

## Performance Groups in Contemporary Spanish Theatre

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This article aims to look at the performance groups that sprung up in the latter years of the Franco regime known as 'Teatro Independiente' (Independent Theatre). Beginning with the major Catalan companies (El Joglars, Comediants) who have now forged an international reputation, the early sections look at the legacy of their work and their continued impact. The subsequent sections deal with the main TI groups in Madrid and Andalusia, discussing their significant characteristics and their major productions. The article ends with a brief discussion of the TI groups in the Basque company and Valencia, and the new groups enjoying close links with the international stage.

KEY WORDS: Independent theatre, Performance groups, Physical theatre, El Joglars, La Fura dels Baus, Comediants.

### Dates in History: Spain 1962–1992

<i>Year</i>	<i>Politics and Society</i>	<i>Theatre</i>
1962		<b>Els Joglars</b> formed. Joan Brossa: <i>Accions</i> .
1963		<b>La Gàbia de Vic</b> formed. First Gijón Contemporary Theatre Festival.
1964	Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Franco's regime.	<b>Los Goliardos</b> formed.
1965		<b>Akelarre</b> formed. <b>Esperpento</b> formed. <b>TEM</b> (Teatro Estudio de Madrid) formed. Teatro Independiente (TI) congress in Córdoba.
1966	Constitutional Press Law.	<b>Ditirambo</b> formed. <b>Teatro Estudio Lebrijano</b> formed. TI congress in Valladolid.

- 1967 Carrero Blanco, Head of Government. State of emergency.
- 1968 **Los Goliardos:** '24 notas anárquicas a la caza de un concepto' ('24 Anarchic Notes Searching for a Concept'). **Bululú** formed. **La Claca** formed. **Tábano** formed. **Orain** formed. **Els Joglars:** *El diari* (*The Diary*). Sitges Theatre Festival established.
- 1969 Student unrest. Demonstrations at universities.
- 1970 Nixon visits Spain. O Festival in San Sebastián. **Tábano:** *Castañuela 70* (*Castanet 70*). **Teatro Estudio Lebrijano:** *Oratorio* (*Oratory*). **Els Joglars:** *El joc* (*The Game*).
- 1971 Council of War in Burgos. ETA militants and political prisoners executed. **Comediants** formed. **La Cuadra de Sevilla** formed. **Los Goliardos:** *La boda de los pequeños burgueses* (*The Wedding of the Petit Bourgeoisie*). **La Cuadra de Sevilla:** *Quejío* (*Lament*). **Els Joglars:** *Mary d'ous* (*Egg Mary*).
- 1972
- 1973 ETA kills Carrero Blanco. Performance Art in Banyoles (Girona).
- 1974 **Dagoll-Dagom** formed. Independent theatre magazine *Pipirijaina* set up. **Els Joglars:** *Àlias Serrallonga*.
- 1975 Death of Franco. Coronation of Juan Carlos I. Actors' strike in Madrid. **Comediants:** *Moros i cristians* (*Moors and Christians*). **Ditrambo:** *Pasodoble*. **Tábano:** *La ópera del mendigo* (*The Beggar's Opera*).
- 1976 Grec 76 in Barcelona. Formation of the Assembly of Professional Actors and Directors of Catalonia. Formation of ATIP (Asociación Teatro Independiente Profesional). Founding of the **Teatre Lliure** in Barcelona. International Showcase of 'Happenings' in Granollers (Barcelona).
- 1977 Legalization of political parties. General Elections. The UCD with Adolfo Suárez come to power. Mass demonstrations in favour of Freedom of Expression. End of censorship. **El Talleret de Salt** formed. **La Tartana Teatro** formed. **Els Joglars:** *La torna* (*The Return*). Imprisonment of Albert Boadella, director of **Els Joglars**. **Dagoll-Dagom:** *No hablaré en clase* (*I Will Not Speak in Class*).

- 1978 Setting up of the Spanish Constitution. Abolition of the death penalty. National Statute of Catalonia. **Sèmola Teatre** formed. **Dagoll-Dagom:** *Antaviana*. **La Claca:** *Mori el Merma (Death to the Monster)*. First International Showcase of Contemporary Theatre in Valladolid. **Esperpento:** *El bello Adolfo (The Beautiful Adolfo)*. Creation of the Centro Dramático Nacional (CDN) (National Drama Centre) in Madrid.
- 1979 **El Tricicle** formed. **Teatro Guirigay** formed. **La Fura dels Baus** formed. **Teatro Geroa** formed. **La Cuadra de Sevilla:** *Andalucía amarga (Bitter Andalusia)*. **Comediants:** *Sol solet (Little Sun)*.
- 1980 **La Cubana** formed. **Bekereke** formed. Conversations at El Escorial. End of the Independent Theatre. **Comediants** create the street theatre festival at Tàrrega. **Els Joglars:** *Laetius*.
- 1981 Failed military coup d'état on 23 February. **Vol.Ras** formed. **Zotal** formed. **Circ Cric** (Catalan neo-circus) formed. **Els Joglars:** *Olympic Man Movement*. First Contemporary Theatre Festival at Granada. **Comediants:** *Dimonis (Devils)*.
- 1982 PSOE (Socialist Workers Party) wins general elections; Felipe González Prime Minister.
- 1983 **Atalaya** formed. **La Fura dels Baus:** *Accions (Actions)*. **La Fura dels Baus:** *Manifesto Canalla (Mob Manifesto)*. **La Cubana:** *Cubana's Delikatessen*. CNNTE (Centro de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas) formed in Madrid.
- 1984 **Cambaleo Teatro** formed. **La Tartana Teatro:** *Ciudad irreal (Unreal City)*. **Comediants:** *Alé (Breath)*. *Pipirijaina* disappears and *El Público*, a new magazine published by the Ministry of Culture, is established.
- 1985 Spain enters the EEC. **Teatro del Norte** formed. **Los Rinos** formed. **La Fura dels Baus:** *Suzjol Suz*. **Bekereke:** *Eco (Echo)*. **Teatro Guirigai:** *Enésimo viaje a Eldorado (Nineth Journey to El Dorado)*. **Els**

- Joglars:** *Virtuosos de Fontainebleau* (*Virtuosi of Fontainebleau*).
- 1986 Referendum: Spain re-  
mains in NATO. **Ur Teatro** formed. **Arena Teatro** formed. **El Tricicle:** *Slàstic* (*Elastic*). **La Cubana:** *La tempestad* (*The Tempest*). INAEM (Instituto Nacional de Artes Escénicas) formed.
- 1987 **La Zaranda** formed. **Circ Perillós** formed. **Comediants:** *La nit* (*The Night*). **La Cuadra de Sevilla:** *Las Bacantes* (*The Bacchae*). **Teatro Geroa:** *Grand Place*. **Atalaya:** *La rebelión de los objetos* (*The Rebellion of Objects*).
- 1988 General Strike on 14  
December. **Xarxa Teatre** formed. **Esteve & Ponce** formed. **Zotal:** *Zombi*. **Sèmola Teatre:** *In concert*.
- 1989 Elections to the European  
Parliament. **La Carnicería** formed. **La Fura dels Baus:** *Tier mon*. **La Cubana:** *Cómeme el coco, negro* (*Soft Soap Me, Black Man*). **La Zaranda:** *Vinagre de Jérez* (*Vinegar from Jérez*). **Arena Teatro:** *Extrarradios* (*The Outer Parts of Town*).
- 1990 **Moma Teatre** formed. **Legaleón Teatro** formed. **Teatro para un Instante** formed.
- 1991 **Artificio** formed. **La Fura dels Baus:** *Noun*. **Los Rinos:** *Primera conferencia en Rinolaxia* (*The First Meeting in Rinolaxia*). **Els Joglars:** *Yo tengo un tío en América* (*I Have an Uncle in America*). **Atalaya:** *Espejismos* (*Mirages*).
- 1992 Expo' 92 in Seville. Olympic  
Games. Madrid, Cultural  
Capital. **La Cuadra de Sevilla:** *La muerte del minotauro* (*The Death of the Minotaur*). **La Fura dels Baus:** *Opening Ceremony of the Olympics*. **Comediants:** *Closing Ceremony of the Olympics*. **Sèmola Teatre:** *Híbrid*. **La Cubana:** *Cubana Marathon Dancing*. **Ur Teatro:** *El sueño de una noche de verano* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). **La Zaranda:** *Perdonen la tristeza* (*Forgive the Sadness*). **Moma Teatre:** *Basted*. **Esteve & Ponce:** *La verdad está en inglés* (*The Truth is in English*).

## An Approach to Spanish Independent Theatre

Spanish alternative theatre of the 1960s and 1970s is usually known as 'Teatro Independiente' (TI). This title covers a range of groups conceived as cooperatives, who, through different, sometimes contradictory aesthetics, shared two objectives: a left-wing struggle against Franco's regime and the establishment of a new professional mandate for the theatre, which would exist on the margins of the complacently bourgeois and escapist commercial stage.

