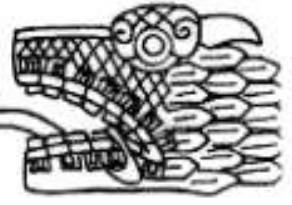


# BUSCANDO CALIFORNIA



(c) Sept./Oct. 1992, Vol. 1, No. 7  
Editor: Kat Avila

## EDITOR'S NOTES



"Are you calling me a cultural imperialist?"

This is not the sort of question one gets every day, and the person asking it was Bruce Levitt, the chair of Cornell University's theatre arts department. I was a guest at the university's invitation-only "Grassroots Theater in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives" conference (Oct. 9-11). He was responding to my rebuttal that Haitian is not grassroots theatre. What would you have said if you were in our discussion group? Go ahead. Be creative.

Other issues brought out by the small group discussions were problems with mainstream institutions receiving funds for minority playwright development but not producing these playwrights. Funds were being diverted from organizations that were "authentic" representatives of their cultural communities. Conference participants also talked about developing alternative theatre management techniques, constructing mechanisms so that younger artists could benefit from the experience of others in grassroots theatre, encouraging artists to become community leaders, and educating funders and children.

Performances at the grassroots theatre conference included Junebug/Jack and various readings. Junebug/Jack was a joint presentation by the Junebug Theater Project from New Orleans and Roadside Theater from the Appalachians. Junebug was a mythical African storyteller; today, Junebug exists not as a name, but as a title. Jack was an Appalachian hero. In the presentation, African- and European-American folklores and histories were brought to life through tales, songs, rap, and chants. The evening concluded with a song against oppression of all kinds: "What did they do with what they took from you? What did they do with mine?" The performers were given a standing ovation.

I spoke with Ron Short, a storyteller and musician with Roadside Theater, about folklore and theatre. We talked about populations in exile and how central to identity land is. Stories define place, he pointed out. People who don't have such need survival tools. Self-affirmation, self-worth, and ownership is found in folklore. Folklore relates to the central core of a people, and Junebug/Jack can be considered "a [religious] service" in some ways, said Ron.

Formally welcoming the conference participants was artist G. Peter Jemison of the Seneca Nation. He is a member of Keepers of Treasures, an organization devoted to the preservation of indigenous ways of life. On this Columbus Day weekend, another reminder of the Native American presence popped up in the form of an aerosol message on the wall of the Center for Theatre Arts: COLUMBUS IS A RACIST INDIAN TERRITORY (sic).

For the readings, myself, Jorge Piña, Marcos Martínez, Rodolfo Cortina, Teresa Marrero, and Jorge Huerta were drafted by Nicolas Kanellos to present vaudeville sketches from early Hispanic theatre. We read Me voy pa' Mexico by the Mendora family and Una Mula de Iantas by Netty and Jesus Rodriguez. So standing ovation, but we did get a few laughs. Readings by other conference participants were Wedding Clothes, and A Medal for Willis by William Branch, who was also attending the conference.

Leaving the conference, I ran into Junebug/Jack performer and flutist/composer Letteta Theresa, who made a friend of everybody she met at the Ithaca airport, causing one person to ask if she was a professional comedian. I also met Saraka Bels, director of performing arts for San Francisco's Center for the Arts, a state-of-the-art facility opening in Oct. 1993. Saraka has been working with Luis Valdez. Dance of the Giants, from a Mayan creation myth, is scheduled as one of the Center's opening events. Also, Rodrigo Duarte-Clark and Saraka are putting together a Latino theater festival for fall 1994.

Thank you to Janet Salmons-Rue, director of the Community-Based Arts Project, for facilitating my stay in Ithaca and to Eloise de Leon of the Centro Cultural de la Raza for nominating me to take her place at the conference. Muchas gracias to . . . Univ. of North Carolina professor Betty Jean Jones for being such a great roommate . . . Jorge Huerta for lunch . . . Tony Garcia, a playwright with Su Teatro, for the "I Don't Speak English Only" t-shirt (the airline lost my luggage) . . . Letteta Theresa for the emerging music cassette (she is available for all types of gala events; call (504) 881-7453 in New Orleans).

