will become" (Joseph 362). Certainly in the years immediately after Jenkins wrote his account, the violence did worsen, and the political maze became even more confoundingly tangled.

The most ferocious period in Mexican history was marked by an almost constant shifting of political allegiances amongst an ever-larger number of influential players bringing with them new concerns and fluctuating ideologies—all of them chaotically jostling for presidential power. When reading scholarship about this period it is often very difficult to ascertain what the true ideological aims of the leaders and the groups were. To a large degree, we know what the revolutionaries' states goals were at specific points on the timeline; however, we also know that those goals changed drastically given the new material and political realities of war. Moreover, much of the historical evidence has been lost and time has created many new ideological lenses through which to read the revolution, such as examinations of the role of women and children in the war, the relationship of the United States and other foreign interventions (or lack thereof) in the conflict, and new Marxist interpretations of the paternalistic agrarian structure and uprising. In order to see the place of children and the performances that they saw during the most violent years of the hostilities it is

important to remember that the ideological aims of the revolution and the revolutionaries during this period were ever shifting.

The beginning of the revolution is usually credited to Francisco Madero, an elite landowner who was successful in industry and finance, and effectively fomented opposition in many parts of Mexican society during *el porfiriato*. Mobilizing this political power, he ran for president in 1910. As Madero campaigned across the country, his popularity grew rapidly and contemporary theatre companies began to comment on the political situation.

While Madero's popularity was increasing with many sectors of society, Díaz was still very much respected by the Porfirian elite theatregoers. A play script for adults mocked Madero's political ambitions: entitled *Madero-Chantecler* "a rigorous political zoo tragicomedy in three acts (and verse in the fourth)," the text features a character named Madero-Chantecler who appears "in a trance, with his eyes fixed, invoking the spirits to help him win the presidency" (qtd. in Berman 247). The play was never performed publicly but circulated widely amongst theatre practitioners (Berman 246).

Fearing a Madero win, Díaz had the challenger arrested and won the election by a narrow margin in 1910. Díaz immediately mobilized the army in the capital to counter the growing social unrest and enforced strict controls on curfews and public assembly. While this was not enough to stop theatrical performances entirely, ticket sales dwindled as audiences feared for their welfare and events had to "return to closed forums—in theatres and cinemas" (Berman

249). Circuses, outdoor *espectáculos*, magic shows, and most puppet shows, "except those that performed in large theatres" were largely closed because of social unrest, "Women and children were protected, and it was rare to see them on the street or at cultural events unaccompanied" (Santos 144).

Madero escaped prison and was smuggled by supporters to the United States. In Texas, Madero hurriedly finished the *Plan de San Luis Potosí,* a call to arms against the Díaz government that he had begun in Mexican prison with poet and philosopher Francisco Vázquez Gómez. The San Luis Potosí Plan called for a destruction of the authoritarian dictatorship and named Madero the true president of México. The plan rejected the authority of Díaz's government, promoted federalism and democracy, promised a redistribution of land to the poor and indigenous peoples, and guaranteed rights for workers and political prisoners. Madero: "Fellow citizens, do not hesitate for a moment! Take up arms, throw the usurpers out of power, recover your rights as free men!" (qtd. in United States 1913).

These words were distributed to workers unions and villages all over the country. In the north a mixed group of cowboys, farmers, factory workers, and miners united with Pascual Orozco and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. In the south, Emiliano Zapata united indigenous workers from sugar and *pulque*[21] plantations with farm hands and other rebels in the seizure of large haciendas. Zapata's army divided conquered lands and spoils amongst the employees and indentured

[21] *Pulque is* an alcoholic agave product.

servants on the farms they took. Men, women and children all fought together with the rebel armies drawing widespread diverse support for Madero across the countryside. In México City, riots fueled by labor unrest and anti-American sentiments were overwhelming to the Díaz regime, who "would have suppressed workers as it did in the past…but now confronted widespread elite and agrarian violence and had no time to waste on the organization" (Hart 250). Ultimately, Madero's popular support prevailed and he took the presidency in 1911.

In the capital, theatre practitioners working for children seemed more concerned with the death of the beloved clown Ricardo Bell than with the political situation to which they ostensibly showed little concern (Berman 249). This stands in stark contrast to the adult theatres:

> Now that the libertarians were blowing the winds in a country where Madero was president, from November of 1911 onward, the political satire in the field of entertainment was definitively consolidated. Many times scripts spoke about current events, political scandals, to criticize the government, generals, and national political figures…the press like the producers enjoyed the freedom of expression that permitted making fun of the new class of politicians. (Berman 250)

Partly in reaction to this criticism and to some extent because he was trying further dissociate himself from Díaz, Madero' halted construction on the long awaited National Theatre. Madero called for interested contractors to submit

proposals to repurpose the site, drawing further disapproval from many in the theatre community.

Immediately after Madero's takeover, it appears superficially as though children's cultural institutions were relatively unaffected. Soon after Madero was in office, daily life for the city's children returned to Porfirian norms (Brun 51). Berman notes that "The Mexican Revolution isolated cities and towns; however, in the capital of the country, with the exception of the ten tragic days in 1913, [the capital] was kept nearly on the margin of the violence. There was not one year between 1910 and 1920 in that there was not at least one opening in one of the various theaters" (233). The circus resumed as before, puppet shows were back in business, and otherwise

> the capital seemed a place alien to any violent insurrection and throughout all of 1911 the theatres, *los jacalones* (the popular term for social gathering places), *los tívoli* ice skating rink, [as well as] the centers of entertainment where one could stroll, find restaurants and see plays continued to re-open their doors. (Berman 249)

However, as the ideology of the government changed, the productions marketed to children and families followed suit or pushed back with diverse oppositional voices in a delicate balancing act that characterized all of the professional theatre in México City during this period. Furthermore, an ideological shift in the way adults were constructing childhood was occurring below the surface; this would

have a considerable impact on the future of child and youth culture, and on theatre made specifically for children.

Largely due to the proliferation of photography during the interwar period (1910-1911), the Victorian image of the ideal child was transformed into a "militarized, politicized metaphor for the revolution" (Albarrán *Children* 71). Photographs of child soldiers posing with weapons and other military equipment were common in period publications. In contrast to the idealized romantic images of children from the *porfiriato*, child soldiers of the lower classes, including white, mestizo and indigenous children, became a common subject for photojournalists of the period. Elena Jackson Albarrán articulates the paradox that these images represented for the populace:

> these wartime images also justified the armed struggle as a moral cause so pure that even children participated. On one hand, war and violence revolutionized the popular perception of childhood, refashioning the definition of civic participation previously not associated with children. On the other hand, due to photography, children revolutionized the perception of war by lending it an air of moral impunity. (*Children* 67)

No longer separated by their "purity" and "innocence," children during the revolution began to occupy a new space in relation to their adult counterparts. In many ways for both children and adults in the capital, this created new perceptions of childhood. As civil wars continued to break out across the country

and inflict their devastating effects in the capital and all over the country for the rest of the decade, this phenomenon became even more prevalent.

From Porfirian Positivism to Bergson

This ontological shift was underscored by a larger shift in the rhetoric of the period demonstrated by intellectuals who began to argue that intuition and experience—liberal Bergsonian ideals—were more beneficial to the health and wellbeing of society than the rationalism championed by Porfirian *científicos* a decade earlier. Martin Luís Guzmán, Antonio Caso, Alfonso Reyes, and most notably, José Vasconcelos[22] were all highly influenced by Henri Bergson's *The Creative Mind*, published in 1907, and "may have led to the formation in México of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*" an important philosophical youth civic organization for young people that had much influence on art and culture (Shorris 202). Earl Shorris implies that Mexican intellectuals were aware of Bergson in spite of the fact that that Bergson was not published in México until 1932. Shorris notes that Bergson's "notion of open and closed societies was established early on in his career" and, given that Mexican intellectuals were well traveled and nearly a quarter of the population was foreign born (predominately from Western Europe), it is likely that many Mexicans would have been familiar with Bergson's early writings before his later works were published in México (202).

[22] I address Vasconcelos and his influence at length in Chapter 3.

It has been argued that Bergson's ideas are closer to religion than science. Instead of resting solely on the power of logic as the Porfirian positivist politicians had in the decade before, from this point forward Mexican politicians began to invoke the greatness of the spirit and of human intuition, just as Bergson advocated for an "open society" based on creativity and intuition. In the Bergsonian view, open societies allowed citizens to express their "*élan vital"* or vital force necessary for societal growth, and social evolution. Closed societies, more aligned with the positivist philosophies championed by Comte, were based on science and repetitive intellect.

Closed societies stifled creativity and Shorris argues that "…the brief waltz with science and sociology brought about by the love affair with Comte had to end, for it was contrary to the Mexican character and tradition" (202). The members of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* and other intellectuals, writers, philosophers, and artists of the period were inspired by Bergsonion thought in part because they thought it to be quintessentially "Mexican" in many ways. Caso, Vasoncelos, Guzman and others argued that México was simultaneously an ancient and modern civilization; they felt it was a highly creative society that showed tendencies towards a kind of self-sacrifice and human relationship that was uniquely suited to the kind of open society that Bergson was writing about. For such thinkers, these facets of Mexican culture had pre-Columbian Meso-American roots that simultaneously facilitated the spread of the Bergsonian ideas

in México and “produced a new understanding of the Mesoamerican worldview” (Shorris 203).

Key for Bergson was the understanding of time, “… this duration which science eliminates, and which is so difficult to conceive and express, is what one feels and lives,” which is the notion of the élan vital itself, a power that exists in all beings and ultimately denotes God or the highest power responsible for all evolution (Bergson 6). Mexican philosophers felt that there was a clear connection between Bergson and animism, as well as other pre-Columbian beliefs of the Meso-American indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples were no longer seen as “primitive” and subhuman, but rather characterized as decidedly spiritual and transcendently close to nature. However problematic, this change in thinking ushered in a new era of official and unofficial policies that affected the status of indigenous peoples and the position of their culture in Mexican society both directly and indirectly.

Like indigenous peoples, children and youth were seen as being “highly intuitive—spiritual beings…. animalistic in nature” who in many ways “naturally” embodied Bergsonian notions perfectly. Albarrán’s careful study of letters written to the president after the overthrow of the Díaz regime prove “that many of these people saw the revolution as synonymous with the governing head of state, and entrusted him with the care of their family as promised in political speeches and reinforced through murals and art” (Albarrán *Children* 76). These letters, when taken together with changes in new rhetoric about children, changes in child

culture and art, and a new concern for child welfare and education, illustrate a profound shift in Mexican ideology that:

> viewed the child as more central, more entitled, more active, and more productive. As adults changed their ideas about children, new forms of interaction emerged in which children could participate in the reconfiguration of a revolutionary nation. (*Children* 77)

As children gained more influence, so did members (and former members) of the *Ateneo de la Juventud,* which achieved a level of power not seen in young people's groups before the Madero presidency. The organization was founded at the end of *el porfiriato* by a group of young philosophers and artists who sought to change the positivist system enforced by the Díaz regime. Officially the central mission of the organization was to "promote intellectual and artistic culture" (qtd. in Pedraza 26). "*Ateneo de la Juventud*" can be literally translated as "Athenaeum of Youth." The *Ateneo* was a place where young people aged 15-25 came to debate the social issues of their day, utilizing contemporary philosophy from Western Europe. Their social programs had governmental support, which funded these young artists, teachers, and philosophers in execution of many educational programs throughout the city, and later into the further reaches of the republic. During Madero's presidency, the *Ateneo* developed new literacy workshops and facilitated free conferences at places of work around the city. Many members of the organization went on to prominent careers in politics, in the Department of Education, and in the arts.

Prompted by the *Ateneo,* the Department of Education saw its first national “Congress” and as a result opened the first school cafeterias. Madero, founded “La Universidad Popular [The People’s University]” and Alfonso Reyes was named Secretary of the National Preparatory School (Brun 51). Madero appointed many former “*atenetistas*” as the first professors of the National Autonomous University of México alongside several Díaz era bureaucrats.

The *Plan de San Luís Potosí* had promised collaboration between those considered part of the former regime including many officers from the military who had supported *el porfiriato.* Madero urged the populace to disarm and work towards cooperation with the former regime. Furthermore, Villa, Zapata, Orozco and others who had helped Madero overthrow the dictatorship were marginalized in Madero’s new government (Meyer 439). Many interpreted Madero’s cooperation with his former enemies and the suppression of popular revolutionary leaders as ideological capitulation, surrendering the very essence of the revolutions stated goals. His former supporters quickly branded Madero incompetent.

Throughout the revolution, Haro’s company, *Cuentos Representados* (Depicted Stories) was thriving at their theatre *El Teatro Bernardo García*, located in the Santa María la Rivera district of the capital. Brun notes, “His [Haro’s] social position allowed him to invite the president’s wife, Sarita Perez de Madero and the Bishop, Antonio Paredes, to see his productions with distinguished families” (Brun 51). Ostensibly, Haro continued to produce the

same type of traditional and Eurocentric fare that he presented before the revolution after Madero took the presidency. This review of the first lady's visit from *El Imparcial* notes:

> In addition to being fun and beautiful, it is highly educational and moral, which makes for very happy parents. Today in the afternoon they will present *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Puss in Boots*. In the same month the company staged *The Magic Flute* (Hans Christian Anderson) and *The Magic Powders of Pirlimpimpin*. (reprinted in Reyes de la Maza 268)

The newspaper did not lose the chance to report Madero's wife at a highbrow theatre event full of elite families, "The wife of President Madero, Sarita Perez was in attendance and appeared delighted throughout the performance as [were] many other distinguished women" (reprinted in Reyes de la Maza 268).

Madero was often criticized for being out of touch and for only serving the interests of the wealthy and foreign investors. This was certainly true of his agricultural policies, which seemed to be falling far short of campaign promises. In a speech given to Congress in 1912, Luis Cabrera, a federal deputy and Madero supporter, criticized Madero's agrarian reform efforts. From this speech, we can clearly see the ideological shift occurring from Porfirian positivism to a new philosophy rooted deeply in Bergsonian ideals and Mesoamerican memory:

> I believe that politics is the most concrete of the sciences, as well as the most concrete of the arts, and extreme caution is needed to avoid rationalizations that rely on analogies with other countries and other

> periods. Our political system requires a personal and local knowledge of our country and our country's needs, not general principles gathered from the study of other peoples. There is only one country that can teach us the solutions: New Spain… (Cabrera 143)

For the first time in Mexican political discourse, Cabrera's discursive shift—using "science" in a Bergsonian way—points to a new philosophical framework for Mexican policy makers without the "morally stifling rigidity of positivism" (Shorris 203). For theatre makers and educators this new philosophical approach had significant impacts on both form and function. As we will see below, this new Bergsonion framework relied on creating a unifying "Mexican" memory grounded in quintessentially Mexican beliefs, which reflected a blend of both Spanish and indigenous philosophy. *Teatro infantil*, then, later theatre for children and young people, would become an ideologically loaded space in which to impart this new "mestizo" identity through both content and aesthetics.

The Huerta Dictatorship

Within three weeks of Cabrera's speech, Zapata drafted the *Plan de Ayala*, calling for the overthrow of Madero. While General Orozco and his army remained loyal to Madero for a brief period, Orozco soon became the leader of opposition forces in the north and Madero appointed Victoriano Huerta to lead the federal troops. Huerta quickly arrested Pancho Villa, a rebel leader gaining rapid influence in the north, for treason, but Villa escaped from prison on

Christmas Day and fled to Texas and continued to fight Huerta from there. By 1913, a full-fledged civil war was being waged again in the north and in the south. In México City, the *Casa de Obrero* (workers union) had initiated widespread strikes and by 1913 the war was being waged on the streets of the capital. Virtually all theatre in the capitol had ceased.

In February of 1913, conspiring with the U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, Huerta assumed the role of the presidency and secretly had Madero and the Vice President, Jose María Pino Suárez killed. This event is known in México as *la decena tragíca* (ten tragic days) from February 9 to February 19, 1913, wherein the conspiracy, execution, and ultimately the change of power took place. “México City was paralyzed,” writes Brun, “All the theaters closed their doors. The children were sheltered in their homes” (52). By order of Huerta’s new government, the theatres were forced to reopen on February 22, 1913, just twelve days after the coups. Shorris and Knight suggest that Huerta’s insistence on reopening the theatres and other cultural institutions was a gesture intended to show foreign diplomats and journalists in México City that the citizenry had accepted the new government’s help to protect foreign investments. While the theatres did open, the freedom of expression enjoyed under Madero proved to be short lived as Huerta’s government strictly punished any oppositional voices in the theatre. This forced many artists to leave the capital for other cities in the Republic or to emigrate overseas where they wrote many plays critical of the regime.

It seems that while many artists left the capital and the country, the few practitioners working in *teatro infantil* were largely left alone because their work was considered "inconsequential" to the regime (Beezely *Mexican* 107). With the exception of the Rosete Aranda Company, one can see from the titles and reviews, that artists like Felipe Haro were working on traditional, apolitical pieces. The field was still in its nascent state, and Western European fairy tale adaptations such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in Boots,* and *Aladdin and the Lamp* dominated what little work was created explicitly for children after the revolution. It is also important to note the violence in the capitol during Huerta's dictatorship. The Almeda and the area near the Zócalo (where many of the *espectáculos* and theatres operated) was often under heavy gunfire. It would be very rare to see women and children out of doors in these areas (except for those who were involved in the fighting). Likewise, according to the many catalogues of plays performed during this period, it seems that touring foreign companies also avoided the capitol. Foreign embassies discouraged their citizens from travelling to México, "especially to the capitol" (Guzman 314).