The most prosperous years of TI coincided with the end of the Franco dictatorship, years in which a certain economic liberalization co-existed with political hardlining. It should be remembered, for example, that censorship operated in the Spanish theatre until 1977, and was effectively responsible for banning writers such as García Lorca and Valle-Inclán (who were denigrated for their links with the Republic), Beckett and Ionesco (who were dismissed as 'decadent and atheistic'), and even Tennessee Williams (who was viewed as 'lascivious'). The singular nature of TI is reflected in a manifesto written by the Madrid company Tábano in 1978:

The phenomenon of Teatro Independiente cannot be understood outside of the Spanish political and social context, TI is not the Experimental Theatre of capitalist countries, neither is it subsidized theatre, maintained in 'ghettos' in socialist countries, nor is it the amateur theatre of those countries that lack a theatrical tradition of their own. In our country, TI is an alternative to the established theatre, a cultural, political and aesthetic alternative.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, such fierce political repression meant that TI developed an impudent metalanguage made up of codes shared by the creators and spectators through situations and dialogue that, at least initially, appeared banal. In the same way, censorship forced theatre to use parable and parody, both textual and visual, as dramatic tools, as well as anti-naturalist non-textual forms of theatrical discourse like mime.

Nevertheless, despite this exclusivity, TI belonged to an international theatre scene with which it maintained close ideological and aesthetic ties. As with post-1968 European and American theatre, TI eroded the physical and psychological barriers of the traditional stage (bourgeois buildings, established genres, conventions perpetuated through realism, etc.). In general, TI was marked by an increase of visual elements in its productions (usually at the expense of the textual), a popular, festival atmosphere, and a direct relationship with its audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Alberto Fernández Torres, ed., *Documentos sobre el Teatro Independiente español* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1987), p. 381.

This all derived from the use of techniques created in the Documentary Theatre of the 1930s, in Brecht's epic theatre, and from the theories of Antonin Artaud or Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre', although in the case of Spanish theatre, all of these scenic revolutions took place in an eminently intuitive way. TI also shared with post-1968 theatre a desire to challenge dominant social structures, as well as the role of mouth-piece for oppressed national minorities (Catalan theatre, Basque theatre, Andalusian theatre).

Despite the fact that TI was relatively unknown on a worldwide scale, as Eugène van Erven points out in his book *Radical People's Theater*,<sup>2</sup> there were some obvious contacts with the international stage through the Nancy Festival and the visits to Spain by the most important groups of the North American 'Free Theater': the Living Theater and in particular the Bread and Puppet Theater (particularly through their residence in Catalonia in 1977 with Comediants). Also extremely important were exchanges with Eugenio Barba's "Third Theatre" (Comediants) or with the Improvisation Method of the Colombian Enrique Buenaventura from the TEI in Cali (Tábano).

As with groups such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Teatro Campesino, Bread and Puppet and Il Collettivo Teatrale La Comune, there existed in TI an almost generalized use of satire, understood as the transposition of a reality that was distorted but still recognizable. Satire, popular comedy, farce and catchy music were to be the basic ingredients of TI. Where TI differed from these international groups was in the seasoned use of the atavistic black Spanish humour: the *esperpento*. The only groups which deviated from this biting satirical spirit were those of the Andalusian theatre (Teatro Estudio Lebrijano, La Cuadra de Sevilla), which were characterized by a visibly 'tragic' style, in accord with the transcendence of flamenco song and dance.

Another feature shared with the international alternative scene was the appropriation of popular elements: traditional songs and stories, elements of folk heritage, clownish sketches, vaudeville, circus, rock and roll, *zarzuela*, and reviews, as well as the use of techniques such as acrobatics, *commedia dell'arte*, pantomime, puppets, Chinese shadow plays, *cabezudo* (carnavalesque big-headed) figures, and stilts. What is certain is that TI introduced new forms of performance, like street

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<sup>2</sup> 'Like the San Francisco Mime Troupe, el Teatro Campesino, Bread and Puppet, Le Théâtre Populaire de Lorraine, and 7:84 Theatre Company, who were spearheading the vanguard of the new alternative theatre movement with popular pieces aimed at the war in Vietnam, the exploitation of the working classes, and the general authoritarian structures of post-industrial Western society, seemed to ignore the fight of the Spanish people, who were suffering under a very real fascist dictatorship in Europe's own backyard.' Eugène van Erven, *Radical People's Theater* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 145.

theatre, into the country. In addition, it created a new audience through a network of university locations, since universities were at one point the principal supporters and generators of this type of theatre. Not that these were the only venues used by the TI companies. The appropriation of non-conventional spaces like parish halls, community centres, and Residents' Association halls was one of the hallmarks of the TI movement.

On the other hand, due to the itinerant nature of the groups and their precarious economic situation, TI developed a preference for improvisation as a major tool in the creation of so-called 'collectively created' productions. This type of performance, often involving months of research and rehearsals, relied on extensive experimentation until a unity of action and an ideological and aesthetic coherence were reached. A taste for improvisations coincided with a seeming lack of texts to fulfil the needs of the groups. This seemed to bring with it a certain distaste for the figure of the playwright.<sup>3</sup>

To all this, it is pertinent to add that intuition and passion were the standards of TI, a theatre with no established 'masters', which rose out of a real sense of political commitment and at whose forefront were artists that were extremely young and frequently self-taught. This is how José Luis Alonso de Santos, a writer linked with the TEM (Madrid Studio Theatre) expressed it:

TI, by breaking away so radically from what already existed, took us, a group of people in a very uncomfortable position, and made us into leaders incredibly quickly, with no direct teaching or models to follow. There was a need for change, and we found ourselves obliged to fulfil this role.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, before distinguishing the different stages of TI, it might be appropriate to reproduce some of the '27 notas anárquicas a la caza de un concepto' ('27 Anarchic Notes in Search of a Concept'), that were produced in 1967 by the Madrid-based group Los Goliardos, one of the oldest companies in the movement. It was a document with a firmly militant bent, that for years set the ideology of TI:

3. TI is a new form of professionalism. We should make a distinction between professional and commercial. Professional comes from to profess, commercial from commerce.

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<sup>3</sup> In this area, there is significance in the complaint of the generation of anti-Franco realist writers of the fifties and sixties (Alfonso Sastre, José María Rodríguez Méndez, Carlos Muñiz, Lauro Olmo, etc.) concerning TI's disregard of their work. Curiously, some dramatists from the previous generation did maintain close links with TI groups, for example, José Luis Alonso de Santos with TEM, and Fermín Cabal with Tábano.

<sup>4</sup> José Luis Alonso de Santos and Fermín Cabal, *El teatro español de los 80* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1985), p. 150.

Dionysus and Hermes. Professional refers to the dramatic act itself. Commercial refers to its alienation in the marketplace.

5. TI lives for the Theatre. One day it will live off the Theatre. And its members will have a union card.

8. TI does not accept the productions of the day. Or fashionable writers. Or the managerial system. Or the cult of the Star. Or the dictatorship of the literary author. Or box-office prices.

9. TI, for the moment, must content itself with 'guerrilla' action, isolated, unconnected, but terrifyingly effective.

18. TI tends to steer clear of the usual venues that offer productions for public consumption. It provisionally uses the most diverse of sites: community centres, casinos, university halls ...

20. TI is made up of workers, not 'artists'. The worker works, and acts, using techniques, amassed by previous generations. That is why an apprenticeship is necessary. That is why it is a profession.

22. TI is not a trampoline, or a lever, or an intermediate step that leads to the commercial theatre.

24. TI, in its internal government, is organized into a system that is usually cooperatively based. The tasks that are necessary for the development of the group, both artistic and non-artistic, are divided. Typing is of equal value to acting. They are two jobs leading to the same ends. The boss and the worker are the same person.<sup>5</sup>

## **The First Stage of Independent Theatre (1960–68)**

The introduction of elements from universities from 1950 onwards was a decisive factor in the evolution of Spanish theatre. This is the way in which the contributions of Ricard Salvat (Adrià Gual School for Dramatic Art and José Monleón (*Primer Acto* magazine) prepared the way for TI to blossom. The first stage can be dated back to 1963, the year of the First Contemporary Theatre Festival at Gijón, which reflected the need for a theatre befitting the reality of that particular moment in Spanish history. The embryonic TI emerged from a federal system whose centre was located in the Main Hall of the University of Valencia Theatre, founded by José Sanchis Sinisterra.

The next important date was 1965, in Cordoba, through meetings where the term 'Teatro Independiente' was definitively adopted. As the

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<sup>5</sup>Alberto Fernández Torres, ed., *Documentos sobre el Teatro Independiente español*, pp. 83–86.



