

Journal

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News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project



Zully Montero, Hermilo Salazar and Ana Manzano at Bronx River Neighborhood Center:
A traveling, bilingual puppetry workshop.

George Malave



Ramon Mendez Quinonez' *Un Jibaro*, presented throughout the city.
(L to R) Luis Melendez, Hermilo Salazar, Lui Marquez and Maria Norman.

George Malave

CETA and the Hispanic Arts: It takes Two to Tango

By ILEANA FUENTES-RAMOS

It's coming, and you run like crazy toward the bus stop, because if you miss this one, you are going to be very late for rehearsal, even by Latin time standards. You make it! It's very crowded, and all you can manage is a hand-over-a-hand at the pole, to prevent you from falling and breaking your neck. "I should be there in twenty minutes. Only a half hour late. Not bad." With a sigh of relief you look up, your eyes half closed. And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, there it is: HISPANIC ARTS: A DIFFERENT SLICE OF THE APPLE. A big, gorgeous sign in black and white. In English. On the 104 going down Broadway, in the middle of rush hour. You start to look around with pride, as if it were your own picture up on the wall. "Wonder if anyone else on this bus has noticed it." You take out your script and continue reading. "Show opens in three weeks, I better have this memorized soon . . ." But you can't concentrate. You look up again. It is your picture on that sign, because you are part of that slice. A DIFFERENT SLICE . . . "Man, we are here to stay . . ."

The energy and perseverance behind that sign go to the credit of the Association of Hispanic Arts —AHA for short. Founded in 1975 by a group of

performing and visual artists, the "Association" has been partly responsible for the survival and growth of the Hispanic arts in New York City. In its short lifespan, AHA has successfully fought for greater opportunities for Hispanic artists, for increased city, state and federal funding of Hispanic arts institutions, and for adequate representation of these institutions and their constituencies in higher levels of decision-making, panels and advisory boards of funding organizations. The progress, although real, has been very slow. Of the fifty-odd arts organizations under its umbrella, still only half receive financial assistance from either government agencies or the private sector. The funds — as is always the case regardless of the size and resources of an organization — are never sufficient. Representation in the decision-making process is nowhere near adequate. However, no one at AHA is giving up. "If you want something" say co-directors Marta Moreno Vega and Elsa Ortiz Robles, almost in unison, "it's been proven that you have to fight to get it." So the fight goes on. For increased funding. For greater Hispanic representation. For an increased awareness of what is going on in the Hispanic arts world. It's quite a task, and it ain't easy.

An outsider looking into AHA could walk away with the impression that much more is being bitten off than can be realistically chewed. Maybe so. However, if you can chew fast enough, you can con-



Braulio Villar at the American Museum of Natural History:
Workshops for youngsters, one of
AHA/CETA's major objectives.

George Malave

Verse

Poem for the day 33 years ago Hiroshima was bombed, 29 years ago Tom was born, last year I found two lamps on the street and had dinner with my French cousin Jacques, and this year the Pope died.

I stopped on Canal Street to watch a
a big puddle
into which were falling many raindrops
each making a circle in the water
which quickly disappeared.
A circle, hmm. Why a circle? I wondered.
Why is the world filled with circles?
I said to myself as I watched the
disappearing circles intermingling —
Like us, I said to myself,
the circles of our lives, our problems, our
coincidences,
each of us has a circle, repeating itself,
intermingling with other circles,
disappearing
and each puddle has a century's-worth
history of raindrops.
Canal Street is a place for disposable
revelations
and bargains in bright colors
and people dressed in inexpensive clothing
that doesn't look as shopworn as they do
and those of us who smoke and eat the
same things
understand each other to a certain extent.
I don't particularly want to be alive now
in this season, this city,
but to keep the continuity between the last
time I did and the next time I will
I am.
And all the while the men on Canal Street are
whistling and making noises at me
as if I were a bird or small animal
they wished to attract.

—CASSIA BERMAN

NIKS #2

Love is not the only face
a poem wears
a poem can be shaped to cry
know rage, and tear
can stop or twirl mixed rhythms
a poem is munitions dump
is lance
is arrow
a poem is a veto
a short straw for the war
a monument to martyr
a tribute to scarred knee'd
straight back'd Black women
a poem is
an act
or more.
No less.

—NIKKI GRIMES



Juan Gomez Quiroz conducting a printmaking class for Hispanic youths, sponsored by the Center for Inter-American Relations.

