

Anglophone Theatre and Performance Practices on the Spanish Stage: An Introduction

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Anglophone. Theatre. Performance Practices. Spanish Stage. We know it could be simpler, but it is not. The articles presented in this volume all look at theatre originally written in English and by English-speaking authors from countries which have English as their official language (or at least one of them). As such, it is traditionally Philology or Modern Languages and Literatures Departments in Spain that have looked at work with these characteristics. The present volume looks at what we may call 'Anglophone theatre in Spain', a much less wide area of study than Spanish Theatre Studies, but sharing the focus noted in David George, Stuart Green and Duncan Wheeler's article "Spanish Theatre Studies: Beyond the Text" (2015, 109). Both 'subfields' adopt what is rather common in Theatre Studies today: the attention to process over the finished product, which is central to take into account whilst approaching the articles in this volume. More broadly, the present volume also bears in mind the disciplines of theatre and performance studies in the sense that, for instance, the areas covered by the articles are an example that the analysis of "an exclusively literary-based approach to the text" (George, Green and Wheeler 2018, 108) has not been sustainable for some time now despite the entrenched traditional approaches to theatre based on "literary analysis and close reading" (George, Green and Wheeler 2018, 111). Contributors in this volume look at a number of realms, which,

considered altogether (adaptation, repertoire, translation, musicals and creative practice including rehearsal processes), respond best not just to theatre and performance but also to theatre and performance practice. In addition, the phrase ‘Spanish stage’ evokes the idea of practice and yet, with it, we further want to emphasise geographical location. The locus of the target audience of all the works addressed in this volume is mainly Spain, whilst also having in mind the language in which the works are most of the time delivered, in translation, is Spanish.

But, let us pause for a moment in the language question. When talking about the presence of Anglophone theatre in Spain, we should refer to the fact that there are other official languages and plurilingual regions in Spain that have made significant contributions to the staging of this theatre, both in Spanish and other official languages. The most prominent is the case of Catalonia, where, for example, the staging of contemporary British theatre is common. In this respect, two theatres that should be mentioned are the Teatre Lliure and the Sala Beckett, whose Obrador d’Estiu invites highly renowned theatre professionals, with a marked British participation (this year includes playwright Ella Hickson and director Katie Mitchell), to deliver workshops, seminars and staged readings of works in progress. The Pavón Kamikaze in Madrid, which sadly closed its doors in January 2021, was one of the main venues in Spain’s capital to present Anglophone theatre in Spanish on a regular basis, featuring the works of contemporary playwrights such as Tim Crouch, Anna Jordan and Dennis Kelly. Many of the productions first produced at the Pavón Kamikaze are still on tour, contributing to their circulation beyond the main cultural hubs in the country, namely, Madrid and Barcelona.

Anglophone theatre and performance can be found in modern and contemporary Spanish stages in diverse ways, not just in the productions of contemporary playwrights. The circulation of plays, people, and ideas have shaped Spanish theatre-making. Shakespeare’s plays have been programmed by public and private theatres along with other Spanish classical plays by Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca. As Simon Breden notes in his article for this volume, English directors such as Lawrence Boswell have been influential in staging Golden Age *comedias*. Likewise, daring stagings of Shakespeare have become a norm after Calixto Bieto’s productions both in Spain and abroad (Delgado 2006). As it is more common in the contemporary globalised stage, commercial successes in London and New York have seen Spanish productions. This volume also reflects one of the recent trends in Spanish Theatre Studies, “the musical turn” (George, Green and Wheeler 2018, 113), by including two contributions that are somehow related to musicals, Ramón Espejo’s article on musicals during Franco’s dictatorship and Marta Mateo’s work on a specific musical translation for the Spanish stage. As both authors remind us, musicals have been part of

the commercial circuit in Madrid and Barcelona since the 1960s. In addition, contemporary Spanish theatre-making owes much of its professionalization to the work of William Layton. Since he settled in Madrid in the 1960s, Layton trained several generations of actors in his adaptation of the Actors Studio's Method (Carazo 2017). Until then, most actors learned the craft of theatre by playing in multiple productions, and very few received formal training. In 1960, he co-founded TEM (Teatro Estudio de Madrid) and taught at the RESAD (Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático, Royal College of Dramatic Art), the Institut del Teatre (Theatre Institute of Barcelona) and his own school, Laboratorio William Layton, which continues actors' training to this day.