Catalan critic Xavier Fàbregas commented in 1969, it is difficult to determine exactly when this term came into use:

The term 'independent' is used to try and affirm the presence of a theatre which is not subsidized by the servitude of the commercial theatre, but which instead has as its vocation normality, and full professional development.<sup>6</sup>

A year later, in 1966, the Valladolid Congress established the need to target a popular audience, producing theatre for the masses of students, workers and peasants. This popularization can be related, at this early stage, to the (clandestine) success of the writers of protest songs. The most notable case was that of Catalonia, where militant nationalism had a double face, that of the new theatre, and that of the 'Nova Canço' (Raimon, Joan Manuel Serrat, Lluís Llach, and so on).

## Second Stage of Independent Theatre (1968–75)

Most TI groups were founded between 1968 and 1972.<sup>7</sup> Their professional status was also consolidated within this period, as was their access to the commercial circuit. TI became fashionable at a time when the commercial theatre was witnessing a veritable crisis, a fact that encouraged several impresarios to book productions for their theatres that originated from the independent theatre circuit.

TI attempted, at that time, to create its own festival in the image of the Nancy Festival. Organized by Los Goliardos, the First San Sebastián Festival of International Theatre, known as the O Festival, was initially banned and censored in 1970. But although this attempt was cruelly aborted, the vitality of the TI was unstoppable. 1974 saw the creation of a new magazine, *Pipirijaina*, edited by Moisés Pérez Coterillo, which soon became the voice of the TI. Also during those years, several groups belonging to the TI (Els Joglars, Teatro Estudio Lebrijano, Tábano, La Claca, La Cuadra de Sevilla) enjoyed notable success, winning both critical and public acclaim at various international festivals. It was in fact during this period of consolidation that the importance of the figure of the director/creator began to grow within the collectives (Boadella/Els Joglars, Távora/La Cuadra de Sevilla, etc.), resulting in some of the most innovative and emblematic of the TI productions.

<sup>6</sup> Alberto Fernández Torres, ed., *Documentos sobre el Teatro Independiente español*, p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> In 1968 there was a real boom of groups, with a total of twenty-one being formed during that year. In 1969 a further fourteen groups swelled the ranks of the TI.

## Third Stage of Independent Theatre (1975–80)

With the arrival of democracy, TI was to lose the aggressivity that proved such an asset in its fight against Franco's dictatorship. In this third stage, as well as the redefinition of the term 'independent', which no longer had any substantial meaning, there was an abundance of vindications of the profession, such as the famous Madrid actors' strike (1975), or the experience of self-rule afforded by the 1976 Grec Festival in Barcelona that ended with the foundation of the Assembly of Professional Directors and Actors of Catalonia. 1976 also saw the setting up of the Professional Assembly of Independent Theatre (ATIP), made up of thirty-three groups and two venues (La Cadarso in Madrid and La Villaroel in Barcelona). Notably present among those groups were Catalan troupes such as *Els Joglars*, *Comediants*, *Dagoll-Dagom* and *La Claca*, while *Tábano* and *Ditirambo* represented Madrid.

After such a euphoric year, however, 1977 was a step backwards, with the forced closure of the Sala Cadarso, and the imprisonment of Albert Boadella, director of *Els Joglars*. Nevertheless, these measures did generate a series of massive demonstrations in favour of freedom of expression, which finally resulted in the transitional government definitively abolishing censorship. The coming of democracy, however, also produced a serious crisis for the TI, with integration into the state subsidies programme, a blunting of the aggressive critical edge which had been the hallmark of the early productions, and the very real danger of becoming part of the commercial circuit which they had originally stood against. Moreover, the new government encouraged an internationalist theatre, bringing new life to banned contemporary writers as well as the Spanish dramatists of the first half of the century, particularly García Lorca. Cultural prestige then moved onto expensive 'super' productions and flashy shows of the type that proved the hallmark of the Centro Dramático Nacional productions in the eighties.

Consequentially, some of the groups, or rather their 'leaders', came to occupy important posts in the new autonomous state or public theatres. And although most of the collectives disbanded, some watered themselves down to fit the commercial market (*Dagoll-Dagom*), and others survived within the field of amateur theatre (*Palestra*, *La Cassola*). Lastly, a few kept going as private professional companies, with access to state subsidies, but preserving their autonomy as 'private enterprises'. This was the case with *Els Joglars*, *La Cuadra de Sevilla* and *Comediants*, perhaps the three groups who have most fiercely held on to their independent roots.

Curiously, the TI died a self-proclaimed death with the El Escorial Talks in 1980, at whose conclusion the end of the historic period that had generated this movement was announced.

## Spanish Independent Theatre up to 1975

(The italicized groups are still currently active).

CATALONIA	<i>Els Joglars</i> (Barcelona/Vic), TEI/Teatre Experimental Independent (Girona), <i>Palestra</i> (Sabadell), Cataros (Barcelona), <i>Comediants</i> (Barcelona/Canet de Mar), La Claca (Barcelona), La Gàbia (Vic), El Globus (Terrassa), <i>Dagoll-Dagom</i> (Barcelona).
MADRID	Los Goliardos, Tábano, Ditirambo, Bululú, TEI/Teatro Estudio Independiente, TEM/Teatro Estudio de Madrid.
ANDALUSIA	<i>Esperpento</i> (Seville), Teatro Estudio Lebrijano (Lebrija), <i>Quimera</i> (Cádiz), <i>La Cuadra</i> (Seville)
BASQUE COUNTRY	Akelarre (Bilbao), Orain (San Sebastián), Cooperative Denok (Vitoria).
VALENCIA	<i>La Carátula</i> (Alicante), <i>La Cassola</i> (Alcoy), Teatro Club 49 (Valencia).
ASTURIAS	<i>Colectivo Margen</i> (Gijón).

Although as the above list indicates, a number of the most prominent TI groups disappeared in the years after 1975, TI's inheritance was reclaimed by groups that were formed at the end of the 1970s or during the last decade. These collectives, despite their ideological considerations, joined the international ranks of such movements as Dance Theatre, Circus Theatre, Image Theatre, Space Theatre, Industrial Theatre and Catastrophic Theatre (whose formal innovations had already been taken on board, in an intuitive way, by the TI). Immersed in the 1980s

style production process, these groups often used music as a guiding thread, and displayed a clear fascination with images of high sensory voltage, ever aware of the growing presence of technology.

Despite their debt to international artists such as Tadeusz Kantor and Pina Bausch, these new companies took from their predecessors the notion of the group as an independent enterprise. Rejecting traditional dramatic texts they evolved a working method based on improvisation functioning as the principal tool in the construction of images, characters and situations.

A list of the new generation of companies to emerge during this time could be set down as follows:

CATALONIA	La Fura dels Baus (Barcelona), La Cubana (Barcelona), Sèmola Teatre (Vic), El Tricicle (Barcelona), Vol.Ras (Barcelona), El Talleret de Salt (Girona), Zotal (Granollers), Circ Perillós (L'Hospitalet de Llobregat), Artificio (Barcelona), Los Rinos (Barcelona).
MADRID	Cambaleo Teatro, La Carnicería, La Tartana Teatro, Teatro Guirigai.
ANDALUSIA	Atalaya Teatro (Seville), La Zaranda (Jérez de la Frontera), Teatro para un Instante (Granada).
BASQUE COUNTRY	Bekereke (Vitoria), Teatro Geroa (Durango), Legaleón Teatro (Irún), Ur Teatro (Rentería), Trapu Zaharra (Rentería).
VALENCIA	Esteve & Ponce (Valencia), Moma Teatre (Valencia), Xarxa Teatre (Castellón).
ASTURIAS	Teatro del Norte (Gijón).
MURCIA	Arena Teatro (Alcantarilla).