Friend and artist Nilza Marta Di Carlo invited me to see her work in the Art Brazil/LA exhibit at the VASP Brazilian Airlines exhibit (Sept. 17-Oct 16), 200 W. Sepulveda Blvd., #100, El Segundo. I was pleasantly surprised to see that her work had not been censored. Originally, only her fish collage sculptures were going to be allowed, which while beautiful are not her most powerful work. (They did not want anything indigenous or sexual.) Yacht, a mixed media piece, made it into the exhibit. It consists of a round vessel whose surface is covered with sperm-shaped designs. From the top of the vessel, tiny people of all colors are crawling out through an opening. Picture Perfect, a mannequin made from film canisters (which husband Louis helped Nilza with), was popular with people in the crowd who would pose with it to have their pictures taken.

Another artist whose work I liked at the exhibit was Vera Viana Asper. She had on the wall six triangular paper shrines that were accessorized with found objects. (Vera studied papermaking, and paper is her favorite medium.) Below the shrines were unlit votive candles on the floor. Vera had just come back from Greece where she said road shrines are common.

# CARLOS MORTON INTERVIEW

We agreed to meet before The Child Diego reading (8/31/82, 7:30 p.m.) at the Centro Cultural de la Raza. Carlos Morton and I sat outside on the sunset-side of the Centro as homeless people and early-bird audience members strolled by.

Carlos, an Army brat, was born in Chicago in 1947. He is married to Azalea Marín from Oaxaca, and they have two school-age boys--Xunco (6) and Miguel Angel (10). Carlos and Azalea are both UCSD alumni.

This past summer, he and his family rented a house on Lake Chapala, near Guadalajara in Mexico. (Carlos visits Mexico regularly so he can recharge his batteries.) There he worked on his newest play The Child Diego.

Carlos is the project coordinator for the upcoming "Encuentro Mexico: New Chicano/Mexican Dramaturgy," in March 1983, at the University of California, Riverside, where he teaches playwriting.

C: Carlos Morton

K: Kat Avila

C: [Talking about his summer vacation.] It [the house] was just out in the middle of nowhere. There was only one channel or two channels you could get on the TV. There was no telephone, no fax machine. Incommunicado. If you wanted milk, you asked the guy to bring you milk from the cow and you boiled it. It was really great because there was nothing to do but read. I got a lot of reading done.

K: What was most of this reading?

C: About Diego and Frida. 'Cos we had a staged reading in Hollywood in May. That was the first staged reading. And then they've had a second one in Portland. I haven't seen that one. The third one was in Santa Barbara on Wednesday. And now this is the fourth one [at the Centro]. So I'm just rereading, re-evaluating, you know, thinking about how I'm going to rewrite this play. It is very different from anything I've ever done before.

. . . I did go to Mexico City. I went to the Diego Rivera studio in San Angel Inn, and I went to Bellas Artes and saw the murals there . . .

I also saw a lot of Siqueiros and Orozco murals in Guadalajara. These muralists were contemporaries of Rivera.

So I kind of like went and checked out other murals, trying to figure out what was going on at that time when these murals were being painted . . . right after the Mexican revolution. See, this is a very unusual time.

There were these artists who had a vision of what post-revolutionary Mexico should be like. They believed in public art just like these right here [points to the Centro's wall behind us]. And they believed that art should be for the people. The government also supported that policy and would commission Rivera, Siqueiros, and Orozco to paint their murals in public places--city halls, the national palace, universities . . . It wasn't art for the elite, to be cloistered in museums. It was art that people were meant to see in their lives on a daily basis.

K: What provoked you to write about Diego?

C: I was always interested in Diego Rivera ever

since I've been going to Mexico and looking at the murals there. They're very theatrical. The murals of Diego Rivera, if you look at them, they want to leap out at you. They jump out. They want to start talking. The characters just want to start interacting. You're going to see some of the slides tonight that frame the scenes that I wrote . . .

I've been thinking about this play [The Child Diego] for about 10 years, no, even before I met my wife, 15 years . . .

The mural ["Sleeping on a Sunday in Alameda Park" that the play is based on] works with time and space. It interjects time and space. So there are a lot of anachronisms, which is typical of my work also. There's Hernán Cortés, then there's a Malinche punk. What's Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz doing in a bar with Hernán Cortés and Don Porfirio [a Mexican dictator], you know, and Diego Rivera? Then, all of a sudden, Frida comes in. What are they doing? What's Carlota [wife of Archduke Maximilian] doing with Frida in a later scene? What's going on here? So the play has that same sort of playfulness that the mural does.

I hope it doesn't take itself too seriously. Basically, I just wanted to have some fun.



