

ROSITA DIAZ GIMENO  
EULOGY AND REMEMBRANCE

At the commencement of a Spanish film series for hispanic television in the United States and Latin America, Rosita Diaz Gimeno suffered a fatal heart attack. Thus, five months ago we lost the most original dramatic actress of cinema and the modern theatre.

Rosita Diaz Gimeno, known in her profession as Rosita Diaz, was in her private life Rosita Diaz de Negrin. She was born in Madrid August 14, 1922, eventually adopted Northamerican citizenship and lived more than thirty years in New York which provided the base for her multiple and brilliant professional activities.

Rosita was admired for her kindness, compassion and charity toward others. She stood out for her modesty, discretion, dignity and irreproachable ethics and moral qualities. She always knew how to maintain an inviolate strength of character. She never compromised her artistic concepts nor her high principles of conduct. Although she was never interested in nor affiliated with politics, she refused to propagandize Franco or work in Nazi Germany. This stance, resulting from a preeminent sense of humanity, is in retrospect surprising considering her youthful age.

Despite the fact that she was then the most popular film actress of Spain and the Spanish speaking world, she was obliged to leave her country and go into exile under dramatic circumstances having accepted a contract in Hollywood



2)

to make "Vida Bohemia" with Paramount. As reprisal to her decision, the negatives and copies of her films in Spain were burned and her name was censored and prohibited in all media, vanishing until a few years ago from the lives of those Spanish people who never left their country. These setbacks never shook her integrity nor were there any motives of rancor on her part. She always remained triumphant against all evil with the invincible and victorious weapon of her example.

Rosita graduated from the Real Academia de Bellas Artes (Royal Academy of Fine Arts) in Madrid with honors and first prize in theatre. After a brief and brilliant period as a child actress in the best repertory theatre companies of her native city, she began her stellar career in cinema. She starred in more than thirty films produced in Spain, Mexico, Hollywood and France. Some of those notable for their innovative precedents, quality of production and exceptional acting were: "Angelina o el honor de un brigadier", "Rosa de Francia", "Vida Bohemia", filmed in Hollywood, "Se ha fugado un preso", "El bandido de Ronda", "Susana tiene un secreto", "La Dolorosa", in Spain, "Pepita Jimenez", "El ultimo amor de Goya" and "El canto de la sirena" in Mexico.

Rosita's theatrical contributions were highly acclaimed as well. She received first prize as best actress for her interpretation of the Japanese boy "Sakini" in



"La casa de te de la luna de Agosto" in Mexico. Before and during the rehearsal of this play, its producers (Jean Dalrymple and Rita Allen) reacted with scepticism which, after the dress rehearsal, was transformed into satisfaction and admiration for her "Sakini". The same play was presented on Broadway in English and later, with a North American company of Spanish speaking actors, toured throughout Central and South America under the auspices of the Department of State as a goodwill gesture.

As part of the inauguration of the theatre section of INFA (National Institute of Fine Arts) of Mexico, Rosita was invited by the Mexican government to perform in the Fine Arts Theatre (Teatro de Bellas Artes) there. Rosita selected "La Visita" by Friedrich Durrenmatt, thus introducing this distinguished Swiss author to the Mexican public.

Earlier, Rosita played the leading role in "Jano es una muchacha" by the famous Mexican playwright, Rodolfo Usigli and also brought to the Mexican stage several works by North American authors, such as "Tea and sympathy" and European authors like Jack Popplewell's "Picara Ladrona." With "Jano" in the Colon Theatre (Teatro Colon) "Sakini" in the Insurgentes and "La Visita" in Bellas Artes, she attained the greatest public attendance of theatrical productions in Mexico, as yet unequalled.

Rosita was the subject of numerous honors and was

4)

granted many titles and medals of honor. Recently, the Sociedad de Periodistas Cinematograficas de Mexico (PECIME) presented her with a diploma in acknowledgement of her extraordinary contributions to the Industria y Arte C. de Mexico (Cinematographic Art and Industry).

One year ago, as part of the annual Sister City Week between New York and Madrid, the Mayor of Madrid, Professor Don Enrique Tierno Galvan, honored Rosita at a ceremony at which New York's Mayor Edward Koch was also present. In 1983, the Minister of Culture of Spain, Sr. Javier Solana, celebrated the first festival of Spanish films in the United States at Rockefeller Center, at which Rosita was honored as well. The catalog published for the event announced the showing of five of her films with English subtitles. A few months ago, this distinguished actress was guest of honor receiving the highest decoration of A.C.E. (Asociacion de Cronistas de Espectaculos de Nueva York) and they presented her the "Premio Extraordinario of Distinction and Merit" at a celebration held at the Waldorf Astoria in New York attended by many outstanding personalities of cinema and television from the United States, Mexico and Spain, including Ambassador Don Manuel Sassot and the Cultural Attache, Don Tomas Pantoja.

Rosita's triumphs were unique. We remember that even before "Rosa of Francia" she was the first Spanish



actress under contract by Hollywood to star in an original production and not in "versions." They gave her the privilege of selecting her films and directors. She chose "Angelina" so that it would be filmed in verse. To the producers it seemed an impossible task to find a screenwriter capable of making the adaptation in verse. "Well, then, bring the author of the work" suggested Rosita sweetly with her candid, innocent but powerful voice. Thus, Jardiel Poncela arrived shortly thereafter in Hollywood.

