

## INTAR, Staged Readings by Latino Playwrights

From November 5 through December 7, 1980, INTAR (International Arts Relations) sponsored a series of staged readings from the plays of ten young Latino writers who live in the New York area. This group could almost be Nuyorican, except that two of its members, Michael Alasá and Ramón Delgado, belong to that first generation of offspring from the anti-Castro exodus. Thus, the sentimental commitment to their own branch of U.S. Hispanics is strong. That they are integrated into this contingent of Nuyorican new talent is an exciting development that could result in a blueprint for future change in the American minority theatre.

Two common denominators became clear during this series: 1) All the plays were written and staged in English as the literary language these authors use best. Furthermore, at least half of the plays had a highly lyrical texture and the occasional lapse of the dialogues into Spanish would seem more a sign of biculturalism than of bilingual interaction. 2) One is greatly impressed by the wide diversity of subject matter and theatrical form.

A quick gloss of the titles: *Hustlers with Worn-out Shoes* by the well-known poet Lucky Luciano and Shamsul Alam's *Bempires* represented the still strong gravitation of ghetto culture. Tee Saralegui's *The Ash-Can and the Cobra*, with a very powerful first act, eludes any ready-made label in spite of the characters' background and their traumas from the Vietnam fall-out. Even Eduardo Gallardo, who achieved fame for *Simpson Street*, showed in *In Another Part of the City* his resolve to shift away from relentless naturalism and start tapping the rich reservoirs of multi-media stagecraft. Coming from the opposite direction, the gifted Victor Fragoso (co-author of the successful review *La Era Latina*) has made the grade with his personal view of a sorority of bagladies – the only one-acter in the series and one of the best written. The two lady authors might have been literary first-cousins for such is their plays' likeness in both format and content. They rely heavily on imagination and poetry while keeping sentimentality at a good arm's length. Sandra M. Esteves' *Yerba Buena* deals with Puertorican historical roots vis-à-vis a heroic tradition of *independentismo*; Lynne Alvarez's stakes in *Mundo* were even higher since she ventures into the mine-fields of allegory via transcendental spirituality and myth ("la llorona"). Finally, Pedro Pietri's play *I Dare You to Resist* was taken off the program, much to the audience's regret, when this playwright and poet, considered the spiritual nucleus of the group, had to fly to Europe to a poetry event.

Two closing notes: As stated in the title, the plays in the series were presented in staged-reading form. After the first two, however, the faithful and receptive audience was rewarded with more staging and less reading. More important still for the authors themselves were the discussions after each performance, where all the authors, plus the production team and cast but minus audience and critics, met to discuss the play. No doubt much good will result from the constructive team-spirit to the plays' final quality as well as to the cohesiveness of this talented group of *jóvenes teatristas neoyorquinos*.

L. A. Díez  
Queens College