George Malave

Hispanic Arts...

tinue biting. The proof? AHA's participation in the Cultural Council Foundation's CETA Artists Project. As the only New York City organization servicing the Hispanic arts institutions, AHA became an influential force behind the move to include an appropriate percentage of Hispanics in the CETA Artists Project. As a subcontractor of CCF, AHA absorbed fifteen positions for Hispanic artists. Although it fought for a multi-discipline program, it had to accept all 15 positions in the area of theater. It is quite a step to go from providing information and services to its constituent organizations, to providing employment for artists. But it all goes hand in hand in the Hispanic arts world, where the organizations are nothing without their artists, and the artists are nothing without the organizations. It is a closely knit chain wherein helping one side automatically helps the other. If the organizations disappear, the artists — especially the theatre artist — are left homeless. If the artists disappear, the organizations might as well close their doors. A little bit of history will explain.

Hispanic arts, in the form of theatrical presentations, date from colonial times in the northern hemisphere. Today's American Southwest used to be Spanish Mexico's Northeast, where the theatre tradition of Spain flourished as early as 1598. In the Anglo-Saxon territories of the north, it would not happen until the twentieth century. When it did, it flourished in New York City. Where else? The year 1921 saw the beginning of the first *temporada de teatro en español*, with the production of *El Genio Alegre*. The 20s and 30s witnessed innumerable productions in the form of variety shows which included song, dance, theatre, declamation... a little bit for everyone's taste. 1939 marked the beginning of a siesta (many have called it a decline, others an end. I see it as a trance, a kind of "sleeping beauty awaiting her prince"). Spain was torn apart in its civil struggle. Then the world was at war. The few attempts at theatre made during the 40's and 50's had momentary success. The groups faded with the applause. The 1954 production of *La Carreta* is worth mentioning, not only for its success, but because it showed that good theatre could attract a mass audi-

ence. Rene Marques was an unknown Puerto Rican playwright in 1954. Miriam Colon was a young actress.

During the 60s, New York witnessed the arrival of many exiled, professional Cuban artists. The ground was ready for *Sleeping Beauty* to end her siesta. And she did, in 1966, with the founding of ADAL. Then came the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, founded by Miriam Colon in 1967; Greenwich Mews Spanish Theatre (later to become Spanish Repertory Theatre), Duo Theatre, and Dume Spanish Theatre in 1969; Centro Cultural Cubano and Nuestro Teatro in 1972; and many other performing and visual arts organizations in the last seven or eight years. Most of these organizations were founded by artists themselves. Today they continue, for the most part, to be run by artists who have, in their struggle for personal and institutional

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Pedro Pietri at Alianza Civica Tropical in the Bronx, reading poetry to senior citizens.

George Malave

survival, become jacks of all trades *and* masters of their own art. The road has been difficult for the visual artists; it has been difficult for the dancers. But it has been the most difficult for the Hispanic actor and actress and for the writer, because for them there is an even more real barrier separating their art from a much-wanted and deserved success: language. Many of our theatre artists and our playwrights cannot find an artistic outlet outside of the Hispanic arts organizations. That is why it is so important that the organizations become stronger and more stable. And it is just as true that most of our theatres will have a limited lifespan if our artists and directors and our playwrights do not become stronger and more stable.

This brings us back to AHA/CETA. It is very fitting that during the first year of the program the theatre aspect of the performing arts has been the target of the strengthening process. Not only has it been a blessing for the fifteen artists employed to have been able to earn their living from their profession instead of from a factory or office job. The program has also added some stability to the organizations which utilized the services of these artists, and enabled them, in many cases, to meet their contractual obligations with the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and other funding sources, in light of the minimal budgets allocated for productions. For example, Rene Buch was assigned as resident director with Gilberto Zaldivar's Spanish Repertory Theatre. He was able to continue the fine work he has done in the past, this time with greater financial security. For Spanish Rep, it has meant greater freedom to budget for productions, at a time when budgets are becoming tighter and tighter across the board. Heberto Dune, also a director, was able to continue to do what he loves best, thanks to a CETA position. After closing his theatre in Manhattan, he and Silvia Brito took on the joint venture of opening a new theatre in Queens. That the theatre remains open, having successfully presented four pieces in less than a year, with great financial constraints, and all the headaches that come with the construction of new facilities, is in part due to the AHA/CETA program. Centro Cultural Cubano would not have been able to meet its contractual obligations with NYSCA and DCA without the assignment of Francisco Prado on

a three-month residency to direct the Centro's third production of the year, and no money in the world could have paid for the craftsmanship of the work done by Hermilo Salazar with the set and costumes of Latin American Theatre Ensemble's production of *Popol-Vuh*. As for Don Quijote's Experimental Children's Theatre, very recently founded and still a babe within funding circles, the availability of Manolo Martinez and the facilities for touring the city (which both AHA/CETA and INTAR made possible) have been decisive in a rather successful start.

