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Mariano Pensotti
Cineastas
(Filmmakers)
Feb 26–Mar 1, 2015

Cast:
Horacio Acosta
Javier Lorenzo
Vanesa Maja
Juliana Muras
Marcelo Subiotto

Mariano Pensotti, text and direction
Mariana Tirantte, set and costume design
Diego Vainer, music and sound design
Alejandro Le Roux, lighting design
Florecia Wasser, production
Leandro Orellano, stage manager
Ernesto Fara, sound engineer
Gonzalo Córdoba Estevez, set design assistance
Rodrigo Pérez, production assistance

Cineastas is performed in Spanish with English subtitles.

Running time is 105 minutes with no intermission.

Opposite:
Mariano Pensotti
Cineastas
Photo: Carlos Furman

The US tour of Mariano Pensotti: Cineastas is made possible through Southern Exposure: Performing Arts of Latin America, a program of Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

Additional generous support is provided by the Consulate General of Argentina in Chicago, and the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Chicago (CLAS).

Additional travel support for Mariano Pensotti is provided by El Cultural San Martín and the city of Buenos Aires. Cineastas is a coproduction of Grupo Marea, Kunstenauticki De-
sArts (Brussels), Wiener Festwochen (Vienna), Hebbel Am Uffer (Berlin), Holland Festival (Amsterdam), Theaterformen (Hannover- Braunschweig), Festival de Autome Paris, Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires, and El Cultural San Martin.
Artists Up Close

MCA Stage’s series of artist-centered talks, workshops, and open studios allows the public to engage with artists in intimate settings to provide a closer look at the creative process. Join us today.

MCA Studio
Earlier this week, as part of the Open Doors program, museum visitors were invited inside the theater to observe the artists working on the production.

Theater Thursday
Feb 26
The public is invited to stay following the performance and mingle in the lobby with Mariano Pensotti and the cast of Cineastas. Cash bar and snacks are available. Theater Thursday is a citywide promotion organized by the League of Chicago Theatres.

First Night (in English and Español)
Feb 27
Audience members are invited to stay at the end of the performance for a conversation with Mariano Pensotti and collaborators. Moderated by Yolanda Cesta Cursach, Associate Director of Performance Programs.

Special thanks to the students and the faculty coordinators of the Theater Foundations Course (TFC), housed in Columbia College Chicago Theatre Department. With an international focus, TFC develops programs that explore the individual as creator within the context of original work and devised performance.

Thanks to the League of Chicago Theatres for joining MCA Stage in convening a community discussion with Mariano Pensotti and company members. The MCA salutes the League of Chicago Theatres for providing many vital opportunities for visiting artists to meet and interact with members of Chicago’s vibrant performing arts community throughout the year and all over the city.

MCA Stage is also pleased to partner with the University of Chicago’s Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry, a new forum for experimental collaborations between artists and scholars. The Center links visiting artists to faculty from a range of departments and leaders from various campus centers to explore topics of mutual interest.
The Seldoms

*Power Goes*

Mar 20–29, 2015

Buy tickets online at mcachicago.org

The Seldoms

Photo: William Frederking
From the Artist

Three years ago I became interested in exploring the ties between private lives and films. I started interviewing different filmmakers in Buenos Aires, focusing on what happened to them while filming, the extent to which their personal circumstances insinuated themselves into the work, and what aspects of their lives were altered from contact with those fictions. Later, I started interviewing other people, to find how much of their lives they modeled after the stories they consumed through cinema. Very little from the original interviews remains in Cineastas. It is itself fictional, not a documentary. This is a fitting result for an exploration of the extreme possibilities of fiction in constructing the actual world.

Cineastas revolves around the stories of four filmmakers and the movies they shoot over the course of a year while in Buenos Aires. Five actors perform the simultaneous lives of the filmmakers, whose personal circumstances begin to blur with the films they are creating. Sometimes, the filmmakers’ lives influence their cinematographic work, but at other times, quite the opposite occurs: the process of creating the films and developing their plots shapes the private lives of the creators.