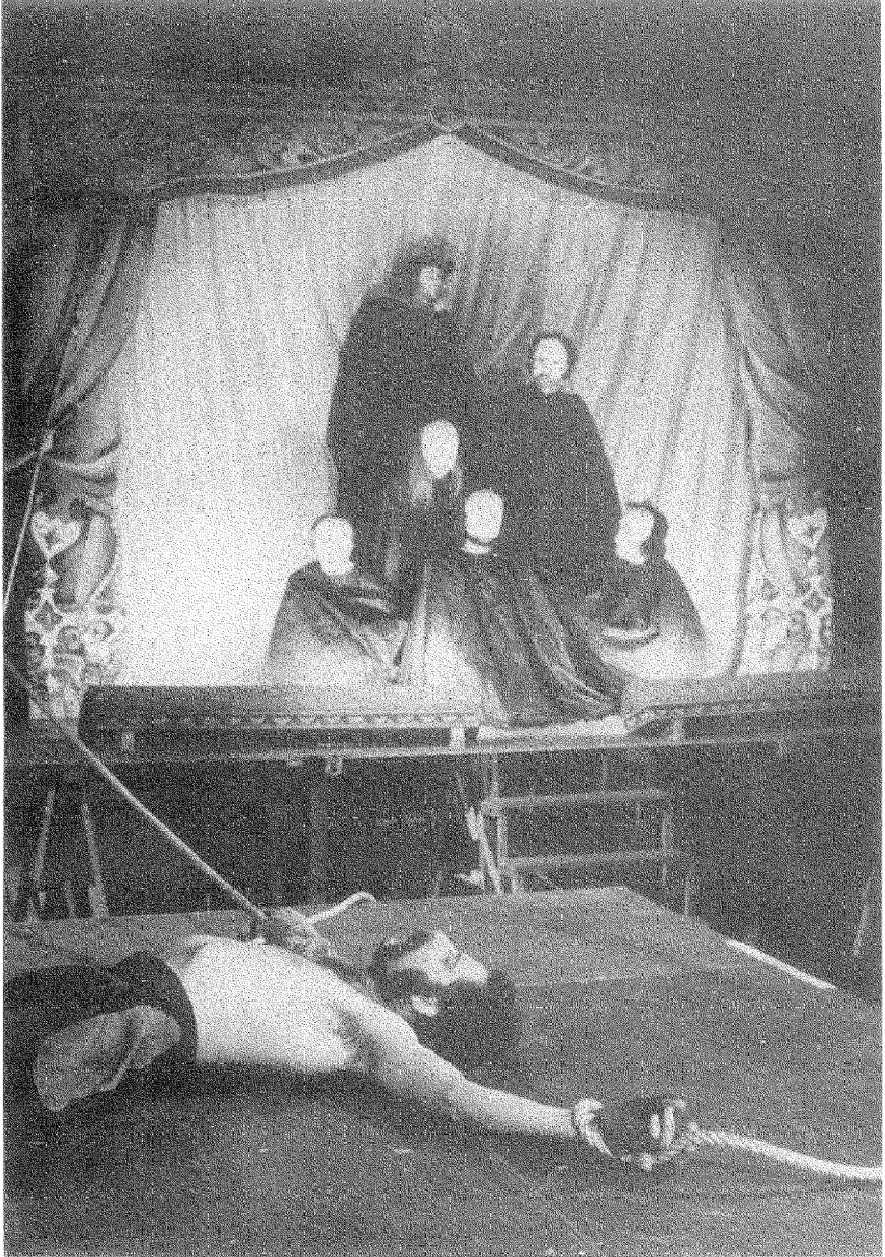
## Catalonia

Els Joglars, a group formed in 1962 and directed since 1966 by Albert Boadella, undoubtedly exemplifies the most corrosive political viewpoint of Spanish TI. Els Joglars introduced Marcel Marceau-style mime to Spain, and in this way managed to avoid the devastating effects of censorship. Els Joglars fell under the category of Music-Hall, whose censors were more concerned with the decency of the costumes than politics. But with Els Joglars, mime broke its academic silence and integrated itself fully into the theatre.

Their earliest productions already displayed a great formal audacity, which has become a characteristic of their work over the past thirty-five years. *El joc (The Game)* (1970) took place on a circular, inclined stage, on which the actors, barefoot and in leather costumes, executed abstract actions. In this production, where gestures played a central role, Els Joglars also incorporated a use of the voice for the first time, through screams and onomatopoeia. *Mary d'ous (Egg Mary)* (1972), their next project, was a veritable stage 'canon' acted out by two clonelike couples, John and Mary, who performed a series of continuous, choreographed gestures, in a minimalist production. *Àlias Serrallonga* (1974), for its part, broke away from the usual Italian style sets of the company (see Figure 1). This was largely due to the input of the visionary designer Fabià Puigserver. Based on the mythical figure of a seventeenth century Catalan bandit, the production evolved on three stages which permitted an involvement of the audience in a more physical manner, associated with the work of European practitioners such as Luca Ronconi and Ariane Mnouchkine. *Àlias Serrallonga* had strong political connotations, since the absolute monarchy that wiped out the rebellious bandits was clearly equated with Franco's regime.

This political commitment grew even stronger with *La torna (Left Overs)* (1977), (see Figure 2) which incorporated the staging of two executions by garrote, a method by which the Franco regime, had in 1974 executed an anarchist and a common criminal. The consequences came swiftly, and Boadella and a number of actors were imprisoned.

In the years after 1978 Els Joglars introduced their method of 'borrowed drama', based on the appropriation of certain techniques taken from paratheatrical acts (rallies, masses, concerts, psychodramas, etc.), which were organized around a basic political theme. This is the method used in *M-7 Catalònia* to tackle the theme of nationalism, taking as a 'borrowed drama' a cybernetic conference in the twenty-first century, which analyses the members of a residual culture: Catalan. *Laetius* (1980), meanwhile, an apocalyptic parable of great formal beauty, focussed on a mutated human race in the aftermath of a nuclear war.



**Figure 1.** Els Joglars production of *Àlias Serrallonga* (1974). Photo: Jordi Pasqual

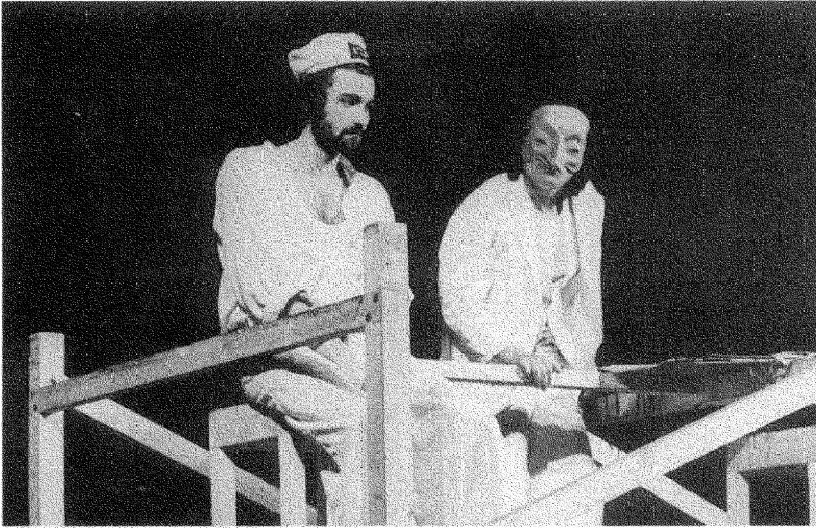


Figure 2. Els Joglars production of *La torna* (1977). Photo: Jordi Pasqual

The group's productions are also strongly characterized by a desire to provoke, effectively witnessed in *Olympic Man Movement* (1981), which revolved around the theme of sport as a form of racism, beginning with a supposed rally organized by a sporting sect. The production included direct questions to the audience, simulating the capture of 'olympic men' acolytes in a skillful manipulation of theatrical conventions.

However, perhaps the greatest scandal in the history of the company was caused by *Teledium* (1983), a parody of religious rituals that outraged the most conservative sectors of Spain. *Virtuosos de Fontainebleau* (*Virtuosi of Fontainebleau*) (1984), dealing with the entry of Spain into the EU, also proved controversial, as did *Columbi Lapsus* (1989), in which a group of paparazzi investigated a range of Vatican intrigues, amongst them the causes of the sudden death of John Paul I. Finally, *Yo tengo un tío en América* (*I Have an Uncle in America*) (1991) took pot shots at the Spanish colonization of America with the motive of the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the New World.

In short, parody and theatre within theatre or meta-theatre (through the so-called 'borrowed dramas') have consolidated the style of this company, centred on highly detailed acting work and technological perfection. Boadella demands of his actors a total domination of their bodies, so as to produce the most diverse kinds of human, animal and robotic behaviour.

Els Joglars have also, since 1991, produced several television series where they have continued to use their peculiar parodic language. It

could be said that the most veteran of the groups of the new Catalan and Spanish theatre have frequently set the theatrical standard for creating true social catharsis. Reactions provoked by their bravery, their ability to provoke and their stage skills has revived and indeed brought to the fore one of the most basic functions of theatre: biting criticism. This was not to say, however, that all TI collectives followed the lead of Els Joglars. Other Catalan TI collectives (like La Gàbia de Vic created in 1963) opted for a more text based theatre, producing the work of new, preferably neo-Brechtian writers.

At the beginning of the 1970s, in the face of the end of Francoism, Catalonia experienced a rise in 'collective theatricality'. 1969 saw the establishment of the Sitges International Theatre Festival, which clearly represented a breath of fresh air for the isolated Catalan stage. But in particular, those years saw the revival of popular festivals that had been banned by the dictatorship. Catalonia was able to revive its *Festes Majors* and carnivals, which are deep-rooted in the history of the Catalan people.

