

Stage: 'Antigona Perez'

Sanchez Play Given by Puerto Rican Troupe

By HOWARD THOMPSON

Only genuine, stirring theater performed in the nave of a huge church, could make you forget the premises.

Such is the culminative effect of "The Passion of Antigona Perez" an updated "Antigone" by Luis Rafael Sanchez, which was given two performances in English by the bilingual Puerto Rican Traveling Theater at the theater-minded Cathedral of St. John The Divine.

After last night's performance the unit will tour the work indoors in the Metropolitan area. An outdoor summer tour will follow.

The play, in its American premiere, is a major step by the estimable ensemble, operating under two grants.

Mr. Sanchez has turned a coolly scathing denunciation of dictatorship, personified by the absolutism of his heroine, who defies the head of a republic "somewhere in the Americas."

Faced with death, the girl fouls her cell, speaking to the audience, scanning the vineyards around her. Finally, uncompromising and standing alone, she marches off with a firing squad.

The action last night unfolded on a raised wooden platform holding several tiers backed by a skeletal lattice.

Using the device of shouted newspaper headlines—trivial to political—the play adamantly affirms the topping of might, nudged by a free spirit. But its conviction is passionate underneath. And so last night was the re-

The Cast

THE PASSION OF ANTIGONA PEREZ, a play by Luis Rafael Sanchez. Directed by Pablo Cabrera. Set and lighting by Karl Elgsti; costumes, A. Christina Giannini; production stage manager, C. D. Creasap. Presented by the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam, Avenue and 112th Street.

Antigona Miriam Colon
The press Tony Vargas, Luis Cadiz
 Jose Rodriguez, Eddie Velez, Jose Ocasio
Aurora Mary Bell
Creon Molina Manu Tupou
Pilar June Adams
Msgr. Bernardo Escudero .. Peter Blaxill
Irene Irene DeBari
Townsppeople Marcos Abril, Freddie Aponte, Ana Bonilla, Pura Cintron, Phyllis Collins, Lillian Cortez, Lourdes Ferre, Pedro Luis Gonzales, Raphael Henriquez, Gloria Lake, Soraida Lara, Marie McFarlane, Ramon L. Ortiz, Anna Maria Otero, Ralph Oxlos, JoAnne Robinson.

strained, steel-sprung performance of Miriam Colon, the ensemble's founder, as the brave girl. The joy of the evening, at first, was her steady watchfulness of the others.

About midpoint (there is no intermission) the play stretches taut in direct confrontations. The writing becomes gripping, the flanking characters all too real. The playwright deftly thrusts them against his rockbound heroine.

All the key players are good: Manu Tupou as the unctuous ruler (and Antigona's uncle), June Adams as his perceptive, ruthless wife, Peter Blaxill as a pompous but shrewd emissary of the Vatican and Irene De Bari as the heroine's impressionable friend.

Last night the play, the players and the very setting of the church, merged no less than hauntingly, under Pablo Cabrera's understanding direction. Nothing more was needed.