

## Teatro Avante's Winning Streak

Mario Ernesto Sanchez, founder and Producing Artistic Director of Teatro Avante, was voted "Best Actor" at the AACT/Fest Competition '89, in Daytona Beach. Teatro Avante represented Miami at the state-wide festival with the award winning production of "An Empty Shoe Box" by Virgilio Piñera, this time in English. Co-starring with Sanchez were Nattacha Amador and Arturo Llopis, under the direction of Alberto Sarrain. Judith Kase-Polosini, from Lutz, Florida, one of three adjudicators at the Festival, called it a brilliant performance and a powerful production. Gregory Hausch from Tampa and Pete Raby from Raleigh, NC, the other two adjudicators, praised the acting, direction and design, calling it an excellent piece.

"An Empty Shoe Box" world premiered at the II Annual Hispanic Theatre Festival in 1987, winning many awards. In early 1988, this play was Teatro Avante's entry at the International Theatre Festival in Puebla, Mexico, representing the United States, and earning the praise of the press. Teatro Avante was able to represent Miami at this Festival thanks to a grant from the City of Miami Community Development Department. The following day, Mario Ernesto Sanchez was again honored, this time by one of the most prestigious Cuban organizations in exile, as the first recipient of a FACE Excellence Award in Theatre, under the category of Performing Arts. The Fifth Annual Excellence Awards Banquet held at the Inter-Continental Hotel is FACE's (Facts About Cuban Exiles) major annual event. Other outstanding leaders who were honored included: Polita Grau de Aguero and Ramon Grau Alsina (in Human Rights); Dr. Octavio R. Costa (in Literature); Jorge Ulla (in Visual Arts); and Bishop Agustin Roman, among others. In accepting the award, Sanchez stated that it was a proud moment for him and for Teatro Avante, as it was a most valuable recognition of Teatro Avante's indefatigable efforts to establish, maintain and enhance Hispanic Theatre, especially Cuban Theatre, in the U.S. and abroad.