

have been able to survive in Mexico City. Their picturesque presence, their distinctive names and characteristic odor, together with their customary signs — "Minors, dogs, women and people in uniform not allowed" are slowly becoming part of our picturesque past.

**LOS CHAPULINES:  
GRASSHOPPERS ARE  
TASTY WITH LEMON AND  
GARLIC**

One of people's natural drives has always been to take advantage of the things around them. Perhaps that's the origin of the custom in the state of Puebla, Oaxaca and Hidalgo of eating insects now known to have high protein values. There are some 247 edible insect species in Mexico, and some of them form part of the dietary tradition in many communities in the three states mentioned.

We've heard people say that the maguey worm served in hot sauce is a great delicacy. But very few people know that the merry, green grasshopper is good for something other than jumping around and enthusiastically devouring plants. During grass-

hopper season, mostly from June to November, insect hunters come out in many places, armed with nets to snare their prey. It's quite easy to capture and preserve grasshoppers, making them a traditional, regional favorite. And they're good for people, too. The *esphenario*, one of 58 grasshopper species in the country, is 60-65 percent protein on a dry weight basis.

Previously boiled grasshoppers are grilled with lime juice and garlic; eaten in this simple way, they can solve dietary problems in even the poorest communities. But they are also used in more sophisticated dishes, prepared in garlic butter, for example, and served in specialized restaurants. Since grasshoppers are seasonal, other ways have been found to prepare them so that they can be eaten year-round. One is to boil and grill them, then grind them into a flour used to make "meatballs," croquettes or crackers (the latter served with a *nopal* cactus sauce). Thus, necessity and imagination are joined not only to solve a vital problem, but also to enrich culture and bring new pleasures to the palate.★

Emma Rizo and Teresa de Jesús Yanes

**odds and ends**

cue the artistic values of Tabasco, to build the repertoire and to compete in state, national and international theater competitions.

The group is based in Oxolotlan, a small Tabascan town where the tropical jungle hangs from the mountainsides. The experimental group began its work under the direction of Alicia Martínez. Their first challenges were to overcome local resistance and to learn to keep their spirits up under the broiling sun. Once established, they began to take their project to neighboring villages, as well.

The initial group grew into a full-fledged company, developing its own works, the fruits of their efforts to rescue local traditions. One such play is the *Tragedy of the Jaguar*, in which the oral tradition is re-created and transmits the Chontal spirit. Local elders told the story to two of the playwrights, Auldárico Hernández Gerónimo and Eutimio Hernández Guillermo, who working together with the director and an assistant, Martha Alicia Trejos, created the faces and the script, transforming the Chontal voices into credible characters, even though they speak Spanish. Later they got permission from the elders to include certain sacred elements in the play, like the funeral ritual.

But the company's experimental efforts didn't end with the rescue of the traditional, the presentation of ancestral community values, their relationship to the earth, their sense of the sacred and their ancient mysteries. Rather, they began to seek out the

**Theater**

**Indigenous Group  
Presents Lorca  
Play**

Ever since the experiment known as the Peasant Theater Workshop was started in May 1983, many of us had waited anxiously to see one of its productions. We finally got our chance when the group performed in Mexico City to the natural backdrop of the third section of the Chapultepec Woods, on October 24-26.

The idea for Peasant Theater originated in the state of Tabasco, based on the desire to create theater from the historical traditions of the peoples living in southeast Mexico, with roots in the rich Mayan, Olmec, Chontal and Chol cultures. Their traditions have been passed along orally through the generations, from the old to the young. The idea is not just to present plays, but rather to create a laboratory based on the region's history, to train actors and teachers, to res-



"Ajolotes" and "Acociles", aztec names of typical mexican animals.



"A Blood Wedding" in its Oxolotec version

Photo by the Laboratory of the Independent Peasant theater of Tabasco

## odds and ends

relationship of the traditional to the universal. That's how they decided to stage Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* (*Blood Weddings*), bringing to life his world and feelings, from the perspective of the Oxolotlecán vision. The local community understood the Granadian poet's peasant world as if it were their own, quoting lines from the play for days after the performances. They related easily to his passionate conception of love as an irrepressible vital force, like the tide that inescapably drags the love-stricken girl out to sea and leads to the death of the rivals for her love.