Huerta's dictatorship was brutal and short lived. The new U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was appalled by the events and recalled Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson from México[23]; insisting that Huerta win the presidency by

[23] President Wilson was searching for permission to use force against Huerta's regime that allegedly harassed U.S. sailors who were posted off the Mexican coast city of Tampico. When the U.S. government demanded a 21-gun salute of the U.S. flag on Mexican soil and Huerta's government declined, Wilson ordered

democratic election. In his speech to the U.S. Congress on April 20, 1914, President Wilson said, “México is torn by civil strife. If we are to accept the tests of its own constitution, it has no government. General Huerta has set his power up in the City of México, such as it is, without right and by methods for which there can be no justification” (United States 1914). The United States had publicly become a key player in the conflict.

In response to Huerta’s dictatorship, Victoriano Carranza drafted *el Plan de Guadalupe*, which initiated yet another political party, “the Constitutionalists,” who sought to overthrow Huerta and reestablish the constitutional democracy. The *Plan* named Carranza as the interim president to be installed once the newly formed constitutional army took México City. The Zapatistas (followers of Zapata) in the south and Villistas (followers of Pancho Villa) in the North, also worked to overthrow Huerta. The “Constitutionalists” came to represent rural interests. Comprised largely of cowboys, sharecroppers, miners and railway workers, they aligned themselves with already formed *Zapatistas* and *Vilistas*. The Constitutionalists worked to bolster democracy, federalist principals, and workers rights, but stood in opposition to socialism. The Constitutionalists enjoyed populist support from regional elites and well-born southern landowners. Given that the groups that comprised the Constitutionalists were widespread across the

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the Navy to blockade the Port of Veracruz, the most important Mexican seaport at the time (US 1914). Many scholars have argued that the U.S. was more interested in the high concentration of U.S. citizens and capital in the rich oil-producing region than in the offense.

country, well organized (amongst themselves), and well armed, many factions were now waging war separately for common goals across the country. Villa had already seized control of the north and Zapata was gaining ground in the south (Meyer 449). With the growing support of the Constitutionalists, these armies forced many elite landowners (*los haciendados)* in the center of the country to flee their countryside haciendas. Many sought refuge in México City or emigrated to the United States or Europe.

In Sonora, Plutarco Elías Calles, Alvaro Obregón, Benjamin Hill, and Roberto Pesquiera stood in political opposition to Huerta and the Constitutionalists. This influential group came to be called *los sonorenses* (the Sonorans) and stood largely for indigenous and urban interests. The Sonorans had many left-leaning tendencies; and believed in comprehensive agrarian reform, which included a redistribution of the land to the poor and indigenous, encouraged unionization and the workers rights, far-reaching educational reforms, and many new social programs. This markedly urban group appealed with the poor and lower working classes, especially with workers in large cities.

In the spring of 1914, Villa's forces were advancing from from El Paso to the northeast, and Obregón's army was charging up the Pacific Coast from Guadalajara, both by train. Huerta's army had just lost Zacatecas, and the race to seize control was literally a question of hours. In a strategic move, the U.S. cut fuel support to Villa, and his train stalled just north of the capital, allowing Obregón to ride into the city to witness Huerta's resignation. The interim

president, Huerta's former Vice President Francisco S. Carvajal, surrendered the rest of the federal army to Obregón in exchange for the protected evacuation of the upper class, who lived in the capital, as well as those who had sought refuge there.

The blockade of Veracruz, military expenditures, the incredible losses of infrastructure to the rebel armies including the telegraph lines, highway access to the ports, and most devastatingly the loss of control of the railroad to the rebels created an economic and humanitarian crisis in the capitol that made professional theatre productions virtually impossible. Aside from home schooling and educational programs for the relatively few child soldiers and children of soldiers on the train children rarely went to school or to cultural programs during this period. As Brun writes, "there was not children's theatre either because children continued to be sheltered in their houses. Food and money was scarce" (52). Food no longer arrived into the capital by train, as the railroad had been co-opted for other uses—malnutrition in México City was widespread and many children and young people died of starvation.

By 1914, the train in the hands of the rebels had become the great symbol of the revolution that it remains today. Touted repeatedly as one of *el porfiriato's* greatest contributions to the Mexican society, the railroad's logistical (and symbolic) power was co-opted by rebel armies to move troops and supplies across a large country. Ideologically, the train acted as a conveyor of philosophy,

news, and commerce. Rebel armies, complete with women and children, traveled in and on empty boxcars as the requisitioned trains traversed the republic.

In a rare 1914 photo[24], Pancho Villa is performing a puppet show on the train surrounded by enthralled children and teachers. In the image, we see Villa with his animated sunburned face, manipulating a *campesino* marionette with both hands. This image illustrates a shift that was occurring in the theatre made for young people during the revolution: theatre was being used as a teaching tool. Using aesthetics made popular during the days of the *espectáculos*, Pancho Villa gathered children and teachers together to educate both the children (as they were not in school[25]) and the teachers in the political and philosophical tenents that Villa believed would "become institutionalized by federal departments" after the war (Zuñiga personal int.). In the image we see Pancho

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[24] In the private collection of theatre scholar and artist Antonio Zúñiga, México City, México. As part of dramaturgical research for a production of *Los niños de Pancho Villa [The Children of Pancho Villa],* a 2008 theatre for young audiences production, the director, Zúñiga, acquired the image from the son of a soldier who fought in Villa's army. The image is the only one in existence, and did not belong to Zuñiga, who refused to let it be photocopied. I did receive permission to cite and describe the image. Other similar images exist in *Los Niños Villistas, (Conaculta 1996)* that Zúñiga used to corroborate the validity of the photo that features Pancho Villa, from other angles, with the same children and teachers in train cars.

[25] Many biographies of Villa describe that he was a "peculiarly interested" in children and their issues (Alcubierre 179). Beatriz Alcubierre, Alan Knight and Silvestre Terrazas all have written extensively about the incredible improvements Villa made to education for children in the north and for his affinity for children's causes. Julio Cárdenas notes that after the revolution Pancho Villa would invest largely in circus companies for children. For more on children and Villa see, Alcubierre and King's *Niños Villistas.*

Villa using the basic tools of theatre, storytelling and theatricality (in this image puppetry), to simultaneously teach and entertain his pupils in the evening. The revolutionary transformation from theatre as spectacle to theatre as an educational tool, which used aesthetics from a previous generation, could be seen clearly on the train at the height of the most violent years of the revolution.

President Venustiano Carranza

Between 1914-1915, México City changed hands many times during the ensuing hostilities that broke out in an epic in political power play between the remaining parties. As Meyer notes:

> By mid-1915, the military outcome of the Revolution was no longer in doubt. Political and social results had become the core issues. The Constitutionalists, who had been united against the military prowess of the Villistas and the ideological force of the Zapatistas, disagreed about the degree of democracy México could realistically achieve, the pace of agrarian reform and the amount of power and independence that the anarcho-syndicalists of the labor movement should be given…This vision of the future carried over from the 19th century because México 's transitional working classes were still preoccupied with the loss of artisan freedoms and community cohesion, rather than with the achievement of state power. (456)

In 1915, Venustiano Carranza returned “triumphantly” to the capital to seize power (Brun 53). Scholars (including Alan Knight and James Suchlicki) concur that the era of Carranza was the first period to see some of the revolutionary ideology implemented in actual policies, Huerta’s deposal did not bring an ensuing period of peace, but rather ushered in yet another violent period of civil war and, at times, anarchy. Throughout Carranza’s presidency, Zapata and Villa continued to fight against the federal forces—and internally with each other. Suchlicki characterizes the chaos of the period noting that, “While Zapata’s Indian’s [sic] begged for bread in the city, Villa’s troops raped, murdered and robbed the residents of México….Carranza and his followers issued decrees and proclamations advocating agrarian reform, labor rights, and the destruction of the army and clerical elements” (108).

In spite of the chaos, for the bourgeois in México City, “Little by little the capital returned to its normal rhythm. All of the theaters opened their doors again and with them theatre for children and youth returned” (Brun 53). With much fanfare, Felipe Haro’s theatre opened for children in October of 1915 when the capital was finally deemed safe again for women and children to travel alone (Brun personal interview). Haro’s company *Cuentos Representados* performed and Haro himself directed a revival of *The Magic Powders of Pirrim-Pimplin* and another revival, *The Three Grapefruits* at the White Theatre to mark the occasion (Brun 53).

Known as the “Bearded One” or just “the Old Man,” Venustiano Carranza was nearly twenty years older than most of his intellectual contemporaries and political rivals. Like many figures of the revolutionary era, the aging leader’s philosophical and political beliefs were ambiguous and often grounded more in personal allegiances and ego than in a uniformly well-defined ideology. Many historians have traditionally painted Villa and Zapata as rebel leaders with clear socialist goals rooted in a Marxist ideology, in stark contrast to how they positioned Carranza. In many ways Carranza seemed to be from a different realm—expounding a variegated ideology colored by Mexican leaders of the past. Carranza still pledged allegiance to Benito Juárez and, like Juárez, was mistrustful of foreign intervention, especially of México’s neighbors to the north, whom he rebuked at every opportunity. The brutally anti-clerical “Bearded One” opposed the influence of the Catholic Church vehemently. Like Díaz, Carranza longed for a controlling government with an authoritative chief executive officer that wielded its might in virtually every domestic and international affair. Alan Knight notes that like the other governments that came before and would come after him, Carranza had to tackle all the “specific problems engendered by the Revolution” as well as the more pressing problems of “economic collapse, inflations, dearth and disease” (435).

Knight argues that the Carranza regime “prospered less because of their rare, intrinsic qualities, but because they were in the right place at the right time,” noting a “significant psychological change” in the populace that allowed Carranza

to succeed. This change is described as a “mood” of war-weary men who longed for peace and stability and who no longer “itched to ‘ir a la bola’ (‘join in the fun’) [Knight’s translation]” of going to war (436). However, one of Carranza’s intrinsic qualities was his ability to summon the power of the past (stability, prosperity, and peace) into the rhetoric of the present. In many ways Carranza’s personality and age seemed to provide him a stable platform on which to embark on many of the Revolution’s first lasting reforms. While Carranza was only president for a brief period (he was assassinated in 1920),[26] the changes he ushered in through the Constitutional Convention of 1917 and during his short time as president would have long lasting impacts on official ideology, education and culture.

In 1916, Carranza held elections for a committee to draw up a new charter constitution. Completed in 1917, this document, known as *The Constitutional Convention of 1917*, is most recognized for its comprehensive redefinition of private and public property. This document paved the way for extensive real property reforms with regard to agrarian, mineral, and church ownership rights. Most notable for theatre practitioners interested in working with children, this constitution illustrates in Article 3 specific details about the role of the federal government in Mexican art and education:

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[26] In 1920 when Obregón’s army marched on the capital from the north widely supported by labor organizers in the city, Carranza fled and was assassinated by one of his own sentinels (Suchlicki 112). The Mexican author and cultural critic Fernando Benítez illustrates the last days of Carranza’s life and his ultimate murder in 1920 in *El Rey Viejo* in detail.

> ..[Mexican art and education] should be completely independent of any religious doctrine and based on the results of scientific progress; should fight against ignorance and its effects: servitude, fanaticism and prejudice. The teaching will be democratic and national; it will foster respect for the individual and the family, and the appreciation of human brotherhood and equality, and therefore reject the discrimination based on race or sex or religion. (1917 *Constitución*)

Yet, as Suchlicki notes, "the radicals' addition mandating that education be secular caused bitter resentment among conservative and clerical elements" (110). Carranza famously called the church, "the most baneful and perverse enemy of México" landing a "death blow to the power and influence of the Catholic Church" (qtd. in Suchlicki 110).

In addition to education, the constitution also brought about great reforms in land tenure and workers' rights. Article 27 redistributed large landholdings possessed by *hacienderos* as well as restored land to indigenous peoples. Importantly, the private land ownership became a privilege, not a right, conveying to the state all mineral rights. The issue of mineral rights would prove to be a significant foreign relations debacle.

For workers, the constitution's Article 123 recognized their rights to collective bargaining, to organize and strike and, for the first time, established norms for reasonable compensation based on an eight-hour workday and a six-day workweek. Suchlicki, Brun, and others have argued that the principal aim of

this article was political—to garner loyal support for Carranza's regime from the growing labor movement. In 1918, Luis Morones seized the opportunity created by the new constitution and created the first national union, the *Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos* [The Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers] (CROM) which would become very important politically in the next presidential election.

Before Carranza could enact the many changes that were made in the constitution (some, like Suchliki and Hart, argue that he never intended on doing so), Carranza had to regain control of the military. With agitated Zapatistas in the south, and insufficient control over the federal army to defeat Zapata militarily, Carranza conspired with his officers to have Zapata killed. On April 10, 1919, Pablo González an army officer executed Zapata at the Chinameca hacienda. Even though Zapata was physically dead, his political movement continued (and in many ways still does), much to the consternation of Carranza and his regime.[27]

Carranza's belief in a strong federal government resulted in the official federalization of the Secretary of Public Instruction and of Fine Arts. The regime named Luís Manuel Rojas as its first federally supervised Secretary; however, despite the strong new federal department that answered directly to the president, each governor effectively was put in charge of the schooling for his state. States of the republic still received a large portion of their funding from the

[27] Knight notes that Zapata was "invested with a mythic significance" even after death, and that some believed that Zapata "supposedly lived on…even said to be fighting alongside Hitler twenty years later" (520).

federal government for education, but now each state would have discretion over the management and distribution of these funds. In the Distrito Federal, the federal government continued to oversee public education.

Gustavo Villatoro worked for the Secretary as chair of the "Theatre Section," which oversaw various federal theatre projects, theatre construction projects (such as the Palace of Bellas Artes), and productions for visiting foreign dignitaries. During President Carranza's term, the important "*Ateneo de la Juventud*" was recreated. Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano, Jaime Torres Bodet, Salvador Novo and Xavier Villarrutia became its most influential and famous members (Brun 54). Novo and Villarrutia published a magazine called *Policromías,* and was made up of articles comprised of students from the student body of the National Preparatory School. Brun argues that these four men would become "important men in the creation, promotion, and realization of a national theatre for children and young people" (54).

In order to mark the end of the Constitutional Convention in 1917, a famous director and theatre maker for adults, Alberto Michel, was contracted by the federal government to mount a revival of the works of Felipe Haro's company for children. The production included a rendition of *Puss in Boots* and the popular magical comedy, *The Magic Flute* (Brun 54). The selection of a play for children is emblematic of the Carranza administration's conviction in the importance in education and his simultaneous focus on the future. However, it is telling that the administration chose a play and from the magical comedy genre. In many ways

this selection is illustrative of Carranza's paradigm—bolstered by a nostalgia for the philosophy of Benito Juárez and a time gone by, "the Old Man" often seemed to be caught between wanting to make bold changes for the future, but with his feet firmly rooted in the past.

During Carranza's presidency, the federal budget for education, art, and culture was greatly reduced, bringing the status of the arts and artistic output down to a level that art makers "were accustomed to during *el porfiriato*" (Brun 54). The federal government quit subsidies to private theatre companies begun during the Madero presidency and in keeping with Carranza's thinking about a strong executive branch, only used federal dollars to sponsor performances when productions were found fit to serve the goals of the administration (Brun personal interview).

The rival Obregón government had "struck a deal between the economic nationalists of the revolution and foreign businessmen," who were comprised of predominately US oil and railroad firms (Hart 342). The Carranza administration characteristically towed a hard line with American oil companies and other foreign investors in México, and challenged their claim to unlimited property rights. In spite of allegations of Mexican kidnapping of U.S. businessmen and a scandal involving the arrest of U.S. Consul William O. Jenkins, Carranza "refused to reassure American banking, mining, and oil concession holders regarding their rights in the future. In doing so he provoked the wrath and indignation of Secretary of State Robert Lansing" (Hart 342). To exacerbate the situation, the

Russian Revolution was raging in Europe with the U.S. firmly on the side of the White Army, and México officially neutral, but with rumored Marxist sympathies. This frightened American interests in México, who called on the US government to intervene further. Back in the U.S., a civilian organization, “The Association for the Protection of American Rights in México” was formed as an anti-Carranza movement that advocated and lobbied for invading México and making the entire republic a U.S. protectorate. Tom Schuster has examined the ambiguous role of the Communist International (Comintern) in México during the Carranza administration by examining Mikhail Borodin, a Comintern agent who worked in México during this period. Schuster concludes that “radical ideas that shared early communist roots, such as the ideas of Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, were incorporated into the Mexican Constitution of 1917” and that these ideas challenged the United States’ official positions (2012). While the official role of the Communist party in the Carranza administration is not completely clear, it seems plausible, when considering Schuster’s analysis, that the Carranza administration was making an ideological public relations move in the spring of 1919 when it chose to sponsor the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova, in an outdoor performance marketed specifically for children and youth. By doing so, the production drew official and unofficial attention to the Russian Revolution. Furthermore, comparison of the two revolutions brought Carranza’s land reforms (made in the Constitutional convention of 1917) that Carranza had used as justification against the U.S. property claims to the fore. Brun argues that

superficially the sponsorship of Pavlova made Carranza's position on the Russian Revolution plain to the United States (personal interview). By sponsoring a performance for children specifically, the Carranza administration also drew attention to the new Secretariat of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, in spite of drastic budget cuts (Arnaut 103).

