

# Theater: 'Dog Lady' and 'Swimmer'

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*New York Times (1923-Current file);* May 10, 1984;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2010)

pg. C32

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By HERBERT MITGANG

**T**HE sets designed by Ming Cho Lee are the hit of the evening at "The Cuban Swimmer" and "Dog Lady," two plays by Milcha Sanchez-Scott. Through the artistic techniques of perspective, suggestion and just plain legerdemain, the two one-acters on Intar's 22-foot stage on West 42d Street make you believe that you're watching a wide-angle spectacle at the Winter Garden.

In the curtain-raiser, "Dog Lady,"

Mr. Lee's magic wand has willed a barrio street in Los Angeles, with a couple of houses, a winding street, palm trees and the Hollywood freeway in the background. In a clever amalgam of stage design and performance, directed by Max Ferra, the actors move at a slower pace as they walk in the distance.

Then, topping himself in "The Cuban Swimmer," Mr. Lee creates nothing less than a stretch of the Pacific Ocean, a tramp boat and a helicopter. The audience can almost feel the resisting tides and the California

oil slick that are represented by a watery-blue floor and curtain. The lighting, designed by Anne E. Militello, effectively creates an illusion at sea.

Mr. Lee won a Tony last season for building a Himalayan mountain in "K2." Nothing, apparently, is beyond his imagination.

In both plays, Hispanic-Americans use athletic skills to propel themselves into the mainstream of middle-class life in this country. It's a traditional theme. The basic plot was advanced long ago in such plays as Clifford Odets's "Golden Boy," and since then, in scores of films, books and

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### Dreamers

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**THE CUBAN SWIMMER** and **DOG LADY**, by Milcha Sanchez-Scott; directed by Max Ferra; scenery by Ming Cho Lee; lighting by Anne E. Militello; costumes by Connie Singer; sound by Paul Garrity; casting by Janet L. Murphy; production stage manager, Anne Marie Hobson; movement/mime by Pilar Garcia; sound operator, Barbara Lee. Presented by Intar, Max Ferra, artistic director; Dennis Ferguson-Acosta, managing director. At 420 West 42d Street.

**THE CUBAN SWIMMER**, with Jeannette Mirabal, Carlos Cestero, Manuel Rivera, Lillian Hurst, Graciela Lecure, Carlos Carrasco and Elizabeth Pena.

and

**DOG LADY**, with Manuel Rivera, Carlos Carrasco, Jeannette Mirabal, Graciela Lecure, Lillian Hurst, Elizabeth Pena and Marcella White.

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movies, members of ethnic groups have moved out of the slums.

In "Dog Lady," a runner is given a healing potion to make her go faster; the twist is that the religious mumbo-jumbo in the barrio causes her to run, like an animal, on all fours. In "The Cuban Swimmer," a daughter is entered in an endurance race from Long Beach to Santa Catalina Island. She is egged on by her family, following her in an old boat.

The cast, including Jeannette Mirabal, Carlos Cestero, Manuel Rivera, Carlos Carrasco, Graciela Lecure, Lillian Hurst, Elizabeth Pena and Marcella White, play well together. Miss Mirabal makes an auspicious debut in both plays, as the long-distance family runner and as the Cuban swimmer. In a tour de force of balletic movements, she literally must

keep her arms fluttering in the imaginary waters throughout the play.

"I'm going to dive into the Milky Way and wash my hands in the stars," the swimmer dreams.

But what is her family's unpoetic, realistic goal in "The Cuban Swimmer"? To be recognized by the pretentious, unwittingly bigoted sports commentator in the helicopter hovering overhead that is covering the contest for the local television station — for a moment of fame in the tinsel glory of the all-American tube.

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