# TEATRO '92 CALENDARIO



## ARTSTREET

Neighborhood Outreach Program  
2220 Broadway, San Diego, CA 92102  
(619) 232-8128

Sept. 18; 8-9 p.m.; 10th & K St.  
(Carnation Bldg.); free  
L\_Care was a showcase presentation  
by the fourth cycle of Artstreet,  
a revolving group of at-risk youth  
brought together for four-month  
periods of arts training. Each  
graduate was given a certificate and  
a long-stemmed rose at the end of  
the evening. Members of the festive  
crowd walked around with Melendez's  
colorful "Mad Bag Hats".

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BILINGUAL FOUNDATION OF THE ARTS  
421 N. Ave. 19, Los Angeles, CA  
90031; Tickets: (213) 225-4044

Sept.-Dec.  
Second Chance (Theatre for Young  
People/Teatro para los jovenes)  
touring production, by Annette  
Cardone and Amy Weinstein.

Oct. 18-20  
La Falsa Cronica de Juana la loca/  
Juana, Mad Queen of Spain: A False  
Chronicle, by Miguel Sabido, at the  
Festival Cervantino in Guanajuato,  
Mexico.

Sept. 22-Dec. 6; Weds.-Thur. 8 p.m.,  
Sun. 3 p.m.; \$18-\$8  
La Celestina/The Spanish Bard  
By Fernando de Rojas  
Directed by Maria Rivera  
Adapt. by M. Galban, M. Stocker  
Trans. by Margarita Stocker

\*\*\*\*\*  
CENTRO CULTURAL DE LA RAZA  
2130-1 Pan American Plaza, #1  
San Diego, CA 92101; (619) 235-6135

Oct. 9-Nov. 22; Weds.-Sun., 12-5 p.m.  
Ambientaciones 1492-1992  
Artists Kathleen Robles, Arinda  
Caballero, Graciela Ovejero

\*\*\*\*\*  
GUADALUPE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER  
1300 Guadalupe St., San Antonio, TX  
78207; Info.: (512) 271-3151

Nov. 10-15; \$6-\$4  
TENAZ XVI International Festival  
of Chicano/Latino Theatre  
Festival coordinator: Jorge Piña

Groups participating are Los Actores  
de San Antonio, Grupo Cultural Zero,  
Teatro Experimental de Cali, Su  
Teatro, El Teatro de la Esperanza,  
and Chicano Secret Service.  
Workshops are Nov. 11-13.

INTAR, Hispanic American Arts Center  
420 W. 42nd St., P.O. Box 788  
New York, NY 10108  
Tickets: (212) 695-6551

Oct. 14-18  
Daedalus in the Belly of the Beast/  
Dadaio en el vientre de la bestia  
By Marco Antonio de la Parra  
Trans. by Joanne Pottlitzer  
Directed by Alfredo Castro  
Production by Touchstone Theatre/  
Teatro La Memoria

Nov. 11-Dec. 13, 1992  
Words Diving: A Miracle Play  
By Lorenzo Mans, based on Ramon del  
Valle Inclan's Divinas Falebras  
Directed by Max Ferra

\*\*\*\*\*  
JAPAN AMERICA THEATRE  
244 S. San Pedro St., Los Angeles,  
CA 90012; Tickets: (213) 880-3700

Oct. 8-10, 1992; 8 p.m.; \$18-\$12  
la la la Awards, by Latin Anonymous  
(Chris Franco, Luisa Leschin,  
Armando Molina, Diane Rodriguez)  
Directed by Jose Luis Valenzuela

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LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE  
Mandell Weiss Forum, UCSD  
La Jolla, CA; (619) 534-3960

Sept. 8-Oct. 14; Tues.-Sat. 8 p.m.,  
Sun. 2 & 7/8 p.m.  
Marisol, by Jose Rivera  
Directed by Tina Landau  
"After losing her guardian angel,  
Marisol travels an uncharted, some-  
times dangerous, & often outrageous  
road in urban America."

\*\*\*\*\*  
Sept. 2-Oct. 20, 1992  
SOLE MIO III FESTIVAL  
Info.: (415) 776-9204  
Celebration of individual as  
performer. Lots of provocative  
events; included Luis Alfaro with  
Downman at the Mission Cultural  
Center (Sept. 24-27).

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EL TEATRO CAMPESINO  
705 Fourth St. (playhouse location)  
San Juan Bautista, CA  
Tickets: (408) 823-2444, 823-4895

September--Enlilano (Sept. 10-20),  
When El Cucui Walks (reading, 9/25),  
Harvest Moon (reading, 9/26).