Pavlova had been performing all over the world and was in residency for three months at the exclusive Teatro Granat. Her performances were received with much critical acclaim. In keeping with the liberal ideological aims of the administration, Carranza asked Pavlova to move from the bourgeois theatre space outdoors to the national bull-fighting ring in order to make the performance accessible for more people. She was commissioned to dance *El Toreo* (The Bullfight) on point in the Plaza de Toros. Free tickets to the performance were distributed to schools and, from accounts from the "subsidized press, which retailed approved news and official opinion," newspapers *El Demócrata* and *El Pueblo* both reported that the plaza was packed with children and caregivers (Knight 447). Knight has linked Carranza's "cult of revolutionary orthodoxy" to "mild-Stalinism;" identifying the significant role of the official press and the ubiquitous "informer" to the success of the Carranza's regime in disseminating "official revolutionary" ideology (445). *El Demócrata* widely reported on Pavlova's performance for several days and lauded the event as an "incredible success" for the young dancer and the Carranza administration (Ruíz 6). *El Pueblo* noted how "young boys and girls applauded and screamed wildly at the incredible ballerina

from Russia" (Gomez 1). Many of these papers also took the opportunity to report on the Russian Revolution and the left leaning, Catholic daily *Excélsior* noted that "Their [Russian] starving people are fighting for many of the same rights that so many of our people so bravely fought and died" (Portillo 3). While Pavlova's exact political beliefs are still unclear, her presence in México would have resonated symbolically with many Mexicans given the discourse about the Russian Revolution. If Pavlova was a communist she could have returned to Russia to work for the communist party; however, she did not have communist beliefs and her symbolic presence in México seemed to be commodified as such by those in the Carranza administration. If Carranza chose Pavlova's performance for children with these political ends purposefully, it was first time that the Mexican government aligned itself with Marxist ideology publicly; and it did so in a performance for children.

While Pavlova's performance was not a scripted piece of theatre for youth as such, her dance production, like Pancho Villa's puppet shows on the train a few years prior, illustrates just how many lasting performance trends became embedded in the new revolutionary culture drawing on contemporary political ideology in content and pre-revolutionary notions about aesthetics. As we will see, in the Mexican field of theatre for children and young people, these trends will come to define the professional theatre and performance that children and young people see and do.

Chapter 3:
The Revolution Onstage "In the Sun"

As the bulk of the fighting came to a close in the capital in 1917, the new government made disseminating a revolutionary ideology its largest project. Josefina Vazquez concludes that this was a "[d]ifficult mission given so many divergent perspectives" (151). Given the potentially explosive fact of disparate political factions within the capital, each with its own agenda and ideological aims, it was essential for leaders to unite the populace cohesively in order to ensure the government's stability. In order to achieve this goal with any degree of efficiency, the government primarily used schools to "form citizens" and teach history in a way that "indoctrinated certain values that created loyalty to the government" (Vazquez 18). Vazquez argues that the revolutionary nationalism wasn't something "innate," which people automatically felt after the fighting stopped, but rather that it was explicitly and intensively taught in order to establish the rule of a post-revolutionary government and justify its role. Furthermore, it was important for these new leaders to disseminate their message quickly, in order to avoid further bloodshed. Drawing on examples from Soviet Russia, leaders found that theatre was an efficient means for disseminating a national ideology. Now that the fine arts were officially a part of national compulsory education, by the end of the decade, theatre for children and

youth would become an important part of the revolutionary government's indoctrination program.

Scholars often note that the revolutionary ideology was imposed on every sector of public and private life, beginning in early 1917. While projects for children were important to the government's efforts in creating a "Revolutionary" populace, theatre created specifically for children and young people, for this specific purpose, took time to develop[28]. During the years of civil war in the capital there was virtually no theatre for children and young people, and a new revolutionary society with comprehensive schooling, healthcare, a unified *mestizaje* populace, and a vibrant theatre scene did not occur overnight; it took time to translate ideological principles into social policy, to rebuild infrastructure, and to set up the means by which the fine and performing arts were to be incorporated into the new revolutionary society. Theatre for children and young people adapted to these ideological shifts slowly and there was very little theatre for young audiences activity occurring in the capital even at the beginning of this period of change, though there are few exceptions, which I discuss later in this chapter. However, a sea change was under way in the culture's attitudes about children and childhood, its policies about the nature of public education, and its

[28] Scholars usually maintain that the signing of the Constitution of 1917 marks the end of the fighting, however this was only in México City. Well-documented skirmishes (largely between hacienda owners and their employees over property ownership) continued throughout the Republic until the end of the 1920s when the newly elected populist president Plutarco Elías Calles began land redistribution in earnest. (See Knight, Suchlicki, and Tannenbaum)

views of the role of government in disseminating culture—these shifts would have substantial ramifications for the field of theatre for children and young people as the government took on the principal role of cultural production.

In this chapter, I explore the ideological changes that were happening at the highest levels of government immediately after the civil war, and discuss the ways in which these shifts changed theatrical practice for children and young people during the period from 1917 (just after the fighting subsided in México City) to 1928 (at the official end of the Calles presidency). No longer propelled exclusively by motives of profit and loss, theatre made for children and young people after the fighting stopped became the province of public education. While a few companies dedicated to theatre for children and young people existed, the push from the federal government solidified the genre's position as a significant and popular cultural endeavor by the mid-1920s. This movement was spearheaded by the new Secretary of Education (former founding member of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*) José Vasconcelos who, like other revolutionary ideologues, recognized the power of theatre as an instrument for disseminating information to large groups of people. In the effort to create a uniquely Mexican—*mestizo*—identity, the theatre proved an important pedagogical tool for instilling the revolution's philosophical tenets in a new generation of young Mexicans. In an attempt to create a uniquely Mexican theatre, ideologues and ideological forces specifically shaped the aesthetics and thematic content of theatre for children and young people during this period.

When Carranza was assassinated in May of 1920, the “political class” had been preparing for an election for nearly a year. While the new constitution incorporated many of the ideals of the revolution, the federal government lacked a clear leader. With Carranza dead, President Obregón’s popularity allowed him to swiftly take power in 1921. While Carranza had professed some socialist leanings, Obregón clearly articulated his strong belief in Marxist ideology from the beginning of his term: “Socialism is a supreme ideal that in these moments stirs mankind[…]. [Socialism] looks primarily to reach out to those below to find a better balance between capital and labor, to find a more equitable distribution among the assets which nature endows humanity” (qtd. in Córdova 271). Edgar Luis López Miranda notes that Obregón was able to ameliorate capitalist reservations about his presidency by offering them “national reconstruction projects that included bonuses for workers and the possibility for future government contracts” (25). Obregón “realized very early that, to consolidate the revolution, workers and peasants had to be incorporated into the revolutionary family” (Suchlicki 113). The new administration worked closely with an alliance of labor organizations, such as the powerful CROM (*Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* [Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers]), and rural groups, which served as a foundation for Obregón’s far-reaching social and economic policies. Obregón’s Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, reorganized the Secretariat of Education in 1921 to pave the way for many new creative fields, all of which found material support in the established Department

of Theatre within the Secretariat of Education in the years following the revolution. As Silva notes, “Above all [The Secretariat of Education] sought to accommodate the great variety of interests emerging in Mexican society from its ideological exchange with different countries, especially those pointing to the adoption of a socialist system” (*Época* N.pag.). During the 1920s, many countries were experimenting with socialist education and ways of disseminating socialist ideologies.[29] For the new Mexican government, socialist ideas became a “platform upon which to build an educational system” (Silva *Época* N.pag.). The new revolutionary government “generously backed a great variety of emergent artistic endeavors and trends,” especially those that were directed at children, who were now at the center of social reform (*Época* N.pag.) At the beginning of the 1920s, for the first time since Madero (1913), México was not engaged in civil war, and reconstruction was beginning across the country.

The Revolutionary Child

The overwhelming quantity of literature and propaganda about children and childhood produced during the decades immediately following the years of fighting was unsurpassed in the history of the republic either before or since. Intent on providing the devastated population with a new generation devoted to the new ideology, budding child specialists attempted to create the “ideal

[29] As early as Obregón, the programs coming from the Secretariat of Education were moving in a decidedly socialist direction.

revolutionary child" through education, hygiene, newspapers, and the fine and performing arts. Through such discourse about children, the positivist alliance between government and intellectual elites had come full circle (back to the pattern popular during *el porfiriato*), however in the post-war period, positivist intellectual discourse was garbed in the look and language of the revolution.

A newly mobilized professional legion of social workers, teachers and other "puericulture" professionals (those engaged in so-called "science" of child rearing) many of whom were trained during the Porfirian positivist era, designed child development programs with the aim of creating healthy children who were literate, numerate, and, above all, patriotic. Mary Kay Vaughn and Steven Lewis, along with Elena Jackson Albarrán and others, have noted the contradictions and accomplishments of the nationalistic decades that immediately followed the years of fighting. These scholars note that government programs often contested Catholic doctrine; among other issues, federal social campaigns such as contraception education and federal eugenics programs stood at odds with Church teachings. Vaughn notes that, "Rightly or wrongly they [government social programs] were often associated with campaigns against the church" (12). While the Church continued to be important in shaping the hearts and minds of Mexicans after the revolution, it is important to note that it was often plainly at odds with official governmental policy. At times this tension tempered the success of revolutionary programs because, "The reformers' unconsidered faith in the cosmopolitan science of the moment and their attitudes of superiority

limited [the programs'] impact" (12).

As Albarrán discusses in depth, the 1921 and 1923 Pan American Congresses on the Child, funded by the Obregón government, marked a profound change in post-war thought on Mexican child rearing. Jose Vasconcelos articulated his enthusiasm for the work at the opening of the first congress in 1921:

> What a beautiful spectacle, that after ten years of incessant divisions between brothers and persecutions among groups of Mexicans, after ten years of combat and blood, as though arising from the ashes and purified by fire, men of science are gathering to treat academically the instruction, the hygiene, the surgery, the medicine, and the beauty of the child. (*Memoria* N.Pag.)

Albarrán explains that the goal of this congress and was to "rear the children…into [the] revolutionary cultural context of their historical moment" (*Children* 36). She argues that, in spite of much academic discourse to the contrary, "the history of childhood can *only* be accessed through an analysis of adult discussion, ideology and policy" (*Children* 37). Similarly, at the 1923 Geneva Convention on the Rights of the Child[30], Mexican officials positioned

[30] In Geneva, The first *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* was drafted by Eglantyne Jebb in 1923. The original declaration had five stipulations: "1. The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually. 2. The child that is hungry must be fed, the child that is sick must be nursed, the child that is backward must be helped, the delinquent child must be reclaimed, and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored. 3. The child

their nation as a leader in the field of child studies, urging other nations to "recognize the vital forces influencing the child's physical and moral development [that] came through organized recreation, the home, the school, and religious institutions" (Boletín 217).

Children were at the center of the debate about what the new México would be, what post-Revolutionary Mexicans would believe, and how they would behave. Scholars often note this by pointing to significant expansion in the educational system in the period immediately following the war. Obregón's regime expanded substantially upon Carranza's changes in the educational system and in social reforms that targeted children. Young people became the centerpiece of revolutionary ideology: no longer individuals bound only to their fathers, they became symbols of the future transnational generation with responsibilities to the community and nation. Images and recent memory of child soldiers fighting helped to accelerate the new notion of childhood in the years just after the gunfire stopped. Replacing Porfirian romantic notions of childhood, this idea held that children "fell under the state's discursive and normative domination independent of parents and the church" through compulsory education (Vaughn 161). As Albarrán's research indicates, the shift in Mexican thinking about

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must be the first to receive relief in times of distress. 4.The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation. 5. The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of its fellow men." (qtd. in Kaime) For more on the history of the Declaration, see Kaime.

children and childhood was manifested in the educational and cultural policies of the period:

> Striving to replace the decimated population with [a] productive, ideologically committed generation, officials imagined an ideal revolutionary child and disseminated the image among the nation's mothers, schoolteachers, and community members. (Albarrán *Children* 36)

New schools were built across the republic, united in a patriotic curriculum that stressed collaboration with coeducational group projects, team sports, and cultural performances that together became the hallmark of the new educational system.

While theatre for children and youth before the revolution strove to include young people in mixed audiences principally for economic gain (with few exceptions), it is clear that, immediately after the revolution, more attention was paid to children as ideological vessels who required separate cultural events and theatre specifically designed for them. Albarrán confirms Benedict Anderson's suggestion that "Individuals imagined what it meant to be part of a nation based on their reception of these cultural projects," and that "Despite the standard complaint that children's voices rarely enter the historical record, creative archival work turns up ample evidence of the ways that children participated in their

socialization, albeit often unknowingly, thus contributing to the construction of national identity" (*Children* 81). Educational theatre projects that featured children and youth as performers and spectators were locations for children to participate directly in this national identity project.

Educational theatre initiatives in México were influenced by the "whole child" philosophy of education being studied in the United States and in Europe at the same time. Whole child methodologies were studied and advocated by American scholars and child psychologists, John Dewey chiefly among them.[31]

Dewey was interested first and foremost in the Darwinian-Hegelian notion that all philosophy should reject "'inquiry after absolute origins and absolute finalities in order to explore specific values and the specific conditions that generate them" (Dewey 10). Arthur Zilversmit notes that Dewey felt that, when freed from its focus on "hypothetical transcendental reality," philosophy could more productively address ways we might 'improve our education … ameliorate our manners … [and] advance our politics" (qtd. in Zilversmit 4). In that context of concrete focus on practical experiences, Dewey argued that the child should be seen as a complex organism and that "the care and growth of the body are just as important as the development of the mind" (Dewey *Schools* 317). He insisted that each student comes to school with talents and natural resources that a teacher might harness in order to facilitate student learning as a result of the

[31] Other notable figures in the field include William Kirkpatrick, Francis Parker, and Hughes Mearns.

individual's inherent curiosity and interests. Dewey posited that schools needed to perform a larger socialization function in order to make up for disappearing systems of family and community control. For Dewey, training a child to participate in this new community was essential to democratic social reform.

Álvaro Obregón's Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos

Dewey was influential in México, and his notion of democratic social reform is what most interested José Vasconcelos, the renowned leader of Obregón's increasingly powerful Secretariat of Public Education. While Vasconcelos is today a controversial figure, the grand educational and cultural policies that he implemented elevated Vasconcelos to the status of national hero in his time. Regina Cortina and Alexandar S. Dawson have argued that Vasconcelos was influenced by the sociological power of Dewey's writings as well as by the mandatory aesthetic education programs that were taking hold in the Soviet Union simultaneously. The link between Vasconcelos's ideas and Dewey's is seen most directly in two often-overlooked men who worked in the Secretariat of Education directly underneath Vasconcelos, Moisés Sáenz and Rafael Ramirez. Sáenz was the "primary administrator" who drew up "the leading lines on which [the new Revolutionary programs] could be pursued" and Ramirez acted as "the business director and organizer of the movement [who] worked out the details of its application" (Grubb 674). Both Sáenz and Ramirez were graduate students of Dewey's and have been credited as forming the direct

connection between Dewey and Vasconcelos.[32] Under Vasconcelos, the Secretariat of Education extended Dewey's ideas and contextualized them for a Mexican audience (López 8). Changes in Mexican educational policy were enacted largely in response to new conceptions of childhood, as Dewey's work was.

México City was a fitting place and time for Vasconcelos and other education reformers to begin their crusades: its industrial sector was rebuilding quickly and new residents from all over the country were flooding into urban neighborhoods at unprecedented rates. Vasconcelos envisioned employing Dewey's ideas on a national scale in order to unite children in a new, cohesive Mexican identity. A new law intended to promote this national identity mandated that all children in México learn the historical and cultural signifiers required to become *"*authentically Mexican*"* in its new conception of "mestizo" citizens. In 1920, the Mexican House of Representatives debated how best to impart this knowledge:

> National history must be shown…emotionally, citing the examples of our heroes and our great men, in order to excite the child, which goes more to

[32] Deron Boyles problematizes the extent to which John Dewey influenced Vasconcelos and, through him, Mexican education after the Revolution. Boyles argues that Vasconcelos was responding more to the political and sociological upheaval of the time than to Dewey through Sáenz and Ramirez. Nonetheless, contemporary scholars (including Vasconcelos biographer Claude Fell) agree that the overwhelming quantity of evidence linking the two philosophies shows too much similarity to dismiss the connection. Javier Ocampo López notes that the Secretariat of Education "understood and disseminated" Dewey's writings while Vasconcelos was acting secretary (137).

> the heart than to the brain. Educated rather than instructed; rather than teach, educate in order to help steer discretion and fortify character. (*Estados* 1920)

With explicitly nationalist objectives, Obregón's Secretariat of Education emerged as the most powerful, farthest-reaching, best-funded government agency in the decades following the revolution" (Albarrán *Children* 106). Vasconcelos only served as Secretary of Education from 1921 to 1924, but during this time he revolutionized art and education throughout the republic.

In addition to John Dewey, many contemporary thinkers and actors influenced Vasconcelos's ideology. He was particularly inspired by the educational reform occurring in the Soviet Union. Brun notes that, inspired by Soviet programs, "Vasconcelos became a proponent of popular folk festivals, free night school courses for workers, and nationalized book publishing programs to promote large circulation. He defended secular education, despite being a devout Christian." (Brun 55) As he was one of the founders of the *Ateneo de la Juventud,* Vasconcelos often corresponded and socialized with others who had been active in the early days of the *Ateneo.*

Many of these former *Ateneo* men were important thinkers on art and education in their own right. Alfonso Reyes had already published *Aesthetic Considerations,* Pedro Henríquez Ureña, had written the influential book, *The Culture of the Humanities* (1928), and Antonio Caso was working on his book,

Principles of Aesthetics (1925)—he would go on to become the rector of the National University of México (now the National Autonomous University of México). When one considers these together with Dewey's influence on Vasconcelos, one gets a sense of the intellectual and philosophical conversation that Vasconcelos was participating in at this time and the supreme status that art and education had in philosophical debates of the period. While influences from all of these men came to shape Vasconcelos's thinking, and what would come to be called "aesthetic education," it is Vasconcelos's close personal relationship with the influential philosopher and intellectual Alfonso Caso that was perhaps most influential in Vasconcelos's thinking about cultural education (Fell).