The work is built upon the tension between the ephemeral and the durable. Cinema captures a moment and freezes time; by contrast, theater, like life, presents a transitory experience in which time flows freely. In Cineastas, the difference between the lives of the filmmakers, staged theatrically, and their films, which they hope will last forever, is a permanent condition.

This raises many questions: Are works of art time capsules that preserve our lives for posterity or do they in fact shape our everyday existence? Do our fictions reflect the world or is the world a distorted projection of our fictions? As a theatrical production, Cineastas posits that cinema in particular and art in general fundamentally shape our personalities: even as they transform lives into art, we also act according to what films, books, and television have made us to be.

Cineastas is also a kind of portrait of the city of Buenos Aires. In recent years, Buenos Aires has become a major location for the production of international films. It is a cheap city with many streets that are reminiscent of those of other metropolises (mostly European). It serves as a fictional reproduction of other, pre-existing locations that in many cases no longer exist in their original cities because of wars, urban development, or political changes. In film, Buenos Aires becomes a displaced version of cities that have disappeared elsewhere. It preserves a vanished history of other places. As a cinematic location, Buenos Aires becomes several cities that are superimposed one on top of the other.

The condition of Buenos Aires as a city led me to wonder if film created through characters can also reach an ephemeral state, and whether theater, so different from film’s seeming permanence, can build something that lasts. By design, the five actors in Cineastas alternate between represent-
ing multiple characters and a narrator. While not appearing on film, they do perform on a stage set reminiscent of a split screen. This classic cinematic technique divides action up neatly, heightening the divide among simultaneous performances while also allowing the viewer to experience them simultaneously.

Through the lenses of the filmmakers, the Buenos Aires in *Cineastas* becomes a setting that moves among overlapping narratives. These combine the ephemeral (its inhabitants) and the timeless (the place). In every story, Buenos Aires is present as a mirror that reflects back to its residents own lives, but of course we can only know the culture of Buenos Aires as a whole through the particularities of its inhabitants and their ways of representing themselves.

So our lives and fictions collide, perhaps forming a third plane. This resonates with Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of cinematographic montage. He argued that the juxtaposition of two ideas leads to a third one. Many of his concepts come from Japanese ideograms, in which superimposed images generate a third, new image. He believed that montage is “an idea that emerges from the dialectic collision between two others.” Drawing upon these theories, narration and representation are disassociated in *Cineastas* by the presence of a live narrator, who describes things that are not happening onstage. Akin to a voiceover in film, the narrator completes to the lives of the characters. At the same time, narration transforms the narrator and the event he relays to suggest that if people’s pasts are built through stories, the present is built on fiction.
What is Latin American Theater?

by Analola Santana. Revised from the Program Notes, January 2015, Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College.

Mariano Pensotti’s *Cineastas* leads us to the question most often associated with Latin American theatrical production: what is theater today from this part of the world?

Often, the question is addressed as if Latin American theater is in a process of emergence. Actually, it is not. What is now called modern Latin American theater appeared in the midst of the past century as artists came together in search of a common ideal that took into account the social and cultural revolutions throughout Latin America. The appearance of new protagonists, new stories, new actors, new audiences, and new spaces required the development of a different and more complex form of theater, one capable of representing the diversity found across the region.

At times, the need for a theatrical mode that could encapsulate this diversity has led to an idyllic, naïve, and nostalgic position that has oversimplified Latin America. In fact, there has been an expectation—especially in international circles—for Latin American theater to fit into a folkloric vision that draws on stereotypes. The assumption is that it should be drawn from popular forms (street theater, carnival, and dances). At international theater festivals, many expect Latin American theater to contain magic realism, some type of Amazonian sensuality, the violence of dictatorships, and the tragedy of social terror. Even worse is that it must sustain what is imagined to be an “original” theatricality grounded in pre-Hispanic origins, as if it was possible that cultures could remain immutable over vast expanses of time. Latin American theater tends to be understood through categorical approaches that deny its relation to world theater as a whole. It is falsely reduced to a product of one, imaginary, homogenous country.

