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## Brazilian Literary Masterpiece, The Brothers, Becomes Play

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Dois Irmãos (The Brothers), a book by Brazilian author Milton Hatoum, is going to become a theatrical play. The play will be staged beginning next week at the Bank of Brazil Cultural Center, in the southeastern Brazilian city of São Paulo. This is the first adaptation for the stage of a book by the writer of Lebanese descent, who won three Jabuti Prizes (the most prestigious award in Brazilian literature), one of them for The Brothers novel, in 2001.

The book is one of Hatoum's most acclaimed publications, and was elected by Brazilian critics the best Brazilian novel in the last fifteen years. The plot is based on the story of twins brothers in a family of Lebanese origin who live in constant conflict.

The family lives in Manaus, capital of the state of Amazonas - the author's native state -, and sends one of the boys to Lebanon. The differences in the upbringing and the mother's excessive attention to the son that stayed in Brazil lead the two to argue all the time.

Whereas the twin who stayed at home turns out a womanizer, a drunkard, but very caring and loving towards the family, the other, upon returning from Lebanon, engages in an exemplary career. He moves to São Paulo, becomes an engineer and marries precisely the lady who was the object of desire of the two throughout their childhood and adolescence.

The entire story is told by Nael, son of the family's maid, who had an affair with one of the twins and was raped by the other.

The text of Hatoum's book was adapted by playwright Jucca Rodrigues, and the play is directed by Roberto Lage. The actors are Imara Reis, Luiz Damasceno, Vivianne Pasmarter, Jiddu Pinheiro, Gabriel Pinheiro, Tatiana Thomé, Bete Correia, and Rodrigo Ramos.

Lage uses narrative theater in this version of the play. According to Lage, in this staging of the play, Nael is the leading narrator - in the book, he is the only one - but other characters, such as the maid Domingas, also tell fragments of the story.

Lage claims that the idea of staging the play came up after one of the actresses, Bete Correia, read the book and fell in love with it. The project of turning it into a play was then funded by the Bank of Brazil, under the Rouanet Law (Federal Law for Culture).

The play was adapted and staged in two months time, according to the director. "As Jucca was adapting the play, we

staged the fragments as he delivered them to us," explains Lage. According to the director, there is not a single word in the play that is not included in Milton Hatoum's book.

Lage directed more than 130 plays since the early 1960s. He has worked with many different theatrical genres, from children's plays to experimental and opera. He has staged texts by Plínio Marcos, Machiavelli, Pasolini, and Camus Duras.

Jucca Rodrigues has carried out several joint projects with Lage. *The Brothers* is the first of his adaptations to be staged. According to Lage, Hatoum watched the rehearsals and enjoyed the work.

Hatoum published his first novel, *Relato de um Certo Oriente* (Tale of a Certain Orient), in 1989, after earning a scholarship from the Vitae Foundation. Besides living in Brazilian cities such as Brasília and São Paulo, the author has also lived abroad, in the United States and in France.

Hatoum holds a doctorate in Literary Theory from the University of São Paulo. His most recent book is *Órfãos do Eldorado* (Orphans of the Eldorado), released this year by publishing house Companhia das Letras.

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