The crystalline voice of Rosita possessed a youthful purity, a spontaneous and natural projection and modulation, without artifice or mannerisms, which brought those who heard it to a celestial plane or a dreamlike Nirvana. In her professional and private life, affectation and pomposity were never present. Spontaneity and naturalness could not have a more adequate personification perceived as surrounded by an aura of holy mystery.

Her profound knowledge of theatre extended from Sophocles, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega and Galdos to the most modern of the western world, without omitting oriental sources. Her familiarity with Japanese Kabuki, Chinese and Indian classics astounded the experts. She was always found at the vanguard of every significant cultural movement or style whether in cinema, theatre, audiovisual arts, fashion, hair styles or culinary arts (although she disliked cookery.)

6)

In relation with her personal style, it is interesting to recall that she always carried a purse and wore a hat, gloves and most original adornments. "Accessories" she said "are fundamental to fine dress."

Her vision about everything related to her profession and in the most diverse areas of cultural life was chilling. Her small, lively and resplendent figure was familiar in New York University halls where she regularly attended courses in history, philosophy and art; even anthropology drew her attention. With passionate intensity, she augmented her skills in these areas while also enriching them with her brilliant ideas at the same time. In the constant invitations to incorporate her knowledge into teaching courses in acting, interpretation, make-up, theatre history, etc. she always responded "Someday.. when I stop working."

Her performances and character interpretations on the stage, screen and television were unfoldings of her own personality and true metamorphoses. She will be remembered in history as an example to follow for her incomparable professional achievements, for her virtue and respectable manner.

Aside from being a professional actress without equal, Rosita led an outstanding academic life as well. She was named honorary member at Hofstra University being considered "an extraordinary champion of Spanish culture in the United States." For several years she was a member of the



Advisory Council of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Princeton University. Two years ago she was named an honorary member of ALDEEU (Association of Spanish professionals in the U.S.) in the company of Joaquin Calvo Sotelo and Ramon Sender among others.

This great lady of exceptional dignity and valor was graced with culture, intelligence, discretion, vision, perception and sensitivity which went beyond human limitations. Her great beauty, perfect proportions, her refinement, elegance and good taste were legendary. Her scrupulousness, obsession with detail and perfection and her incredible memory were cause for surprise and admiration among all those who knew her. Her every movement made the springtime air that emanated from her passing vibrate with harmonious melodies of hypnotizing inspiration. She loved to run in the open air in the countryside. Gazelles with dizzying quickness and elegance seemed to stop and stare at her with wide open eyes with admiration and a touch of envy. Rosita would climb rapidly with ethereal steps through the steepest slopes. Precipices were startled as she passed with such daring, bravery, energy and skill.

Horseback riding was another favorite sport of hers. She was named an honorary member of the renowned "Sociedad de Charros" in Mexico for being a fine rider with perfect style and absolute dexterity.

There was nothing Rosita could not do to perfection. Everyone fortunate enough to see her observed her with delight, being transformed into enthusiastic spectators. From then on



they became her admirers and loyal fans.

Rosita was privileged with an eternal physical youthfulness, radiating with enthusiasm and insuperable faith, with a discretion and femininity of divine exquisiteness. "Woman child" she was frequently called. Through her delicate stature thunderbolted a spirit and soul with infinite splendor which enhanced the divine revelation of pure beauty. Much has been written and said about her unforgettable gaze and smile. It is impossible to say more, useless for the most inspired pen or brush to try to define her. It would be ridiculous to relate that smile and gaze to any human symbol or to catalog them with any worldly label.

She was an inspiration to all - men, women, youths, the elderly and children, regardless of race, religion or ideologies. The most inert and passive would be taken by her vitality and genius for she emanated an incommensurate energy full of happiness, well being and spiritual peace.

Among her friends were the greats of cinema, theatre and television, Nobel prize winners, laureates in arts and literatures, chiefs of state, business men and financiers, diplomats and scientists of several continents. She treated all her friends equally from the famous and powerful to those of more modest situation. Among her most prized possessions Rosita kept a small library of books dedicated to her by writers, journalists, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, painters and biographies of the most diverse range in terms of ideology, importance, fame and prestige of their authors.

Despite her popularity and contact with the public, Rosita always maintained home, personal and family life in the strictest privacy, without publicity, exhibitionism or notoriety. She was never spoiled by praise, eulogizing and adoration. Demonstrating a surprising sensitivity of clear, diaphanous expression, she had a most analytic spirit and an ever inspiring critical sense.

In joining the cast of the immortals, Rosita leaves behind her spouse, Dr. Juan Negrin, Jr. in New York who recently received the Liberty Medal from Mayor Edward Koch in recognition of his contributions in the field of neurosurgery and the neurological sciences during the Centennial Celebration of the Statue of Liberty at the time of the last Fourth of July Celebration.

It was her wish that funeral services be private.

Rosita was not only loved - but adored.

Rosita was, is and will always be Rosita... beyond the eternity of time and the infinity of space.

Pedro Duran

Los Angeles

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