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HART, STEVEN EDWARD

**THE FAMILY: A THEATRE COMPANY WORKING WITH PRISON
INMATES AND EX-INMATES**

City University of New York

PH.D. 1981

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THE FAMILY: A THEATRE COMPANY WORKING WITH
PRISON INMATES AND EX-INMATES

by

STEVEN HART

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

1981

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1981

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE FAMILY: A THEATRE GROUP WORKING WITH INMATES
AND EX-INMATES

by

Steven Hart

Principal Adviser: Professor Stanley A. Waren

This study illuminates the origins, development, representative methods, dramatic works, and the cultural as well as the social impact of the theatre company known as The Family. The group was formed in 1972 under the direction of Marvin Felix Camillo by six former inmates of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County New York. Best known for its award-winning 1973 production of Short Eyes by Miguel Piñero, the company to date has enjoyed some commercial and critical success as a part of the theatre community in New York City.

Part I of this study deals with the origins and development of The Family. Following an introductory chapter, Chapter II focuses on the background leading up to the formation of The Family with particular emphasis on the background of Marvin Felix Camillo. Chapter III covers the workshop that took place at Bedford Hills, its growth and working methods. Chapter IV relates the history of Short Eyes and its rise to national prominence, as well as providing a summary of The Family's activities from that time to the present, including material on its administrative and funding history.

Part II deals with representative works of The Family. Chapter V is an overview of characteristic plays the group has chosen to produce as well as working methods and themes that specifically relate to The Family. Chapter VI is a history, reconstruction and commentary on the group's production of The Crucifixion, a modern form of passion play based on the poem by James Weldon Johnson. Chapter VII is a discussion about Short Eyes in comparison to four other contemporary plays that deal with enforced confinement.

Part III explores the organization of The Family and its relationship to prisons. Since the group seems to operate in a way that is similar to an extended family, Chapter VIII is predicated on an analogy between the group and some concepts on the role of families in society expressed by Robert F. Winch. Chapter IX is an exploration of prison in relation to the theatre in general and The Family in particular. Chapter X is the conclusion.

It was not Marvin Camillo's objective to set up a social service or psycho-therapeutic agency when he founded The Family, but rather to set up a theatre. Its workshops, however, which emphasize the individual's exploration of his emotions and his untapped abilities seem to yield a great deal of personal growth and satisfaction to the participants. Society also gains from The Family through its literature which seems to give us insight into aspects of American life that generally go unrepresented in the arts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Charles Elson, Professor Emeritus of the City University Graduate Center and formerly Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Family who first suggested this project to the Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in Theatre, Professor Stanley A. Waren. Professor Elson's sensitivity and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this work.

Professor Waren first suggested The Family to me as a dissertation topic, which, because of its relationship to the field of corrections, constitutes a fairly new area of research in the theatre. He has provided countless hours of incisive, constructive argument and imaginative suggestions that have made this research both exciting and valuable. For example, it is largely through his efforts and support that there is now a national organization known as The Theatre in Prisons Project of the Center for Advanced Study in Theatre Arts to assist arts groups in prisons and working with ex-inmates in meeting their own needs and in bringing the case for arts in corrections before the public. I would also like to thank Professor Edwin Wilson, Chair of the Department of Theatre and Film at Hunter College, for his advice and assistance with this research as well as during the rest of my career as a doctoral student.

I have come to feel a deep respect and affection for Marvin Felix Camillo, the Artistic Director of The Family, who has set aside time from an extremely demanding schedule to work through an exhaustive series of interviews. He and the members of The Family as well as many

members of the Board of Trustees supplied the material for the heart of this study.

I would also like to acknowledge the time, thought, and patience contributed by my father, W.D. Hart, who talked through numerous difficult areas of this research with me. Most particularly, I want to thank my wife, Jon Kent Hart, for her intellectual and emotional support, as well as her assistance in preparing the final copy of this research for presentation.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the origins, the development, the representative methods, the dramatic works, and the cultural as well as social impact of the theatre company known as The Family. The group was formed in 1972 under the direction of Marvin Felix Camillo by six former inmates of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County, New York. Since that time, the company has enjoyed some commercial and critical success as a part of the theatre community in New York City. It has expanded its membership to include several hundred people with intermittent ties to The Family and a core company of about thirty.

Members of The Family come from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds including a large number of individuals with prison-related experience. Along with the productions staged by the repertory company, which is the nucleus of The Family, the activities of the group include classes and workshops in acting, speech, dance, singing, and playwriting.

