

AND THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Two years ago, with the generous support of the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund's Resident Theatre Initiative, CTG embarked on a four-year effort to increase the participation and attendance of Latino audiences and Latino artists. Now in its third year, LTI (Latino Theatre Initiative) is both an important voice and platform for Latino artists and the larger community.

LTI's audience development efforts were successfully kicked off by a substantial growth in Latino subscriptions at the Taper during the 1994 production of *Bandido!*. The 1994/95 Mark Taper Forum season offering, *Floating Islands* by Eduardo Machado, witnessed further growth in Latino audiences, and gave LTI an opportunity to continue its efforts to bring Latino artists to the mainstage.

In April, LTI welcomed Luis Alfaro and Diane Rodriguez as Co-Directors. Working with Rosamaria Marquez, LTI Project Producer, they have formulated plans for productions and commissions over the next two years. In July, they produced *DIVA L.A.*, a family oriented variety arts show in the traditional Latino "tanda" vaudeville style. In September they offered a festival of mariachi music, *El Grito*. In November they celebrated the Day of the Dead with *Spirits Rising*. The West Coast premiere of Oliver Mayer's *Blade to the Heat*, will be a LTI production, enabling them to continue increasing Latino participation at CTG.

In a joint statement, Luis Alfaro and Diane Rodriguez said, "We are committed to artistic excellence in the development of a new theatre that gives voice to cultural diversity. We are invested, through our work and activism for the arts, in creating a new Latino theatre that encourages a vibrant generation of artists and audiences." They pointed out that LTI has sponsored a total of nine playwright fellowships and commissions.

In addition to support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, LTI is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, Los Angeles County Music and Performing Arts Commission, City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, and the Music Center Unified Fund. For more information on LTI, call Luis Alfaro at 213-972-7588 or Diane Rodriguez at 213-972-7586, or for more information on supporting LTI with a donation, call Hilary Crahan at 213-972-7368. ●



Latino Theatre Initiative Co-directors, Luis Alfaro and Diane Rodriguez.

Photo Credit: Jay Thompson



Chay Yew, Director of CTG's Asian Theatre Workshop, attends an opening night with friend and actress Tsai Chin.

Photo Credit: Craig Schwartz

Chay Yew recently joined the Mark Taper Forum staff as one of three artistic fellows as part of the Mellon Fellowship Program. Chay immediately began work on conceptualizing and creating the ATW (Asian Theatre Workshop), a program dedicated to the development of Asian American theatre and to serving the Asian American communities in Los Angeles through the medium of theatre.

Chay will be working in conjunction with APAF (Asian Pacific American Friends of CTG). APAF is a volunteer support group formed in 1986 to foster mutually beneficial relationships between Center Theatre Group and Los Angeles' Asian Pacific American artists, administrators and audiences in the work of the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson Theatre, and the Music Center of Los Angeles County.

In addition to continuing the APAF Reading Series, ATW plans a series of no-frills Shoebox Readings. ATW hopes to commission several plays, and to produce special projects such as *The Square* which would bring together eight Asian and eight non-Asian playwrights to write a ten minute play exploring their experiences, thoughts and feelings about each other. Chay is especially excited about this project and stated, "I don't believe in isolationist policies. It would be fascinating to see what Tony Kushner (one of the eight non-Asians) comes up with." Upcoming Special Events include an Asian American Solo Performance Festival and an Asian American Theatre Conference. ATW plans to reach out to the community by hosting Salon Series such as their recent *Lounge Series*, an intimate series of conversations between Asian American theatre artists, performers and critics, and by creating playwriting groups especially for Asian teens and HIV positive Asians.

Chay said, "I hope to encourage Asian-American voices to tell their stories and experiences. I want to create a home base for Asian American writers." For more information on ATW, call Chay Yew at 213-972-7682 or for more information on supporting ATW with a donation, call Hilary Crahan at 213-972-7368. ●