

y habilidad mostrado en conjunto por esta exitosa Quinta Temporada de Teatro Popular de México.

Igualmente, la Temporada triunfó, a mi parecer, en otros aspectos. Todas las obras, menos una, son mexicanas. Por mi parte, no recuerdo ninguna ocasión anterior en que haya sido posible ver tal cantidad y calidad de obras mexicanas en tan breve espacio de tiempo. Los precios de entrada fueron módicos, de diez y quince pesos, y además se proporcionaban boletos gratuitos en las oficinas del Departamento del Distrito Federal. Las obras también se cambiaban de teatro generalmente cada tres semanas, para así llevarse a otros teatros de barrio y hacerlas asequibles al público de diferentes colonias sin que tuvieran que hacer gran esfuerzo para presenciarlas. Así que no hay duda que efectivamente se llevó el teatro al público y no al revés. Entre el auditorio de las funciones a las que yo asistí se encontraba, sin lugar a dudas, un buen número de gente del pueblo que no suele asistir al teatro.

En conclusión, este Teatro Popular sí llegó a su destinatario: el pueblo. Y, también, todas las obras interesaron al auditorio, según mi parecer. Se contó con libertad de expresión. Los montajes contaron con una excelencia muy notable. Así que, en general, la Quinta Temporada de Teatro Popular de México salió con éxito porque cumplió con casi todos sus objetivos.*

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The Nuyoricans

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The Nuyoricans (short for New York and Puerto Ricans) are a cadre of artists spawned in the boiling kettle of Manhattan's Lower East Side. Their feelings are running over and scalding the country in many different ways. Take their music, *Salsa* (hot sauce), a hot and spicy stew of Afro-Latin-American rhythms that is "cooking" its way to legitimacy in this country after being virtually ignored by the National Academy of Arts and Sciences for decades. "Cultural oppression!" cried the Nuyoricans. And so this year a Grammy Award will be offered in a Latin music category.

Their theatre has just recently been "discovered" by Joseph Papp, no less. This producer supported a young addict and thief who had just finished serving a five year sentence in Sing-Sing for armed robbery and who within a year after his release was playing on Broadway. Miguel Pinero's *Short Eyes* went on to win an Obie as well as the New York Drama Critic's Award for the Best American Play of the 1973-74 season.

The heart of Nuyorican turf is 6th Street between Avenues "A" and "B." It is there where the two dozen or so actors, directors, poets and playwrights live—in cramped but homey little flats with roaches, absentee landlords, and bars on the windows to keep out the junkies. But they are all making a living

off their art and several of them have invested their money in a Cafe, scene of frenzied poetry readings and nightly Salsa jam sessions.

Before looking at examples of their work, I want to discuss their language which is two-thirds English and one-third Spanish. (Add to this a dash of Afro-American and mix well.) In *Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Words and Feelings* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1975), editor Miguel Algarin tells us the origins of his tongue: "There is, at the edge of every empire, a linguistic explosion that results from the many multilingual tribes that collect around wealth and power. The Nuyorican is a slave class that trades hours for dollars at the lowest rung of the earning scale."

Algarin—poet, playwright, director and Assistant Professor of English Literature at Rutgers University—is a very scholarly, aristocratic looking man in his early thirties. He has the look of the Moor about him, as though you would expect to see him wandering in the corridors of the Alhambra. He translates Pablo Neruda and uses that poet's words to express the pangs of neo-colonialism. Algarin claims that the poems of his people, like Neruda's, are "poems of protest." But the complaints are delivered in a new rhythm. It is a bomba rhythm with many changing pitches delivered with a bold stress. The pitches vary but the stress is always bomba and the vocabulary is English and Spanish mixed.

Congas, saxophones, flutes and bongos often accompany poetry and plays and the resulting combination is an exciting thing to behold. These poems and plays, according to Algarin, "describe the neighborhood of the writer for the reader." Lucky Cienfuegos' "America Conga Mania"—a mixture of poetry, dance, drama and music—takes place in a concrete pocket park littered with broken glass and garbage where Afro-haired players, addicts, and dealers act out their rites of song, dance, intoxication and death. Algarin writes that "raw life needs raw nouns to express the action and to name the quality of experience." Therefore, "The power of Nuyorican talk is that it is street rooted. It is the way people talk before the spirit is molded into standards." He gives an example of a Nuyorican mother ordering groceries at a *marqueta*: (1) dame half pound de chuleta, (2) aceite, bacon, una matita de recaó y un container de leche, (3) un momento, mister, no speak to me de esa manera.