Oct. 30-31; 8:30 p.m., 812-86  
Dia de los Muertos celebration

Nov. 27-Dec. 13; Thur.-Sat. 8 p.m.,  
Sun. 3 & 7 p.m.; \$13-\$6  
La Virgen del Tepeyer

TEATRO INLAKECH  
632 W. Guava St., Oxnard, CA 93033  
(805) 486-7488

Aug. 21-22, 1992  
4th Califas Chicano/Latino Theater  
Festival (nine theatre companies)

## \*\*\*\*\* ART WORKSHOPS:

"Mad Bag Hats!"/ARTISTS IN MOTION  
Tony Melendez, 2885 Arboleda Rd.,  
San Diego, CA 92154; (619) 491-1305

Artists show how to make exciting  
hats from recycled paper bags. "Art  
as a Medium for Conservation Aware-  
ness" slide show. Fees: \$80-\$150.

## \*\*\*\*\* CONFERENCES:

Sept. 24-27, 1992  
"Crossing Borders/Cruzando Fronteras:  
The Next 500 Years/Los Siguietes 500  
Años," National Assoc. of Latino Arts  
& Culture, San Antonio, TX.

Sept. 24-27, 1992  
"Latin American Studies Assoc.,  
XVII International Congress,"  
Los Angeles, CA.

Oct. 9-11, 1992  
"Grassroots Theater in Historical  
and Contemporary Perspectives,"  
Community-Based Arts Project,  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Oct. 16-17, 1992  
"After the Smoke Has Cleared: Race  
& Ethnicity in the Future of L.A.,"  
UCSD Ethnic Studies Dept., at the  
Price Center, La Jolla, CA; (619)  
534-3276.

Nov. 6-7, 1992  
"A Re-Analysis of the Role & Nature  
of Arts Organizations," by Center  
for the Arts, at Fort Mason Center,  
San Francisco, CA; (415) 512-1000.

## \*\*\*\*\* GRANTS:

California Community Foundation  
806 S. Olive St., Ste. 2400  
Los Angeles, CA 90014-1526  
(213) 413-4042  
"[I]s the largest Funding Informa-  
tion Center on the West Coast."  
Open Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Make reservation for orientation.

Multi-Cultural Entry Grants  
California Arts Council  
2411 Alhambra Blvd.  
Sacramento, CA 95817  
(916) 739-3188  
Deadline: Oct. 21, 1992

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ORGANIZATIONS:

CONCERNED LATINO-AMERICAN ARTISTS  
AGAINST DISCRIMINATION  
P.O.B. 4062, Burbank, CA 91503-4062  
(310) 281-8165, (818) 502-5537  
Tired of seeing non-Latinos hired  
for scarce Latino roles on stage  
and in film?

VIVA!

4470-107 Sunset Blvd., #261  
Los Angeles, CA 90027  
(213) 953-1970  
Teatro VIVA! (Frank Castorena, Ron  
Sandoval, & Refugio Guevara) does  
HIV info. skits in the L.A. area.  
VIVA! is a support organization for  
L.A. lesbian and gay Latino artists.  
Luis Alfaro and Monica Palacios are  
among its artists-in-residence.

\*\*\*\*\*  
RECEIVED:

AAA! HISPANIC ART NEWS

Asso. of Hispanic Arts, Inc.  
173 E. 118th St., 2nd fl.  
New York, NY 10029; (212) 860-5445  
Subs.: \$20 ind., \$40 organizations  
A newsletter crissed w/info on arts  
events in New York and nationally.  
Oct. issue lists Mario E. Lavan,  
Hispanic Casting, 16 W. 64th St.,  
Ste. 2B, New York, NY 10023; co.  
is updating its Latino actor files.

CINEMA GUILD

1697 Broadway, New York, NY 10019  
(212) 245-5522  
Offers a small selection of Chicano  
films and videos--Chicano Park,  
The Lemon Grove Incident, and  
Yo Soy Chicano are listed titles.

EL TEATRO NOTAS (Campesino news)

P.O. Box 1240  
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045  
Mailing list: (408) 823-2444  
Sept./Oct. issue has Luis Valdez's  
"Statement on Artistic Freedom," a  
defense of his casting an Italian  
for the movie role of Frida Kahlo.



Alfredo Diaz Flores mural at the  
Plaza de la Raza in Los Angeles.



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Indian Pueblo Cultural Center  
in Albuquerque, New Mexico.