

## Theater: Magic in the Intermission ...

By HOWARD THOMPSON

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# Theater: Magic in the Intermission

## Actors Stay on Stage in Brazilian Play

By HOWARD THOMPSON

There is theatrical magic in the Spanish-language staging of Alfredo Dias Gomes's allegorical play, "El Pagador de Promesas," also known as "Journey to Bahia," from Brazil. The magic is the intermission at the small loft showcase of the ADAL Performing Arts troupe, 682 Avenue of the Americas.

During the intermission a young farm couple remains seated on the floor (a cathedral square) in despair and exhaustion. The man stares fixedly (for 10 minutes) at his wife, rightly suspecting her of infidelity. The girl, who loves him, can't meet his eyes. A woman fruit peddler,

off to one side, fans herself and stoically eyes the audience, about half of whom stayed in their seats Friday night.

The intermission treatment, not in the printed text, typifies the skillful, practical direction by Max Ferra of a drama difficult to pin down, much less vivify, in small quarters. The peasant hero, having made a voodoo promise to save a stricken donkey, has borne a large wooden cross 30 miles to the city. The church refuses him admittance. The human scavengers close in, fatally.

Being a first-rate company, the ADAL people give it a strong, thrusting production. Translated from Portuguese to Spanish by Stanley Richards, it moves briskly and boilingly. The acting, with Juan Canas, as the desperate

## 'Journey to Bahia' Is Performed in Loft

hero, is very good indeed, with firm flanking by Frank Robles, Magaly Alabau, Alfonso Manosalvas and Pablo de la Torre, among the rest. But the thrill of the evening, intermission included, is the mercurial face of Ilka Tanya Payan, as the wife; it mirrors and crystallizes the whole play.

The play is running Friday, Saturday and Sunday through May 23. An ADAL spokesman told the Friday audience that the company, penniless and with no prospective lodging, was being evicted in late July. It was a sickening postscript to a full evening of theater by real professionals.