The Family is of interest because of its work in helping its members to stretch their personal horizons and in making it possible, through its productions and workshops, for society to gain greater insight and understanding of itself through the special perspective of the group's playwrights and performers. In so doing, The Family opens

fresh channels of awareness between racial and economic factions of our culture that traditionally remain remote from each other. I have attempted to focus on those features of The Family that set it apart from other theatres and make it unique in our society and culture. Two and a half years of research cause me to regard the group as significant.

While the history of inmate/artists in American prisons can be documented from before the Civil War, these were largely in the form of novels, poetry and retrospective accounts of prison life.¹ The theatre did not appear except as the occasional charity performance by notables like George M. Cohan and Sophie Tucker, and amateur theatricals mainly conceived and performed by the inmates as "in-house" entertainment.²

The driving force behind The Family is its director, Marvin Felix Camillo, without whom, every person interviewed agreed, the organization would never have come into being and who, as its principal founder, is referred to as "the father" of The Family. From all indications, it is largely his creativity and leadership that has attracted funding sources to support The Family, and it was also generally agreed that without Camillo as its central authority and spokesman, the group might very likely cease to exist.

¹H. Bruce Franklin, The Victim as Criminal and Artist (New York; Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 133.

²"Prison Theatre," Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts, Clipping file, New York, NY.

Before discussing the specifics of The Family's development, Camillo and I had an introductory discussion about the group's objectives, character and relationship to the rest of the theatre community. As he describes it, "The Family offers an introduction to basic theatrical art" to its new members and that, "...the arts should be involved in all phases of life such as institutions, prison, schools--touching all classes and neighborhoods." He added that, "Theatre experience is only good if one can learn--not like learning math and science etc. Theatre is the way that absolutely anyone can learn."³

Camillo identified that learning process as follows, "Theatre demands total participation. It is one of the few things you can see from the ground up...from beginning to end." The history of the group is indeed one of creating productions "from the ground up," sometimes beginning with no more resources and materials than the imagination of a group of actors in a workshop and a few lines of poetry as is the case with The Crucifixion. Camillo found as a child that the theatre gave him pride and taught him, "a very special discipline" that was applicable to other phases of his life.

When Camillo began to shape the idea of The Family, two concepts were paramount: (1) The Family would be interested in art, not prison reform or social work for inmates, (2) the group would be non-competitive within itself unlike the commercial theatre where he worked for a

³Interview with Marvin Felix Camillo, Family Office at St. James Church, New York, NY, 27 March 1979. The National Endowment for the Arts will be referred to hereinafter as the NEA.

time before founding The Family. Professionalism would be achieved by example through involving professional theatre people in the company like Colleen Dewhurst, Gilbert Price, Raul Julia, Joseph Papp, Charles Elson, David Mitchell, and Spencer Mosse, all of whom have taken an active role in the group at various times.

Unanimity is achieved by having everyone who enters the company participate in some way in workshops whether they are from high school, off-broadway, college, a conservatory, the street, or prison. At the same time, Camillo stresses that, "The concept of The Family is not defined in terms of limitations...of limiting it to one type of experience. The closest thing we all have in common is living in the city." As an example of this diversity, Camillo cited The Marriage Proposal, a play by Chekhov that The Family performs in Spanish and English and has reset in the Caribbean.⁵

The Family is an unusual organization patterned after an extended family for which, as noted, Camillo serves as the patriarch. Members of The Family grow into and out of their various artistic, technical, and staff positions as their abilities and desires grow and change. Titles and job descriptions seem to have less meaning than the emotional tie the individual has to the group. For example, J.J. Johnson is one of the founders of The Family, a board member, the technical

⁴Camillo, 27 March 1979.

⁵Marvin F. Camillo et al. "The Marriage Proposal" Adapted for the stage from the play by Anton Chekhov. Taped Performance at All Angel's Church, New York, NY, 15 June 1980.

director, and an actor in the company. I have seen him operate on all these levels and handle himself impressively. I have also seen him painting the ceiling of the office at the Black Theatre Alliance (BTA), and stop to chat with a shy youngster who was waiting to see someone else. Everyone defers to Johnson and Camillo not so much because of their titles, but because they are the elders of The Family and have remained active since the group came into being.

Members sometimes work outside The Family to do shows or pursue other interests. I saw a production at the Wonderhorse Theatre of Bullpen by Shamsul Alam, who is currently the playwright-in-residence at The Family. Produced by Ron Comenzo, who has nothing to do with the group, the play had had its first reading in The Family's Playwright's Forum. The Comenzo production included J.J. Johnson as one of the actors.