There is another aspect of AHA/CETA which cannot go unmentioned—its usefulness as a tool for audience development. If one were to take a poll among the Hispanic arts organizations in order to determine which situations present the greatest problems, the first would undoubtedly be "not enough money"; the second, "How do we reach a greater audience?" The community-work element of the AHA/CETA program has had, as its principal goal, the penetration of Hispanic communities for the purpose of increasing (and in many cases, kindling) the public's interest in and awareness of the Hispanic arts. Through its presentation of the play *Un Jibaro*, a Latin American poetry recital, the bilingual children's theatre production *Richard and his friends*, and the puppetry workshop, AHA has attempted, once again, to meet its commitment to the community by bringing cultural experiences to the very heart of *nuestra gente* and its obligation to its constituent arts institutions by disseminating the various art forms and letting the folks out there know that there are at least six dance companies, two music institutions, twenty-six theater and theater-related organizations, and twenty-one visual arts organizations (all non-profit) in the Big Apple where Spanish, and English, and sometimes a mixture, and sometimes all three, are spoken. AHA/CETA has begun to do a lot in the area of audience development. It has been able to strengthen the grapevine, and in the Hispanic community, for the most part, "the grapevine is the message."

So much for the immediate past, and the rapidly-transpiring present. Where does AHA/CETA go from here? Incorporating into its set of criteria all the experiences of the last ten months, where should it go? A superficial look at a list of AHA's affiliated organizations tells us that AHA/CETA cannot re-

main a theatre arts program exclusively. Nor does AHA want to: for one, its visual arts constituency is almost as large as that of the theatre. Throughout the year, these organizations have come to the central visual arts pool of the Cultural Council Foundations's CETA component for assistance. Hispanic and non-Hispanic graphic artists, printmakers, painters and photographers have been placed in residence at organizations like En Foco, Visual Arts Research and Resource Center Relating to the Caribbean, El Museo del Barrio, and Cayman Gallery. In addition, a closer look at the experience of the last ten months will indicate the placement of several visual and performing artists from the CCF pool in the various theatres under the AHA umbrella. Dancer Beverly Brown, for example, did a tremendous job with Latin American Theatre Ensemble's acting workshop students, in order to choreograph LATE's production of *Popol-Vuh*, the light design for which was done by Bruce Porter. The set for Centro Cultural Cubano's Spanish production of *Blithe Spirit* was designed and partly built by designer Steve Edelstein, who also compiled a guide to stage-space renovation for the Ricans Organization for Self-Advancement, in the Bronx. Spanish Repertory's *Blood Wedding* was enhanced by the choreographic work of Merian Soto. At AHA, CCF/CETA's entire technical pool conducted a series of community workshops for the purpose of giving basic instruction in the technical and design aspects of theatre to Hispanics interested in working with the various theatre groups. Winston Vargas and Walter Torres (from the CCF/CETA visual arts pool) provided extensive photographic and graphic design services to many AHA affiliated organizations.

With regards to the organization itself, an expansion of the program into other disciplines would enable AHA to improve on the work already started. Community outreach and audience development could be done more effectively with additional technical personnel and more professional promotional material. Its training programs in theatre arts would be enhanced by the incorporation of a dance and music element. The inclusion of visual artists within its program would enable AHA to provide more direct assistance not only to its visual arts organizations, but also to the performing organizations under its umbrella.

By the way, where have you been reading this? On the bus? STOP!! Look around. Bet you anything you'll find at least one nervous, Hispanic artist trying to hold onto the pole with one hand, and to the script, or the books, or the art work, or the dancing gear, on the other. Keep looking. Find the big, gorgeous sign in black and white. In English. And for Heaven's sake, write down the telephone number and call the "Association." Take a bite into that different slice of the apple. It tastes yummy good.

CCF/CETA Notes

The Philharmonia CETA Orchestra will hold a concert with the Harlem Boys' Choir on Dec. 1 at 8 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church at 316 E. 88 St. The orchestra will be conducted by Brian Bruman; the Harlem Boys' Choir will be directed by Walter Turnbull.

The orchestra will hold another joint concert with the Harlem Boys' Choir on Dec. 10 at 2 p.m. at the Church of Intercession, 155th St. and Broadway.

