

Highlights for Kan Balaam—Serpiente Jaguar (Jaguar Serpent)—Learning Module

Excerpts from reflection papers by Teatrotaller students, Spring 2009

“Teatrotaller created a space to reflect, expand, and engage the knowledge and cultural familiarity with Chiapas that was nurtured on the *Experience Latin America* course trip. It was also a break from the routine structure and learning environment of other classes. A space for inventive creation, it brought to fruition a work of art that spoke to the culture, history, and political dynamic of the place and people we met in Chiapas.

“Tied to this is my personal development in self-esteem, language, and consciousness. My experience with *Experience Latin America* supported my identity-forming journey and recharged my aspirations.”

—**Tania Peñafort** (2009)

“Watching *Kan Balaam* be born from nothing was an enlightening experience. Not only was the play provocative, but I felt part of the team because I saw everything being put together from scraps, and helped put it together myself. Overall, *Kan Balaam* was one of the most rewarding and enlightening experiences of my college career.”

—**Marina Boushra** (2011)

“I had not only walked into a masterpiece, but a time of cultural exploration and creative flow. Teatrotaller allowed me the opportunity to practice my Spanish, explore the culture of the Mayan civilization and theater production, while embracing my creative talents through costume design. Before the first class I did not have friends of Latin descent, had been uncomfortable speaking Spanish, and little experience with Mayan culture.

“As a team we built, ground-up, a production that captured a civilization and a culture very different from the modern day. We developed a script, created characters, became those characters, re-created the set and costumes of the time. The question remains, what did I learn? My answer: the essence of collaboration, the power of passion, and the ability when ambitious people come together to achieve a common purpose.”

—**Diana Capous** (2010)

“It was amazing to see how it all came together through hard work and support from everyone in the class. I am so happy and proud to have been a part of it... Teatrotaller this semester was amazing, spectacular and history making. Many people don't see the significance of this course and how important it is to keeping the Latino culture alive.”

—**Anthony López** (2009)

“One of the things I enjoyed most is that I could practice Spanish in a academic but fun environment. I had taken Spanish for bilinguals first semester my freshman year, and I thought my Spanish career would end. I decided to see what Teatrotaller offered me. I entered the class, about a week and a half after school started, and was immediately sold.”—**Michael Zamora** (2011)

“Of all the Teatrotaller productions I have been involved with, *Kan Balaam* was particularly meaningful. Not only did I practice Spanish and learn Mayan history, but I met and bonded with amazing people.”

—**Katheleen García** (2010)

“This experience has been one of the best at Cornell. The creative process of *Kan Balaam* was an incredible experience, from writing the script, to rehearsals under the direction of Carolina. I enjoyed every minute of it. I feel like I have regained the spirit and desire to pursue my creative talents in any way possible. This experience helped me recognize the joys that have always brought me joy. It has made me a better person, more open to the creative energy of life with an increased sense of humanity.”

—**Verónica Chávez** (2009)

The entire process for the creation of *Kan Balaam* was really an experience and a collective group effort. From its very beginnings of being just an idea during our trip in Chiapas, to the script writing, the set making, the masks, the costume design, the lights, the stage –everything was able to come together because there was a communal group goal. It can be argued that the same group effort that was put into the creation of *Kan Balaam* is parallel to the community effort of the people of San Juan Chamula in the play when they are trying to get rid of the Coca-Cola company... As I watched the play I felt like I watched my Latin American Experience course condensed into one play with all the issues I learned and with my classmates whom I learned them with acting them out on stage.

—**Alejandra Ruiz** (2009)

I was one of the students that traveled to Chiapas during winter break and as a result I was able to contribute to the script. Being a member of script group was a learning experience... I had never done anything like this before and I really enjoyed being a part of this creative work... Being a part of Teatrotaller this semester was a great experience. I really enjoyed working with other students in order to create an original production. I learned a lot about theater and the work that goes into putting on a successful play. I hope that in the future Teatrotaller continues to put on productions similar to *Kan Balaam*.