Nuyorican is a creative language; it is in a constant state of improvisation. There are no dictionaries or grammatical restrictions, and all rules of spelling and punctuation are gleefully tossed out the window. The language is just being born and the poet or playwright is the creator of not only the matter, but the method as well. Algarin is moved to warn against the corruption of this childlike tongue: "It is necessary to guard against the pressure to legitimize a street language that is in its infancy. Imposing a system of usage on Nuyorican would at the present time stunt its childhood and damage its creative intuition."

The general barrio attitude towards formal education, incidentally, is best expressed by two junkies in a play entitled *All Junkies* by Miguel Pinero:

Doggie: Man—what you think is high school?

Chino: Got me.

Doggie: High! *High* school; high school is when you go to school high all the time—man—why do you think they call it high school?

Chino: I didn't know that, man. Well, like, uh, what's junior high school?

Doggie: Well man—junior high school—that's when you go to high school only haft ass high—you know—like skin poppin on the weekends.*

One final note about this exotic potpourri of English, Afro rhythms (many words and feelings came from Puerto Rico via the Yoruba, Bantu, Congo, Dahomey, and Ibo tribes), and Spanish. Although many educators consider Nuyorican a bastardized tongue and a liability to those who speak it, the street poets and playwrights have turned their rap and lingo into an asset.

Miguel Pinero is one of the best practitioners of the Nuyorican language. As I described him in *The Drama Review*, "he is of medium stature, well built, with a face that might be mistaken for a boxers' were it not so finely hewn and nearly classical. He even has a boxer's tough way of talking, were his words not so poetic. He is light complexioned, with melancholy brown eyes. There is a deep mood of sadness that seeps from those eyes—imprinted there by years of drug addiction and incarceration. Pinero is the image of a dark and fallen angel."

Sex is one topic Pinero writes about—the more shocking and taboo, the better. *Short Eyes* is the story of a child molester who is eventually executed by fellow inmates in the day room of a house of detention. *Short Eyes* is prison slang for a child molester—the lowest, most despicable criminal in jail—by the prisoners' own code. Clark, the "pervert," is talking to Juan Otero, the only sympathetic ear he finds:

Clark: How did I get to the bathroom with her? Don't know. I was standing there, I was combing her hair, her curly reddish hair. I was naked . . . naked . . . except for these flower printed cotton underwear . . . no slippers, barefooted . . . suddenly I get this feeling over me . . . like a flash fever . . . and I'm hard . . . I placed my hands on her small shoulders . . . and pressed her hand and placed it on my penis. . . . Did she know what to do? Or did I coerce her? I pulled down my drawers . . . but then I felt too naked, so I put them back on . . . my eyes were closed . . . but I felt as if there was this giant eye off in space looking at me. . . . I opened them up and saw her staring at me in the cabinet mirror. I pulled her back away from the view of the mirror. . . . My hands up her dress, feeling her underdeveloped body. . . . I, I, I I began pulling her underwear down on the bowl. . . . She resisted . . . slightly, just a moment. . . . I sat on the bowl . . . she turned and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me on the lips. . . . She gave a small nervous giggle . . . turned her body . . . to face away from me. . . . I lubricated myself . . . and . . . I hear a scream, my own . . . there was a spot of blood on my drawers . . . I took them off right then and there . . . ripped them up and flushed them down the toilet. . . . She had dressed herself up and asked me if we could do it again tomorrow . . . and was I her boyfriend now. . . . I said yes, yes. . . .

What is ironic about "Short Eyes" is that the other prisoners, while hating him

* Note: "Skin-popping," as opposed to "main-lining," is a much more temperate way of injecting heroin.

enough to want to kill, also want to violate him sexually as a way of releasing their own pent up frustrations.

In *Sideshow* there are scores of young male hustlers and female child whores who taunt and seduce the audience with their forbidden eroticism. In *The Sun Always Shines For The Cool* the topic of titillation is incest—a brother turns his sister into a whore.

