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| **Discépolo, Armando** |
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| Armando Discépolo was an Argentine playwright credited with the creation of the *grotesco criollo* genre in the 1920s and 30s. The son of first and second-generation Italian immigrants, Discépolo entered the Buenos Aires theatre world at a time of transition in audience tastes. Lower-class entertainment represented by the *sainete criollo* (comic one-act plays often featuring tango music) remained popular in the commercialized theatre of the city. Meanwhile comic folk dramas by writers such as Florencio Sanchez had attracted a growing middle-class audience and the attention of critics. Discépolo’s career began in the sainete genre, and he often collaborated with other writers, including his brother Enrique Santos Discépolo, who was a successful lyricist of tango songs. |
| Armando Discépolo was an Argentine playwright credited with the creation of the *grotesco criollo* genre in the 1920s and 30s. The son of first and second-generation Italian immigrants, Discépolo entered the Buenos Aires theatre world at a time of transition in audience tastes. Lower-class entertainment represented by the *sainete criollo* (comic one-act plays often featuring tango music) remained popular in the commercialized theatre of the city. Meanwhile comic folk dramas by writers such as Florencio Sanchez had attracted a growing middle-class audience and the attention of critics. Discépolo’s career began in the sainete genre, and he often collaborated with other writers, including his brother Enrique Santos Discépolo, who was a successful lyricist of tango songs.  The transition from the comic sainete to the grotesco occurred with *Mateo* (1923), which fused comic caricature, typical of the sainete, with emotional depth. Tragicomic characteristics of the new genre included immigrant characters in financial distress, play on words, and physical clumsiness. The characters’ ultimate loneliness reverberated with the spiritual void represented in European expressionism. *Muñeca* [The Doll] (1925) shows a more direct influence of the Italian grottescos of Pirandello. *Stéfano* (1928), which is considered a masterpiece of the grotesco genre, features an immigrant musician who is so fixated on his own failed artistic ambitions that he ignores the needs of his family.  File:discepoloactorluisarataasstefano1928.jpg  Figure 1 Discépolo actor Luis Arata as Stefano, 1928.  Source: Taken from webpage <http://www.cerogrupoteatro.com.ar/stefano_la_obra.htm>. No copyright.  The more pessimistic *Relojero* [Watchmaker] (1934) was written during the dictatorship and crisis of the 30s. The Buenos Aires intellectuals of the time overlooked Discépolo’s grotescos while favoring a nascent independent theatre, which shied away from commercialized theatre. Discépolo’s grotesco criollo plays are recognized as a great accomplishment of Argentine theatrical practice and have influenced later authors such as Roberto Cossa and Griselda Gambaro.  **List of Works**  Pellettieri, Osvaldo, ed. (1987) *Obra dramática de Armando Discépolo*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires.  Discépolo, Armando. (1969) *Obras escogidas*, Buenos Aires: Editorial J. Alvarez.  ------ (1921) ‘Mustafá,’ *El Teatro Argentino* 3 (40).  ------ (1923) ‘Mateo,’ *Bambalinas* 6 (275).  ------ (1925) ‘Muñeca,’ *Bambalinas* 7 (355).  ------ (1926) ‘El organito,’ *La Escena* 9 (407).  ------ (1928) ‘Stéfano,’ *La Escena* 11 (519).  ------ (1934) ‘Relojero,’ *Argentores* 1 (13). |
| Further reading:  (Loayza)  (Majstorovic)  (Sanhueza-Carvajal)  (Viñas) |