—**Ivy Torres** (2009)

This semester with Teatrotaller has been the most memorable. My experience began in winter when I, along with a few other students, visited Chiapas. While we were there, we learned a lot about its rich traditions and culture. We also learned about the struggle people face in modern times. While we were there, a few people got together and decided to create a theatrical representation of what was seen... In my three semester working with Teatrotaller, it has been definitely been the best. Many people congratulated me and I suggest I should keep doing it. This night became one of the most memorable moments at Cornell.

—**Jimmy Suarez** (2009)

Spanish excerpts:

"Kan Balaam pasó como un huracán, poco preví su llegada y cuando me di cuenta ya me había dejado alborotado. Esta es una reflexión de cómo la producción teatral de *Kan Balaam* me absorbió y cautivó. De cómo todo empezó tranquilamente, y de cómo, de repente, todo a mi alrededor era Kan Balaam. Directoras, actores, escenógrafos, todos teníamos que ver unos con otros. Hablando en *Spanglish* nos habíamos convertido en un verdadero *team*. Finalmente, después de las arduas semanas de esfuerzo, llego la obra, dos noches de presentación, un clímax que todavía me saboreo entre dientes"...

—**Daniel Quesada** (2010)

A partir de cero una producción, y escribir el guión, hacer todas las disfraces y la escenario, y atraer un público tan diverso, Teatrotaller como grupo ha superado todas las expectativas. Este semestre fue la primera vez que Teatrotaller logró todas estas cosas, y me alegro tanto por ser una parte de este capítulo de la historia de este grupo...

Teatrotaller es en grupo que sirve como puente entre el inglés y el español. Es una cosa tomar una clase de español, y de sentirse a gusto de comunicar en una situación académica, pero es otra cosa sentirse a gusto de comunicar en cualquier idioma afuera de la clase.

—**Sean Cretella** (2010)

He actuado en “Kan Balaam” porque quería estudiar español en otro contexto, y desarrollar mis habilidades en actuación. No tenía experiencia con un papel con más de dos líneas en una obra, y por eso las primeras semanas memorizando las líneas fueron difíciles para mí...Para el futuro, creo que Teatrotaller es una buena opción para estudiantes que están planeando estudiar en un país hispanohablante, y después del regreso de estudios extranjeros.

—**Lisa Cao** (2009)

El ímpetu de cuestionar y argumentar en lo que puede ser teatro viviente, me llevo a comenzar en este curso, y aun creo que solo me ha dejado con muchas más ganas de continuar profundizando en el tema. Después de entender que temas como el de la relación de indígenas y grandes corporaciones como la Coca-Cola, pueden ser interpretado como teatro que es vivido y reproducido cada día en la vida real, quede fascinada con continuar esta investigación.

Para concluir, lo más importante del curso fue la participación y ganas que mucha gente puso. Creo que el trabajo colectivo logró hacer de Teatrotaller un verdadero taller, en donde todas las personas envueltas cooperan por un interés publico sin individualizar ningún triunfo o logro.

—**Elizabeth Suárez** (?)

Este semestre me matriculé por primera vez en la clase de Teatro Taller. En mis estudios sobre América Latina, uno de los temas recurrentes es el conflicto entre la asimilación y el progreso, y el desarrollo intelectual y la implicación que la modernización tiene sobre el aspecto cultural.... Mucha de la trama de Kan Balaam gira en torno a la resistencia a la pérdida de las tradiciones frente la supervivencia económica. La obra de Teatrotaller ha identificado estos temas y los ha divulgado al público de Cornell.

—**Stephanie Brossig** (2011)

Eso de escribir una obra entre más de dos cabezas aún me asombra. Creo que todos los que participamos en esta producción podemos recordar este detalle y agradecerles la fuerza mental... Tener paciencia y los oídos abiertos es lo más personal que me llevo de haber trabajado en Teatro Taller. Estoy muy orgullosa de la labor ejercida por todos los que participaron y estoy muy agradecida de la lección en trabajo en equipo que me estoy llevando. Teatrotaller es una organización muy sacrificada... “NO es fácil” desarrollar y montar una presentación de tal tamaño con todas las restricciones y límites impuestos en solo tres meses.

—**Zahira Crespo** (2009)