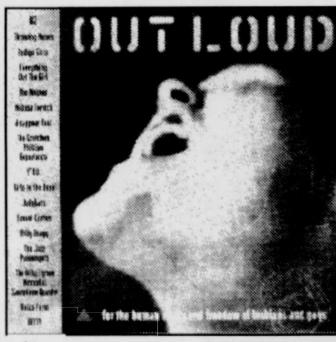




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LET THEM ENTERTAIN YOU

Local companies Miracle Theatre Group and Imago have what it takes to astound, excite and delight

by Risa Krivé

Il the world's a stage...of multicultural and multimedia art performed and produced in the upcoming season by some of Portland's most popular players.

Miracle Theatre Group (Teatro Milagro), the largest Hispanic arts organization in the Northwest, has planned a month-long festival of art and theater events to celebrate Dia de los Muertos.

Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is considered by many to be Mexico's most important and popular holiday. It is traditionally a festival of welcome for the souls of the beloved dead who, it is believed, return once a year for a few hours to enjoy the earthly pleasures they knew in life and to commune with their loved ones. The living delight in preparing food and drink for their dearly departed guests. The living create ofrendas (altars) decorated in honor of their dead. The Day of the Dead is celebrated annually on Nov. 2. The festival itself lasts for a month; most rituals and events take place from Oct. 28 to Nov. 2.

There is a worldwide calendar correspondence to this celebration of the lifting of the veil between

the realms of the living and the dead. Our Halloween holiday, from the pagan European All Hallow's Eve (later christened All Saints Day), was originally a similar celebration. At this time the yearly cycle of the agricultural harvest was completed, the earth's New Year just begun. The time of the crossroads between the death of the old crops and the germination of the new crops is also an intersection for the commingling of the spirit and material realms, where the dead and the living meet. The living entertained their spirit visitors with sweet treats. The later Christian overlay of fear and morbidity obscured the pagan purpose of the holiday. Halloween is commonly

out awareness of the origin of the mystery of the masquerade, and without connection or contact with our loved ones who have

Now the Miracle Theatre Group brings this uniquely Mexican celebration to Portland for all ages and cultures to partake in the festivities. A wide variety of events and activities, including two plays; a First Thursday opening of artist-created altar exhibitions; a children's altar- and mask-making workshop; a community altar creation; an evening of poetry, film and discussion entitled "The Celebration of Death in Mexico"; and a self-guided altar tour, are all part of the seasonal excitement.

Miracle Theatre Group has developed a broad range of programming throughout metropolitan and rural Oregon, Washington and Idaho to provide quality Hispanic theater, arts and cultural experiences for the Northwest. The artistic excellence of these performances and the sound fiscal management of the organization have attracted wide audiences and funding sources. The work of important Hispanic playwrights, artists and scholars is shared with general audiences and with lowand moderate-income Spanish-speaking audiences.

Miracle Theatre Group assists in the development and support of a regional Hispanic arts community. Its presence on the Portland theater scene has influenced other theater companies to assess and expand their bicultural offerings. Major and minor theater companies have followed Miracle's lead by showcasing plays by Hispanic authors and casting Hispanic actors in various roles. Miracle has assisted the film industry as well, securing major roles for Hispanic actors in locally filmed productions and commercials.

Miracle Theatre Group has attracted funding from such diverse sources as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Oregon Arts Commission, McKenzie River Gathering, Black United Fund of Oregon, the US West Foundation, Bank of America, and the Heathman Hotel.

different seasonal mingling with the mysteries will be presented by the internationally acclaimed theater ensemble Imago. This Portland-based theater company has been featured three times at the International Children's Festival in Taiwan. Imago's national reputation led to its inclusion this autumn in "Passport '95," an annual AIDS benefit and multimedia fashion extravaganza organized by Elizabeth Taylor and sponsored by Macy's San Francisco. Imago opened and closed the runway events with its "Rhythms of Hope" performance. Imago created a collage of ever-changing surroundings, transporting the audience to strange lands and un-



celebrated in the United States with- Carol Triffle and Jerry Mouawad star in Buffo

known worlds. The company charmed the heart and tricked the eye with a brew of clay, papier mâché, wood, wire, foam, video, electromes, lighting and sound. The show was an explosion of magical dance, mime, music and mask illusion fusion.

Imago returns to Portland this October to kick off its home season with the play *Buffo*. *Buffo* delighted children of all ages at the world premiere last spring. *The Oregonian* declared it "a satisfying romp through the underworld." *Buffo* now features a new ending, for those who've already seen it, and promises pleasure for all. The story follows a boy on his journey through the center of the earth, only to find that he was headed for home all along. Remind anyone of Dorothy?

Thanks to our abundance of local talent, we don't have to go to Broadway to be entertained. We can find theatrical satisfaction and travel all over the worlds without going further than our own backyard.

Most of the events in the Dia de los Muertos Festival will take place at Miracle Theatre Group's new performance center, at 525 SE Stark St., in Portland. For more information about or tickets to events, call 236-7253.

Buffo plays through Nov. 18 at the Imago Theatre, 17 SE Eighth Ave., in Portland. Tickets are available through Fred Meyer Fastixx 224-8499 or Imago 231-9581.