

History of Teatro America

(English translation of Website info)

The news of the construction of the fantastic movie theater, right next to the well-known Radio Cine, spread throughout Havana and the greater the expectation, it would continue to spread beyond the sea. It would compete in beauty and elegance with the great halls of the United States, America and the entire world. But for the most spectacular highlight in theater's international fame was its name AMERICA. Very soon it became the favorite of all, although essentially marked by the upper classes, for which reason attending the cinema theater was considered a rank of distinction, since it was attended by the most outstanding figures of the world.

Just after the World War II in 1945, the theatrical movement recurred, resuming musical variety shows in the most important theaters, including America. Although the theater company maintained contracts with North American film distributors and its annual film programming was based on them, some film material from the past would be periodically spaced, due to the increase in Cuban cinema, as well as Mexican, Argentine and other films of other nationalities in full alliance with the United States.

From the beginning, the theater was careful to present better and more select performances for its audience, both on the screen and in stage shows, and it never spared an effort to continue with this motto that made this the favorite venue for families! In the 20th century, the most recognized national and foreign stars of the moment paraded through its stage, always accompanied by an exclusive premiere film. The theater kept musical variety shows on its scene, together with the usual film programming from 1945 to 1953, the reason was because the contracts with the film companies stimulated more rigorous clauses, based on their economic interests, dedicating the rooms in such a temporary way to cinematographic activity exclusively.

After a few elegant years of incomparable shows in the 70s, the lack of financial resources meant that the theater deteriorated inside, although it maintained its attractive façade. The air conditioning and part of the windows were affected. Thus, on the date of May 2, 1976, it closed its doors to the world until May 1978. Continuing with its various occasional activities like the XI Youth Festival, it was not until 1979 that finally, after two decades of being closed to shows, it reopened its gates to this day. Entering the 21st century, the theater remained faithful to the traditions that made it known worldwide, preserving its original state thanks to the efforts of its management and administration that had the support of restoration engineers, artistic construction workers, and technicians. Since 2015, some resuscitation has been carried out in areas such as: the stage, looving and mezzanine, and other works are currently underway.

Since September 22, 1941, the theater included shows in its programming where great figures of culture, relevant figures from the world of music and entertainment have passed through its stage. Concerts, recitals, zarzuelas, operas, operetta, humorous shows, comedies and dance seasons have completed a program that will forever have names such as Gonzalo Roig, Julio Cuevas, Mario Ruiz Armengol, Luis Alcarás, Rodrigo Prats, Adolfo Guzmán, Las Anacaonas, Rita Montaner, Moisés Simón, Esther Borja, Rosita Fornés, Ernesto Lecuona, María de los Ángeles Santana, Felo Bergaza,

Orlando de la Rosa, Isolina Carrillo, Alicia Alonso, Alberto Alonso, Elena Burke, Omara Portuondo, Benny Moré, Alfredo Sadel, Marianela Bonet, Luis Trápaga, Ramiro Guerra, Carlos Pous, Enrique Santisteban, Los Chavales from Spain, René Cabel, Los Panchos, María Luisa Landín, Tito Guizar, Luis Carbonell, duos like Clara and Mario, trios like Matamoros, Hermanas Lagos, Taicuba, Ensembles like Casino, orchestras like Aragón, América, Anacaona, foreign artists like Pedro Vargas, Josephine Baker, Lola Flores, Toña la Negra, Libertad Lamarque, etc.

In more recent history, it has had the presence of the most outstanding artists of music, songwriting and performance of our times, featuring artists such as Juan Formell, Adalberto Álvarez, Edesio Alejandro, Pancho Amat, Juana Bacallao, Aurora Basnuevo, Mario Limonta, Bobby Caracés, Mundito González, Lino Borges, Compay Segundo, Lázaro Ross, Pablo FG, Celina González, Fara María, Lourdes Torres, Cesar Pedroso, Cesar López, Cándido Fabre, Chucho Valdez, Geidy Chapman, Manolo del Valle, Isaac Delgado, Osvaldo Diomeadiós, Rafael Espín, Argelia Fragoso, Raquel Hernández, Tania Pantoja, duets like Buena Fe, Cristian and Rey, trios like Los Embajadores, quartets like Los Zafiros, Génesis, Los cuatro, Los Modernistas, orchestra like Juan Formell and Los Van Van, Adalberto and his Son, Afro Cuba, Irakere, Bamboleo, Barbarito Diez, Dan Den, Habana Ensemble, Original de Manzanillo, Buena Vista Social Club, Roberto Faz, Rumbero de Cuba, groups such as Los Papines, Los Dolls from Matanzas, Moncada, septets such as Nacional Ignacio Piñero, Habanero, traditional dance companies such as JJ Johannes García, Santiago Alfonso, Raíces Profunda, Ballet TV, Tropicana, Parisien. Foreign artists such as Totó la Momposina, Lucia Althieri, Chico Buarque de Hollanda, Paco de Lucia Rodrigo from the Yordanka Hristova chain, Moncho among other artists who show us that in its 80 years of foundation it is undoubtedly one of the most prestigious and important institutions of our country. In 2021, the América theater will celebrate its 80th anniversary, for which it has proposed to develop a series of activities that highlight the work of this cultural landmark of the city. These celebration plans have been marred by the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected humanity for more than a few years and our country is no stranger. Regardless of that, we have proposed not to overlook such a high and expected celebration by developing a number of activities mainly in digital capsules for which we claim that although closed to the public, this Programming, even if it is not in its historic setting, will be widely viewed through social networks.

The fact that more than 80% of the services, the largest number of jobs and the educational cultural infrastructure are concentrated in the areas closest to the theater is the cause of the high migratory movement to and within Centro Habana, for which reason the relationship established by the theater with the periphery must produce substantial fruits that up to now have not been achieved with the fullness that we sometimes wish for, although there are links with the Ministry of Culture, the Cuban Institute of Music, the National Council of the Performing Arts, the National School of Performing Arts, UNEAC, the Popular Music Center, music companies, the Theater and Dance Center and all provincial organizations and agencies linked to culture, as well as the municipalities of the territory. From here the serious work of Public Relations and the Technical Advisory Council is imposed, which maintains a permanent link not only with organizations but also with the work centers near our theater.

The rise of international tourism requires that the shows being offered, in addition to expressing the cultural identity to a high degree, must be a permanent exhibition of optimum quality, whatever the genre in question and of our most genuine Cuban identity. The increase in staging for adolescents and young people requires not only the possibilities of development, the diagnostic study of preferences

with a view to knowing the needs of these ethereal groups, which require greater attention in the city and especially in our municipality, hence the functions on Saturdays and Sundays in the morning for children and young people.

The vast heritage that the theater concentrates, both in its real estate building and in the history made up of the artists who have passed through its stage during all these years and the stagings that have been achieved, is an obligatory reason to convert a special value of the city to this theater that celebrates its 80th anniversary and holds the award for Best National Center and has the status of National Vanguard Collective since 2003.

Reference: Taken from the Book The America Theater and its Magical Environment by Pedro Urbezo