Caso's central aesthetic doctrine was twofold: the theory of creative intuition and art theory. Caso's theory of creative intuition dealt with a "cosmological" introduction to aesthetics. Caso theorized that creative intuition and empathy were a phase of "contemplative expression." He argued for the importance of artistic theory, the psychological importance of aesthetic pleasure, and the power of art as a social phenomenon to create societal change. In his final work, published in 1924, *El problema de México y la ideología nacional*, (The Problem of México and National Ideology) Caso identified disunity of race, culture and society as México's most critical national issue.[33]

Fell and others have speculated about the influence of Caso's cosmological introduction to aesthetics on Vasconcelos's now infamous writings

[33] For more on Antonio Caso's life and philosophy, see Haddox.

about a cosmic-race. Newly appointed revolutionary officials used popular European methods of the time such as psychometrics and phrenology to explain and defend José Vasconcelos's theory of *La raza cosmica* [the cosmic race].

The cosmic race was a problematic idea propagated by Vasconcelos and other Mexican intellectuals that argued that a Latin American blended race or "*mestizaje"* was the "highest race" because Latin American genes descended from a historical "blending" of the races of the classic world: "White" (Western European) "Mongol" (through indigenous Americans descended from nomadic Asians), and "Black" (Africans imported through slavery). Vasconcelos argued that in the future that *mestizaje* (this blending) would be the "moral and material basis for the union of all men into a universal race, the fruit of all the previous ones and amelioration of everything past" (Vasconcelos *La Raza* 9). According to Vasconcelos, the Mexican "cosmic-race" was a "genetic genius in which there was added to the races of the world race made up all the others" (Shorris 287). The Mexican nation, fueled by scholarly rhetoric encouraging a unifying ideology and identity, quickly embraced Vasconcelos's idea of the "genetic and spiritual power of the *mestizaje*, which [Vasconcelos] called the cosmic race" (Shorris 287). This idea championed a particularly Mexican aesthetic, drawn from sources that blended pre-Columbian indigenous and Western sources.[34] Caso emphasized the study of classic aesthetic forms (both from México and

[34] Later, Vasconcelos was much criticized for his unyielding advocacy for the assimilation of indigenous groups and his equivocal position towards the Eugenics movement and fascism. See Marentes, Fell, and Shorris.

elsewhere) as a way for Mexicans to create their own uniquely Mexican aesthetic. Scholars later would dub this aesthetic “Revolutionary,” identifying as such any art that championed the “new” Mexican identity that was being fashioned immediately after the Mexican Revolution.

Vasconcelos, drawing on many of Caso’s principles, believed that aesthetic education in México would unify the divergent perspectives of the populace in one political ideology and one “Mexican” way of life. Adapting Dewey’s models and those from the Soviet Union, Vasconcelos implemented Caso’s principles of aesthetic education in a new national curriculum. Vasconcelos explained:

> [E]ducation [should be] through play, sport and dance, the formation of social habits, aesthetic education, initiation of children in the enjoyment of the beauty of things, forms, movements of the sounds, colors and lines. The teacher should encourage the practice of drawing, singing, recitation, reading aloud and organizing school parties adapted to the age of the students. (Fell 163)

In addition to new methodology, Vasconcelos compiled new content that included teaching a new canon of children’s literature from Indigenous, Greek, Roman, and other international sources, including dramatic literature. This new “blended” canon is characteristic of his educational ideology. Beatriz Alcubierre Moya and Rodrigo Bazán Bonfil explain Vasconcelos’s approach, noting “It was so that Mexican children would identify with the highest values of liberalism

(country, family and work), and project from it the future of ideal citizenship" (qtd. in Álbarran *Children* 164) Alcubierre Moya and Bonfil go on to explain how the new curriculum was necessary for the new revolutionary society because it was believed that "only trained individuals could be considered true citizens" (qtd in Albarrán *Children* 164). Brun notes that Vasconcelos drew on pedagogical models from the Lancasterian system organized during the early days of independent México, in addition to focusing on classical content.[35]

Vasconcelos built schools at a rapid rate, championing the importance of literacy across the country to create a national culture; he organized the building of over one thousand rural schools to serve as educational and cultural shrines where "A legion of nationalistic, dedicated teachers resembled the priest of the colonial era in the task of educating the Indians [sic], albeit in a secular fashion" (Suchlicki 114). Where schools could not be built, or could not be built fast enough, Vasconcelos initiated the "Federal Missions Plan" which was "inspired by the monks who organized during the Conquest" (Brun 55). This plan sent specialized teachers who were trained in vocational, hygienic, literacy, artistic, and cultural education to indigenous areas. Six months after introduction of the

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[35] Founded by Joseph Lancaster in 1798, the recursive Lancasterian system of education employed "honorary professors who were willing to teach reading and writing for free to other citizens, children and youth" (Brun 55). Lancasterian schools awarded students for learning new material that they would then teach to other pupils. The Lancasterian model was complementary to Dewey's system and, when considered together with the classical based education promoted by Caso, gives one a sense of the kind of schools that Vasconcelos was creating.

literacy campaign, Vasconcelos sent over one-thousand five hundred volunteers (largely university students) throughout the republic to teach people to read. As Rosario Torres notes in her extensive study on the federal missions plan, Creative drama, role play, and performances by the staff of rural schools for children and community members (largely about good hygiene, the importance of going to school, national legends, and other prescribed revolutionary goals) were common in rural areas. Volunteers for the Federal Missions Plan were provided scripts from the Secretariat of Education (and of other ministries including the Secretariat of Health) and were instructed to allow students to "improvise, pretend, and play act using theatrical methods" (Torres 161).

Despite the emphasis on classical education and the use of theatre in Federal Missions Plan education during the four years in which José Vasconcelos was Secretary of Education (1920-1924), there were no sanctioned school plays and there was no subsidized state theatre for children or young people during this period (Brun 58). This is in part due to Vasconcelos's complex understanding of the commercial theatre. While Vasconcelos appreciated the "power of the performing arts," he agreed with Caso's notion that contemporary art was "decadent" and "bourgeois" (Caso 100). Caso and Vasconcelos argued that the commercial theatre addressed "personal issues and selfish beings" and

was therefore devoid of virtue (Brun 59).[36]

A Decline in Professional Theatre for Children and Young People

A search of the newspapers and detailed catalogues of performances throughout the capitol reveal that there was only a modicum of professional theatre for youth presented in México City during the Obregón presidency, because it had not established itself completely as a separate genre. Brun agrees that, "Outside the formal context [governmental context], in these four years there was little theatre [or drama] for children" (62).

With the exception of the variety *tandas*, and the occasional Mexican play, the great majority of performances for children and young people that debuted immediately after the revolution in the capital's "high theatres" were adaptations of Spanish plays or productions performed by visiting European actors and/or companies (Álvarez VII). Curiously, Mexican actors were trained to speak with "Spanish accents," even in productions that were set in México. This was "typical of the mainstream commercial theatre" of the day (Álvarez VIII). Vasconcelos

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[36] Similar notions of theatre as decadent and dangerous were propagated elsewhere as well at this time. Constance D'Arcy MacKay argued vehemently for a separate children's theatre. Similar to Vasconcelos and Caso, MacKay made clear distinction between "inappropriate…commercial…empty entertainment" and "appropriate…educationally sound" theatre (qtd. in Van de Water 82). While MacKay was talking specifically about children's theatre, and Caso and Vasconcelos were speaking more broadly about the form, parallel patterns of thought emerge at the same time, in different places, which place educational and social concerns ahead of artistic ones. For more on MacKay's life and work see Van de Water 1995.

rejected this emulation of European culture and aesthetics believing, like Caso, that emulating foreign culture worked against the development of a unifying national identity. At this time the School of Theatre Arts at the National University was teaching students to produce work in the heightened style that mirrored Spanish theatre. Consequently, Vasconcelos revoked funding from the School of the Theatre Arts, which ultimately forced its closure, arguing that students should not learn to "speak as if they lived in Spain… they won't be able become teachers of theatre suitable for children of their own country" (Brun 59). Many of the displaced theatre faculty transferred directly to the Secretariat of Education to work as faculty in normal schools and to provide training for the cultural missions program. Other faculty went abroad to study new forms and practice European methods, while others became leaders of cultural missions teams.

Despite the lack of productions made specifically for children, a few *espectáculo* performances, which would appeal to audiences of all ages, endured. In January 1921, the *Teatro Principal* announced a revival of the Rosete Aranda Puppets to be presented in May. The show featured Carlos Espinal's new, puppets, comedy, operetta and varieties. In 1922, families with their children could attend the Olympia Theater to see an American production that was in keeping with the *espectáculo* tradition, *Hip-Hip-Hooray Ice Ballet* "sensation," featuring the famous "Charlotte" a touring production from the United

States.[37] Billed as the first-name-only "Charlotte," the seventeen-year-old performed her variety show on ice, featuring "eye-popping tableaux, dancing horses, comedy skits, and musical acts on the boards. The third act opened to reveal a magical expanse of glistening ice, falling snow, and magnificently costumed skaters whose astonishing movements enacted a fabulous musical story" (Blakey).

In addition to these *espectáculos,* there was one unique example of a company producing the otherwise nonexistent *teatro infantil*. In November 1924, the Compañía Mexicana de Ricardo Mutio began an entire season devoted to plays exclusively for children at the *Teatro Hidalgo*. The company began the season with an original adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, based on the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, followed by a magical comedy, entitled *The Kickstand.* Next, they presented a comedy adventure *d'Artagnan and Three Musketeers* and finished their season with adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew, Othello,* and *Hamlet,* marketed to children. It is important to remember that, except for those noted above, *espectáculos* such as the circus, puppet shows, and magic comedy, as well as other fledgling *teatro infantil* productions operating in the capital before the revolution, had virtually ceased to exist during

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[37] Ice-capade historian Roy Blakely notes that Charles Dillingham first produced the 17 year old German skater at the Hippodrome Theatre in New York City in 1915. Blakely recounts that Charlotte Oelschlägel, also known as Charlotte Hayward, was the first to land an axel in performance and that her famous trick, "The Charlotte Stop" is still performed by figure skaters today. After her world tour she returned to Germany for her mother's funeral and was trapped in Berlin during WWII. She died in 1984. For more see, "Roy Blakely's Ice Stage Archive."

the Obregón presidency due to changing attitudes about the role of theatre in society and of theatre in education that precluded such indulgent, non-revolutionary forms.

Moving Performances "into the Sun"

In keeping with changing attitudes about the role of theatre in society, the places where performances occurred began to change. Instead of the bourgeois theatres built for the elite of the Porfirian era, outdoor spaces were used for theatrical and musical performances in order to allow more people, from every sector of society to attend. Vasconcelos explicitly championed this move outdoors, when he wrote in 1924 of a classical music concert that he attended with the president at the end of his term:

> I took Obregón to one of these concerts…He liked it. However, he liked the outdoor festivals more. At that time I did too, because they were creating and propagating the development of many national arts, costume, dance and song. Taking shows out into the sun was one of my greatest concerns. (qtd. in Berman 296)

Outdoor productions were seen as "more Mexican" than those performed in indoor theatres because they were considered to be like the ancient performance rituals of indigenous peoples and allowed for more diverse audiences. Vasconcelos's idea of "taking shows out into the sun" meant that, in order to make the theatre more accessible, he wanted to support productions that were

performed in massive outdoor arenas—literally "in the sun" instead of indoor performances in the theatres of the Porfirian era (which were built to look like the elite bourgeois theatres of Western Europe). He believed that truly Mexican productions should be performed outdoors in facilities large enough to accommodate large crowds from all sectors of society--comparable to the classical theatres of antiquity[38]. Vasconcelos considered the unfinished Palace of Fine Arts a bourgeois space—"as theaters of cold countries… it was meant for the elite" (Brun 59). Consequently, Vasconcelos refused to allocate money for its completion instead redirecting funds formerly earmarked for the building's development into large construction projects to rehabilitate and enlarge outdoor bull fighting arenas, stadiums, and build new amphitheaters throughout the city.

Often these new stadiums were decorated with indigenous images and had Native American or blended (*mestizo*) names like the famous Estadio San Juan Teotihuacán (1925), the art deco Hipodromo Condesa (1928) and the Balbuena (1929), all of which had a government mandate to show and tour diverse shows around poor and indigenous areas in the federal district.[39] In 1922, The Secretariat of Education organized and oversaw the construction of the

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[38] Brun and López both note that Vasconcelos had a deep appreciation for the ideal classical theatre inspired by his readings of Frederick Nietszche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* and the works of Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus in the *Ateneo*. In 1921, The Secretariat of Education published several of these works in Spanish.

[39] "San Juan" or Saint John is a Christian name and Teotihuacán an Aztec name for a holy place. When blended together San Juan Teotihuacán, the name becomes mestizo – or mixed.

National Stadium, with a capacity of twenty-five thousand people. Vasconcelos wrote of the new stadium:

> Our stadium will be a mix of outdoor theater and modern setting. Not exactly a kind of bullring (...) The art that must triumph in the stadium will be an expression of beauty (…) will develop as fusion... A great ballet, orchestra and chorus of thousands of voices, is the only kind of art that can express the collective ideals of humanity. The only kind of art that breaks with selfishness in all its manifestations and that will be determined to conquer a universal form of feeling (...) A vast stage will serve as an arena in which to develop intense dramas with scenes of dazzling beauty, that moves slowly at first and then explodes with a jubilation of rhythms. (Vasconcelos “El Teatro…”)

Vasconcelos was impressed by Soviet methods of disseminating and teaching knowledge and culture through “folk festivals” to large (often diverse) groups of people, and the idea took root in México in 1921 when the republic was celebrating its Independence from Spain with a year of cultural and civic events. The National Ukrainian Chorus, Russian National Orchestra, and Kuban Cossack Choirs and Dancers, all came to México to perform throughout the year. Free tickets were distributed for children and young people at public schools through the Secretariat of Education. These groups were to serve as models for Mexicans “to create similar groups” in México (Brun 60).

At the same time, an archaeologist, Manuel Gamio, was working on an ethnological project with the San Juan Teotihuacan indigenous population that lived near the Teotihuacan pyramids. Gamio wrote and produced a commercially unsuccessful film, *La Cruza,* about the "living descendants of the giants who built the ancient civilizations of the past," (Brun 60). In an effort to capitalize on his investment, Gamio invited playwright Rafael M. Saavedra and the folkloric musicians Francisco Rodriquez and Carlos Gonzales to adapt the film into a performance for children and young people with the hope of reaching a broader audience. This play was written in an experimental style of the period called *estridentismo*, which was completely removed from realism, drawing on elements of futurism, cubism and Dadaism. Vasconcelos attended the production and was impressed, noting that:

> Saavedra took some of the most representative aspects of daily life in San Juan Teotihuacan to create a work like *La cruza*…where one observed the work of an indigenous woman on stage, making tortillas, with sufficient beauty and harmonic concentration of gestures and attitudes to integrate the show. The representation also included regional dances and songs, that may or not have been integrated to the theatrical story…. (Fell 474).

Fell notes that the objective pursued was "not at all literary," but rather that its intent was to "show the typical customs, relying on some scenes of family life that gave prominence to the importance that the people of the region give their saints and their festivals without completely divesting themselves of the ancient

superstitions and prejudices" (Fell 474). This mode of performance was in line with Vasconcelos's thinking about aesthetic education, and *La Cruza* was commissioned for performances in México City amphitheaters as well as for tours of the states of Jalisco and Michoacán for the following year (Brun 61). Tickets for performances in the capital and on tour were again distributed widely at public schools. A critic, Jesus Zaragoza, notes that *La Cruza* performed to

> …crowds of enthusiastic young people who stood in ovation when their preferred saint appeared in spectacular costume. […] Remarkable traditional dances were performed with great pride; uniting people from all over the republic in song. Patriotic songs echoed through the streets long after the work was completed and the stadium empty. (Zaragoza 1921)

In 1922, despite Vasconcelos's misgivings about foreign theatre companies, when the *Compañía Dramática Española de Margarita Xirgu* came from Spain to present its repertoire of Greek tragedies, Vasconcelos also commissioned an original staging of Euripides' *Elektra* in the Tribuna Monumental de Chapultepec, one of the newly renovated outdoor spaces, to be performed in indigenous dress. Free tickets were distributed in public schools and the house was filled with a diverse audience (Vazquez 178). Immediately after the performance, the National Symphony played Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* and the *Prelude to Lohengrin,* "as Vasconcelos supposed Nietzsche would have himself" (Fell 78). This "fusion theatre" that blended European content with Mexican aesthetics (performed in Mexican spaces, with an

emphasis on spectacle as in the grand *espectáculos* of the Porfirian era) would ultimately become the foundation for future theatre projects for children and young people.

