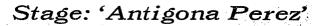
Stage: 'Antigona Perez': Sanchez Play Given by Puerto Rican Troupe By HOWARD THOMPSON New York Times (1923-Current file); May 20, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg. 20



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.

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.

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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

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.

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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.