

THE SECRET DAYS OF ORSON WELLES IN BRAZIL



Orson Welles and Carmem Miranda in Brazil 1942

CREATED and ADAPTED
BY DOC COMPARATO

ADAPTATION FROM HIS OWN AWARDED PLAY 2019

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Typical birds of northeastern Brazil



1 - INTRODUCTION

If one expects to find biographical accuracy in this Script/theatrical text about Orson Welles, one would be sadly mistaken. There is extensive biographical material available to anyone interested in Welles.

In any case, it is well to remember that with his first film - *Citizen Kane* - Orson Welles transformed visual cinema language forever.

He accomplished this cinematic transformation most markedly by his innovative use of the flashback - which he introduced into film while the world was living through the horrors of World War II.

The flashback transforms the memory of the character into action, into a live scene, turning the abstract into something real as it is staged. Nowadays, more than fifty years later, the flashback feature is even used in cartoons.

In fact, we are so used to this technique that we accept, without question, that the memory of the character becomes action and thus "truth and life." Welles sophisticated manner of making an abstraction - the invented character - into something real and effective that promotes a kind of cinematic tension between distancing and approximation, a vision, an "abstraction of an abstraction." The "invented" past of an "invented" character passes as if it were the present of the "invented" character. All "invented" and mirrored. Pure creativity.

The war ended, but the flashback remained.

At that time most of the audience did not understand *Citizen Kane*, even if they sensed that a lasting and memorable method for storytelling was being introduced behind that trick of time.

And at the height of glory and misunderstanding, the improbable happens.

He was 28 years old and decided to film his third masterpiece in Brazil. A remote and forgotten country in 1942.

The movie's title was *It's All True*. Always experimenting, Welles wanted a realistic film, distinct from the frantic fiction of his previous work.

He came to Brazil as a global celebrity, but left hurriedly, in less than desirable circumstances. The movie was never finished. It exists in bits.

Accidents and incidents marked his passage along the coast of Brazil. One of the actors in the film, a fisherman, drowned while they were filming. A tragedy that remains in the movie's footage.

But my Script/play is not about any of these events. It centers on what will be referred to as the secret days of Orson Welles on the Atlantic coast. In the dunes of a place that at first seemed like paradise.

During filming, so the books say, Welles disappeared alone, with a jeep along the coast for two days. It could have been simply to get away from the stress for a while.

This seems to have been a turning point for him. Just as he said about the twist on his life and career: "I started at the top and then it was all downhill."

After his unfortunate experience in Brazil, he is harsh to conclude: "I am a genius who lost his talent."

Maybe. Everything is possible. Because for those who write about Welles, looking for the truths and facts of his life, from this moment onwards becomes not a question of what is true or false, but a search into the luminous but obscure realm of imagination. Where anything is possible, even if not credible.

What did actually happen during his disappearance? Answer: a torrent of speculation. Only imagination. In typical Orson Welles style.



Red crab from northeastern Brazil

2 - CHRONOLOGY

It takes place in the sands of Ceará. We are in the Northeast of Brazil, 1942.
Lighting/Props: clearly marked in text and fundamental to the production.

3 - CHARACTERS

Six onstage, one voice-off:

1. **ORSON WELLES (O.W.),** the film director as a young man
2. **MADALENA,** the daughter (young girl)
3. **MIGUEL,** the father (mature man afro brazilian)
4. **MALAQUIAS,** the guide (mature man)
5. **EVA/MOTHER,** the mother (a mature woman)
6. **BENTO,** the son (eighteen year old boy)
7. **CAPTAIN** (always voice off)

4 - SCENERY/THEATER

Only three major components make up the shifting sets: the sand; the sky; and a sheet of water.

Note that the sky appears infinite, an eternal variable against which selected shadows and images can be projected.

The set itself can be very simple (the sheet of water made from a piece of cloth or a tarp extended on the floor), or complex, depending on the director's vision and production possibilities. Options are varied and multiple.

5 - PHOTOS/LOCATION/SCREENPLAY



Red fish from northeastern Brazil
(See photos of locations in attached document)