The dramatic staging of the tragic spirit of love and death was given a much slower rhythm than any of us had ever associated with the work before, but which was just right for the play as contemplated from an Oxolotlecán perspective. Fernando Isidro H.'s music sustains this rhythm throughout the play, as popular Mexican music is interwoven into the Spanish text to express the same romantic drama, "for love," "to die for love." The tragic sense of life and of death come together as one, the Spanish village and the people of Mayan roots, able to bless the wheat and the corn growing above the resting dead. It's not a guitar that accompanies the wedding party, but a band and a *marimba*,\* which at the moment of death grows quiet and is covered over, as if ashamed by its joy, like the flamenco player who strips the strings from his guitar when a loved one dies.

Lorca would have enjoyed the freshness of the interpretation, with harlequins on horseback, the wedding party in a cart with the band behind it and the chorus repeating, "Wake up the bride, it's her wedding day." He would have been excited by death's prowling presence until at last it controls the stage, with a triumphant gesture of fulfilled destiny as it extends its cape. In Oxolotlán, *Blood Weddings* was staged in a natural setting of jungle and sun. Its haunting beauty remained intact event in the clearing of the Chapultepec Woods, in a stolen silence within the very heart of Mexico City, interrupted only by occasional airplanes overhead. The slow rhythm of the Chontalan drums spoke, as if in another language, of the drama of love and death, the passion of the earth. Lorca's poetry shined

\* A *marimba* is a xylophone-like instrument, traditional in Mayan culture.

through, not only in the natural simplicity of the spoken verse, but also in the merging of the simplest set components with the movements of horses, the band, the *marimba* and dancers, all on stage. And it was especially present in the outstanding team work and in the participation of a community that understood Lorca's tragedy as its own, both factors adding unique dimensions to the performance.

The Peasant Theater Workshop is not a case of the search for the picturesque, but rather of serious experimental theater, bringing together study, rigor, professionalism and re-creation to construct a work of art. The

company has performed in New York City, during the annual Latin America Theater Festival, winning honors for its work. It has been invited to tour in Spain, Brazil, Cuba and other countries. It is truly an esthetic experience and a privilege to see them perform. We can only hope that their efforts, which have already demonstrated the great potential of peasant theater, will continue without losing quality; that they will not become a mere footnote to the 1986 theater annuals, but that they will go on performing, this being just the start of a long history.★

Emma Rizo



Photo by the Laboratory of the Independent Peasant theater of Tabasco

A natural setting for "A Blood Wedding"

## Cinema

### Love, Luck and Destiny Play Double in New Ripstein Film

Juan Rulfo's story *El gallo de oro* (*The Golden Cock*) was written into a film script by Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez and Roberto Gavaldón who finally made the movie in 1964. The script was an effort to remain faithful to the spirit of Rulfo's original and its main themes, namely chance, gambling, love and fortune, and the story of the two main characters caught up in them. The narration follows Dionisio Pinzón, a character caught up in a perfectly circular structure in which he sets out from zero or nothing and eventually ends up back in the same place. When Gavaldón translated the script into time and space on film, he produced a correct, clean-cut movie, mid-way between classicism and academicism, and did not delve further into the themes indicated in the script.

In 1985-1986 Arturo Ripstein shot a new version of Rulfo's story called *El imperio de la fortuna* (*Fortune's Dominion*), a time based on a script by Patricia Alicia García Diego. She picked up on the recurring themes of Rulfo's story—chance, gambling, love, fortune and destiny—all linked around the central topic of duality. Thus, the passage of time exists only as an extension and unfolding of the same theme.

There is a world of difference between the two versions. For one thing, there's a basic and seemingly external aspect to time when the story takes place. *El gallo de oro* happens in an undefined time, in a rather vaguely mythical time and space whose only reference to reality was to a series of folksy Mexican