

Chile Finally Paying Royalties On Productions of Yankee Plays

Literary agents in the U. S. have apparently won a long-standing struggle with the Society of Authors of Chile over non-payment of royalties due their clients from Chilean productions of American plays. The money is beginning to come in for shows as far back as the 1962-63 season.

It's a complicated story, happily resolved after a concerted effort by New York agents, led by Bridget Aschenberg of Ashley Famous, to force the Chilean authors' group to cough up past-due coin. Ne-Mesio Antunez, cultural attache of the Chilean mission to the United Nations, helped in the drive, as did a series of articles in a Santiago news magazine by Hans Ehrmann, a Chilean drama critic and VARIETY's correspondent there.

The whole thing began about a year ago, when the producer of the Chilean edition of William Hanley's "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground" stopped by the New York office of Hesseltine Bookman & Seff Ltd. to tell Hayden Griffin, Hanley's agent, what a hit the show was. "Great," replied Griffin, "but you didn't get the rights." The producer said he'd look into the situation.

As it developed, other agents were'n't receiving payments, and so Chilean productions of most Yank plays were, in effect, "pirated." The agents also found out that the Society of Authors of Chile takes 10% off the top of the grosses for every show, of which 5% is to go to the author and the other 5% to the translator, if any. But the Society wasn't relaying the coin.

Last November, the agents submitted an official protest to Antunez, at the U.N. He had heard about the fuss and had promised cooperation. Pressure was brought on the Society of Authors by the Chilean foreign ministry in Santiago, by way of the Chilean embassy in Washington. About that

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time, Ehrmann got wind of the tale, contacted Miss Aschenberg and started running his hard-hitting articles.

The payments started coming in soon after—for Hanley's "Slow Dance," Murray Schisgal's "Luv" and "The Typist and the Tiger," Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," Norman Krasna's "Sunday in New York," Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and so on.

It is presumed that Chilean producers now know the standard rules of International copyright, including use of licensing contracts and the principle of advance payment against future royalties. According to the agents, Chile was the only signatory to the International Copyright Convention that wasn't adhering to the rules.

English authors and agents are now reported to be looking into the Chilean situation, armed with a note from Ehrmann listing productions of British plays spanning the last several years.

The Yank agents have fervent praise for the roles of Antunez and Ehrmann in the dispute. For the record, the representatives who signed the formal complaint to the Chilean government were, in addition to Miss Aschenberg and Griffin: Howard Rosenstone, of William Morris; Paul Block, of General Artists Corp.; William Koppelman, of Harold Freidman-Brandt & Brandt; Leah Salisbury; Gilbert Parker, of Savan-Parker APA; Claire Degener, of the Sterling Lord Agency, and Blanche Gaines, Annie Laurie Williams, Flora Roberts and Monica McCall.