But Pinero has a style about him that can turn something as banal as masturbation into an act of political liberation. In *Short Eyes* a convict named Ice is caught by two white guards while masturbating to a picture of Jane Fonda:

Ice: . . . I happened to look up and there's these two redneck . . . peckerwood big-foot country honkies looking and grinning at. I don't know how they was there cause I had my eyes closed all the time I was gitting my rocks off, better for the imagination. They weren't saying a word, just standing there grinning . . . grinning these two big grins . . . these two real big grins on the faces that reach from one ear to the other. So I started grinning back. Grinning that old nigger grin we give to Charlie. We stood there grinning at each other for about five minutes . . . them grinning at my Johnson . . . me grinning at them grinning at my Johnson . . . just grinning. . . .

All of a sudden the biggest one with the biggest grin gives out a groan. "Hey, Harry, this fucking face has been pulling his pecker on a white woman." So Harry comes over and said very intelligently, "Da . . . da . . . she's white trash, Joey. Take my word for it, she's white trash. *The Daily News* said so." So Joey runs this down on Harry: "Harry, I know what she is, I read the papers, too, you know. But she is a white women. And this nigger has been thinking about having screwed her. Now you know that's un-American. Harry, open up the dead lock." So Harry rims to open up the dead lock. Now Joey got the nigger knocker wrapped around his hand real tight, dig. I know he about to correct me on some honky rules. I know what's about to jump off . . . I'm in my cell . . . and I'm cool . . . extra cool . . . that's my name, Ice. The lames roll in front of my cell and I go into my Anartic frigid position . . . you can see the frost all over my cell. But before Harry could open the dead lock, I told him, "Joey baby, I sure hope you can fly." He said, "What you talking about, nigger boy?" I said "fly like a bird, you know F-L-Y. 'Cause once you open this gate . . . I ain't about to let you whip me with that stick." I stood up on my toes. Pointed over the rail and said, "both of us are going, Joey." He yelled out, "Harry, don't up the gate. This nigger crazy!"

Again in *Short Eyes* one white convict is discussing race relations in prison with another white convict:

Longshoe: Black go in the front of the line, we stay in the back. It's okay to rap with the blacks, but don't get too close with any of them. Ricans too. We're the minority here, so be cool. If you hate yams, keep it to yourself. Don't show it. But also don't let them run over you. Ricans are funny people. Took me a long time to figure them out, and you know

something, I found out I still have a lot to learn about them. I rap spic talk. They get a big brother attitude about the whites in jail. But they also back the niggers to the T. If a spic pulls a razor blade on you and you don't have a mop wringer in your hands . . . run . . . and if you have static with a nigger and they ain't got no white people around . . . get a spic to watch your back, you may have a chance. That ain't no guarantee. If you have static with a spic, don't get no nigger to watch your back cause you ain't gonna have none.

What we have in the above two examples is the Latino rap on race: A brown man writing about white and black men and his fragile existence in hell with them. This has never happened before and it gives us an entirely new perspective on this controversial subject. The Puerto Rican is a mixture of black and white—with a little bit of red (Taino) thrown in. Pinero is the New World man, racially and culturally, and this is his first opportunity to speak in the United States.

Furthermore, the director of this production is also a Nuyorican. Marvin Camillo is the product of a Mexican father and an Afro-American mother and was raised in Newark, New Jersey. He is in his early thirties, a dark and solid man. And because he is always thinking about his audience and because the audiences in his theatre are usually *el pueblo*, Camillo prefers to use real (image making) actors from the streets rather than professional (stereotyped) actors from the schools. At a recent audition I had the eerie sensation of seeing and hearing professional white and black actors trying out for Latino parts. Is that the way we sound to them, is that the way they see us? I tried to imagine what was going on in Marvin Camillo's mind and the hair on the back of my neck stood up. For decades directors had cast Italians and Greeks to play Latinos, a sort of "blackface" syndrome, but now the tables were turned.

While racial attitudes may be undergoing a change in Nuyorican Theatre, the sexist roles are still fairly typical. Most of the directors and writers are machos and so the women in the plays are very shallow.

In Pinero's plays the women, with few exceptions, are all controlled by one man or another. In *The Sun Always Shines For The Cool* a young prostitute talks to a customer about how her brother "turned her out":

Rosa: Yes, my brother, and he was my pimp and my lover . . .

Viejo: I have nothing more to ask you.

Rosa: He's not bad, he's not mean . . . he's like little Bam-Bam who hangs around Justice's place. He's trying to make a hustle. Ever since he saw Moms fucking the welfare investigator, since then he always jumped on what came his way and I was naturally in the world that was his to use. A very simple story of life in what Cat Eyes is about a, what can I call it, a ghetto fairy tale come true.