Identity Crisis

By the middle of the decade, shifting demographics in the capitol started to affect the theatre to a significant extent. Berman notes that

> [T]he center of the city continued to be the site where daily movement was developed: in business and commerce, culture and art, politics and intellectual life….The revolutionary process popularized customs and entertainment; the refinement of the *Porfiriato* of other times disappeared and suggested new social groups that took to the streets, public spaces, plazas and forums. (270)

Working and middle class people were attending theatre together in spaces once reserved for the elite. The adult theatre was changing to meet this evolving demographic, making substantial shifts in content and formatting. Cabaret acts, dances, magicians, singers and “drinking during the show without restriction” all became commonplace in the capital’s theatres (Berman 283). The theatres were far more relaxed than during the theatrical presentations of the pre-revolutionary period. People were not expected to remain silent during the production and audience members were encouraged to dance between acts, as well as after productions at parties that lasted long into the night. Mariachi groups were

proliferating in the Plaza Garibaldi (near the theatre district) and evenings at the theatre often signified an event that included much more than just attending a production. This new paradigm coupled with the "semi-naked bodies that had taken to the stages in México City," in many productions at the end of the 1920s, caused "Many critics and part of the society" to voice their disapproval publicly at "an attack on moral decency" (Berman 295).

While this theatre of "luxury and provocation" was a "formula for success" at the box office, in many ways it was at odds with the positivist protectionist ethos of child rearing propagated by the government (Berman 295). Likewise, this "new theatre" was contradictory to religious-conservative practices that flourished in the wake of disputes about the role of the Catholic Church in the new Revolutionary society. The Pan American Congresses on the Child in 1921 and in 1923 had already

> [R]evealed the changing paradigm of child welfare after the revolution that placed the child, and not the family, at the center of reform and policy initiatives…Public spaces designed specifically for children, limited to welfare institutions and fortress-style schools during the *Porfiriato*, swelled in the 1920s to reflect the expanding social role that the child assumed during this time. (Albarrán *Children* 47)

Commercial adult theatre productions, once shared by adults and children alike were no longer considered suitable to be shared by adults and children together.

Even the nation's largest newspaper inserted a magazine written by children, for children, in its Sunday edition.

Pulgarcito, "an interactive periodical" for children, was published from 1915-1925, in the newspaper *El Nacional* weekly, included in the Sunday edition. The magazine included short stories, comics, games, art, and plays written by and for children and young people. The positivist impetus to create a separate vehicle to showcase children's cultural products for other children was produced with the aesthetics and language of the revolution. The magazine was distributed to each public school in the capital and children were encouraged to submit drawings and writing by mail, which were then evaluated for future publication by a team of painters and educators. In order to make the periodical accessible for more children (and arguably to have more editorial control), the Department of Fine Art (within the Secretariat of Education) took over the publication and distribution of the magazine in 1925. As a product of the Secretariat of Education, *Pulgarcito* significantly increased its pages and had a greater national and international distribution. By 1927 the magazine had grown from a circulation of 2,000 to 5,000; and by 1928 to 10,000 copies. Ultimately over 65,000 copies of the magazine were distributed. (Berkin 20). Secretary of Education Puig Casauranc celebrated *Pulgarcito*, as the "bible" for teachers of arts and crafts, rendering it the standard methodological tool in the field (Pulgarcito 14).

From 1920-1930, the government created the great majority of the theatre seen by children and young people in México City. Largely because Vasconcelos

had tied theatre for children and young people inextricably to the Secretariat of Education by creating the Department of Fine Art and Aesthetic Education, in which the Department of Theatre was located. This had many immediate ramifications. First, from that point forward, the politics of the ruling government could assert control over the content and aesthetics of productions funded by the Department of Theatre directly. Secondly, because the great majority of the theatre produced for children and young people was housed in the Secretariat of Education, the content and aesthetics were largely educational and didactic. Furthermore, the small amount of theatre that was done outside the control of the Secretariat of Education was inaccessible for the great majority of the capital's children.

The late theatre critic Edmundo Valadés wrote that, as a child in 1928, he visited one of the early public libraries near his uncle's house that was constructed by the Obregón government where he had his "first encounter with theatre" (48). Valadés's remembers the first play he encountered in a collection of "universal classics edited by José Vasconcelos." He notes that there were plays that were strictly prohibited for young children such as "*The Mysteries of Paris* where the Jesuit priests were quite naughty and did the worst things!" (48). Valdés notes the reason why the plays were off-limits, "it would be undermining the Christian ideas professed by the church and [his] family" (48).

Valadés's family was part of the conservative Catholic community. As seen in Valadés's testimony, the Cristero war, in which Carranza had attacked

the Catholic Church as part of the revolution, still weighed heavily on people's minds in the late twenties. "In this period of my childhood, the Cristero war came to pass and many Catholic churches were still closed for worship. Families began to organize masses at home in mansions was a common practice carried out with great secrecy" (48). Valadés notes that the conservative Catholic community was "full of taboos, and for them curiosity was the worst sin" (48). This community, during *el porfiriato* (and long before) had used puppetry and pageantry in the theatre by, for, and with children as part of their annual traditions. Given the new official and unofficial ideologies about the Catholic faith, many of these traditions were silenced during the revolution in order to keep their religious worship clandestine.

We have few surviving records of private, commercial productions for children that were mounted autonomously from the Secretariat of Education. In 1925, Mutio Ricardo resumed his work for children and young people at the *Teatro Hidalgo*, mounting revivals of earlier works such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a comedy called *La Pata de Cabra,* and a morality play entitled *La Amoneda del Diablo.* A visiting Italian company from Rome called Dei Piccoli, lead by Vittorio Podrecca presented Italian operas with marionettes for children. Brun notes that the aesthetic focus of Piccoli's productions was "less about children and more about tiny puppets," however the production proved "very successful" for the children in the audience who enjoyed the unique spectacle (62). In November 1927, a visiting Spanish company, *La Compañía Española de Gregorio Martínez*

Sierra y Catalinia Bárcena, performed at several theatres in the capital with a professional program that billed itself as *teatro infantil*. Their repertoire featured adaptations from classic children's literature and fairy tales featuring *Let's Kill the Wolf!* (an adaptation of Red Riding Hood), *Animal Island,* and *The Adventures of Pinocchio.* These companies and productions illustrate how plays for children and young people performing without governmental support were still written in the heightened language of European adaptations and performed with Spanish accents. This theatre was far removed from the Mexican experience. An anonymous author criticized the Spanish company noting that

> …the problem could be seen from the start. The only thing that has been achieved with their productions is that eventually children will become tired and uninterested in cultural events. […] What puzzles me and makes me doubt and fear is that the adaptation was made by two Spaniards. I doubt they have completed this task properly-- and not for lack of ability. God forbid such a suspicion! Rather, I am afraid that they do not profoundly understand our customs; do not know what separates the good from the bad in our environment ("Sucesos" n.p. 1927).

This frustration and disquiet about the identity of the Mexican theatre (for adults and children) was echoed over and over in articles with titles such as "The '*Mexican'* Theatre?" in *Revista de Revistas* of 1926; "The National Theatre of the people, or the middle class and the aristocracy?" in *El Universal* 1929; "We have to elevate the people of the middle class" in *Recent Opinions in Theatre*, *El*

Mundo 1926, and “Why has *our* theatrical literature not developed?” featured in *Universa*l 1926. In 1923, *Revista de Revistas*, published an article urging writers to

> write in our own language, and above everything, in theatre and in novels. More than a style, language is human, and we must not stop at the apparent crudeness or vulgarity of *mexicanismos* [Mexican dialect/slang]. The only way to ennoble many popular words is to use them in the field of art, masterfully, and with pure intention. (“El Teatro Mexicano” N. pag.)

It took time for productions written with *mexicanismos* to become commonplace; this was also true in theatre specifically for children and young people. The plays in Felipe Haro’s repertoire, for example, were still written and performed in the heightened language of Old Spain and Western Europe. Perhaps most compelling, a quote from *“Teatro Infantil Mexicano?”* in *Revista de Revistas* 1924, illustrates the theatrical identity crisis: “Our children and our children’s children deserve a theatre that is theirs. One that is profoundly Mexican, with Mexican attitudes and Mexican values; a theatre that all Mexicans can be proud of” (16). By the middle of the decade, changes in government would usher in a new genre that would attempt to do just this: celebrate Mexican attitudes and values on a grand scale.

Plutarco Elias Calles and Teatro de Masas

Just as Mutio's company were finishing their season at the *Teatro Hidalgo,* Obregón's term as president was coming to an end—as was Vasconcelos's position as Secretary of Education. Obregón's handpicked successor, Plutarco Elias Calles, would come to power in 1925 and serve as president until 1928. Brun put it simply: "Calles used propaganda. That was the reason why he brought school drama to the fore again in the interest of the government" (62). On the role of government in the lives of children, Calles remarked early in his presidency that:

> We go in and seize the minds of children, consciences of young people because they are and must belong to the Revolution […] because the children and young people are outside the community […] and the Revolution must banish prejudice from the new national soul.
>
> (qtd. in Krauze 124)

In order to educate this new national soul, Calles named Manuel Puig Casauranc as Secretary of Public Education. Casauranc was not as powerful or as respected as Vasconcelos, and the Secretariat of Education was much less productive in the Calles years. Furthermore, in spite of grand rhetoric to the contrary, Calles sought to elevate México through industrialization rather than through education. While many of the programs started under Vasconcelos's administration continued and were expanded, including the popular cultural missions and pedagogical practice of aesthetic education, there was more

evidence of marked growth in technical education given the amount of growth in the industrial sector[40] (Vazquez 160).

By this time all of the fine and performing arts were fully integrated into the Secretariat of Education, and under Calles this new office was officially renamed *The Secretariat of Education, Fine Art, and Aesthetic Education,* each division with its own departmental head and staff. Casauranc appointed the playwright Rafael Taylor as Head of the Department of Fine Arts. Taylor had been active in the Madero government (1911-1913) and had participated in the founding of the *Casa del Obrero Mundial*. As director of the National Museum, he met Manuel Gamio and became familiar with his work. By 1916, Taylor had published several plays and was the author of *Socialism in México* (1913) (Brun 63).

Aurelio de los Reyes notes that Taylor Perez was interested in mounting Gamio's new work, "A great ballet, orchestra and choirs thousands of voices expressing collective ideals of humanity," by and for children and young people (qtd. in Brun 63). Taylor Perez chose Gamio's first production, entitled *Tlahuicole*, a tale of an Aztec warrior on his way to ritual sacrifice. The performance was based on the sources collected in Gamio's ethnography that was first published by the Fine Arts Department under Vasconcelos. Cited in Reyes, Gamio and Saavedra note that their purpose in writing the text was "to make known the greatness of the customs of our [their] ancestors" (Reyes 28).

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[40] After Calles saw similar efforts on a tour to Germany in 1925, his efforts in this vein only intensified (Boletín).

This production required several hundred performers (armies of actors, orchestras full of musicians, multiple choruses, dancers and acrobats, in addition to the soloists), and, in keeping with Vasconcelos's earlier ideas about participating in aesthetic education, these performers were drawn from schools and educational programs across the city, and would be performed outdoors. These productions were ostensibly different enough from the adult commercial theatre of the time (both aesthetically and thematically) that adults found them appropriate for children and young people. In March of 1925, in the outdoor amphitheater of Teaotihuacan, with hundreds of performers and thousands of spectators, the Secretariat of Education staged the first *teatro de masas* or "mass theatre" production.

According to Reyes Palma, *Tlahuicole* attempted to "manifest repentance" of the injustices suffered by the indigenous population during *el porfiriato* by inviting the Indian [sic] to join the banquet of 'civilization'" (22). According to a 1925 Secretariat of Education Bulletin, this "benevolent rendering of culture" gave to the indigenous population "divine art to store in their hand and caress with their ears" (66).

Taylor Perez posited rhetorically in the Bulletin, "But is the Indian [sic] actually worthy of artistic attention from the government? Yes! Because modern art is based on redemption and justice!" Taylor Perez continued:

> A group of minor artists of imbalanced intellect—impotent peddlers of line from the fine and performing arts continue believing that art is a

> prerogative of the rich… And nothing more false! In the new social evolution the most deserving are the worker and the peasant who work hard making the daily wage, the soldier who fights in moments of passion, inspired by bastard ambition; and that the snobbish artist that paints high on morphine and inspired by the readings of Jean Lorrain…It is fair to tend to the Indian, so that artists may come to the city to him, as the missionary friars, to teach them the good news and show them redemption and righteousness of their art. It is as simple as nature and as big as life itself. (Boletín 67)

We can see the Secretariat of Education's ideological aims plainly in Taylor Perez's argument: that art was not a luxury to be afforded only by the rich, but that it should be made accessible to all social classes in order to "teach them the good news" of the revolution. *Teatro de masas* productions incorporated Mexican folk performance that was championed by the aesthetic education movement into a new form that strived to celebrate "Mexicanness" and promote nationalism on a grand scale. Emerging as a new kind of popular performance, *teatro de masas* productions "showed national history," complete with epic tales of national heroes. These productions drew on many aesthetic traditions from *espectáculos* of the Porfirian era, especially from the circus. Productions of *teatro de masas* would be performed in new performance spaces built throughout the capital.

After the premiere of *Tlahuicole,* many other federally sponsored productions of mass theatre worked to “integrate art into the community and to spread the ideological principals of the government” (Brun 63). These immense performances typically comprised a program that featured thousands of children and young people performing large group numbers, culminating with a didactic play performed by adults (sometimes with children), usually celebrating a piece of Mexican history or retelling—or sometimes inventing—an indigenous myth. Students from different primary and secondary schools participated, as did students from the military academies and normal schools. In all, it took between fifteen and twenty thousand people to stage these immense performance projects. It is widely assumed that students returned to their seats once their parts were played, to join their families and other invited public guests in the audience. Brun, however, speculates that there were enough illiterate and indigenous children in the capital to fill venues to capacity without the performers returning to their seats (personal interview).

As Reyes Palmas hypothesizes, “Surely after the theatrical recuperation of the indigenous past there was present an exaltation in the power of the state and of caudillismo [exaltation of the leader]” (23). Reyes Palmas reports that after the performance of *Tlahuicole,* “hundreds of workers echoed through the ancient walls at the start of the singing of the *Himno al Sol* and popular songs. The ‘indigenous’ children of the zone, trained by the same Department of Physical Education, executed the dances” (23). *Tlahuicole* is a perfect example of the idea

of the “cosmic race” in action; a patriotic celebration of the great *mestizo* society that explained through content and aesthetics the great history of the *mestizo* people and their Republic. This production, and others like it, galvanized performers and audience alike—affirming the *mestizo,* uniquely Mexican way of life that Vasconcelos had championed. A storied past with a perfect future imagined onstage that celebrated a quintessential “Mexicanness” that every good citizen was to embody.

In 1925, the Secretariat of Education mounted another production to celebrate the *cinco de mayo* battle at Puebla. With over “60,000 primary school students” in attendance at the brand new National Stadium, the program featured “a chorus of 15,000 voices…the gymnastics routine of 1000 students, at a cost of $9,000 [pesos] in that time” (23). The Secretariat of Education’s Bulletin heralded the event as “a triumph of the youth of the revived race, … a resurrection of the happiness of a country returned to liberty” (58).

In 1927, the Department of Public Education and Fine Arts produced another such performance in México City at the National Stadium entitled *The Song of Victory, a Chinaca Scene in 1867,* written by journalist James Tournebroche, to celebrate the Battle of the *cinco de mayo* in Puebla, and the triumph of the Republic in 1867.[41] To open the program, the floor of the stadium

[41] There are only two copies of this script that exist publicly. I hold a copy of the surviving pages of the script, found in a used bookstore in the Calle Donceles. Because of the modern artwork included in the script, I am unable to duplicate it

was filled with a chorus of fifteen thousand voices of “boys and girls from local primary schools” to sing the new song “Dream” written for the occasion. Following the choir performance, another two hundred indigenous students created human pyramids, which led into twelve hundred young girls from nine elementary schools executing “rhythmic gymnastics with garlands.” After one thousand boys did calisthenics with batons and five thousand students sang a choreographed dance by Wagner, the flag of the republic was presented with much fanfare. Finally, the play began. For this, a narrator commented on the relevant historical actions as the main characters reenacted the battle in period costume, accompanied by an army of extras (the cavalry, etc.) who, by the end of the play, filled the stadium floor.

The Song of Victory offers clear examples of a marked ideological shift from pre-Revolution *espectáculos* marketed and designed for children to the *teatro infantil* that existed professionally. First, the performance was state sponsored and explicitly didactic. The performances were designed with unambiguous pedagogical aims for all people: adults and children, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, celebrating the new Mexican society—la *mexicanidad moderna.* This new society, now outdoors together “under the sun,” celebrated the experience of the collective society as opposed to the pre-revolutionary model of theatre, which occurred largely indoors, with tiered seating that

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in the appendix. I will deposit my copy in the University of Wisconsin-Madison archive at the conclusion of this study.

highlighted class distinctions and was designed for the elite and bourgeois. Second, the content of the massive production was written to specifically celebrate Mexican history and Mexican heritage. Before the revolution, plays for children were either drawn from the Western European canon, adapted from children's novels, or featured middle class variety or circus performances. For the first time, indigenous peoples and the lower and working classes were represented onstage (however problematically) in roles that validated their worth in society. Finally, a shift towards the new educational models was evident in the large demonstrations of musical and athletic prowess. The content of these performances championed the values of the new Mexican society. They featured indigenous education and *mestizo* aesthetics in human pyramids made from indigenous peoples with the actual Aztec pyramids in the background. There was a reverent flag ceremony celebrating the new republic, and a play where the young peasant defeats the powerful oppressor to become a hero who ultimately risks everything to save all of his countrymen. Taken together, these acts paint a rich picture that highlights the nationalist ideologies of the period.

