



Así que pasen 75 años Bring on another 75

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TEATRO THEATER

La actriz Margarita Xirgu lo imaginó en 1933 y hoy es una realidad. El Festival de Mérida celebra su 75 aniversario y homenaje a la que fue su gran impulsora.

Corría el año 1933 cuando los actores Margarita Xirgu y Enrique Borrás, dirigidos por Rivas Cherif, llegaron a Badajoz para actuar con su compañía. Su siguiente parada sería la cercana Mérida, donde en 1926 Xirgu había quedado prendada del teatro romano que, gracias al empeño del arqueólogo José Ramón Mérida, se acababa de recuperar. Desde el primer momento tuvo claro que no podía dejar de actuar con una obra clásica en un escenario que resucitaba toda la esencia de la época romana y que, sin duda alguna, iba

a engrandecer la representación. Sus esfuerzos se vieron recompensados y consiguieron una subvención de 50.000 pesetas del gobierno e incluso el propio Miguel de Unamuno se ofreció a traducir la 'Medea' de Séneca en sólo dos semanas. En el verano de 1933 Margarita Xirgu dio vida al germen del que hoy es el festival de teatro clásico más antiguo de España y la celebración no pudo ser otra que una gran cena en el Parador de Mérida, inaugurado ese mismo año, con el propio Azaña en la mesa.

Actress Margarita Xirgu imagined the Festival of Mérida in 1933 and today it is a reality. Celebrating its 75th anniversary, it pays homage to its greatest proponent.

It was the year 1933 when the actors Margarita Xirgu and Enrique Borrás arrived in Badajoz to act with the director Rivas Cherif and his company. Their next stop would be nearby Mérida, where in 1926 Xirgu was captivated by the Roman theatre that, thanks to the dedication of the archaeologist José Ramón Mérida, had just been restored. From the beginning it was clear that she could not stop acting in a classic play on a stage that brought back the essence of the Roman epoch and that, without a doubt, made the play greater. Her efforts were rewarded by a 50,000 peseta grant from the government, and even Miguel de Unamuno offered his services to translate Seneca's 'Medea' in just two weeks. In the summer of 1933, Margarita Xirgu breathed life into the seed that is today the oldest classical theatre festival in Spain, and the celebra-

boost to the festival. In 1954 'Oedipus' premiered, with the great Paco Rabal on stage. Nuria Espert also began her love affair with Mérida during this epoch, when she played the leading role in 'Medea'. She is still around today, and it is of little wonder that she is in charge of inaugurating this year's festival.

With the passage of time, the Festival of Mérida not only scheduled works of classical theatre, but operas and dance shows as well. Additionally, works by foreign companies reached the festival after José Monleón was named director. However, if there is something that this date with the theatre should be recognized for it is classical theatre, since it is one of the few festivals that produces these plays that otherwise would have little space on theatre marquees. The echoes of tragedies, satires and comedies reverberating off stone thousands of years old makes Mérida an essential stage that this year is celebrating its 75th anniversary by paying homage to Margarita Xirgu.

About her, Ortega y Gasset said, 'count me among her innumerable fans, as the most humble, and perhaps, because of this, the most enthusiastic. My admiration dates back to the first time I saw her image, so human, so kind, on the proscenium'. She was born in Barcelona in 1888, and from a young age she knew her life would be one of pure theatre. In Catalonia she took her first steps and at 18 she debuted in the Teatro Romea in Barcelona. Her first successful performances, in 'The Student Prince' by Wilhelm Meyer Forster, and 'Salome' by Oscar Wilde, came quickly. Soon after, she left for Madrid and started working with the big names of the era: Valle Inclán, the Quintero brothers, Benavente and García Lorca, with whom she forged a real great



Arriba, la cena en el Parador de Mérida, y a la dcha., Borrás y Xirgu. Arriba dcha., la imagen de esta edición, la 54, pues el festival estuvo 21 años sin celebrarse.

Above, the dinner at the Parador of Mérida, and, to the right, Borrás and Xirgu. Above right, the image of this edition, the 54th, due to the fact that the festival was not celebrated for 21 years.



tion could not be any other than a grand dinner in the Parador of Mérida, which was inaugurated that same year with Azaña at the table.

The experience was so satisfactory that the next year Xirgu and company returned to Mérida to not only present 'Medea', but 'Electra' as well. There was also a concert of Spanish music and a dance recital. However, history intervened and this date was interrupted until 1939, when Plautus' 'Aulularia' premiered. In the 50s, the producer and director José Tamayo gave a

Ambas imágenes se pueden ver en la muestra 'Margarita Xirgu, la primera actriz' (Asamblea de Extremadura, del 16 de junio al 27 de julio).