



Behind Spanish American Footlights

Willis Knapp Jones

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Across a five-hundred-year sweep of history, Willis Knapp Jones surveys the native drama and the Spanish influence upon it in nineteen South American countries, and traces the development of their national theatres to the 1960s. This volume, filled with a fascinating array of information, sparkles with wit while giving the reader a fact-filled course in the history of Spanish American drama that he can get nowhere else.

This is the first book in English ever to consider the theatre of all the Spanish American countries. Even in Spanish, the pioneer study that covers the whole field was also written by Jones.

Jones sees the history of a nation in the history of its drama. Pre-Columbian Indians, conquistadores, missionary priests, viceroys, dictators, and national heroes form a background of true drama for the main characters here—those who wrote and produced and acted in the make-believe drama of the times.

The theatre mirrors the whole life of the community, Jones believes, and thus he offers information about geography, military events, and economics, and follows the politics of state and church through dramatists' offerings. Examining the plays of a people down the centuries, he shows how the many cultural elements of both Old and New Worlds have been blended into the distinct national characteristics of each of the Spanish American countries.

He does full justice to the subject he loves. A lively storyteller, he adds tidbits of spice and laughter, long-buried vignettes of history, tales of politics and drama, stories of high and low life, plots of plays, bits of verse, accounts of dalliance and of hard work, and sad and happy endings of rulers and peons, dramatists, actors, and clowns.

A valuable appendix is a selected reading guide, listing the outstanding works of important Spanish American dramatists. A generous bibliography is a useful addition for scholars.

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