Trying to departmentalise the examples offered in this volume is highly complicated because we believe that the directionality and the academic tradition behind the work is not necessarily identical. While some Hispanists and/or Spanish Studies academics doing this kind of work abroad may locate these contributions in the discipline of Spanish Theatre Studies, scholars doing research in Spain who are mainly English philologists focusing on theatre and performance may identify this kind of work with the label Anglophone theatre in Spain. Our interest is not to solve this matter, but to continue raising this question of complicated labeling. Perhaps the most noticeable presence of Anglophone theatre in theatre history is in the repertoire of staged and translated plays. Paradigmatic references on the study of Spanish reception of Anglophone theatre include the two volumes of the *Diccionario de la recepción teatral en España* (2020), directed by Javier Huerta Calvo, with Jorge Braga Riera in charge of editing the entries on Anglophone theatre. Other important works have documented productions and translations of American, British and Irish plays. Anna Marí Aguilar's unpublished dissertation (2008) offers a thorough and useful account of British plays staged from 1956 until 2004. Raquel Merino Álvarez analysed several case studies of English-language plays translated for the stage into Spanish in the second half of the twentieth century (1994). More recently, she studied the presence of Irish plays in the censorship archives in Franco's era (Merino 2021). In his comprehensive research of American theatre in Spain, Ramón Espejo notes the prominence of this theatre in all aspects of theatre-making, above all since the beginning of collaborations between both countries in 1952. Beside the introduction of musicals and LGBTQ+ topics, he claims American troupes such as Living Theatre, which toured Spain in 1967, were also instrumental in the transformation of performing arts that was noticeable in Spain since the late 1960s. Other companies would follow, as did Bread and Puppet in their residence in 1977 with the troupe Comediantes in Canet de Mar.

The Spanish and British theatrical traditions received special joint attention on the occasion of William Shakespeare's and Miguel de Cervantes' 400th death anniversary in 2016, with several conferences devoted to these national and

global authors. This was the case of the *Cervantes + Shakespeare 1616-2016, 27th SEDERI Conference* (Universidad de Valladolid), the international conference *Cervantes, Shakespeare y la Edad de Oro en la escena* (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and the international conference on performing arts *Cervantes y Shakespeare, de su pluma a nuestra escena* (Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Murcia). These conferences not only allowed the comparative analysis of two historical theatrical traditions – those of Elizabethan England and the Spanish Golden Age – they also propelled the study of Anglophone theatre in Spain and Spanish theatre in English-speaking countries, as the publications derived from them demonstrate (see, for instance, Braga Riera, González Martínez and Sanz Jiménez 2018). From a global perspective that includes chapters by British and American directors and translators, the volume edited by Harley Erdman and Susan Paun de García, *Remaking the Comedia*, is an excellent example of the interdisciplinary work done in this field.

The main academic journals on English studies in Spain regularly include articles that reflect the interest in Anglophone theatre and performance practices on the Spanish stage. Publications such as *Atlantis*, the journal of the Spanish Association of English Studies, and *SEDERI Yearbook*, the yearly publication of the Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies, have featured articles on topics such as the circulation of theatrical ideas between sixteenth-century Spain and England (Conejero-Magro 2020), the transfer of performance practices from the early modern English stage to twenty-first-century Spain (Guerrero 2017) and the connections between the Spanish stage and international theatre during Franco's dictatorship (Olivares Leyva 2018), among others.

Research groups like “Shakespeare and Elizabethan Literature”, led by Clara Calvo at Universidad de Murcia, and “CBTBarcelona (Contemporary British Theatre Barcelona)”, led by Mireia Aragay at Universitat de Barcelona (see <https://www.ub.edu/cbtbarcelona>), are at the forefront of research done in Spain on Anglophone theatre. The first one includes the research project “The Reception of Shakespeare's Works in Spanish and European Cultures”, directed by Juan F. Cerdá and Keith Gregor, which has produced a database on Shakespeare's translations and performances in Spain (see <https://www.um.es/shakespeare/proyecto.php#>), as well as the project “20th Century Shakespeare”, also led by Clara Calvo (see <https://www.um.es/en/web/20thshakespeare/>). Although CBTBarcelona focuses on contemporary British theatre as originally delivered mainly across stages in the United Kingdom, some work has been published by the group in the area that the present volume looks at, including Mireia Aragay, Clara Escoda and Enric Monforte's article “Martin Crimp at Sala Beckett, Barcelona” (2014).