Formed in 1971, Comediants could be considered the company that most markedly represented this popular strand, creating a fusion of ethnographic materials (giant figures, large head-masks, masks, stilts, etc.), sophisticated technology and a dramatic performance style which habitually evolved and was performed in open spaces. Joan Font, the 'leader' of Comediants since the company's earliest days, has always created work which has a strong grounding in popular culture and iconography. For example, *Sol solet* (*Sun, Little Sun*) (1979), one of the company's greatest successes, featured as its main character the Star King, a symbol of Mediterranean cultures. The production was marked by pyrotechnic effects, Chinese shadows, cut-outs, popular songs and tightrope acrobatics. The show proved a real burst of happiness and vitality to welcome in democracy.

It is *Dimonis* (*Devils*) (1982), however, a production which is still touring, which is perhaps the company's hallmark venture. (See Figure 3.) Using elements from the Carnival, it exemplified its satirical spirit by using the medieval symbolism of the *mundus inversus*, thus introducing infernal chaos (shamelessness, transvestism, scatology, obscenity) in order to provoke a real collective catharsis. Moreover, *Dimonis* is an open-air production that portrays an initiatory voyage (an inverted *via crucis*) along which charming little devils guide audiences immersed in their music, their insinuations and their pyrotechnics. *Dimonis*'s key achievement lies in vindicating physical experience in the theatre, establishing a model for street theatre that is both widely imitated and exported. The practice of street theatre in all its various forms (wandering players, parades, processions) was consolidated in Catalonia around 1975, generating a myriad of groups headed by Comediants,





**Figure 3.** Comediants production of *Dimonis* (1982). Photographer unknown

who, in the early 1980s, diversified their activities by organizing several carnivals (Canet de Mar, Venice, Milan) and establishing in 1981 the Tàrrega Street Theatre Festival, an international meeting place for this theatrical form.

As a multidisciplined enterprise, Comediants has also produced records and books as well as several television series. Much in demand worldwide for organizing outdoor events, Comediants were responsible for the Closing Ceremony of the Barcelona Olympic Games, a theatrical event realized in their own inimitable style. That performance visualized the creation of our solar system through a pyrotechnical display from which the planets, the Sun and the Moon were born; all these events evolving within a strikingly beautiful dance. That large scale performance was, as Bim Mason pointed out, a huge scale spectacle based on bold visual effects and technical perfection:

Because of the distance, large images are needed to replace the reduced immediacy of the human scale. These images might be in the form of the set or large puppets, inflatables or fireworks displays. Those are all techniques that are used at rock concerts and at huge outdoor events such as the Ceremonies of the Olympic Games.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Bim Mason, *Street Theatre and Other Outdoor Performances* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 123.

To return to the 1970s, one of the most representative TI performances was *No hablaré en clase (I Will Not Speak in Class)* (1977), by the group Dagoll-Dagom, directed at that time by Joan Ollé. Schools under Franco and memories of that repressive education system provided the pivot of the production, built around certain repeated images and set phrases. *No hablaré en clase*, a puzzle-play, became one of the great theatrical successes of the period of political transition in Spain. Later on, the group moved towards a more commercial circuit by staging musicals. *Antaviana* (1978), a production based on the fantastic tales of Pere Calders and the songs of Jaume Sisa represented a Copernican turn-around for the Catalan theatre. For the first time, a TI company were doing a production with no overt political implications.

In the same year, 1978, the puppet and object theatre group La Claca, directed by Joan Baixas, produced a legendary show, *Mori el Merma (Death to the Monster)*, with giant puppets and masks designed by the painter Joan Miró. This allegory about the death of the dictator (El Merma was a monster) was premiered in an opera house, the Barcelona Liceo, with definite support from the Catalan bourgeoisie who were then financing the Liceu which was until 1981 a private theatre. TI was thus shown to be a way in which the wealthy Catalan bourgeoisie affirmed their national identity. So *Mori el Merma*, after a successful tour of Europe and America, became an emblem of that Catalan TI from which survivors still remain.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1970s, mime became fashionable in Barcelona, with the presence of the British Lindsay Kemp and the Americans Stewy and Jango Edwards, as well as the attraction of the Jacques LeCoq school in Paris. Parallel to this, in 1976 a Department of Mime was set up at the Barcelona Institute of Theatre, which, under the direction of the Poles Pawel Rouba and Andrej Leparski, was to become extremely influential. From that department came, among others, two trios of mime artists: El Tricicle and Vol.Ras. Both groups are characterized by their postmodern mime, their eclectic use of sounds and objects, and the incorporation of masks, clowning and *commedia dell'arte* techniques. El Tricicle builds performances around a thematic axis; for example, *Slàstic (Elastic)* (1986) is described as a hilarious news report on sport and its practitioners. The group has also developed a strong television presence through numerous series on physical humour in which they explored the comic nature of classic sketches. Equally influenced by the aesthetic of silent movies,

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<sup>9</sup> 'There are groups such as Els Joglars or Comediants who have organized their artistic structure in such a way that they are not only totally professional companies, but they also make their position as such highly profitable by generating higher incomes than that of usual companies'. César Oliva, *El teatro desde 1936* (Madrid: Alhambra, 1989), p. 430.

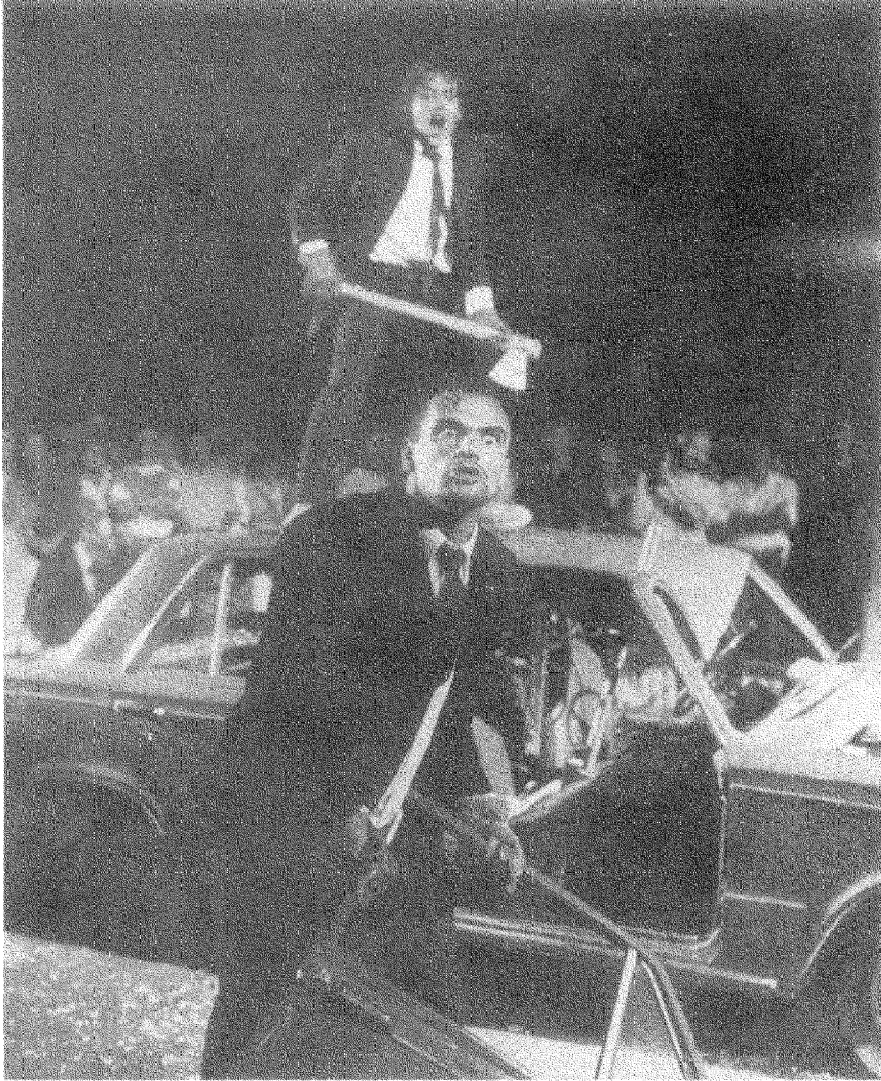
Vol.Ras has opted in their productions for an immediate, easily read physical style of comedy.

Few can deny the impact made by La Fura dels Baus since 1979, the year in which the professional artistes from different disciplines (sculpture, mechanics, dance, music) came together to form a new street theatre troupe. Their first real international success came with *Accions* (*Actions*) (1983), a collage of sensations that each spectator had to put together for themselves (see Figure 4). Closer to a 3D installation than a conventional performance, *Accions* physically altered a given space (a hangar, garage, or market for example) provoking a visceral reaction in the audience who were expected to become co-participants in the theatricalized performance. This was the aim as expressed by the company in a written statement: 'The production *Accions* is a game without rules, a drink thrown in your face, it is a clap of thunder, a flash of light and pyrotechnics, it's the best way to get a puncture, a dull thump, a brutal stream of hammer blows, a sound execution, a chain of unlimited situations, it is a 3D transformation in an unusual setting.'