Viejo: I have nothing to ask you because whatever is the case, I know what I must do.

Rosa: Are you going to kill Cat Eyes?

Just as the inmates in the house of detention want to kill "Short Eyes," so does the aging player, Viejo, want to kill the incestuous and ambitious pimp, Cat Eyes.

Yet, this same Viejo had a wife and a daughter once—whom he betrayed. Upon returning home from prison, Viejo confides to his friend, Justice, who runs a Player's Bar:

Viejo: Look, what am I supposed to say to her, hi, I'm Luis Rivera, I'm the spic who turned your mother into a whore . . . and dragged her down into drug addiction with me . . . into prisons and hospitals and abandoned you to a Player's Bar. . . .

Later, at the same bar where Viejo's daughter, Chile, is hostessing, we discover what the lean and hungry Cat Eyes' true intentions are towards her:

Cat Eyes: Viejo, my rap is strong and my words are never wrong . . . I'm young and faster than a streak of lightning and a ball of heat. . . . I've always landed on my feet, ever since I could remember. . . . I've never touched the floor with my knees. You see that girl, Chile, they all wanted her but they all fear Justice and Lefty Gorilla, but not me cuz their time is up on earth . . . this is jungle law, and the jungle creed's the strong must feed on the weaker prey at hand and I am staking my name to that game. She is gonna make me a very wealthy man, my man, she is gonna put me on the mack map of the year. . . .

Viejo: Are you saying what I think you saying . . . you gonna turn her out?

Cat Eyes: That's right, Mister, I'm gonna turn her sweet ass out.

Viejo: I can't let you do that.

Cat Eyes: You don't seem to understand, you can't stop me cuz she loves me. And besides why the fuck are you telling me some shit like that, if you don't want her as a pimp why the fuck are you playing boy scout.

Viejo: I'm her father.

And so Viejo must protect his daughter and show Cat Eyes who really has the balls around here. Cat Eyes must learn that there are limits to pimping; the "player's code" says that it's all right to turn tricks out on the street, just as long as they are not related to you.

Machismo and double standards aside, society also has to take blame for some of the perversions of the ghetto. In a poem, "Twice A Month Is Mother's Day," (because the mailman brings the welfare check on the 1st and the 16th) Miguel Pinero finds fault with the system as presented by the welfare investigator:

AHAHAHAhaa here comes dona rosa she is pretty—NO she is beuuuutttiiiffuulll

NO she is prettier than "pretty please with sugar on top" wow she said the investigator came around last night & almost caught don miguel—who is the nenes tio—everyone says si-si-si-si Y que mas—didn't find don miguel—pero—he found his shoes—everyone says si-si-si Y que mas she says they belong to her son rikie—he says tooooo biiigggg everyone says si-si-si-si Y que mas—she says he now wants to sleep with her or he'll never give back her checks & this time for good—everyone says si-si-si Y que mas—she says que se va hacer.

("Twice A Month Is Mother's Day" by Miguel Pinero, in *Nuyorican Poetry: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Words and Feelings*.)

As if the Latina did not have enough trouble with the welfare investigator, she also has to contend with her arch rival—The Gringa. In *Apartment 6-D*, Michelle and Maria scold Fernando for taking up with “La Americana”:

Michelle: Yes. Now I remember where I’ve seen you . . . I was walking down the street, and I was all by myself, and I took one look at you and said, “Hmmm, hmmm, what a nice looking man! Que hace con esa Americana?”

Maria: What’s he doing con la Americana?

Michelle: You’ve got to give your warmth to me.

Maria: Yes, give your warmth to the Latin woman.

Fernando: I don’t have to give you shit!

Michelle: You fail to understand something about me. You don’t understand that I am like the land. Como la tierra. And like the land, in order to be fruitful, it must be cultivated. And cultivation, takes time.

Fernando: Time, my ass. Let me tell you something, honey. Yeah, you’ve seen me con la Americana. So what. I know where I stand. See, with you, I got to take you out, I got to dine you, I got to wine you, I got to meet your family and then I got to ask for permission to marry you just to get a piece. But with her, that so called Americana, I take her, I do what I got to do with her and I throw her to the side. But I DON’T HAVE TO MARRY HER!