Like with any volume of this nature, we could not aim at completeness, comprehensiveness, exhaustivity. Being aware that this is not a representation

of the ‘field’ (a concept we hesitate to use) but an example of academic production, the volume aims to contribute to the history of theatre in Spain that goes beyond “the figure of the playwright and select texts” (George, Green and Wheeler 2018, 108). And yet, marginal aspects to theatre text are also brought to the surface by including an article of largely unknown playscripts (see Jennifer Ruiz-Morgan’s contribution). Ultimately, this is about the reception of and interaction with Anglophone texts, authors and theatrical and performance practices in Spain, in this case from the United States and the United Kingdom. However, it is crucial to highlight that the essays that form this monographic section are by no means representative of the diverse manifestations of Anglophone theatre in Spain, nor is it representative of the multifarious shapes it may increasingly take in a global and uncertain scenario (including, but not limited to, scattered Theatre and Performance Studies presence across institutions and disciplines, multi-lingual performances, mixed production teams, international collaborations, changing festival landscapes, mutating funding opportunities).

We believe these articles are examples of different approaches in theatre and performance studies, as they make reference to theatrical repertoires, circulation, theatrical languages, adaptation, and translation at different moments of theatre history in Spain. The first article in this special volume, Jennifer Ruiz-Morgan’s “*Romeo and Juliet* on the Spanish Stage. The Neoclassical Adaptations”, addresses one of the first historical connections between the Spanish stage and Anglophone theatre: the performance of adaptations from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* starting in the nineteenth century, when neoclassicism dominated the Spanish stage. The sources for Shakespeare’s play were already circulating in Early Modern Europe, which explains why the plot of Lope de Vega’s *Castelvines y Monteses* is similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*. However, the transfer of plays from one country to the other will not take place until later, with the nineteenth century being key for the introduction of Shakespeare in Spain. The article shows how Shakespeare’s plays have travelled across Europe, turning him into the pan-European/global author that he is today, and explains how Shakespearean appropriations – which are labelled here with the Spanish term *refundiciones* – are one of the main ways for the dissemination of Shakespeare’s plays. The focus is on two adaptations: Dionisio Solís’s *Julia y Romeo* (1803) and Manuel Bernardino García Suelto’s *Romeo y Julieta* (1817). Apart from analysing the main features and sources of the playscripts, Morgan-Ruiz discusses issues of authorship (many adaptations did not acknowledge that they were based on Shakespeare’s plays) and pays attention to the performance and audience reception of the adaptations in Madrid and Barcelona, discussing how the plays are transformed to suit the taste and custom of their new location.

Moving to a quite different historical time, the little Anglophone theatre that reached the stages in the 1950s, when Spain was still under the Francoist regime, was mainly obsolete, exceedingly censored, co-opted by national playwrights and non-experimental. However, for instance, thanks to non-professional theatre groups including Dido Pequeño Teatro, Spanish audiences were able to be exposed to the work of Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and the American-born T.S. Eliot. Masa Kmet's article, "The Presence of American Drama in the Spanish Non-Professional Theatre of the 1950s", looks at some of the work of these authors as it arrived for the first time to the Spanish stage. Being the first to produce works by playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco or Albert Camus (as well as then unknown Spanish playwrights, including Lauro Olmo and Ricardo Rodríguez Buded), Dido Pequeño Teatro, directed by Josefina Sánchez Pedreño, started its journey on the Madrilenian stages in 1953. Kmet's article examines the reception of two plays by Eugene O'Neill, (*Beyond the Horizon* and *Anna Christie*), one by Tennessee Williams (*The Rose Tattoo*) and one by T.S. Eliot (*The Family Reunion*) – all staged by Dido Pequeño Teatro. A fundamental aspect of this article is how it pays attention to the impact the plays made on the Spanish audiences of the time. It also focuses on a non-professional theatre company highlighting the work of these troupes in "the fight against conformism and cultural oppression" and reminds us of the vital role of specific individuals such as "the director of Teatro María Guerrero at the time, Luis Escobar". A particular contribution made by Dido Pequeño Teatro is that their "productions really showed the value of these authors to the Spanish audiences and increased their popularity", which has impacted on their continuing presence on the Spanish stage.