From time to time I have seen attempts to impose traditional management structures on the group which have either been actively resisted or simply fallen away from disuse. As Part I will demonstrate, that is probably because the group has had a constantly changing funding base that required different procedures. They have also had a great number of financial ups and downs, and so have learned to improvise according to necessity, rather than to follow set procedures.

Such loose structure often confounds what should be routine operations. For example, because of a heavy turnover in management personnel, I have frequently found myself helping to draft grant proposals. The Family internal organization is also confusing to outsiders, and even members of the board who are not actively involved with the group

on a day to day basis. Nevertheless, this organizational approach seems to work best for this particular theatre which has a goodly number of inner-city young people and former inmates, who have not had much success with more traditional social institutions such as the public schools and the courts.

This familial organization also demands that the participants make an unusual investment of personal trust which is born out by the fact that The Family involves a larger portion of a person's time and energy. Scheduling and deadlines are loosely planned and executed. Rehearsals often take place at a variety of locations during a single week and involve considerable travel time. It is also true that the group has a pervasive interest in the lives of its members, and that the educational and personal needs of some of the members are wider than those of many young actors looking for work in New York City. Their range of experience, from street gangs to Broadway, is also more "exotic", bringing a special vividness to their work.

I have concluded that the precise methods and character of The Family might not lend themselves to reconstruction by another group because they arise essentially from the personality and creativity of Marvin Camillo. On the other hand, there are some concepts that I think can be extracted from my interviews with Camillo, various Family members, members of the board of directors, and people closely related to their work, that reveal the special qualities of The Family. Understanding such qualities may form the basis for insight into the

theatre's potential as an instrument for giving individuals a sense of their intellectual potential and emotional sense of self-worth. At the same time, it seems that the dramatic literature of The Family may offer American society a unique perspective for our common self-awareness. At any rate, no one can claim that the works of The Family are not natively American or that they are imitative of European models, if sometimes adapted from such models.

While scripts, press articles, books and other conventional materials have been used, my central concern has been to create a monograph that explicates the characteristics of The Family that differ from other theatres. Those elements reveal themselves best in the attitudes, ideas and reactions of individuals. The core of this study, therefore, has been based on personal observations and taped discussions with others. Materials gathered from inmates and former inmates relating to their experience in prison are presented anonymously to insure the individual's privacy and to respect their sometimes hard-won confidence.

The body of this study is divided into three parts followed by a conclusion. Part I, The Origins and Development of The Family to the present, has been broken down for purposes of convenience into three chapters. Chapter II discusses the background of The Family centering on the life of Marvin Camillo and how he came to run the workshop at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in the early 1970s. Chapter III covers the prison workshop, the production of New York, New York, The

Big Apple, the actual beginnings of The Family outside prison and their relationship with the Theatre of The Riverside Church. Chapter IV relates the history of Short Eyes and The Family's rise to national prominence. This chapter also includes a description of the original series of workshops that were conducted for people other than inmates and a truncated history of the group from 1976 to its present location in the Black Theatre Alliance on Theatre Row with performance space at All Angel's Church on West Eightieth Street in Manhattan.

Part II is devoted to the productions and dramatic works of The Family. Chapter V is an overview of characteristic plays the group has chosen to produce as well as working methods and themes that specifically relate to The Family. Much of the work has been developed through collective improvisation based on poetry from various authors brought together to form a single script such as New York, New York, The Big Apple and Straight from the Ghetto. The latter of these two productions evolved from the former, and is constantly being updated and changed each time it is produced. Chapter VI contains a reconstruction of The Crucifixion, a modern passion play developed from James Weldon Johnson's poem that has appeared prominently in the group's repertoire since the Bedford Hills workshop.

Chapter VII is exclusively concerned with the principal themes of Short Eyes and its commentary on prison society in relation to society at large, and related sexual mores and attitudes. There is comparative discussion about Short Eyes and four other plays dealing with enforced

confinement from the same era, Fortune and Men's Eyes, The Brig, Getting Out, and The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel.

Part III is a discussion of the organization of The Family and its relationship to prisons. While it is not my intention to prove that The Family is a real family, I found that Robert Winch's description of the nature and the function of a family is particularly suited to describing this theatre group. Thus Chapter VIII is based on this analogy. Chapter IX is an exploration of prison in relation to the theatre in general and The Family in particular. The attempt here is to characterize some of the features of The Family that make it effective in that environment. This discussion cannot be considered as more than exploratory as it leads to an investigation of prisons and parole which ultimately falls outside the parameters of this study. At the same time, it would seem absurd not to touch upon the subject.