No doubt about it, barrio life can be a series of humiliations—for man and woman alike. But some barrio feminists, like Soledad Barreto, are trying to change the image of *las mujeres*. Her play, *Opiate Seven*, begins in a lower middle class home. We are introduced to the family at the dinner table: Don Pedro owns a small *bodega* and is hard working and present. Nati, the mother, stays home and worries about her children. The eldest son, Chamaco, is a Vietnam veteran who is about to take his bar exams. His younger brothers and sisters all go to school. On the surface, everything seems normal, perhaps they will escape the misery.

But the problems begin with one of the younger daughters, Sugar, who is already thinking of breaking up with her husband:

Neti: How do you know he doesn’t love you anymore?

Sugar: Because the feeling is gone, because his pride is broken, because he just doesn’t care anymore. All he wants to do is forget, forget that he’s a family man with responsibilities. You know, a few months ago he started coming home drunk, beefing about how if he hadn’t married so young he could have been somebody, had a career. I’ve tried, Moms, I have surely tried. But it’s beginning to look like that Saturday we jumped out of church, into the first car of a whole caravan of Chevys, it was all show. All those horns honkin telling the whole Lower East Side, “Hey man, we just got married.” But the promises we made that day haven’t held up, and it was all show.

Well, at least Sugar realizes that the marriage isn’t going to work and perhaps if she gets out in time she can still make a go at leading her own life. Further-

more, let this be a lesson to other young women who want to marry traditionally early.

Later on in the play we discover that the prodigal son, Chamaco, has problems also. He's been selling heroin for a living—even though he kicked the habit long ago. In spite of the fact that he's about to enter a "respectable" way of life, Chamaco is loathe to abandon his player's street code. Well, that may not be entirely negative; after all, he is a born hustler—down to his shiny Florsheims. He'll probably make a very successful lawyer.

The only trouble is, Chamaco finds out that his kid sister, Maria, has been seen "nodding out" from what appears to be heroin. She's only sixteen, skinny, but quite the cutie. She wears six inch platforms, blood red lipstick, chews gum, and raps the kind of Nuyorican that would dazzle your average sanitation worker. Her nickname is "Killer" because she has been known to carry her big brother's gun around with her.

Maria has a gang of teenage girl toughs who appear to be starting a race of Latina amazons until "Killer" accidentally shoots an innocent bystander to death (a young whore, no less) with her brother's gun in a player's bar. Chamaco, who has been suffering under the weight of a massive guilt complex, has quit the dealing business by this time and tries to take the rap for his kid sister. In an unexpected turn of events the owner of the club—an ex-whore named Jenny who loves Chamaco—calls the police and tells them she is the killer. When the cops come she is holding a gun and it is she who dies by their hands.

The ending of *Opiate Seven* is certainly a bit contrived, and not at all conducive to the spirit of women's liberation. Chamaco, we assume, is left free to take his bar exams, since, by the author's own admission, "he is the only one in the play with any potential." But then, this is Soledad's first play, and as she herself will admit, "we've got a lot of catching up to do."

But in her dialogue we do find the beginnings of a budding Nuyorican feminism. In a pocket park at dusk, three young sisters rap:

Mimi: I know it man—they never give us girls a chance.

Maria: They think that when they come around to us that's when we come to life.

Cookie: After that we're statues . . .

Mimi: But when they need a favor, who do they come to?

(And later on:)

Mimi: Us women, you know, we need time out too. You want a hand you give a hand.

(Mimi and Maria give each other five.)

Cookie: We don't need to stick to them like glue, cuz when we ain't around they always be playing with other chicks. Tell a girl they love her and right away she gives it up.

Maria: Us girls plays sucker.

Mimi: I feel like giving men up.

Maria: We should just go out there and cop for ourselves,

And they do go and procure some methadone. In the very next scene two whores are discussing their problem:

China: So that's how it is, Renee, a trashy world run by pigs, so a broad has to assert her freedom anyway she can. And man, I'm at the point now where I'll prefer a fine chick any day of the week.

Renee: You're just saying that . . .

China: Try me, and see if this tongue can't do more than just make words. Look Renee, a man runs his shit down, and just because you're told he's what you're supposed to want you want it. But I'm a woman like, and I know what you really want, and how you want it.

Renee: Yah, I know, but there are some things . . .

China: That only a man can do? You have to try it before you can knock it.

Renee: We could always rap about this some other time, you know.

