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The Living Theater Busted in Brazil

The Living Theater, one of the best known theater companies in America, went down to Brazil last spring to participate in a festival at Ouro Preto. Since the first of July they have been in jail, charged with subversion and possession of marijuana, and unable even to get their case to court. No one, either in Brazil or on the outside, seems to be able to help them.

The company went to Ouro Preto at the invitation of Festival promoters, but for some reason the invitation was withdrawn after they got there. They decided to stick around anyway, performing for free in the streets and working on a mammoth 150-part epic, "The Legacy of Cain." They toured various Brazilian towns staging two sections of the work, and arranged to perform a section with local high school kids for Mother's Day.

Then came the bust. Thirteen members of the company were rounded up and hauled down to the town jail of Belo Horizonte. Shortly thereafter Julian Beck and Judith Malina, founders of the company, were also arrested and jailed. Three other members managed to escape and have returned to the U.S.

Their treatment in prison has not been good. A letter by one of the actors which was smuggled out of the jail reports the group has been subjected to prolonged interrogations, severe beatings and kickings, electric shocks to the genitals and similar old-time favorites of right-wing dictatorships.

Protests by fellow artists from around the world have failed to improve their treatment. Allen Ginsberg has been sending petitions to the U.S. State Department and Brazilian officials, and an appeal has been sent out by 29 leading French artists, including Roger Blin, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Roy, and Jean Paul Sartre.

ON behalf of the company Julian Beck writes: "We are not suffering in the sense that 70 million people in this country who are daily tortured by hunger are suffering, but we are prisoners in the life and death struggle to liberate consciousness on the planet. We appeal to our friends, our allies, for whatever help they can muster, so that we can continue to develop and practice our art in the service of those who are the prisoners of poverty."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Mabel Beck, Julian's mother, is still trying to gain support for the company and urges people to write to the Brazilian Embassy in Washington or President Medici in Brasilia. It is also helpful to write to the police chief at Belo Horizonte: David Hazan, DOPS, Avenida Alfonso Perra (sic), Belo Horizonte.

“My son has given up his whole life to help the poor and to give them the means to help themselves,” Julian ‘s mother told us. “He is probably the most wonderful man put on this earth.”

[Large photo of Julien Beck blindfolded playing with two kids. Caption, Julien Beck performing in Brazil in better times.]