In *Suz/o/Suz* (1985), perhaps their greatest production, La Fura dels Baus consolidated their ability to create a visual drama of great sensorial density, supported by vigorous music, performed live. In this neo-primitive ritual, the actors, naked or dressed only in a white shirt and black tie as the remains of urban dress, manipulated a series of 'dead' objects from our consumer society. It was characteristic of their previous work in its illustration of Artaud's vision of the need to return to our origins, to ritual. As such, the bodies of the actor-performers were used like a seismograph to register the neo-rituals of the 1980s (nude-look, narcissism, industrial music, etc.) in a sea of fascinating images in which the defenceless shipwrecked spectators surrounded by the performance, lived every event enacted before them intensely, with their perception sharpened to a maximum degree. It is this possibility of danger and risk that forms one of the keystones of the 'Furero' language.

*Tier mon* (1988), the third production in the trilogy, that tackled the subject of the war, represented a notable increase in the use of technology (robotics and ballistics) as a creative language. This tendency was affirmed in *Noun* (1991), a performance built around a cybernetic concept and in the multidisciplinary skills which were displayed in their Opening Ceremony for the Barcelona Olympics which set a new aesthetic and ideological standard for future Olympic presentations.

In 1980, an amateur group from the tourist region of Sitges became La Cubana, one of the most original and most popularly accepted collective companies within the field of contemporary Catalan theatre. Directed by Jordi Milan, their *leitmotif* is the confusion between fiction and reality, and has been practised from their street theatre origins onwards with *Cubana's Delikatessen* (1983). *La tempestad* (*The Tempest*) (1986), began as a



**Figure 4.** La Fura dels Baus production of *Accions* (1983). Photo: Gol

mundane realization of Shakespeare's late play, performed in a conventional theatre in a conventional manner. The performance was suddenly disrupted when the tempest announced by Prospero invaded the stage and pit. The theatre 'staff' (ushers, ticket sellers, toilet cleaners, etc.) helped the surprised audience, while a curious salvage operation was carried out, ending with the entrance of a spectacular yellow submarine. Actors and audience finally mixed together and, chatting animatedly, took on roles in another production.

*Cómeme el coco, negro* (Soft Soap Me, Black Man) (1988) and *Cubana Marathon Dancing* (1992) are further examples of the amusing theatrical metalanguage of La Cubana, a group that exploits the ambiguous to an unprecedented degree, basing itself on an interpretive style that creates 'caricatures' of an incredible gallery of everyday characters (the pious old maid, the camp gay man, the dominating mother, the macho Hispanic man, and so on): an aesthetic that the group retained in its television series *Teresinas SA*, whose main characters were three demure dressmaker sisters.

For its part, the new Catalan circus, influenced by European troupes of the calibre of Grand Magic Circus, Archaos, Zingaro and Footsbarn Theatre, opted for sensation and complicity, far from the virtuosity practised by the traditional circus. For another thing, the avant-garde poet Joan Brossa, linked to the worlds of painting and the theatre, and a great lover of the circus aesthetic, attempted in the early 1980s to give Catalonia a circus and a music-hall of its own, reviving a tradition that had prospered in Barcelona at the beginning of the century.

In this context, Circ Cric emerged in 1981, through the initiative of the clown Tortell Poltrona, Together with neo-circus groups such as Sèmola Teatre, Zotal or Circ Perillós, Circ Cric cemented this movement in Catalonia. But parallel to these internationally focussed collectives, 'chamber' circuses were also developed, principal among which were the duos Marceline i Sylvestre, Boni & Caroli and the Pilistrup trapeze artists, not to mention Pep Bou and his acrobatics with soap bubbles.

This section ends with a brief mention of two groups formed by ex-members of La Fura dels Baus. These are Los Rinos and Artificio, groups that point towards a drama for the nineties by reviving a certain thread of argument and forms of realism through performances that combine Stanislavskian acting, music, dance, performing animals, magic, pyrotechnics, film projections and much more, and whose production agenda is being gradually consolidated in rehearsals and performances that usually take place on Italian-style stages.

## Andalusia

This community, historically threatened by emigration, petty tyranny and anarchist struggles, was reduced by Franco's regime to sunshine, bulls and flamenco: a false image of Andalusia which served to create a folkloric export for tourists of a homogenous Spain. Moreover, with the prohibition of the works of Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti, the dictatorship leant its support instead to the comedies of Pedro Muñoz Seca and the Quintero brothers, creators of a flimsy, *costumbrista* vision of Andalusia.

Without doubt, TI established a link from the start with the theatre of Lorca and Alberti, trying, just as these renowned dramatists had, to reach a wide audience made up of peasants and workers, historically distanced from theatrical events. TI effectively began in Andalusia with the Teatro Estudio Lebrijano (TEL), formed in the Seville town of Lebrija in 1966 by a very young director, Juan Bernabé, who conceived it as a cooperative made up of rural actors. In 1970, Bernabé staged a play by Alfonso Jiménez Romero, a promising young Andalusian writer. That play, *Oratorio (Oratory)*, contained references to Greek mythology, even though its characters belonged to a firmly Andalusian world. *Oratorio* took up its atavistic aesthetic, that of white walls and mourning women, and the heart-rending cry of the flamenco. And the *cantaor* (flamenco singer) of this production was in actual fact Salvador Távora, a young Sevillian bullfighter and builder who occasionally sang in a bar called La Cuadra, a young man who was soon to become one of the most prominent directors of the contemporary Spanish theatre.

But to return to the TEL, the prestigious critic José Monleón, linked with TI from its genesis, succeeded in getting *Oratorio* put on the programme of the Nancy Festival, directed at that time by Jack Lang. The production caused a real stir in Nancy in 1971, where it was frequently compared to the Teatro Campesino of Luis Valdez.

Also, and likewise in Nancy, another very important figure in Andalusian TI made an appearance: Lilyane Dillon, a literature teacher who became linked to the group, and was later to become, together with Salvador Távora, one of the mainstays of La Cuadra de Sevilla.

After the success in Nancy, Bernabé decided to study stage directing in Rome, where he had begun several projects with Rafael Alberti. These were never completed as Bernabé's promising career was prematurely cut short by a brain tumour which killed him in 1972. In his memory, the TEL annually organizes an Andalusian Amateur Theatre Week, in which the principal Andalusian companies (La Cuadra, Atalaya, etc.) often participate.

Deeply impressed by the Nancy Festival, and particularly by the Japanese group Tenjosajiki, Salvador Távora decided to explore the dramatic nature of flamenco song and dance, which, together with a text by Alfonso Jiménez Romero, comprised the first production by La Cuadra de Sevilla: *Quejío (Lament)*. *Quejío* was of key importance in that it reflected Távora's expressed aim to develop new ways of working through a search for 'alternative' texts which could be reworked for the stage without a reliance on tired or clichéd conventions:

Right from the start I was looking for physical texts for the theatre, a physical way of speaking, an ordering of sounds, images and sensations. I'm not interested in texts that I call 'grammatical', where grammar is a simple way of saying things.<sup>10</sup>

Within his productions, Salvador Távora began to streamline those areas of concern, to which he added other constants such as the expression of pain through flamenco song, and a cast of actors lacking in interpretive techniques, who did not resort to a pretentious acting style. Realized on a minimalist stage bereft of set or props, *Quejío* rejected bourgeois theatrical conventions, offering a darkly tinted, heart-rending show, based on the ritual force of flamenco song. It proved an immediate success, both in Spain and abroad. Jack Lang's decision to put it on the programme for the Théâtre des Nations Festival in Paris in 1972, where it attracted favorable responses, resulted in further foreign performances, as it was contracted to appear in Switzerland, Italy, France, Colombia and Mexico. By 1974, thanks to *Quejío*, La Cuadra de Sevilla was already a theatrical legend.

The company's second production, *Los palos (The Sticks)*, was premiered at the Nancy Festival in 1975. On that occasion, the ancestral oppression of the Andalusian people was reflected physically in a network of rafters that hung dangerously over the singer-actors, since song (*bulerías, tientos, cañas, fandangos, lullabies and serranas*) was the only form of vocal expression used in the work. It attained equal international success, and after touring many European and American festivals, *Los palos* represented the definitive recognition of the popular theatre of La Cuadra de Sevilla, a theatre that was anti-intellectual, and uncorrupted by established stage conventions.

The collective's third production, *Herramientas (Tools) (1977)*, also premiered at Nancy, was described by Távora as 'A dramatic production for a worker's theatre'.<sup>11</sup> *Herramientas* was an attempt to dramatise the violence and alienation of heavy manual work: on stage there were only three concrete mixers and three labourers who worked them in a ritualized way. The drama of the work could not be written down or simulated; it simply had to be shown in all its harsh graphic reality. And although the radical nature of *Herramientas* provoked mixed reactions among its audience, for the company the production represented the conscious incorporation of machines and objects into its particular poetic aesthetic.