China: Why put it off? Look, you see this flower on your shirt?

Renee: Huh, uh.

China: Well, I'm thinking of the flower that's underneath.

Even though Soledad Barreto advocates total freedom for her sisters and she herself was lucky enough to leave the barrio and get an education, she is still very traditional. Married, the mother of two children, her language is clean and unoffensive. The voice of the Nuyorican woman is usually soft and compromising, unlike the strident militancy of her Anglo counterpart. She still has to walk a thin line between the borders of expression and offense. While the liberals will put her down for referring to herself as a "broad" or "chick" or "man," the conservatives object to seeing Latinas portrayed as addicts, lesbians, and whores. On the one hand, her language will evolve, and on the other hand the Latina's degrading position will never be bettered by running away from reality.

Another issue which the barrio has to meet head on is drugs—and the Nuyorican poets and playwrights have been known to exchange angry words over this dilemma. Some Nuyoricans favor complete legalization of *all* drugs and they come up with some fairly convincing arguments. "What good are more controls by the state," they ask, "what good are long and cruel jail sentences for users. Repression isn't the answer." They point to Miguel Pinero as an example of so-called "state rehabilitation." When Pinero was sixteen the state used him and 200 other addicts as guinea pigs for one of the first methadone programs.

"You didn't drink it in a cup then like koolaide," recalls Pinero with a twinge of black humor, "it was injected with a syringe. Then we would go cope some coke 'cause it brought the high to a kinda mellow head." Pinero became addicted to methadone—which is currently sold on the streets as a "high."

The pro-drug people ask: "Why should the police and the Mafia control the sale and distribution of drugs, why should they make millions of dollars off the barrio? Why don't we take over the operation, and let the money come back into the community."

So the debate ranges between "drugs as genocide" and "drugs as the chemistry which some folks need."

Personalities like William Burroughs have come to the Nuyorican Cafe on Sixth Street and Avenue "A" on the Lower East Side to speak on drugs. Burroughs claims to have been cured of heroin back in 1956 through the use of apomorphine. ("Ten days," says the wise old sage, and "you're as good as new.") Burroughs was invited to the Nuyorican Cafe to discuss his new miracle cure but, unfortunately, he did not get any takers. Several weeks later a 19-year-old youth associated with the Nuyoricans overdosed on heroin. His comrades held a wake in his memory and sorrowful poets cried out against the pushers and drug companies who they felt were responsible for his death.

Outside on the neon street corners the junkies swayed and bounced like rubber bands in the heat of the sultry night. I talked to a former drug addict who claimed that the Nuyorican playwrights unconsciously glorified drugs on stage by characterizing pushers and junkies as people.

"They're vermin, they're scum," he said, blowing smoke through his teeth, "why build up their rep? Why make it seem like its cool to get high?" He feels that pushers especially are respected by certain street people because of their money, power, and lone wolf image.

But director Marvin Camillo disagrees: "Nobody's pushing that shit on stage. Drugs and prostitution are around like rice and beans, or collard greens, tu sabe. Showing is dealing with it. Let's face it, bro, Mary Poppins isn't going to come down from the sky with her fucking umbrella to save us. Pinero is merely showing us his experience. And it isn't necessarily bad. He's been to hell and back and we can all learn from it. In my directing I try to find out what prostitution really is, what pimping is all about. But I don't approach this with any kind of goddam message. You gotta guard against the missionary position. What's important is the execution of the matter."

Camillo has no qualms about telling it like it is, but he is disappointed with those nearsighted critics who fail to see the validity of social realism. Many people from all walks of life are totally unsympathetic to the vulgarity, suffering, drug usage, and sex lives of the pushers, players, pimps, and prostitutes. "What do they want," asks Camillo, "a polite and sterile theatre which eases their conscience and aids in their digestion?"

"Yes, but what about the Latino middle class," I ask Camillo, "aren't you aiding in their alienation? Parents have told me that they walk away from Nuyorican plays in severe states of depression."

"Well, I'd rather have them feel something, even if it's depression, instead of walking away bored or indifferent," shoots back the director. "I don't think our people are stupid. As long as we present our essence, then we are spiritually correct in playing whatever nightmare or dream we wish. Besides, our authors will soon be branching out into other forms, even middle class forms. They're being trained now in the schools. But what's happening right now is in the littered streets, in the crowded barrio, with the common people of the Lower East Side."

New York