

THE OPEN SPACE THEATRE presents

**FERNANDO  
ARRABAL'S**

**AND THEY PUT  
HANDCUFFS ON  
THE FLOWERS**

**BRITISH PREMIER 12 SEPTEMBER 1973**

In July 1967, after an absence of more than a decade, Fernanda Arrabal returned to Spain. "While I was there, this man came up and asked me to autograph one of my books, to write something Panlike and blasphemous, and so I wrote, "I s--- upon God, the Fatherland and everything else," and it turned out that this autograph-hunter had been sent by the authorities, so I found myself hauled before a magistrate, and he said to me: "I have been told to arrest you. Can you tell me why?" He asked *me* why, and honestly, I could think of no reason at all. It never occurred to me that I, who had been living in Paris for about 15 years, might be sentenced to 12 years in prison – which is the punishment for that offence in Spain.

Arrabal spent 25 days in jail awaiting trial, the official charge being "blasphemy and insulting the Spanish nation." It was a situation not unlike K's in "The Trial," a book which, ironically, Arrabal had first read in Spain and was enormously influenced by. I asked him how he felt in prison. "I'm not a courageous man, and, frankly, I was very much afraid," he said, "I told myself that even though it was a ridiculous situation and the crime was absurd, still nobody would take my part, and I would just rot there."

But international pressure was mustered and among his champions, Samuel Beckett, writing to the Spanish court, declared: "You are passing a judgement on a Spanish writer who, in the brief space of 10 years, has risen to the first rank of contemporary playwrights – and this through a deeply Spanish talent. Wherever his plays are acted – and they are acted everywhere – Spain is there."

If the original charge was something out of Kafka, the denouement could have been scripted by Lewis Carroll. On Sept. 26, 1967, more than 400 people crowded a Madrid court to hear a Spanish novelist, a professor of medicine and the brother of the accused (dressed in the uniform of the Spanish Air Force), all attest to the reputation of the blasphemer. After some lengthy jurisprudence, the court decided the offending phrase referred not to La Patria, the Fatherland, but to Cleopatra, Arrabal's cat, whose nickname was La Patra. The court accepted that the defendant *had* used an insulting phrase against God, but, as a doctor testified, at the time of signing the autograph Mr. Arrabal had drunk three glasses of aniseed and taken two stimulant pills; he clearly hadn't been in his right mind. The accused was acquitted.

Despite its comic-opera aspects, there was a curious germ of truth in the accusation, and a very real sense of guilt on the part of Arrabal, who has always been haunted by religion. "Although I am considered to be very revolutionary," he explains, "people ignore the fact that I believe in God – even though I admit I find the face of religion horrible. Nonetheless, in my feelings, I am still very religious – by which I mean that I am linked to God. I don't need any intermediary; I am linked to God in a very personal way."

Memories of his earliest religious training were rewarakened in the Spanish prison and, for the first time, he came face to face with a Spain he had only vaguely known in his early years. Although the consequences of the Spanish Civil War are everywhere in that country, it was in the Madrid prison that Arrabal encountered them in living form. "When I was there, my fellow prisoners said: 'You are going to be set free. You must do something for us. You must explain and show people what life in prison is like.' And that is why I wrote "And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers".

(Extract from ARRABAL'S 'THEATRE OF PANIC' by Charles Marowitz. Courtesy of New York Times Magazine December 3, 1972)

For the Open Space Theatre

Philip Bishop Jenny Cane Frances Fisher David Greenhalgh  
Jenny Hind Thelma Holt Charles Marowitz Ian McDiarmid  
Anthony Milner Jack Perrin Malcom Storry  
Adam Shand Kydd Evan Wiles Pat Weller.

The Open Space Theatre acknowledges financial assistance from  
the Arts Council of Great Britain

And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers

CAST

AMIEL..... ANTONY MILNER

KATAR.....MALCOLM STORRY

PRONOS.....IAN MCDIARMID

TOSAN.....DON McIVER

FALIDIA.....CAROLE HAYMAN

LELIA.....CANDIDA FAWSITT

CHILD.....JUNE PAGE

DIRECTED BY..... FERNANDO ARRABAL  
& PETRIKA IONESCU

DESIGNED BY..... ROBIN DON

COSTUMES BY..... LINDY HEMMING

MASKS BY..... DOÑ McIVER

LIGHTING BY..... JENNY CANE

STAGE MANAGEMENT.....DAVID GREENHALGH

.....ADAM SHAND KYDD

..... PAT WELLER

TRANSLATED BY..... CHARLES MAROWITZ

Men's hair by courtesy of  
SMILE Knightsbridge

THE PLAY LASTS ABOUT 90 MINUTES  
WITHOUT INTERVAL