To speak of Latin American theater more accurately, it becomes necessary for us to look critically, and with the fewest possible prejudices, to the recent history of the form in Latin America. The strength and vitality of Latin American theater arose through the confluence of unprecedented movements (from Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed to Enrique Buenaventura’s collective creations and Polvo de Gallina’s performance art). Actors, writers, directors, playwrights and artists from many disciplines shaped its development.

As many other directors from Latin America have done, Pensotti explores the tragedy of globalization in modern times. Of course, his work pertains to an Argentinian sensibility, but it also does not deny a global understanding of the action onstage. The presence of Pensotti in the United States is significant precisely because he allows the audience to enter his plays through a human context rather than a cultural expectation.

As a theater director and playwright, Pensotti defies all traditional expectations regarding theater and culture. He
first began his career in cinema; by the time he was twenty-five years old, he had already directed a feature film and two shorts. These first explorations of film developed into an interest in the theater as he sought new ways to understand different means of artistic creation.

As Pensotti has often declared, his excursions into theater provided a “do it yourself” education as he learned from experience rather than through formal education (though he does not lack for education; he has studied with some of Argentina’s most renowned playwrights and directors). In this sense, his theatrical training has been constructed through his stage work itself. The stage has become his space of inquiry.

To understand Pensotti’s work, one should look toward his diverse influences, which trace an artistic vision drawn from different forms of art, including literature, cinema, music, and the visual arts. He draws on a wide range of inspirations, among them Wim Wenders, David Lynch, Asian cinema, Tolstoy, the Beat Generation, Roberto Bolaño, and the music of the Velvet Underground.

Pensotti is not merely a playwright and director in the conventional sense, but instead he feels a need to combine different artistic experiences. His writing is often tempered by the interventions of the actors and his work is influenced by a group dynamic of collective creation, as demonstrated through his collaborations with the theater ensemble Grupo Marea, founded in 2005.

More than a decade after his first incursions into the theater, Pensotti has emerged on the national and international theatrical scenes with a unique language and prolific trajectory. His performances have often been described as a “theater of the real”: he attempts to present real lives onstage that push us to reconsider what is fictional; he also brings to the foreground the creative process, which in his work derives from improvisation and experimentation throughout the rehearsal period. His theater is not an attempt to create a fiction based in real life, but rather to document and register a lived experience.

Pensotti’s theater responds to a global preoccupation with the voyeurism that characterizes our era. As he has stated, “I’m interested in the public display of the private . . . how the private can again become a part of the collective.”

The experience provided by Pensotti’s poetics defies any static characterization of Latin American theater. Instead, he invites us to experience a hybrid moment that moves between a theatrical event, a performance installation, and literary narration. As audience members, we are invited to participate in this experimentation: we become co-creators of the theatrical moment through our active interpretation of what we see. The theater of Mariano Pensotti presents us with an unexpected, live, and raw moment of human experience.

Analola Santana is Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Dartmouth College, where she teaches courses on Latin American theater and performance. Santana is also a professional dramaturge and translator and works with theater companies in Latin America and the United States.
Ragamala Dance + Rudresh Mahanthappa
Song of the Jasmine
Apr 10–12, 2015

