

Poet-Revolutionary Inspires a Drama

Cuba's Marti Is Subject of Festival Play

By MEL GUSSOW

"Abdala-José Martí," which the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theater presented yesterday as its contribution to Lincoln Center's Community/Street Theater Festival, depicts the passion of José Martí, the Cuban poet-revolutionary.

Drawing upon Martí's verse (his poem "Abdala" is the core of the play) and his life, the work also attempts to relate its 19th-century hero to Latin-American politics today.

The drama was adapted by Ivan Acosta and Omar Torres, is directed by Mr. Acosta and stars Mr. Torres in the title role. It is performed entirely in Spanish, but the action is violent, emotions are strong, and the acting is full of con-

Theater Festival

Today's events at the Lincoln Center Community/Street Theater Festival:

2:30 P.M. Bed-Stuy Street Academy, Brooklyn, "Nigger Gangs, Nigger."

5:30 P.M. People's Performing Company, "Choices."

The events take place on the plaza at Lincoln Center and are free.

viction. For a Spanish-speaking audience, the work must be particularly provocative, but even for one with only a basic familiarity with the language, "Abdala-José Martí" communicates.

At Lincoln Center the stage is an open platform in the plaza, with the Metropolitan Opera rising in the background like a palace — an oddly effective setting for revolutionary drama.

The cast is garbed in black, as if for Greek tragedy, an aspect that is heightened by the ritualistic quality of the direction. The movement of the actors doubling as patriots and oppressors, is often stylized. In one scene they march in holding long black poles, with which they then simulate the bars of a cell. As Abdala writhes in chains, they swirl into a vortex and finally crawl across the stage like vermin.

Later, as Abdala exhorts the mob about its "moral obligation" and is savagely attacked by a heckler, his mother stands on one side of the stage, looking like a statue, with her hands clamped to her ears.

Songs are interposed, delicately sung by Mr. Torres, who accompanies himself on the guitar. In contrast to the

Earlier, Variety Show Is at Lincoln Center

anger of the dialogue, the lyrics are about love and poetry. As one line reads, "My verse is a knife through whose handle flowers grow."

Earlier in the afternoon at Lincoln Center the Brownsville Theater Project of Brooklyn presented a variety show. According to the Street Theater program, the Brownsville company teaches "performing arts as a developer of confidence, as a source of bringing out the introvert, encouraging free expression of ideas and realization of self-importance."

Yesterday's presentation, directed by Margaret Moore, was a showcase for the company's various artistic endeavors. It began with a fashion show and was followed by two vignettes from the group's dramatic workshop.

In one scene, two young hoodlums successfully mugged two women, then when they accosted a third, she calmly caught one of them in a judo hold and tossed him over her shoulder. After knocking the other down, she strode off stage — to the applause of the crowd.

After several musical selections, the show came to a climax with a production number called "Sacred Forest," in which the vividly costumed company danced energetically to the beat of Windel Hayes's drum. For both shows—as on opening day—the Lincoln Center plaza was filled with street-theatergoers responding enthusiastically to the entertainment.