

To Whom it may Concern :

I'm writing to express my profound admiration and appreciation for New Theatre, its Artistic Director Ricky J. Martinez, Managing Director Eileen Suarez and its entire dedicated staff. Please understand that I'm not given to hyperbole. There will be a lot of strong language used in this letter. It will not be used lightly. New Theatre plays a vital role in the cultural landscape of Miami. The work it presents to the community often goes on to great life elsewhere. New Theatre makes an invaluable contribution nationally and at times internationally. The theatre is small, local and familiar, but even in New York, theatre buffs know New Theatre as a courageous birthplace of new and exciting plays, including Nilo Cruz's *Anna In The Tropics*, which won a Pulitzer.

I first met Ricky J. Martinez when we both were playwrights developing work in the Downstage Miami program. Ricky was extremely generous, supportive and insightful throughout the process. A couple of years later, my play, *The Sunken Living Room* was due to premiere at Southern Rep in New Orleans, when Katrina hit. New Theatre, then under the leadership of Rafael de Acha, gave the play (set in my hometown of Miami) a home. The production was extremely well-acted, designed and directed. Watching the work go up at New Theatre was a wonderful experience. Though it was very well-received and nominated for a Carbonell for Best New Work, the quality of New Theatre's production enabled me to diagnose a small weakness in the script. I did a rewrite, and when the show finally went up in New Orleans, the script was seamless. There, it won the Gambie Award for Best Original Play, and was unanimously praised by the critics. As a result of the two productions (both co-productions by New Theatre and Southern Rep), *The Sunken Living Room* was published by Samuel French. I recently learned that a monologue from the play will be included in Smith & Kraus' annual collection of stage monologues. *The Sunken Living Room* is being planned for a New York production and was named Play of the Week at New York's famed Drama Bookshop. The script also garnered me an invitation into the Dorothy Strelsin New American Writers' Group at the highly-regarded Primary Stages in New York. I could not have achieved any of the above had it not been for New Theatre. For that alone, I would be forever grateful. But there's more.

While I was attending rehearsals for *The Sunken Living Room*, I gave Ricky J. Martinez a copy of a new play still in progress, called *Likeness*. Developed at the prestigious New Harmony Project as well as at Primary Stages, the play was chosen to premiere at New Theatre, with Ricky as director. I was thrilled at the prospect, and my expectations were more than met. During the first week of rehearsal, Ricky and I and the talented cast of local actors did table work on the script. The quality of the feedback and the resulting rewrites rivaled and complemented all that New Harmony and Primary Stages offered. Watching Ricky work with the actors during rehearsals was an utter joy. Ricky's love of theatre and respect for the actors and their process gives me hope that a positive work ethic in theatre will live on and thrive in South Florida. *Likeness* has lived on, having just received its New York premiere at the Manhattan Theatre Source, where it was extremely well-received and is now under consideration for publication by Samuel French as well.

New Theatre's Eileen Suarez went out of her way to make me, as a guest artist, feel at home and taken care of. Tara Vodihn, as both dramaturg and actor in *Likeness*, made great contributions on the page and the stage. During talk-backs for both productions, I got the sense that the Miami audience greatly appreciates the content and the quality of the new works that New Theatre offers to them. These people love the theatre. World Premieres have the potential to make history. In the canon of American Theatre, I hope that my work will one day figure, at least respectably. I know that both of the above-mentioned plays have been taught at the college level already, so that a new generation is already aware of them. This is because New Theatre originally saw something in my work and had the courage to produce the plays of a virtual unknown. I would jump at the chance to return to Miami and entrust any new work to New Theatre and Ricky J. Martinez. I wish all of my plays could start there, but I write a lot, and I know other writers deserve to experience the joy of working at New Theatre.

The New Theatre audience has the sophistication and the open-mindedness to give new work a chance. In these difficult economic times, our country faces the danger of taking a huge step

backward in many areas of life. Art enriches, emboldens and inspires us. These are the very times Art is needed most. Theatre is a dialogue with its audience. It mustn't go silent. It makes me very proud to know that theatrical voices known across the country and sometimes around the world, can first be heard for a reasonable price at this small, courageous theatre in my own hometown.

Sincerely, David Caudle