Buy tickets online at mcachicago.org
About the Artists

Horacio Acosta
began acting professionally in the 1970s in the city of Cordoba, Argentina. He performed in Mexico in El fracaso Café Concert with Liliana Felipe and Jesusa Rodriguez. In Buenos Aires he is a member of Paco Gimenez’s group La noche en vela, with recent work including Manjar de los dioses; Ganado en pie; Fiori de mierda, and Los ultimos felices. He has been directed by Miguel Guerberof in Samuel Becket’s Mercier y Camier (among others), El retrato de un pibe by Gonzalez Castillo, and many Shakespeare plays, including Timon de Atenas. More recently he has performed in Electra shock by Jose Maria Muscari; Salir lastimado, post by Gustavo Tarrio; La venus de las pieles, an adaptation by Claudio Quinteros based on the novel of the same name by L. Sacher-Masoch, and La persistencia by Griselda Gambaro, directed by Cristina Banegas. His film works include No fumar en un vicio como cualquier otro by Sergio Vizzio and Musica Nocturna by Rafael Filipelli. He has taught acting in Argentina for more than twenty years.

Javier Lorenzo
was born in Buenos Aires and has studied with Ricardo Bartis, Augusto Fernandes, and Raquel Socolowickz. He has appeared in stage works including El pasado es un animal grotesco (Mariano Pensotti), Hasta que la muerte nos separe (Paul Desveaux), Los sensuales (Alejandro Tantanian), and La muerte de un viajante (Ruben Szchumacher). He has also worked on feature films such as La rabia by Albertina Carri.

Vanesa Maja
was born in Buenos Aires and has performed in Estado de ira, Exhibición y Desfile, Simil Piel by Ciro Zorzoli, Rainman, Tirano Banderas, Mujeres de carne podrida, and Pornografía emocional. She created the one-person shows Roja, Pequeñas Veladas Susurradas, and Rosa Brillando and has participated in many tours around the world. Maja has been nominated for the Ace, Florencio Sanchez, and Premios Teatro del Mundo awards. She won the Trinidad Guevara award for Rosa Brillando. She also works on many television shows and films in Argentina.

Alejandro Le Roux
was born in Buenos Aires and attended the Institut Supérieur des Techniques du Spectacle (Avignon, France). His design on Monteverdi Metodo Belico was awarded the Trinidad Guevara award, and he received the Theatre of the World award from the UBA for his work on Los Murmullos (2002) and Dolor Exquisito (2008). Several of his designs have been nominated for the ACE awards. Since 2005, he has served as a professor in the undergraduate program of lighting design of IUNA, in the Municipal School of Dramatic Arts, and as a technical advisor for the Instituto Nacional de Teatro and Consejo Federal de Inversiones.

Juliana Muras
studied acting at the Instituto Universitario Nacional de Arte (IUNA) and voice at the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda. She works for film and for the stage, including Pueden dejar lo que quieran by Fernando Rubio; No duerme by Veronica McLoughlin; Reflejos by Matias Feldman; Hacia
donde caen las cosas by Matias Feldman; Mujeres soñaron caballos by Daniel Verroese; Thomas Bernhard’s Heldenplatz directed by Emilio García Wehbi; Rodrigo García’s Rey Lear directed by Emilio García Wehbi; and El matadero 5 by Emilio García Wehbi. She teaches acting, and also has served as assistant director and assistant producer, notably for Dolor exquisito by Sophie Calle, which was directed by Emilio García Wehbi, and toured to Chile, Germany, France, Brazil, and Spain.

Mariano Pensotti studied cinema, visual arts, and theater in Buenos Aires, Spain, and Italy. He is the writer and director of more than fifteen theater works, including El Pasado es un animal grotesco (The past is a grotesque animal) (2010/2012), which premiered at Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires and was presented at Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels), Festival de Otoño (Madrid), Theaterformen (Hannover), Hebbel am Ufer Theater (Berlin), Auabirlewen (Bern), Norwich & Norfolk Festival (England), Kampnagel Festival (Hamburg), Zürcher Theater Spektakel (Zürich), Tempo Festival (Rio de Janeiro), Fiac (Bahia), Rotterdamse Schowburg (Rotterdam), Frascati Theater (Amsterdam), Under The Radar and COIL (New York), the Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus), Walker Arts Center (Minneapolis), Push Festival (Vancouver), On the Boards (Seattle), Yerba Buena (San Francisco), and REDCAT (Los Angeles).