It is important to note that, alongside these grand events' transmission to physical audiences of thousands, the federal Section of Cultural Propaganda was also broadcasting the activities of the Secretary of Education in "plazas, theatres, cinemas, schools, libraries, unions and prisons" across the country (Reyes 24). The reach of these epic productions was far and wide, given the large number of children and young people in attendance at the *teatro de masas* productions,

coupled with those participating in the shows, and those who were listening to the live radio broadcasts of the productions at home.[42]

Another important consideration is that the *teatro de masas* did not exploit children's aesthetics in the service of adult ideological goals like the theatre for mixed audiences that came during *el porfiriato. Teatro de masas* productions like *The Song of Victory* used highly theatrical aesthetics and spectacle that would have been effective for adult, child, and mixed audiences alike. While the performers of the "mass" numbers were mostly young people and the story was ostensibly a didactic, ideologically loaded one, the aesthetics of the pieces were not appropriated from any single cultural group. In fact, the contrary seems to be true; perhaps in an effort to create the effect of a singular "*Mexicanidad*," the aesthetics of *The Song of Victory* seem to be drawn from many traditions, including the indigenous and Western European. This breadth has been criticized by scholars of indigenous Mexican culture today, as the work was created almost exclusively from a Eurocentric power position; however, it is worth noting that the theatre makers creating *teatro de masas* were not borrowing or appropriating "children's aesthetics"—they were attempting to invent a new aesthetic, taking clues from the mass spectacles of Soviet Russia.[43] Moreover, the handbills from *The Song of Victory* included a copy of the play and full color plates featuring

[42] In 1925 there were an additional 65 radio stations installed across the country that reached into "the United States, Central America, and the Caribbean," where "they reported satisfactorily having received the signal" (Reyes 24).

[43] For more on the development of Soviet mass festivals see Rolf.

examples of traditional and contemporary art, including international examples of avant-garde art work. The free handbills are another example of the aims of aesthetic education at work and the movement to distribute cultural literacy materials to children. In these documents, we see yet another method for disseminating the new revolutionary ideology to both children and their parents.

The ideology was embodied further in another performance project that began in 1926, and continued into the next decade, *El Teatro Mexicano del Murcielago*. This group of secondary and university students was originally formed as part of the *La Casa del Estudiante Indigena* (The Indigenous Student Union). The group started as a drama club of secondary and university students formed within the indigenous cultural club, and it explored many dramatic situations "in urban life from diverse social sectors" (Esquivel N. pag.). However, after Luis Quintanilla, founder of the group, saw a Russian performance of *Chauve Souris* in New York, he was inspired to create a uniquely Mexican version complete with "exclusively national elements" (qtd. in Rashkin 101). The premier of the event in 1926 was heralded as "a deployment of liberty and nationalist affirmation" (Magaña 14). Carlos González, a painter and indigenous scenic designer, together with the musician Francisco Domínguez, organized the group's representation of indigenous scenes from daily life as well as scenes of indigenous myth. Rafael López Vázquez notes that their motive for creating the work was to "affirm the cultural roots" of the students in the production, the artists who worked with them (who taught at *La Casa Indigena),* and young audience

members of indigenous origin (Boletín 88). As for so many productions from this period, free tickets to the performances were distributed widely in schools. This ensured full houses and, in the case of *El Teatro Mexicano del Murcielago*, that indigenous students would be in the audience as well.

Although *teatro de masas* productions and projects such as the Cultural Missions and *El Teatro Mexicano del Murcielago* were thriving, many theatre artists were still frustrated by the strong grip that the government had on cultural production. It had become apparent to many artists that the Calles government was corrupt and wealthy, using empty revolutionary rhetoric to maintain power. This frustration reached a turning point in the "30-30 *Guerilla Cultural*" [Cultural Guerrilla War], on November 7, 1928 when artists demonstrated in the capital's largest plaza, *el Zócalo.* This large protest organized by the capital's independent theatre makers, artists, and some academics was as an answer to criticism in the press and the political "interests that threatened existence" of the new governmental Department of the Fine Arts (Reyes 36). Importantly, the group called for a total reorganization of the Department of Fine Arts, and argued for an expansion of the artistic curriculum outside of the fine arts schools and into the government sponsored technical schools as well. Their manifesto argued that ivory tower academics "represented the judgment and taste of the bourgeois, that desire to prolong the moment of their peak power of suggestion and of their domain that entails guiding and controlling the emotions of the collective" (Tercer 1928). They argued that art had to do more than "just superficially exploit the

superficial themes of the Mexican Revolution" to be considered truly revolutionary (Tercer 1928). The group insisted that the "power of the revolution," as they had learned, was to "put the resources of the craft" of the fine and performing arts "into the hands of the people…with the goal that he himself [sic] can freely express himself in the way the he feels and sees things" (Tercer 1928). While the protest was short lived, and very few of the protestors' demands were met, the demonstration was iconic in that it marked a true break for many with the old way of cultural production. Many of their demands could not be met because as Reyes Palmas notes "social benefits were rationed according to political need and not following a progressive pattern of cultural democratization" (36). As the Secretary of Public Education and Fine Arts continued to grow, these progressive ideals quickly confronted a "narrowness on the budget and the bureaucratic struggle of tendencies in the field of arts education" (Reyes 37).

As Calles's term in office came to a close, this revolutionary government's message continued to be increasingly socialist in spite of rampant corruption and extortion. Many artists left the capital and traveled to far corners of the republic and abroad because they were disillusioned with revolutionary promises and a kind of "Mexican McCarthyism" occurring in the federal government where the Secretariat of Education and Fine Art was located. William Beezely notes that independent "Mexican artists eschewed the didactic overtly political themes" characteristic of the revolutionary period" (*Oxford* 566).

By and large, the great majority of theatre that children and young people saw in the capital during the 1920s was fastened securely to the Secretariat of Education and its political message. New work funded by the Secretariat of Education (such as the *teatro de masas* projects) used Mexican language and over the course of the decade began to reflect a blending of tropes taken from the *espectáculos* of the Porfirian era with ideology from the post-war period. This was in part due to the fact that most of the practitioners working for the Secretariat of Education had grown up with and been trained by positivists of the *porfiriato*. This resulted in an aesthetic that was quintessentially *mestizo*; the blending of an emphasis on spectacle (the acrobats of the circus, music and dancing) with the ideology and content of the revolution (heroic stories that taught an invented Mexican mythology) for and with a new generation of *mestizo* citizens. All of this theatre sought to be both good for children and good for the nation. Now performed “out in the sun” in a characteristically Mexican dialect, these productions explicitly sought to spread the revolutionary message. In the next decade, the link between theatre for children and young people and the government would grow stronger, yet it would take on a new aesthetic informed by the European avant-garde and the new cultural policies of President Lázaro Cárdenas.

Chapter 4: A New Theatre for Children and Young People

Many scholars (Knight, Suchlicki, Tannenbaum, Shorris) date the end of the revolution to the end of the Calles government in late November of 1928. However, in order to understand the effects of the revolution on theatre for young audiences, one must look at the years that led up to and immediately followed the revolution. I started this study in 1900, roughly ten years before Madero's presidency, which marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. In the second chapter I discussed the revolution. In the last chapter we looked at the years from the end of the fighting roughly until the 1930s. In this chapter, I will address the ten years after the revolutionary era, beginning with the official end of the Calles presidency in 1928 and the developments that led up to the first congress of *Teatro Guiñol* in 1936, which marks the beginning of the professionalization of the field of theatre for children and young people in México.[44]

Just as the Calles presidency was ending in December of 1928, Álvaro Obregón secured his reelection bid for a second term as president (not sequential). However, days before he was to assume the presidency, Obregón was assassinated on July 17th, 1928 by a religious extremist. Congress quickly

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[44] The name *Teatro Guiñol* comes from an early nineteenth century Italian puppeteer who purportedly popularized children's puppetry in Italy. Over time the movable stage apparatus used for simple puppet theatre came to be called a "t*eatro guignol*, " and was the basis for the portable theatre built by the Cuetos and company (Lago 15).

installed Emiliano Portes Gil as interim president, and voted for the country to undergo a new electoral process.

While Mexican politicians organized a new election, the new interim president broke off relations with the Soviet Union and persecuted members of the Communist Party. The Secretariat of Education and Fine Arts became the center of an ideological struggle, which was itself at the center of the new president's charge against the Mexican Communist Party, "to which many of those that worked in the Secretariat belonged" (Brun 66). In reprisal for their allegiance, many artists, (the majority of whom worked in the Secretariat of Education) were sent on cultural missions to the far corners of the republic or chose to leave the country for Europe where, according to Reyes, "what appears to be at first a forced exile, eventually became a rich source of experiences that broadened their perception of social reality and new content for their personal work" (Reyes 59). Many of these artists had never worked in the theatre directly, and experienced the art form for the first time on Cultural Missions or abroad.

During this period, the European avant-garde was in its prime. Many artists who would later become influential practitioners of theatre for children and young people were influenced by the experimental artistic practices that were occurring in Europe. After returning to the capital from a Cultural Mission the muralist Gabriel Fernández Ledesma argued for the formation of a "Mexican Theatre for the People." Through his exposure to theatre in the Cultural Missions, Fernández Ledesma believed that such a theatre would "deal with the collective

problems of society and show the popular traditions with a renovated concept of scenic space" (Brun 66). Portes Gil was quick to praise the theatrical work facilitated in schools by the Secretariat of Public Education and Fine Art, both in the Cultural Missions and in the schools:

> I thought it necessary to elevate the school through a new advanced moral proletarian ideology of the Mexican Revolution. To this purpose, even more than the immediate action of the teachers to both their child and adult students; an energetic activity in each school building unfolded where in outdoor theaters entire communities of the republic can hear an expression of the new ideology through dramatic works recreationally. (Qtd. in Reyes Palma 59)

The "proletarian ideology of the Mexican Revolution" that Portes Gil spoke about is, in part, an extension, celebration, and search for the notion of the *mestizaje* planted by José Vasconcelos a decade earlier. It was also thoroughly hypocritical given his direct tie to the corrupt national party and their capitalist business dealings.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in many ways, Mexican artists were endeavoring to establish an aesthetic form that spoke to the Mexican condition in the wake of the most horrific violence the republic had ever seen. They sought an aesthetics that expressed the ideological and philosophical goals of the revolution in a quintessentially Mexican voice. These artists, much like their contemporaries in Europe who were also struggling to pursue new forms in

the wake of World War I, strove to create art that questioned and transgressed the foundational assumptions upon which pre-revolutionary Mexican culture had been built. Vasconcelos, in his search for "the heart of reality," drew on philosophical tenets of Fredrich Nietzsche,[45] and concluded that, "only the aesthetic emotion is capable of penetrating to the heart of reality" (Haddox 20).

Given the horrors of war experienced during the Revolution, Mexican artists of the post-revolutionary period attempted to resurrect fundamental ethical certainties without the spiritual certainty of God or the political certainty of an absolute dictator or foreign monarch. They sought to create art forms that, like those of their European counterparts, transcended rational understanding and strove for superlative spiritual and/or mystical enlightenment. These new forms attempted to establish a cultural and spiritual identity grounded in Vasconcelos's notion of the *mestizaje.* Many of these artists traveled extensively in Europe at this time, and were also influenced by the European avant-garde which was manifested in the arts they created when they returned to México.

While Mexican artists explored abroad, exiled Russian Communist Leon Trotsky had found refuge in México and was collaborating with many artists in the capitol including Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and the French essayist André

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[45] Nietzschean, Bergsonian, and Hegalian philosophies were read and discussed in-depth by the members of the *Ateneo de la Juventud* of which Vasconcelos was a founding member. Nietzche's influential book *Also sprach Zarathustra* was translated into Spanish by Eduardo Ovejaro y Maury in 1932, and was republished by the Secretariat of Education in 1933. Much of Vasconcelos's later philosophy draws on the Nietzchean concepts of the "Übermensch" and "God is dead."

Breton (who was in México introducing the republic to surrealism).[46] Together with Trotsky, Breton and Rivera wrote "Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," in which they condemned governmental censorship forced on artists in the Soviet Union and all over the world. They argued that "artistic imagination requires freedom from coercion" and that artists everywhere "had an 'inalienable right' to choose their own subjects" (qtd. in Beezely 567).

All of this was in response to a frightening political climate in the capital. Former President Calles had long rewarded his allies monetarily while in power. Members of his cabinet became very wealthy men during his time in office through kickbacks and profitable contracts in the growing construction sector. Union bosses also were bought as a "pattern of graft and corruption permeated society" under Calles (Suchlicki 117). Suchlicki notes that during the Calles presidency human rights abuses "were commonplace" as many of his political enemies were arrested and jailed—several committed suicide while in prison (117). Once he was out of office, Calles organized the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*[47] (PNR or National Peoples Party) and was elected chairman.

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[46] Diane Scillia notes that "Diego Rivera was especially sympathetic to both the traditional arts of Russia and to their revolutionary variants, in part because of what his teacher Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo) had taught regarding how folk traditions reflect the soul of the people. This romantic view was coupled, in Rivera's mind, with Élie Faure's socialist ideas on how medieval and early renaissance frescos functioned as both didactic and popular art" (447).

[47] The PNR became the *Partido de la Revolucion Mexicana (PRM)* [Party of the Mexican Revolution] and then in 1945 was again transformed into the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)* [Institutional Revolutionary Party] which "ruled

The PNR united Calles's former allies, labor leaders, leaders of the burgeoning federal bureaucracy, indigenous leaders, and virtually all of the military generals. All federal workers were required to join the party and pay dues to finance the PNR's activities. Calles called the shots from behind the scenes and corruption was rampant. For example, many politicians owned casinos and bars, with permits obtained through their connections with party leaders, which could not have been acquired by ordinary citizens. Many novels, plays and essays that challenged the regime were written during this period, but, because of political pressure, were not published or performed until the end of the decade, when Calles was forced out of the country.

Due to term limits, Calles was unable to remain president of México as long as he might have wished, however he had selected and controlled national politics through "puppet presidents" until 1934.[48] First, Emilio Portes Gil was elected president when Obregón was assassinated. Very quickly Calles considered him weak and ineffective and pushed for his resignation; that occurred in 1930. Gil was succeeded by Pascual Ortiz Rubio, who was also unable to hold favor with Calles. Calles publicly sought Rubio's resignation. After several assassination attempts, Rubio resigned in 1932. Finally, Abelardo

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México until 2000" (Suchlicki 118). No opposition candidate won a federal election until 2000.

[48] In 1926, the Mexican congress changed the Constitution of 1917 allowing for "a non-consecutive re-election. In 1928 Obregón was elected as Calles's successor; this amendment was later repealed in 1934" (Coerver 55).

Rodríguez was installed as interim president until 1934. During this period, as politicians became wealthier, they became correspondingly more conservative. “Social reforms were neglected and the tempo of the revolution slowed considerably” (Suchlicki 118). The small Communist party was suppressed, as were independent labor unions. Through empty rhetoric that espoused Mexican exceptionalism and championed the values of the revolution, the PNR was able to maintain control in spite of very little actual progress for the Mexican people. Ultimately, the four years after the Calles presidency may be seen as virtually the same ideologically his presidency: Calles pulled the party strings in order to continue his capitalist plans of “modernization and industrialization” while appeasing the field and factory workers with the same “nationalist, socialist, revolutionary discourse of his predecessors” (Brun 71). All of these presidents and their cabinets were controlled directly by the PNR until Lázaro Cárdenas was elected president in 1934, replacing the last of the interim presidents, Abelardo Rodríguez.

The Abelardo Rodríguez presidency is often noted for efforts in education and culture. Under Rodríguez, the Palace of Fine Arts (begun under Díaz) was finally completed, and he pushed a bill through Congress that made nationalist socialist education and sexual education compulsory in public schools.

In 1934, “a restless generation questioned the purpose and achievements of the revolution and longed for new, honest leadership” (Suchlicki 119). With the Great Depression wreaking havoc on the economy and escalating

unemployment, many Mexicans became discontented with the sluggish rate at which agrarian and labor reforms were occurring. A new decidedly Marxist left was growing in popularity and arguing for more radical socialist reforms. Calles and other PNR leaders drafted the “Six Year Plan,” to appease the growing leftist alliance. The plan called for a rapid acceleration of land redistribution, economic independence from foreign powers (especially the United States), more labor reforms and a full blown “conquest of illiteracy.” Lázaro Cárdenas, the PNR governor of the state of Michocacán, won the national election in 1934 by vowing to accomplish the promises made in the Six Year Plan.

In order to achieve this, Cárdenas realized that he had to rid the country of Calles and his rich allies who were subverting the goals of the revolution through misrepresentation and fraud. Cárdenas allowed for labor strikes and increased military salaries. He taxed the casinos in México City out of existence and reopened bidding for federal construction and service contracts. Contracts and casinos were where Calles and many of his colleagues had made their fortunes, and when Calles publicly challenged the president in 1936, Cárdenas gave him (and a group of Calles supporters) the option of facing trial in México for fraud and extortion or exile to the United States. Calles and his supporters fled the country never to return.

President Cárdenas’s government implemented socialist reforms on the largest scale ever seen in México. He redistributed forty-nine million acres of land to indigenous peoples and peasant farmers; he nationalized the lucrative

petroleum and railroad industries, and reorganized labor and farming groups across the country. With these new revenues from the oil and railroad industries, Cárdenas invested in education on scale never seen before or since. Schools were improved and built across the country.