*Andalucía amarga (Bitter Andalusia) (1979)*, a forceful physical poem on Andalusian emigration, can be considered a production abounding with religious recollections. Once again, it featured song, women in mourning, processional candles, and the *grito* (scream) as eternal symbols of

<sup>10</sup> Moisés Pérez Coterillo, 'Tebas está en Sevilla', *El Público*, May 1987, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Julio Martínez, 'La Cuadra en 8 tiempos', *El Público*, September 1988, p. 31.

Andalusian culture. In particular, rhythm, the defining element of the group's productions, played a central role. In *Andalucía amarga*, Távora introduced more stage elements, by converting the set into a giant footbridge. At one end was black, rural Andalusia, from where the emigrants fearfully crossed a long bridge, in the form of an Easter parade, to get to the other side, where the menacing arm of a crane – symbolic of work far from their home – awaited them.

In the years between 1979 and 1982, democracy stabilized in Spain, and the future looked bright. Perhaps because of this, *Nanas de espinas* (*Splintered Lullabies*) (1982) represented a turning point in the development of La Cuadra de Sevilla, since it involved working on the basis of an already written text, in this case García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* (*Blood Wedding*), a struggle between Eros and Thanatos which brought a sprinkling of colour into the dark shading of the group. But *Nanas de espinas* also revolutionized the group's iconography with a new element: the bull as a symbol of death.

This symbol was to play a central role in their next production, *Piel de toro* (*Bull Skin*) (1986), subtitled *Tragedia sonora con imágenes amarillas* (*A Resonant Tragedy with Yellow Images*). *Piel de toro* was a real explosion of colours, yellow and blood red, in a circular space, that of the bullring, in which the ritual of the killing of the bull was reworked to the music of a *pasodoble*, a style of music created to fit the most dramatic moments of the bullfight.

One year later, *Las Bacantes* (*The Bacchae*) (1987) marked La Cuadra's closer relationship with literary texts, through a treatment of Euripides' classic. However, Távora changed the Greek setting to Andalusia, identifying with the essence of the ritual, and specifically with the Bacchanalian and Christian-pagan festivals of Andalusia: the *romerías*. Távora chose not to perform in *Las Bacantes*, concentrating exclusively on the project's direction. He also adopted dance as part of the production's stage vocabulary. On the stage, the *cantaora* Manuela Vargas, a definitive Agave, shared the leading role with a machine, a huge wheel, that ordered the images of the performance with its rhythm and from each of whose arms, like phallic symbols, hung one of the crazed Baccantes, seduced by Dionysus.

The company's most recent creations, *Alhucema* (*Aires de historia andaluza*) (*Lavender [Airs of Andalusian History]*) (1989) and *Picasso andaluz o la muerte del minotauro* (*Andalusian Picasso or the Death of the Minotaur*) (1991) have consolidated its aesthetic, re-using formulas based on the iconography of the Andalusian people, and utilizing stage images to capture its past, its present and its legacy.

In 1983, Seville saw the birth of the group Atalaya, a collective directed by Ricard Iniesta, who had trained with Eugenio Barba. The concerns of Atalaya, more internationalist than those of the other TI



groups, have largely been centred on the physicality of the actor. Nevertheless, paradoxically, Atalaya's greatest success, which is still touring, has been a production of García Lorca's *Así que pasen cinco años* (*When Five Years Pass*) (1985), a novel staging with neo-avant-garde touches, of a profoundly Andalusian text.

The world of the avant-garde, and particularly that of the Soviet avant-garde of the century was tackled in *La rebelión de los objetos* (*The Rebellion of Objects*) (1988), a play by Vladimir Mayakovsky that Atalaya staged according to Meyerhold's biomechanical theories, using a neo-constructivist set design. This production, which began the trilogy *Teatro del desasosiego* (*Theatre of Unrest*) was completed with Heiner Müller's *Hamlet Máquina* (*Hamletmachine*) (1990), and with *Espejismos* (*Mirages*) (1991), an extremely formalist production built around glances, whispers, breaths and an incessant flux of images.

Atalaya, a group immersed in the image-theatre of the 1980s, has reworked the formal concerns of the international stage without any references to their immediate environment. This line of study has been continued by the newer *Teatro para un Instante*, a group formed in Granada in 1990 by the actress and director Sara Molina.

The University of Granada, having a long humanistic tradition, supported the creation in 1982 of an International Festival that would offer a space for the latest stage trends. This Festival, first directed by Antonio Sánchez Trigueros and later by Manolo Llanes, has an important place in the new generation of Andalusian companies oriented towards contemporary stage aesthetics.

But the spirit of the old TI can be seen in a collective that gave their first performance in 1987. *La Zaranda* (Teatro Inestable de Andalucía La Baja), based in Jérez de la Frontera, swings between the influences of La Cuadra de Sevilla and the expressionist look of Tadeusz Kantor, of whom they declare themselves fervent admirers.

*La Zaranda* produced their first show in 1987: *Marimeneo*, presented a stage filled with useless furniture, a cold evocation of absence around which moved three aimless characters, lost among the junk. But *La Zaranda*'s international success came with *Vinagre de Jérez* (*Vinegar from Jérez*) (1989). Directed once again by Antonio Sánchez, this production recreated the world of flamenco song in an extremely regionally based and tribal way, using dark and fossilized images to reproduce the taverns of Jérez, frequented by drunks and down-and-outs. Despite this local bias and, being performed in a very heavy Andalusian accent, this magnificent production easily crossed over national boundaries. The phenomenon was repeated with *Perdonen la tristeza* (*Forgive the Sadness*) (1992), the company's most recent work.

## Madrid

Los Goliardos constituted one of the pioneer groups of Madrid TI, from their formation in 1964 to their break-up at the start of the 1970s. However, Angel Facio, their director, retained the company name under which he produced several shows during the 1980s.

Following the TI aesthetic, Los Goliardos identified themselves with minimalist theatre and farce (the only genre where a twenty-year old actress could become an eighty-year old woman). Los Goliardos, who introduced Brecht's theories to Madrid, were notable for their 'gun and theatre' concept, expressed in their '27 Anarchic Notes in Search of a Concept', quoted earlier in this article, in which they tried to establish a combative theatrical ideology. As well as Angel Facio, the group comprised of actors including Juan José Otegui, Félix Rotaeta and Paco Algora, who later played an important role in the cinema of the so-called *movida madrileña* (Madrid scene) of the 1980s which came to incorporate such figures as Almodóvar and Trueba.

The hallmark production of Los Goliardos was *La boda de los pequeños burgueses* (*The Wedding of the Petit Bourgeoisie*) (1971), which, based on the play by Brecht, denounced the corruption and the unbearable agony of the Franco regime. In this respect, one of the singular features of Madrid TI was the collaboration with young dramatists. They wrote their plays as rehearsals progressed, becoming part of the formula of collective creation associated with other TI groups as well as companies further afield such as the Britain's 7:84 and Joint Stock. Fermín Cabal, one of the most notable of contemporary dramatists, adapted *La boda de los pequeños burgueses*.

There were similar collaborations in other Madrid TI groups such as Ditirambo (who in 1975 staged *Pasodoble*, a play by Romero Esteo). This was also the case for the TEM (Teatro Estudio Madrileño), which spawned actors (Juan Pedro Carrión, Begoña Valle), writers (José Luis Alonso de Santos) and directors (José Carlos Plaza), who were later to have brilliant solo careers. The TEM created a school of its own, which included classes taught by the American William Layton, who introduced Stanislavsky's Method to Madrid, and the director Miguel Narros.