Sometimes I think I can see you (2010/2011) premiered in Berlin at Hebbel am Ufer as part of Ciudades Paralelas Festival and was presented in Buenos Aires, Cologne, Brussels, Zürich, Warsaw, Salamanca, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Girona, Paris, and Seoul. Encyclopaedia of unlived lives (2010) premiered at Schauspielhaus Graz (Austria) and was presented during Steirischer Herbst Festival. La Marea (2005/2011) premiered at the V Buenos Aires International Festival and was later presented at the Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels), Hebbel am Ufer Theater (Berlin), Homo Novus Festival (Riga), Dublin Festival (Ireland), Festival Automne en Normandie (Rouen), Carrefour International de Théâtre (Québec), Festival Transaméri ques (Montréal), Yokohama (Japan), Festival Temporada Alta (Girona), Norfolk & Norwich Festival (England),
works, and installations in Argentina and around the world. She has collaborated with Argentinian directors and companies, including Krapp, Lola Arias, Pablo Messiez, Agostina Lopez, Lisandro Rodriguez, Matias Feldman, Ariel Farace, Diana Szeinblum, Carlos Casella, Ana Frenkel, Roman Podolsky, Claudio Tolcachir, Julio Chavez, and others. She was the technical director for the V & VI Festival Internacional de Buenos Aires. She received the Trinidad Guevara 2011 Award for Set Design for El Pasado es un animal grotesco (Pensotti), Premios Teatro del Mundo 2012 for Cineastas (Pensotti) and Melancolia y Manifestaciones (Arias), and was nominated for the Florencio Sanchez 2012 award for La laguna (Lopez).

Diego Vainer is a prolific composer and a cofounder of the theater ensemble Grupo Marea along with set designer Mariana Tirantte and writer/director Mariano Pensotti. His electronic media project Fantasias Animadas has released five albums of original compositions and live performances. He has collaborated with Daniel Melero for the album Piano, Gustavo Santaolalla for his projects Bajo Fondo Tango Club and Terraplen, and with El otro yo, La Portuaria, and Rosario Bléfari. For the last fifteen years, he has composed and designed music for theater pieces, films, audiovisual work, dance, and installations with artists such as El Descueve group, Mariano Pensotti, Carlos Casella, Julio Chavez, Federico Leon, Martin Rejtman, Andres DiTella, Javier Daulte, Santiago Loza, and Agustin Alezzo, among others.

Marcelo Subiotto attended the Manuel de Falla Municipal Conservatory, Walter Malosetti’s Jazz Superior College, Ollantaytambo’s School of Popular Music, and the Municipal School of Dramatic Arts. He trained in the group El Primogénito, directed by Guillermo Angelelli, specializing in vocal and body performance based on the principles of theatrical anthropology. In 2003, he founded the theater group Puerta Roja with Adrian Canale and served as director, dramatist, actor, and musician in the ensemble’s production Colectivo Teatral Puerta Roja. For several international tours to festivals in Europe and Latin America, he has performed for directors Jorge Lavelli, Robert Sturúa, Daniel Veronese, Villanueva Cosse, Jhon Tiffany, and others.

Mariana Tirantte was born in Buenos Aires. She is a founding member of the theater ensemble Grupo Marea along with writer/director Mariano Pensotti and composer Diego Vainer. Her independent set and costume designs include productions for theater, site-specific
Creative Music Summit: Nicole Mitchell
Mandorla Awakening: Emerging Worlds
May 2, 2015

Buy tickets online at mcachicago.org

Photo: Kristi Sutton Elias
Thank you

Lead support for the 2014–15 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Additional generous support is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke, Caryn and King Harris, and Lois and Steve Eisen and the Eisen Family Foundation. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

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Program notes compiled by Yolanda Cesta Cursach

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