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| **Teatro Prometeo** |
| **Prometheus Theatre** |
| Teatro Prometeo (Prometheus Theatre) was founded in Cuba by actor and director Francisco Morín (1918-) in 1948. Prometeo began as a fundraising project for the magazine of the same name, also founded by Morín in 1947, which was encountering financial problems around the occasion of its one-year anniversary. Morín established the Teatro Prometeo group and staged the play *Ligados* (*Welded*) by Eugene O´Neill to raise money to support the magazine. The magazine’s goal was to foster the culture of theatre in Cuba through the medium of print, so that the public and theatre practitioners could inform and educate themselves. Based on similar premises, Teatro Prometeo aimed to stage plays by both national and international writers that had never before been staged in Cuba. Teatro Prometeo intended to generate national theatrical production while also keeping up with international trends in theatre and performance by periodically staging the most important plays of world theatre. |
| Among the several international plays staged by Prometeo were *Laboremu*s by B. Bjornson (1949), *Calígula* by Albert Camus (1955), and *El fuego mal avivado* (*Le Feu qui Reprend Mal/The Fire that Does Not Start*) by Jean Jacques Bernard (1957). In keeping with the goal of establishing a national theatre for Cuba, Morín chose *Electra Garrigó* by Virgilio Piñera, a young Cuban writer, as the group’s second production in 1948. This play is widely regarded as the starting point of modern theatre in Cuba, not only for its content—later compared with the Theatre of the Absurd—but also because Teatro Prometeo’s staging exemplified Morín’s concept of theatre, according to which production should be more basic or essential and staging elements should be kept to a minimum. Teatro Prometeo staged *Electra Garrigó* again on the group’s tenth anniversary in 1958. Following the Cuban Revolution, Piñera’s *Electra Garrigó* was produced several more times by Prometeo (1960, 1961, 1964), cementing its foundational status.  File: Vidan.jpg  Figure 1. Photograph of Francisco Morín Vidán  Source: <http://www.encaribe.org/es/Picture?IdImagen=5270&idRegistro=1470>  No other group or company better illustrates the history of theatre in Cuba in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s than Teatro Prometeo. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, producing modern theatre in Cuba was challenging because there was little funding or audience to support it. Teatro Prometeo’s earliest productions were staged in borrowed venues throughout Havana during this period. Because of this economic struggle, the magazine *Prometeo* reduced the number of issues it published each year between 1950 and 1952, and ultimately stopped publishing altogether in 1953 due to lack of funding. 1954 marks the beginning of what is known as ‘teatro de salas’, or venue theatre, in Cuba, when groups like Prometeo acquired their own venues and staged daily and weekly performances with the aim of attracting a larger audience and becoming more commercial. Teatro Prometeo acquired its first permanent venue, Sala de Prometeo, in 1954 with the help of Morín’s longtime collaborator and sponsor, Andrés García, who continued to support Prometeo’s projects until he left Cuba in 1964. In 1956, the group relocated to a new venue at the address Prado 111 in Havana. In 1958, the theatre group moved to its final venue, where its opening production was Crommelynck’s *Carina*, directed by Morín.  After the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the theatre and other performing arts began receiving funding from the government. This afforded Teatro Prometeo financial stability, and resulted in an increase in the production of plays written by Cuban writers, such as *Medea en el espejo* (*Medea in the Mirror*) by José Triana (1960); *El vivo al pollo* (*To the Living the Chicken*) by Antón Arrufat (1961); *Gas en los poros*, (*Gas in the Pores*) by Matías Montes Huidobro (1962); and *La muerte del ñeque* [*Death of the Neque* (the jinxed one)], also by José Triana (1963). By 1962, the Cuban government had begun sending police to monitor performances and ultimately put a halt to the entire season; following these events several artists left the country. Though the theatre kept running for a time, in 1967 the government nationalized Teatro Prometeo’s venue. As a result, Teatro Prometeo was disbanded and Morín decided to leave Cuba in 1970.  During two decades, Teatro Prometeo had become the hub of theatre in Cuba, not only by promoting and cultivating an apparatus and audience for modern Cuban theatre through the group and the publication of its magazine, but also by providing new writers (e.g. Piñera, Arrufat, Triana) with a stage on which to debut their work. Throughout this period many of Cuba’s most important actors and directors of the 1950s, 60s and 70s worked with the group, including Mario Pajón, Vicente Revueltas, Roberto Blanco, Berta Martínez, and Maria Teresa Rojas. After Morín left Cuba, he settled in New York and established a new Teatro Prometeo that was active from 1976 to 1981.  File: Electra.jpg  Figure 2. Program from the first production of Electra Garrigó by Teatro Prometeo. From the Theater Ephemera Digital Collection at University of Miami  Source: <http://ctda.library.miami.edu/digitalobject/561> |
| Further reading:  (Boudet, El teatro perdido de los 50. Conversaciones con Francisco Morín)  (Boudet, Los años de la revista Prometeo)  (Carrío)  (Morín)  (Primer Aniversario) |