The TEM became the TEI (Teatro Estudio Independiente) in 1970 under the direction of José Carlos Plaza, and continued its interest in teaching actors, bringing together Stanislavskian naturalism with psychodrama techniques. From this melding, *La sesión* (*The Session*) (1974) was created, which, with advice from the psychiatrist Pablo Población, became a pseudo-psychodrama in which the actors worked themselves into a frenzy which allowed room for improvisation: in these, José Carlos Plaza, the director, acted as a psychiatrist/conductor. The theme of repression, both political and sexual, was the central axis of that

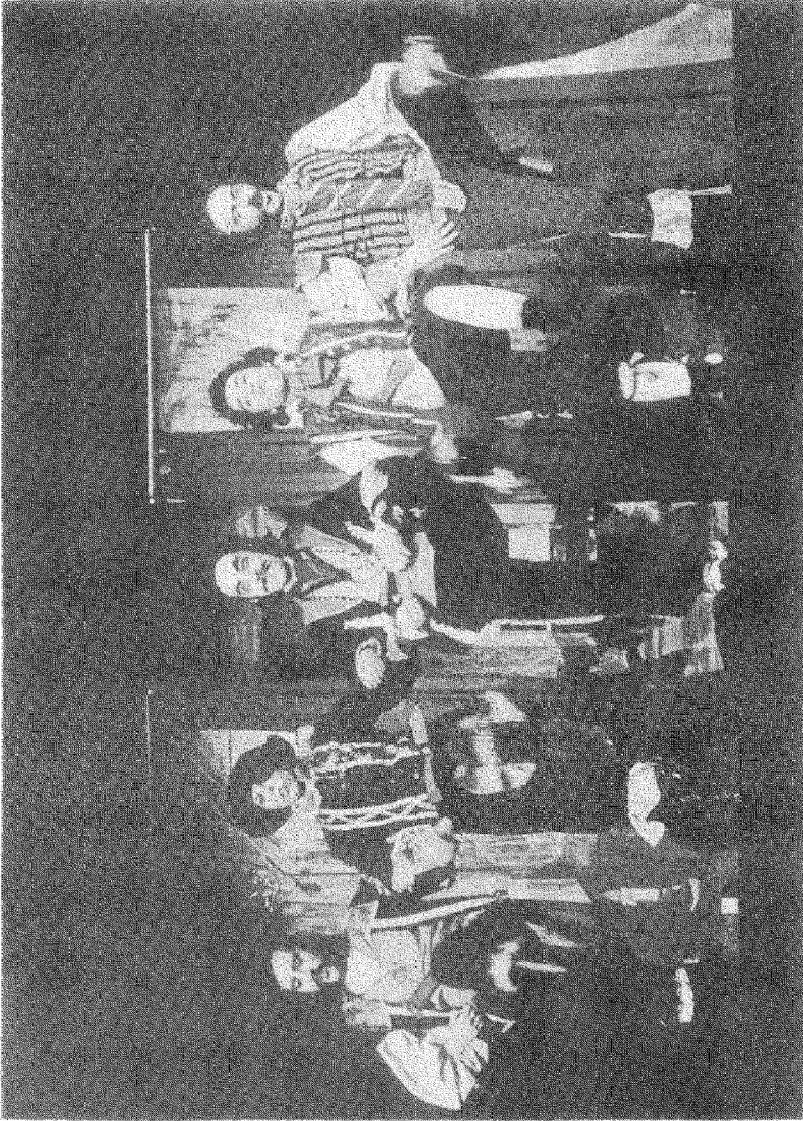
controversial production, which, in order to evade censorship, was also performed in private houses.

But if any group is associated with TI in Madrid, it is Tábano, founded in 1968 by Juan Margallo, and inspired by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, an ideology which was handed on to them by the Argentinian Juan Carlos Uviedo, with whom they staged their first production, *El juego de los dominantes* (*The Game of the Dominant*). This production from 1968, directed collectively, also involved the collaboration of the painter Viola. He created an enormous pendulum that swung dangerously close to the heads of the audience during performances, as a symbol of the oppression of Franco's regime.

Tábano was truly catapulted to fame with the more festive *Castañuela 70* (*Castanet 70*) (1970), one of the most resounding successes of the Spanish TI movement. Inspired by *cinema vérité*, this farcical production was built up of material taken from street interviews and photographs of everyday events, attempting to capture aspects of Spanish reality at that time which incorporated comments on religion, sexuality, consumerism, the family, and politics; material that served as a basis for a multitude of improvisations. Formally, *Castañuela 70* was inspired by the musical revues popular at the beginning of the century, and more specifically by the Chinese Theatre of Manolita Chen (a cheap vaudeville troupe of the thirties made up of Spaniards dressed as Orientals). Curiously, this would also become an inspiration to another group, La Cubana.

With live music supplied by the rock group La Madre del Cordero, *Castañuela 70* was an unprecedented success with audiences. First performed at the Teatro de la Comedia (although it was initially banned by censors after the dress rehearsal), the work ran for two years, even playing on the commercial circuit. It set an example that spawned many *castañuelero* imitators both in commercial productions and café-theatre.

Following their appearance at the Nancy Festival in 1973, Tábano began a period of reflectiveness in South America, developing close links with the teachings of Enrique Buenaventura from Cali (Colombia) and later, with Augusto Boal's guerilla theatre in São Paulo. On returning to Spain, the group began a more politically committed period, with the musical *Cambio de tercio* (*Change of Regiment*) (1976) dealing with the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and the proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1931, in a clear and provocative historic parallel with Franco's death. A year later, they were to premiere *La ópera del bandido* (*The Bandit's Opera*), an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (see Figure 5). The group were finally disbanded in 1984, with the departure of Juan Margallo and the nomination of Guillermo Heras as director of the CNNTE (Centro Nacional de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas) of the Ministry of Culture. This was the end of the story of a



**Figure 5.** Tábano's production of *La ópera del bandido* (1977). Photographer unknown

group who had enjoyed a fair degree of success in their pioneering work with young dramatists such as Fermín Cabal and Angel García Pintado but that, perhaps, swung excessively between various aesthetics without ever establishing a definitive form of their own.

Outside the boundaries of TI, La Tartana was created in 1977 as a puppet and acting group very influenced by Kantor. Productions such as *Ciudad irreal (Unreal City)* (1984) and *Lear* (1987) faithfully followed the techniques of the Polish maestro. Defining themselves as 'a theatre of visions, gestures and sound',<sup>12</sup> this group co-managed by Carlos Marquerie and Juan Muñoz, with the assiduous collaboration of the dramatist Antonio Fernández Lera, gradually distilled itself to a formalism with no linear storylines or defined characters – sometimes hermetic – that sought a new relationship between stage space and text; concerns that belonged to the experimentation of the 1980s, and that were exemplified in La Tartana productions such as *Medeamaterial* (1989) based on the piece by Heiner Müller, and *Los hombres de piedra (The Men of Stone)* (1991), on a text by Fernández Lera.

Relying on the assistance of anthropologist and ethnologists, the dramatist and director Agustín Iglesias decided to create a theatre group that would vindicate the physicality of the Mediterranean, bringing it together with a strong medieval thread that was colourful, and almost Pantagruelian. On this premise, Iglesias founded in 1979 the Teatro Guirigai, one of the most interesting offerings on the Madrid theatrical scene. Its earliest fruits were *Agape (Banquet)* (1982) and *Ritos de solsticio de invierno (Rites of the Winter Solstice)* (1984), both featuring masks, popular songs and choreography based on folk traditions. Abandoning recognized stage conventions, Guirigai staged in 1985 what is, to date, their most representative production: *Enésimo viaje a Eldorado (Ninth Journey to El dorado)*. This was an original street presentation in which the epic story of the Spanish conquistadors becomes a playful travelling performance led by old-fashioned soldiers in armour, surprised at the hustle of modern life, on their tireless quest for the American utopia.

Again in the sphere of formalist theatre, and visual theatre, which was much in vogue in Madrid from the inauguration of the CNNTE, there were notable companies such as Cambaleo Teatro, formed in 1982, and admired for having staged remarkable productions such as *Proyecto Van Gogh (Project Van Gogh)* (1989), in which a closed-off, dark stage served as a space for three actors, improvising repeated actions, while being unceasingly chased by a beam of white light.

Finally, La Carnicería, another young company formed in 1989 by the Argentinian director Rodrigo García, were to display, in productions

<sup>12</sup> Antonio Fernández Lera, 'La Tartana Teatro', *El Público*, November 1984, p. 31.

such as *Matando horas (Killing Time)* (1991), the influence of the avant-garde through a glacial and hybrid aesthetic that includes among other things, cinema projections, dance and declamation, in an attempt to convert the stage into a space to suit the changing spirit of the age at the end of the century.

## Conclusion

To conclude then, Catalonia, Andalusia and Madrid are the areas in which the TI movement most visibly flourished, generating a series of groups whose 'non-textual' legacy is still visible today. In the Basque Country, theatre was never a priority area in the fight against Franco's regime, despite the existence of legendary companies such as Akelarre or Orain, now totally disbanded. In later years, the difficulty of the Basque language has led groups to express themselves in Castilian, and frequently through already written texts, as is the case with Teatro Geroa and Ur Teatro, two of the regions most prominent companies; or through street theatre, where Bekereke and Trapu Zaharra have made a noticable impression. However, the Basque country has not generated any companies that have reached a wide international audience, moving as it does between amateurism and a precarious professionalism.

Since 1980, Valencia has been notable in the theatrical geography of Spain for its vitality, visible in the region's very young companies. Among those, Moma Teatre stand out. With their promising director Carlos Alfaro, they have established a status as one of the country's most inspiring groups. The duo Esteve & Ponce, heavily influenced by cinema narrative, have also enjoyed national attention.

To sum up, far from indicating the exclusivity of TI, a number of the groups looked at in this article are now closely linked to the international contemporary stage, and certainly the success enjoyed at international festivals by troupes such as Els Joglars, Comediants, La Cuadra de Sevilla and La Fura dels Baus suggests that whatever their original aims and intentions, they are now at the forefront of European performance theatre.