Another theatrical import during the years of the dictatorship was that of Broadway musicals, which offered a radically different approach to music and *mise-en-scène* from the national tradition of *zarzuela*. The circulation of megamusicals since the 1980s has been described by Dan Rebellato (2009) as one of the signs of globalization in the theatre (see, for instance, his provocative concept of McTheatre in *Theatre & Globalization*). Looking at the early Spanish history of musicals, in "Spain's Francoist Broadway: American Musicals in Madrid, 1955-1975", Ramón Espejo analyses the reception of *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* in Madrid's Gran Vía to explore the beginning of this phenomenon. These early Broadway musicals in Spain, however, did not follow the franchise system that productions such as *The Lion King* or any of the popular shows by the international producer Stage circulates now around the world. Instead, they were locally produced by Spanish companies. Their reception, as Espejo argues, reflects the tensions of the late years of the dictatorship, with a regime close to its end and whose cultural policies were visibly outdated, as the claims of conservative newspapers against the prohibitions of these musicals show. The

import of Broadway musicals in the last decades of the Francoist regime and the audiences' enthusiasm for them paved the way for Madrid to become the third musical capital in the world after Broadway and the West End.

Marta Mateo builds on her previous research on translation of musicals into Spanish to examine how the acceptance of this genre among Spanish audiences has prompted production choices. In “*Sunset Boulevard* in Spanish Performance: Translations on the Musical Stage”, Mateo studies two Spanish-language versions of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1993): one that opened in Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 2017 and a new translation in Buenos Aires in 2018. The version in Spain was directed and translated by one of the most experienced musical theatre-makers, Jaime Azpilicueta. In Argentina, while it was Claudio Tolcachir’s first experience directing musicals, the translation was signed by the veteran translators of musicals Fernando Masllorens and Federico González del Pino. Both productions carefully introduced changes to make them resemble the productions from the West End or Broadway, such as choosing the title in English over the ones that Wilder’s film had in each country: *El crepúsculo de los dioses* and *El ocaso de una estrella*. Mateo associates titling to the cross-cultural aspect of musicals, and especially to the reference of Lloyd Webber’s musical to the golden age of Hollywood. However, Mateo notes the Argentinian production’s use of *voseo* –the informal address in Argentina– and idiomatic expressions made it culturally specific. The attention to contextual aspects in this analysis of the translation of musicals into Spanish illuminates the cultural choices of each version.

Simon Breden’s “The Influence of British Directors on the *Fundación Siglo de Oro* and its Productions of Early Modern Drama, 2007-2021” focuses on The *Fundación Siglo de Oro*’s rehearsal processes by addressing how the company’s practice has been heavily influenced by a series of mainly contemporary British theatre practitioners’ working methodologies (notably those of Laurence Boswell, Tim Hoare and Dominic Dromgoole). Although ostensibly devoted to the Spanish Golden Age, The *Fundación Siglo de Oro* –formerly *Compañía Rakatá*– has been staging Spanish Golden Age and Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre since it was founded in 2006. Breden, who has also directed work for the company, namely, *Doctor Faustus* (2011), takes us on a journey through The *Fundación Siglo de Oro*’s rehearsal practices from 2007 to 2021, which had subsequent myriad effects on how the works were staged. Breden’s arguments are supported and illustrated by the use of an interview he made to Rodrigo Arribas, the *Fundación Siglo de Oro*’s founder and producer (Arribas has also contributed as an actor and most recently as a director). One of the most original aspects of Breden’s article is how it fascinatingly fleshes out the transformation of and synergies between an idiosyncratic Spanish theatrical genre, playwrights and plays when in close contact to contemporary British directors’ rehearsal methodologies. Breden

situates the genesis of this collaboration and cross-pollination in the connections forged during the Royal Shakespeare Company Golden Age season, curated by Boswell, which visited Madrid's emblematic Teatro Español in 2004. Breden's piece demonstrates that "There has [...] been a clear exchange of ideas between Spanish classical theatre and contemporary British theatre practice", placing the collaboration allowed by creative international partnerships at the centre of this contribution to Anglophone theatrical practice in Spain.

We recognise the tensions between the need of situating the work in this volume and simultaneously escaping the straightjacket of field delimitation. We hope the future of the 'field' will continue to be characterized by an approach to this question that embraces a sense of openness and curiosity.

We said it would not be simple.

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