**Knockin’ on Neruda’s door**

*Take one:* A young man dressed in a jogging outfit, sporting black bikini arm-stocking and white gloves, postures seductively in front of the camera. Another man, slightly older than the first, enters and lies in the younger man’s arms. Both wear heavy theatrical, clownlike make-up. The jogger pulls up his short and presents his breast which the other takes and suckles. The jogger faces the camera and in a high-pitched voice talks to the unseen haunts in the audience. It creates a unique theatrical language combining French and Spanish text, music and projected images (video, film and slides). It is an attempt, as Kurapel explains, to create not a theatre for exiles, and therefore to use the old, but a theatre of exile; a theatre in which the experience of exile – the alienation from the new, the longing for the old and the resulting schizophrenia – is communicated. It’s May 6, the second to last day of shooting on the NFV’s main sound stage. The actors are rehearsing the scene (described above) in which Mario (Kurapel) is seduced by the jogger (Denis Dullaire). It is one of six scenes which make up All’s Over, where Mario is deported from Canada and has not been allowed to know the reason why.

Although Fajardo and Kurapel didn’t know each other in Chile, both were active in the fields in which they now work, although, as both admit, the experience of exile has sharpened the political edge to their work. Alberto Kurapel was working in pre-1973 Chile as the classically-trained actor he is. In 1989, after graduating from the theatre school at the University of Chile, he toured the country starring in a play by the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes. Dissatisfied with traditional theatrical forms, Kurapel began looking elsewhere and found in music and the ritual of Chile’s native peoples’ influences which would mature in exile into his innovative theatrical language.

The image of Alberto Kurapel in make-up for his role as Mario stays in the mind’s eye. Like Charlie Chaplin’s Little Tramp, he evokes both pathos and mirth. When one considers that Kurapel is in exile from a culturally rich country that enjoyed over 100 years of democracy before being plunged into despotism (thanks to an American government and business interests who viewed the democratically-elected Allende government with disfavour), the sadness for what has been lost is not only understandable, it is profoundly shared.

Take two: The jogger forces Mario at gunpoint into a small circle in the middle of the stage. He strips Mario and then covers him in black paint as the image of flickering flames appears on the screen. The jogger turns on his heel and leaves. The final projected image is of a woman, a resistance fighter. She makes with her hands but is unable to speak and can only emit a guttural moan.

Frank Rackow •
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