El Teatro de Periquillo

At the end of 1929, the Secretary of Education, José Manuel Puig Casauranc, named Alfonso Pruneda to work as Director of the Department of Civic Action in the Federal District. This new position was created specifically to spread revolutionary ideology throughout the republic. Closely working with the playwright Amalia Gonzalez Calbellero de Castillo Ledón, Pruneda oversaw the programming of recreational activities for children and young people throughout the capital district. One of their largest programs was a movable educational fair, featuring tents—each with unique shows and lectures sponsored by the Secretariat of Education for children and young people in schools and public gardens. In one of these tents, the poet Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano partnered with the stage designer and theatre technician Julio Castellanos Juan Guerrero to create *El Teatro Periquillo,* a modernist puppet show specifically for children and young people that proved to be very popular.

Marcial Rojas, an influential theatre critic, wrote about the “new approach of separate shows for children and young people.” Rojas was impressed by how different the “modern” theatre of Ortiz de Montellano and Guerrero was from the

famous Rosete Aranda puppet shows that she remembered from her childhood. Rojas observes that the Rosete Aranda Puppets were “outrageously realistic” and therefore less theatrical than *Teatro Periquillo* puppets that shared an aesthetic much like the theatre of German expressionism[49] (Rojas 35). We know that Montellano traveled in Western Europe, and it is possible that he was exposed to experimental and avant-garde theatrical forms abroad. Rojas’s critique is in keeping with Brun’s analysis that, “Contemporary thought was manifesting itself with its emblematic rejection of realism” (67). Puppets in *Teatro Periquillo* were grotesque in nature; their faces were painted to show intense emotional states and their voices revealed these states in cartoonlike extremes. Rojas describes the comic effect of the performances that *Teatro Periquillo* had on child audiences:

> The new “Periquillo” dolls in these theaters are fully oriented to farce and the grotesque; they are born to make a child laugh; to impress them with their reserved human-like personalities that live in constant childlike development; to incite the imagination within a plane of aesthetic beauty that is balanced with the ingenuity of interior décor.... It is Mexican without being gaudy, it captures the eye of the child, and of course, educates him along the way. (Rojas 35)

[49] For more on German Expressionist Theatre see, among many others, Cardullo, Bert and Robert Knopf. Eds.

With their success, the small company quickly outgrew the tent and began touring to public primary schools, backed by the Secretariat of Education. With a demand for more material and an eager audience, Ortiz de Montellano worked quickly to create dramatic texts specifically for young audiences that often illustrated an ordinary protagonist's struggle against class reinforcing bourgeois values:

> I took the characters from the Sunday newspaper comics… the physicality of the characters is ideal for children; as well as illustrating the value of friendship, [of] knowledge and the value of the ordinary. I wrote plays to encourage a new and different life—psychological virtues more in tune to my own purposes. For instance, instead of the traditional types of European puppet farce (which is outside the consciousness of our [Mexican] children) I gave the puppets a higher purpose… rich in spiritual vitamins… […] In the purest tradition of toys and the popular theater—I showed the Devil, Perico [a popular comic bird character], and Death (who doesn't scare our children) playing with cardboard models in order to stir the soul of children in the audience ... (Rojas 36).

The "spiritual vitamins" that Ortiz de Montellano speaks of were redolent of the German expressionists who attempted to create an emotional experience over realistic representation, evoking a spiritual experience over an intellectual one. The puppets in *El Teatro de Periquillo* were not realistically reflecting society back to its young audiences (as many companies had attempted before the

revolution); rather, they were radically trying to elicit a strong emotional response from the children using culturally specific images (like the Devil and Perico—a well known parakeet character featured in folk stories) that were unique to México. Rodolfo Obregon discusses this shift in Mexican puppetry aesthetics, noting that before the revolution puppet companies were "like a mirror" to the audience and after they were helping the audience to discover "who they were and where it was headed" (*Érase* N. pag.). Obregon suggests that puppetry in México is "marked by a colonial, evangelical history" and which in many ways became "more and more didactic" after the revolution. Obregon notes that before the revolution puppet companies were "showing the audience how they felt" and after the fighting ended, puppeteers "were showing them how to feel" (*Érase* N. pag). *El Teatro de Periquillo* was the first company to attempt this with non-realistic, modernist aesthetics.

Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano not only ran *El Teatro Periquillo,* but also wrote many plays for the *Casa Estudiante Indígena*, the Cultural Missions, and for secondary schools, with the painter Antonio Ruiz. Through the magazine *Pulgarcito,* children would contribute scripted scenes and set designs that were selected by Ortiz de Montellano and Ruiz that they later used in actual performances, crediting the children who created them. In 1931, *Pulgarcito* devoted an entire issue to *teatro infantil* and provided children with scripts, instructions for creating puppets, portable stages, and advice for mounting their own shows in their communities or at school (Brun 69). Ortiz de Montellano later

became the chief book reviewer for the Secretariat of Education, a post he held until his death in 1949.

In 1932 José Muñoz Cota was appointed head of the Department of Fine Arts (which controlled the Department of Theatre) within the Secretariat of Education. Under his leadership, the growing Cultural Missions program began to teach creative drama and theatre techniques to schoolteachers at normal schools in México City and to leaders of the growing Cultural Missions program. In January of 1933, Salvador Novo published an article in *El Maestro Rural* [The Rural Teacher], which was a trade journal published by the Secretariat of Education to prepare teachers working in both urban and rural settings (in spite of its title). The article demonstrated how teachers could use theatre and drama in the classroom as a tool similar to how "Christianity used the premises of ancient Greek theatre [to evangelize], and how the Spanish used the theatre during the conquest [to civilize, Christianize, and conquer]" (qtd. in Moncada 135). This article indicated a change in how theatre would be used not only as pedagogical tool to learn curricular content, but also as a way to shape the hearts and minds of a new revolutionary youth. Teachers were no longer only responsible for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, but now were expected to impart revolutionary ideology in the formation of "ideal" Mexican citizens.

Teatro *Guiñol*

Meanwhile, influenced by the popular push to use theatre in schools as a pedagogical tool new theatre projects dedicated to children and young people were rapidly growing in number throughout the capital. Groups such as *Teatro Periquillo*, and the troupes sponsored by the *Casa Estudiante Indigena* and the Cultural Missions, were growing in number under José Muñoz Cota's leadership. In 1932, all of the groups that worked for the Secretariat of Education were "consolidated" into a group with "one aesthetic, one technique, one art, and one goal," (Brun 69). This large puppet troupe grew to have many divisions, but was collectively called *Teatro Guiñol*. The *Teatro Guiñol* program would become the most important and celebrated form of theatre for children and young people in twentieth century México.

People were already familiar with the Rosete Aranda puppets and looked to puppetry "nostalgically," as a national pastime and *Teatro Guiñol* capitalized on this, primarily using puppets as well (Silva *Época* N.pag.). Silva shows how puppet shows were "perfectly suited to the ideological and methodological objectives" of the newly restructured Mexican educational system (Silva *Época* N.pag). Puppet shows were easy to transport, had fixed costs that were relatively low, and served as universal metaphors for vast sectors of the populace. Compared to other forms of performance, puppet shows were materially efficient as puppeteers could play several parts, puppets and sets could be used and re-used, and music was usually pre-recorded so that the expense of an orchestra

was not needed. The Secretariat of Education had a mode of performance art that met the exacting demands of the new revolutionary ideology to "reach massive audiences quickly, simply and directly…while supporting their education. These productions brought the use of animated dolls to bear upon its political, educational and ideological agenda as didactic means for advertisement, indoctrination, and literacy campaigns" (Silva *Época* N.pag).

The well-known artist and long-time political activist Leopoldo Mendez was first to recommend the idea of using puppet shows for didactic purposes in kindergartens and primary schools in 1933. While Mendez is oft cited as the father of *Teatro Guiñol*, his ideas were formulated with many friends who had recently returned from Europe. This large group of important artists, (most of whom were all already well known in their own fields and well connected to popular artists and prominent intellectuals) engaged with similar endeavors in Europe.[50] How these friends came together is the subject of many anecdotes, but for purposes of this study I will share only the known facts of how this now famous group was assembled.

Mexican writer Germán List Arzubide was returning from the Soviet Union through Paris and met the important Mexican painter and sculptor, Germán Cueto and his wife, a painter, Lola Velázquez de Cueto. Arzubide was inspired

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[50] Francisca Silva cites Spanish painter Maria Blanchard; Soviet puppeteers Sergei Obraztsov and Nina Efimova; Writers such as Jean Cocteau, Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob; French pedagogue Jacques Chesnais; and painters such as Pablo Picasso, Jean Charlot, Andre Derain, Henri Matisse (6).

by the “quality and quantity of puppet theatre for children” that he had seen in the U.S.S.R. and shared this with the Cuetos and their Russian traveling companion (who had once been married to Diego Rivera), Angelina Beloff.[51] Beloff, an artist in her own right, was trained in puppetry and theatrical pedagogy. Together the foursome returned to México, where they invited others to a “workshop” in the Merced neighborhood where the Cuetos lived. Juan Guerrero, a popular puppeteer, was invited to the workshop, as were Ramón and Dolores Alva de Canal, well-known painters who lived nearby and were active in the “Strident Movement” and the Cultural Missions projects. [52]

Folklore-expert Graciela Amador joined the *Teatro Guiñol* group, along with many other members of the strident artistic movement and revolutionary artists “who were deeply committed to ideological causes” and active participants in the “cultural missions” (Silva *Época* N.pag). This large group initially tried to create a marionette company, but soon found that hand puppets were easier to build and transport.

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[51] For more on Angelina Beloff see Glenda Maria del Carmen Cabrera Aquino’s biographical study, “*El trabajo pedagogio de Angelina Beloff en el Contexto Aristico e Intelectual de México”* [The Pedagogy of Angelina Beloff in the Mexican Artistic and Intelectual Context]

[52] *El movimiento estridentismo,* (The Strident Movement) was an avant-garde artistic movement that was founded by Manual Maples Arce in México City in 1921. This movement shares several characteristics with Dada, Cubism, and Ultraism, but is distinguished by its content derived from Revolutionary ideology and an emphasis of aesthetics drawn from Mexican folklore. For more on the strident movement in México, see Rashkin.

In 1933, Mendez approached Carlos Chávez (the newly appointed Director of the Department of Fine Arts) to "bring visibility to the *guiñol* theatre project" (Brun 71). Their first production of *El Gigante Melchor,* written by workshop member Elena Huerta Múzquiz, was presented to an invited group of students at the Secretariat of Education's *Teatro Orientacíon*. Arzubide later wrote that many students in the audience "cried" and that the workshop team was truly "proud" of their successful production (Brun 72). The Secretary of Public Education and his Undersecretary, together with the Director of the Department of Fine Arts, the Director of the Theatre Department and the Directors of Primary and Secondary Education were all in attendance. Silva notes that for the first time "The artistic interests of all participants became one with the educational goals and the propaganda efforts of the post-revolutionary regime, and under the protection of México's cultural institutions, puppet shows grew and consolidated into a full-blown artistic movement over the next 30 years" (Silva *Época* N.pag.).

Due to this success, Mendez negotiated the formation of a national "Theatre Laboratory" where projects could be tested before national implementation. Ultimately, by the end of 1933 the Secretariat of Education supervised a decidedly socialist *guiñol* puppet troupe (with many divisions that toured nationally) and a national children's puppet theatre company. The Secretariat of Education financed both groups, and a "repertoire commission" approved their thematic and aesthetic content.

Angelina Beloff translated training manuals, plays and other educational materials used in the Soviet Union from Russian to Spanish. Silva notes that Beloff found many of the Russian texts of "great use to inform the educational agenda of the theatre of the future;" her translations served as a guide for the Teatro *Guiñol* troupes (Silva *Época* N.pag). Later in 1945, after visiting France, Belgium, and the U.S.S.R., she consolidated her translations and observations into a book, *Muñecos Animados* [Animated Dolls], which was published by the Secretariat of Education and used in teacher training throughout the republic.

The Cueto home became the site where most *Teatro Guiñol* projects began. With financing from the Secretariat of Education, they built a workshop and a room to store puppets, props and equipment. They also added a "play hall" to their home, which was used for rehearsals, workshops, and public preview performances of their plays. By the end of 1934, auditions were held and many *Teatro Guiñol* "troupes" were developed. After the "repertoire commission" approved the shows, they went on national tour. The first tour in 1934 consisted of seventy-eight kindergartens, and each small team performed three, thirty minute shows per weekday.

The "repertoire commission" was a committee of officials who worked in the Theatre Section of the Fine Arts Department, and the Primary Education Section of the Secretariat of Education. The committee was charged with determining the "didactic quality" of proposed productions and referring revised scripts to the Chief Inspector of National Kindergartens who ultimately made the

decision about what was approved and cut from scripts. His decision went to the Head of the Fine Arts Department and then finally to the Secretary. Silva notes that in the view of the troupes, "the 'repertoire commission' had become a 'pedagogical commission of censorship' endowed with power to purge and often suppress the very best in each play" (Silva *Época* N.pag.). The troupes often commented that the "commission was completely out of touch with the world of children, and therefore unaware of the issues involved in their development" (Silva *Época* N.pag.). As there was no appeals process, and no legal recourse, the troupe members had to comply with the committee's decision in order to keep their posts.

Productions were short, and usually lasted thirty minutes. The majority of the pieces were drawn either from Mexican folklore, like *The Traveling Tadpole* or *The Beekeeping Piglets* or adaptations of classic children's literature such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Ugly Duckling*. Other plays were more didactic, such as *The History of the Mexican National Anthem* or *Our Proud Mexican Flag*. Later, Gérman Cueto was inspired to adapt adult plays and literature for children, which also became part of the touring repertoire.

While the content of the plays was simple and predictable, the founding artists sought to create an art form of truly Mexican quality. Silva notes that they "manage to put on the tics and foibles of characteristically Mexican stereotypes" that were recognizable to pre-school children. These types, such as the famous *Periquito* (Parakeet) that played tricks on the ever faithful and kind *Comino,* have

become the staples of the Mexican theatrical tradition for children. While some of these stock characters had been created before in other contexts (such as the country girl and indigenous characters), the *Teatro Guiñol* companies codified them in a unifying form and named them (*la China Poblana* and *Los Inditos/as*). The “Mexicanization” of stock characters, and the emphasis on patriotic and morality plays in recognizable Mexican Spanish reinforced the nationalistic aims of the revolutionary government.

In spite of the short duration of the productions, they were loaded with spectacle, inspired by the *espectáculos* of the *porfiriato,* and emphasized aesthetic experience drawn from the avant-garde. Puppets were as technologically advanced as they could be with lavish sets and costumes. Music and dancing was an integral part of each production. Every play was bookended with a dance, featured a song sung by the main character, or had a musical prologue/epilogue. Often the musical scores (many of which survive today) were taken straight from the Mexican folk canon (such as the *Jarabe Tapatío* or *La Cucaracha*). Other songs came from popular music to accompany new plays or classical music to accompany adaptations. Only one piece, *The Traveling Tadpole*, had its own music commissioned. Music was almost always pre-recorded, and the recording/amplifying technology reflected the best available at the time. All of these production considerations added to the spectacular aesthetics that defined the form.

In light of the relative stability offered by *Teatro Guiñol* to the theatre artists who worked in the program, many continued working in the company for decades. The promise of a stable salary, regular schedule, and the opportunity to create new work drew many artists (young and old) to the annual Secretariat of Education annual auditions. New troupes were always forming and older groups toured extensively both domestically and abroad. In 1936, the Secretariat of Education held the first “Congress” of *Teatro Guiñol*, inviting all the troupes, directors, designers, teachers, and critics working in the form to a congress complete with panel discussions and performances.

Theatre festivals for children were organized in streets all over the capital; many were cosponsored by the Secretariat of Education and any of the now flourishing theatrical labor unions including *la Union de Actores* [Actors Union], led by Edaurado Pastor; *la Asociación Nacional de Actores,* led by their Secretary General, Fernando Soler; and *La Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios* [League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists [Designers]. Contemporary theatre critic Armando de Maria y Campos describes one of these outdoor festivals:

> With an agile and alert spirit, José Muñoz Cota, the Head of the Department of Revolutionary Fine Arts, [within] the Secretariat of Education, is demonstrating a palpable interest in Mexican children by endowing them with a theater that is popular, artistic, and educational according to official doctrines. [Cota] first convened a contest of children's

> plays, which were celebrated on Sunday morning at the Alameda Central, behind the Juarez Center. There, outdoor cultural festivals were presented for children and workers, (more for the latter of course) with puppets, children's farces, typical regional dances and popular music. I am not a worker, nor am I a child, but rather I am a devoted spectator (...) *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Firuleque in the Circus*, were presented by Rin-Rin; *The Miracle*, a childish morality farce by Salazar Mallen was presented by the Germán Cueto group. (...) There have already been three festivals of this kind. They have just begun the work and are already seeing the fruits of their labor. (…) The workers, the children, the young and old spirits rejoice (especially when the puppets perform!). (219)

"Rin-Rin" was the name of one of the *Teatro Guiñol* groups that performed in the above festival. Small festivals sponsored by the Secretariat of Education and partner labor organizations like the one described above were performed in parks, plazas, and back alleys all over the city on Sundays. Admission was free, and the programs were varied. Some included well-known *Teatro Guiñol* groups trying out a new production, and others were comprised of small amateur productions created by children in classrooms with their teachers.