The orchestra will hold regular concerts at the International Center of Photography at 94th St. and Fifth Ave. on Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. and on Nov. 28 at 2 p.m.

Notes...

The Jazzmobile will hold two dance concerts for senior citizens at Roberto Clemente Park in the Bronx — the first on Nov. 21 at 2 p.m. and the second on Dec. 19 at 2 p.m.

Linda Kraut and Joe Stallone will show their ceramic sculptures in a group show at Clayworks, 4 Great Jones St., N.Y.C. The show will last until Jan. 4 and will include work done during the CETA project year.

CETA Media Works has just completed a four-minute 16 mm. instructional film explaining the correct use of voting machines. The film, requested by the League of Women Voters of the City of New York, will be shown throughout the city. For further information, contact the League offices at 817 Broadway.

Short Takes

Charles Stanley . . . This quarter, I'm teaching an art course in combination with painting a mural at the East 3rd Street Day Care Center in Manhattan. I teach kids ranging in age from 6 to 13. I've brought them to visit my studio and I take them on tours of the Metropolitan, Guggenheim, and Whitney Museums. They've been very enthusiastic, and their final exam will be the painting of a 60' long mural in a school corridor. It will be a gem if we pull it off — it will be a little oasis in a gray schoolhouse. Actually, the mural will be more like what was done in Roman times when artists were each given small areas to paint. Ken Sofer, another CETA artist, and I will make the connecting designs. Before this placement, I taught painting and drawing at another day care center — P.S. 2 in Chinatown.

I am enjoying teaching — I'm introducing kids to the magic of art and I'm delighted with that. But I

prefer to paint, and wonder if my talents are being used properly by the CETA project. Teaching is very exhausting and, along with transportation, consumes most of my time for painting. I am certainly grateful for the job but find that, while it aids my sustenance, it does not do the same for my career. Probably other placements like painting a mural, or designing sets, costumes, and posters would be more suitable for me while at the same time satisfying community needs. It would also be nice if instead of just talk about time sheets there were a CETA panel making aesthetic interviews — finding out what kind of work and of what quality is being done by the artists. Setting up quantitative quotas on art is antithetical to what art is about, namely the pursuit of qualitative ideas.

Deborah Rosenthal . . . One of the first assignments on my CETA job was helping to organize a group show for the OIA (Organization of Independent Artists). After that I organized my own show of fourteen painters, held May-June. I wrote an article about it for *Arts Magazine*, describing what I feel are certain trends, and explaining why I chose those fourteen painters. I loved organizing that show, which I called "Metaphor and Painting," and I was able to exhibit painters who'd never had a show before. Later on, I helped organize another group show with Francine Halvorsen and Alan Kleinman, also CETA artists, at the Federal Court cafeteria.

At present I'm working for the Parks Service at Teddy Roosevelt House on Twenty-first Street, organizing an exhibit of drawings for murals, some of them old drawings, some drawings by CETA artists. None of the murals has been done yet.

For my consultancy with the Municipal Arts Society, another CETA assignment, I've submitted two proposals for the IRT Clark Street Station in Brooklyn Heights. One is for a large photomontage, and the other will be a schematic tile map, in enamel and steel, which six painters will work on, some from CETA and some from the neighborhood.

Working for the Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project has been wonderful. As for the regular paycheck, what could be better? Most of what I've worked on has been an extension of what I do anyway. I still have time to paint. If I didn't, the job would be unacceptable.

Marilyn Schwartz . . . My first assignment was teaching photography to senior citizens at Co-op City in the Bronx. I realized when I got there that seniors enjoy lectures and discussions when they're unable to do anything too active. I think things would have gone better if we'd had a few weeks to prepare for our assignments. Co-op City wasn't ready for us either; they were quite disorganized.

Next I took photos of all the CCF administrators. I loved that job. After that I taught teenagers at *Aspira* (a social, educational and arts service geared toward teens and young adults of Hispanic background); that experience was frustrating to some degree but also challenging—it was the first time I was exposed to teaching teenagers. I also gave a class at Westbeth which I enjoyed as much as the students did, one of whom recently wrote me, saying that through the class she was exposed to a cultural activity she would have missed had it not been for CETA and the free tuition.

This job would be even more positive if I could have more assignments photographing people and if my work could be shown publicly more, such as in exhibits and booklets. But the quantity of assignments has made me feel more at ease doing a variety of things.

At present I'm working at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences photographing buildings of historical significance. I've already done photos of Snug Harbor and the Richmondtown Restoration. I'm using a lens I never used before and getting a kick out of it. I love Staten Island and enjoy being there.

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