Teatro de masas productions continued in the post-revolutionary era as well, and were presented all over the city in productions sponsored by the Secretariat of Education. Over time, productions grew even larger in size and more epic in scope. For example, the *teatro de masas* production *Liberation,* by

Efrén Orozco Rosales was presented on the Day of the Revolution (a federal holiday on Nov. 20th) in 1935 and again in 1936 in the newly built stadium, *el Centro Social y Deportivo Venustano Carranza*. The production began with a representation of the mythical foundation of the great Aztec city, Tenochtitlan and continued chronologically to dramatize key historical moments when the Mexican populace was "liberated" from various conquerors (the Spanish, the French, etc..) and ending with the beginning of the Revolution in 1910. The production was performed by "a choir of four thousand child voices from primary schools in México City" hundreds of acrobats, dancers, and the national orchestra. Short moments of dialogue were interspersed throughout and performed by practitioners from the Department of Theatre (Brun 78).

Also in 1935, the outdoor amphitheater *Teatro Teotihuacan* hosted a *teatro de masas* production of *The Creation of the Fifth Sun,* by Efrén Orozco and Carlos González in order to commemorate the twentieth international Lions Club convention held in México City. John Nomland describes the production:

> The date of the show coincided with the Aztec New Year, on the 25th of July. The Lions [members] were able to contemplate the sacrifice of the Gods Tecucitecatl and Nanaotzin, from Citalicue that drowned in fire to safe the world from darkness with the creation of a new sun and a new rich life. The scene featured three thousand actors spectacularly dressed in the dazzling royal pomp of a bygone era—all of them carefully placed in a great symphony of color, movement, and sound. (92)

Later in 1937 on the Day of the Revolution, Nellie and Gloria Campobello starred in a ballet theatre production presented in *teatro de masas* form*,* entitled *30-30*. Michiko Tanaka notes that this production "was another attempt to artistically highlight the principles of the revolution" (70). The production featured one thousand, eight hundred school children who sang, danced, and acted with the adult ballerinas. The audience was made up of students who were not performing, invited school audiences, and families of the performers.

By 1936, the Secretariat of Education organized a *Teatro Guiñol* Congress to be held at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* [Palace of Fine Arts] in the capital. There were many speakers, but the most notorious keynote was provided by the French theatre artists and theorist, Antonin Artaud who was in México to experience indigenous rituals first-hand. Artaud was apparently invited to speak about the French character *"Guignol,"* who was a representative character in French puppetry for children. Artaud, having no interest in French children's puppetry instead spoke about Balinese puppet theatre, including the description of a Balinese puppet that had been on tour in Paris. Maria y Campos, who attended the Congress and heard Artaud speak noted that "he stunned his listeners" by not mentioning "*Guignol*," nor children's theatre at all.

The *Teatro Guiñol* congress was significant because not only did it validate the work by celebrating the form in the prestigious *Palacio de Bellas Artes,* a space reserved for the highest forms of performance—but it also brought together everyone working in the field of theatre for children and young people to

hear leaders working in the field, to see exemplary productions, and to discuss the field as a separate genre from adult theatre. The fact that they chose Artaud as their keynote speaker again illustrates the connection to the European avant-garde, which movement was occurring simultaneously. During the Congress, the nature of *Teatro Guiñol* was discussed and debated. A note establishing a "definition" of the form was published shortly after the Congress:

> The dynamic of *Teatro Guiñol:* The movement should be tied to the voice, gestures, and music. The music should arouse movement and the movement should inspire the music. The movement of this theatre is overly slow and overly fast, it plays with audience perspective; makes you laugh to see how they perpetually destroy the space—that is, the objects—the dolls [puppets]—jump from the stage in a way that makes you wonder, "Who could jump like that?" (Maria y Campos 16)

The ideas present in this definition, when considered together with the existence of the small Sunday festivals organized all over the capital, indicate the first steps toward professionalization in the field of theatre for children and young people in México.

This aesthetic of public nationalism stood in stark contrast to the private theatre enterprises for children and young people of the pre-revolutionary period that had virtually disappeared from the capital. Most Mexican companies had been absorbed in one way or another by the efforts of the Department of Theatre within the Secretariat of Education. The exception was visiting companies from

Spain, which presented adaptations of fairy tales and other children's literature, as before the revolution. For example, from September to August of 1937 the Spanish Comedy Company led by *Díaz Collado,* presented a short season of "The Theatre for Children" which included adaptations of *Pinocchio, Pinocchio's Son,* and *Snow White*. After a tour of the Republic, they returned to the capital in 1938 to perform *Puss in Boots, Pinocchio*, and a Christmas musical entitled *The Shepherds of Bethlehem* in the Teatro Arbeu.

Under new ownership, The Rosete Aranda Puppet Company, now named "The Movable Theatre of Carlos Espinal with the Rosete Aranda Puppets," also revived shows from their pre-revolutionary repertoire with a few new pieces reflecting post-revolutionary attitudes. In October of 1939, they announced that they would mount a season of "tent theatre" for children to be presented during the upcoming Christmas holidays with a bill that included *La Llorona, The Queen of México, The Rose of Tepeyac, Puss and Boots,* and a tribute to Pancho Villa entitled, *¡Viva Villa!* The Rosete Aranda Puppet Company, under the direction of Carlos Espinal, would continue to perform shows from their earlier repertoire, as well as new shows that celebrated the heroes of the revolution for many decades to come, yet on a smaller scale than they had done during the *porfiriato.*

The End of an Era

Theatre for children and young people finally became a separate genre in the decade after the revolution. Backed by the government, productions grew in

both number and size. *Teatro de Masas* productions disseminated culture and ideology on a grand scale throughout the capital in an unprecedented way in México. The Cultural Missions reached their zenith in this period, offering new teachers creative drama methodology and practical tools for mounting productions of their own with students throughout the capital. Many of these productions were featured in small festivals organized by the Secretariat of Education and the recently established theatrical labor unions. Throughout the nineteen thirties, more and more school children experienced theatre and drama first hand. Theatre artists who had left México at the beginning of the decade returned to create a theatre influenced by the avant-garde movements they saw abroad. By the end of the decade, the majority of schools in the country, and nearly all of the schools in the capital, had participated in one of the festivals organized by the Secretariat of Education (Brun 82). The growth and establishment of *Teatro Guiñol* as a distinct art form became another important vehicle for disseminating culture and ideology to an age specific audience in kindergartens and elementary schools throughout México City.

These projects all were extensions of programs that had begun in the late revolutionary era. It is important to note the influence of Soviet Russia and the European avant-garde on the genre, from folkloric dance pageants, to expressionist puppet aesthetics, and grand *teatro de masas* productions. These content and aesthetic considerations would eventually become hallmarks of all theatre created for children and young people in México.

Brun notes that the accessibility to theatre for children and young people provided by the government did not only benefit the children, “but also the society in general” (82). Brun argues that efforts of the Secretariat of Education in this “broke new ground for national culture and art. One of the ways this occurred was through the recognition of the originating [*mestizo*] cultures that have remained alive throughout the country” (82). This era marked a time when theatre artists strove to unify their audiences with one quintessential, Mexican voice; and “provide it with a renewed sense of identity and pride” (Brun 82). Beezely agrees noting that “Mexican art gained greater international exposure” which encouraged many artists abroad to settle in México (*Oxford* 567). “These developments heightened Mexicans’ awareness of new approaches to art,” and to professional artistic organizations operating in other countries.

With the exception of the reappearance of the Rosete Aranda puppets at the end of the decade (who would nostalgically be featured in films and later on television), and of touring international companies (mostly from Spain), the *espectáculos* and *teatro infantil* that began in the Porfirian era and trickled on during and after the revolution, virtually gave way to a theatre more engaged with socialism and identity. Private performance spaces, no longer needed for private puppet and magic shows were closed or converted to movie-theatres. By the end of this decade, theatre for children and young people had truly moved “into the sun,” into the streets, and permanently into the schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Questions

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 had the most profound effect on the themes and aesthetics of Mexican theatre for children and young people, more than any other event in the republic's history since the arrival of the Spanish in 1519. These changes reflected major ideological shifts at every level of society, on both the right and the left. For the first time since the *conquista*, indigenous peoples, peasants, women, and children began to see their issues debated publicly. During the revolution, the role of art and cultural production became a major issue--debated at the highest levels of government, as well as among intellectuals and artists of the era. Likewise the role of education and of children's issues (generally) entered political and intellectual discourse on an unprecedented level.

The result of those convergent discourses manifested itself after the revolution plainly, when the Secretariat of Education officially added Fine Arts to its jurisdiction. From then on, theatre for children and young people in México would be associated with education—both materially and subconsciously (by artists and the public) to this day. Theatre for children and young people created before the revolution was a commercial enterprise that sold seats with big spectacle-- where high production values and entertainment was priority. After the revolution, theatre for children and young people became the providence of the state; no longer about providing children solely with an aesthetic experience,

theatre for children and young people became a didactic, pedagogical tool for disseminating revolutionary ideology on a grand scale.

Ultimately, the government's interest in the form allowed more access to the theatrical art form. However, access was a secondary concern to the dissemination of revolutionary ideology. Children and young people who did not completely understand the ideological foundations of the emergent regimes, were acutely prone to ideological interpellation[53] by elder, state sponsored, theatre makers whose ideologies they were not in a position to refute. Van de Water reminds us that, "The child reality that is performed is constructed by adults and posited as the real. The child is implored to buy it" (Van de Water "Adults" 113).

The word ideology itself is a concept with various fluid meanings and connotations. As Van de Water explains, "we should acknowledge that, despite its messiness, the impact of ideology on our work with young people is inevitable, whether we see ideology as a body of ideas, false ideas used by dominant political, forms of thought motivated by social interests, socially necessary illusion, the conjunction of discourse and power, or otherwise" ("Adults" 111).

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[53] Neo-Marxist Louis Althusser defines ideology as "a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society" (qtd. in Eagleton 18). Althusser writes that, "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation" (105).

Althusser's concept of interpellation is acutely germane when interpreting the forces at work in theatre for young audiences before, during and after the revolution because, as Van de Water argues, young audience members are "perhaps more susceptible to ideological interpellation than anyone else" ("Adults" 111). Furthermore, young people were less likely to be aware of the complex ideological underpinnings inherent in the revolution, thus making it difficult for them to make informed decisions about the politics underlying the new modes of theatrical production.

Artists working after the revolution created works that championed the glory of the collective over that of the individual. Cultural artifacts such as murals, *teatro de masas* productions, and *Teatro Guiñol* troupes all reinforced this notion with a new, uniformly compact conception of the revolutionary collective. These works advocated for political participation, celebrated *el mestizaje,* and encouraged a nationalist brand of patriotism. The degree to which this phenomenon actually occurred is unclear. Victor Díaz Arciniega, problematizes the phenomenon through an exploration of *La rebelión de las masas* by José Oretga y Gasset (1930). Gasset argued that this "new kind of man (*el hombre-masa* [the collective man or mass man] [was] passive and conformist" and superficially idealistic. Díaz Arciniega argues that given the level of literacy and access to major media most Mexicans would have been relatively uniformed about the complex ideological goals of the revolution, participating largely to improve their own material circumstances over that of the collective. Díaz

Arciniega cites the many revolutionaries who later became quite conservative and wealthy abandoning collective idealism. In spite of this, after the revolution the Secretariat of Education employed works of theatre for children and young people as a way to idealistically celebrate the collective over the individual. A remnant of the revolution, this theme still exists in contemporary Mexican theatre for children and young people.

After the revolution, the bulk of funding for artists working in the field came directly from the government, which has ultimately limited the breadth and scope of choices those theatre artists producing theatre for children and young people could make. Roger Bedard poignantly argues " TYA [Theatre for Young Audiences] is given identity and judged as successful to the degree that the TYA performative operates in support of the dominant ideologies that contain it" (23). While Bedard is writing about theatre for young audiences in the U.S., the same can be argued for post-revolutionary theatre makers in México City whose chief purpose was to create a new generation of good revolutionary citizens who celebrated the *mestizaje*, and reaffirmed the policies and politics of their state sponsor. This created frustration for theatre makers who like Trotsky, Breton and Rivera argued that "artistic imagination requires freedom from coercion" and that artists everywhere "had an 'inalienable right' to choose their own subjects" (qtd. in Beezely *Oxford* 567). In spite of this, the notion of the "repertoire commission" has endured and today what is "appropriate" and "not-appropriate" for children and young people is decided largely by the National Council for Culture and the

Arts (CONACULTA) that still operates as a division of the Secretariat of Education. This organization provides (both directly and indirectly) the majority of funding for theatre for children and young people through public grants that are awarded annually to theatre makers.

While the ideological content of theatre for children and young people may change slightly depending on who is paying for it, the aesthetics of the form have remained more or less constant. After the revolution, theatre for children and young people in México held onto the aesthetics that defined the *espectáculos* of *el Porfiriato* and of Roman Catholic religious dramas. While the European avant-garde also had some influence aesthetically, such as the grotesque Expressionist faces of *Teatro Guiñol* puppets, it can be argued that the elements that were ultimately incorporated into the form from the avant-garde were done so to increase the overall spectacle of the event (not to change the form's aesthetic foundations). The reliance on spectacle, music, special effects, and most of all puppetry, continues to define the aesthetic of the form.

Likewise, didactic linear scripts that leave little room for ulterior meaning making have been constant fare since the revolution. This too is ideological. The presumption of first-hand universal knowledge of children's like for such aesthetics and content is not surprising considering the current mode of adult-child relationships in México which the adult's subconscious desires may actually supersede the child's actual ones. Theatre for children and young people in México has since the revolution, often portrayed the child's own insights and

opinions about the world as distinctly *unlike* the adult's, which in turn renders the child's opinions distorted—unconscious projections of adult desire. In other words, productions for children and young people in México may be more about satisfying unconscious adult desires than about providing aesthetic experiences for the children for whom they are supposedly intended. Are children naturally drawn to puppetry? Or are puppets used because they were selected for adults when they were children? While productions laden with spectacle may meet the aesthetic desires of some children, their overwhelming presence leaves little room for productions that stray from convention. It creates false limitations of what theatre for children and young people could be if these preconceptions rooted in nostalgia and tradition were removed.

Productions with content that seek to reclaim and recreate indigenous myths are also common in the post-revolutionary cannon of theatre for children and young people in México. The celebration of a uniquely Mexican *mestizaje* culture has pervaded the content and aesthetics of the form since José Vasconcelos first popularized the notion just after the revolution. Ari Roth comments that "the culturally specific theatre, like no other, has the tools, the knowledge, and the mandate to go back into the past and recreate journeys full of knowing and authentic detail, retrieved from a rich cultural catalog that a discerning, appreciative audience both absorbs and imparts" (qtd. in Kovac and Brooks 11). In the Mexican context, theatre has become a site for invented nostalgia for an invented past with a questionable authenticity. Benjamin Sáenz

argues that such pseudo-anthropological projects offer little to most contemporary Mexican young people, and are inappropriate for a contemporary audience (85). He writes, “I occupy a different position from indigenous peoples and I cannot mistake myself for them. I occupy a different position from indigenous peoples and I cannot borrow their identities” (85). Post revolutionary Mexicans, in an attempt to establish a definable *mestizo* culture have appropriated identities based in part on indigenous cultures and mythologies from the historical past. When the details of this past were missing or unknown, Mexican authors and artists have invented them. This act has been problematized by scholars of indigenous Mexican culture who note the generalizing tendency of contemporary artists to homogenize the rich and varied cultures of the numerous civilizations that existed in México long before the *conquista* into “one” indigenous influence.

As Jorge Huerta puts it, “something strange happens” when playwrights attempt to educate an audience about their culture and ancestry by substituting an assortment of pre-Colombian beliefs for more recognizable, western European myths (*Huerta* 19). When Mexican playwrights attempt to fabricate a mythos, they are in essence “compressing time”–constructing a mythology that “conflates images from distinct cultures and time periods” (Huerta 18). Huerta concludes that “most people cannot pronounce names like Quetzalcóatl, Itzamná or Coyolzhaqui, much less identify with them” (19).

This has a direct affect on audience members who are in the process of self-identification. Sáenz explains that in the process of identification, "to return to the 'traditional' spiritualities that were in place before the arrival of Cortes and company makes very little sense. The material conditions that gave rise to the Aztec's religion no longer exist … The resurrection of the old gods (be they 'white' or indigenous) is a futile and impossible task" (87).

By limiting the lessons learned on the journey to experiences appropriated from another culture in order to create a "correct" Mexican identity, the movement has in essence limited its own diversity. By rigidly defining what is and what is not Mexican, and therefore creating an identifiable, perhaps reductive, identity from which new stereotypes can be drawn, theatre artists creating work for children and young people since the revolution have perpetuated the same kind of domination that they fought against in the revolution.

The Mexican Revolution reverberated throughout Latin America, serving as inspiration and (in many ways) a model for other sociopolitical uprisings in the region. Revolutions in México, Cuba and Nicaragua were all "viewed as models to emulate and as symbols to sustain elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Winn 501). A comparative study of how those revolutions affected theatre for children and young audiences in other cultural contexts may shed light on the nature of revolution and the form, and of revolution and the arts more broadly.

While there are many titles and reviews of plays performed from the periods I discuss in this study, many of the actual scripts and production ephemera are inaccessible. This is in part due to the 1985 earthquake in México City that destroyed a large portion of the archives held by the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA). Private collections (by artists and scholars) and used bookstores still tend to be the best source for period information. An organized effort to piece together these archives in one central location would make further studies much more efficient. Likewise, translations of studies from English (and other languages) about theatre for young audiences generally into Spanish (as well as from Spanish to English) would facilitate further interdisciplinary connections about this rich subject.

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