The possible conclusions that may arise from this research begin from the realization that The Family, in the form of Mr. Camillo and the original members, was founded by people who had a first-hand respect and understanding for the group's first audience, the prison population. While their efforts have had an enriching effect on the lives of both their members and many of the inmates they have served, their intent was to create a successful and unusual theatre, not a program for prisoner reform. I think it can be argued that they have succeeded in this endeavor and that they have maintained this objective with a clear continuity from the outset. Because of The Family's flexible

organization, it can change organically and respond in a non-bureaucratic, nurturing way to its members, students, and audience, while presenting itself in a fresh, non-institutional way to funding sources and government agencies. This quality also permits it to work with people, some of whom have had very poor experiences with organizations of any kind other than a street gang. Working with the group demonstrates to them that organizations are composed of people, rather than immutable, unknowable systems, and that people's attitudes and contributions make organizations what they are.

The Family also helps its members to see themselves as having innate worth, creative potential, specific skills and talents that can be developed, and a place in their social and cultural milieu. The Family also invites its members to participate in one of the deepest pleasures of life which is the creation of a work of art, a process which requires uncommon discipline and determination, and which involves almost every facet of the artist's being.

The chief disadvantage of The Family's loose, evolving structure is that it is difficult to explain, and therefore sometimes difficult to visualize, for outsiders from foundations, government agencies and the like. The Family also retains a prison related image which tends to make funding agencies and the press view it in isolation as a kind of freak. It is difficult for the group, therefore, to compete effectively for certain types of arts funding and to achieve the critical recognition that some of their productions deserve. On the other hand,

The Family has access to funds such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Expansion Arts Program, that is not available to strictly performance oriented groups. At the time of writing, it remains to be seen whether the Reagan Administration will continue that program with more than token support.

The Family's organization, or seeming lack thereof, also makes it difficult for it to capitalize on its own accomplishments. Scripts are not brought up to publishable form but kept in the collective memory of the repertory company. Other companies, but not The Family, profit from their efforts such as the film of Short Eyes. Productions are often underpublicized, or announced too late due to a lack of funds or organizational problems, so that potential audience is sometimes lost. The fundraising strategy is often so haphazard that grant materials and applications are not always as fully developed as possible and deadlines are missed. Granting sources are typically anxious to give The Family leeway in these matters by extending those deadlines and suggesting helpful ideas in preparing applications. Fred Garrett, who was a program consultant for the New York State Council for the Arts, even became a private consultant to the group. His experiences are discussed in Part III. Staff members are sometimes frustrated and confused by this lack of definite systems and job descriptions which is perhaps why secretarial and fundraising positions in The Family have shown a high turnover.

A more serious difficulty is that it is near to impossible to get

substantive results out of the board of directors although modest cash contributions are periodically forthcoming from them. It was only in the late 1970s that the board became actively involved in the affairs of the group, and then they were called together to deal with a series of financial emergencies. They tend to see themselves in a paternal role, trying to create some form of stable organization for the group, rather than creating new sources of revenue.

The greatest single feature of *The Family* is that it reveals, with a cheering lack of harangue, aspects of American life, such as poverty, drugs, crime, and prison, from an inner-city, third-world perspective in a way that is emotionally enriching and educational. I have learned more about Harlem from Straight from the Ghetto than from four years of teaching and studying there at The City College. What is best about this phenomenon is that while I, as a white bourgeois, am still careful when I am in the community (such as avoiding deserted areas and groups of young black males), I have lost the feeling of non-specific fear that once gathered about me as I got off the D-train at 145 Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. I concur, therefore, with Mr. Camillo when he says that the theatre helps to provide a bridge between the disparate segments of society. I would also add that *The Family* exhibits a "special sensitivity" to helping to bring together the disparate portions of our society.

With regard to prison and prisoners, *The Family* has revealed to me the simple fact that inmates and ex-inmates are not an isolated, special group of people. Prisons tend to isolate us from those members of

society with whom we feel unable to cope. A person locked inside one of these institutions, however, is, if anything, not removed from society, but remains an object of special attention. Prison is an attempt to reduce his public visibility, but the convict is eventually released to the public forum after living at the public expense during his sentence, and likely to continue doing so on the outside in the form of welfare. An inmate's initial contacts on leaving prison and his ability to make supportive contacts seem to greatly influence his success in re-entering society. The Family provides a sense of belonging, of personal potential, or purpose, and of accomplishment through the arts.

It is an often stated aphorism that prison rarely seems to turn people into respectable citizens, although as Chapter IX articulates, recidivism statistics are to be treated with considerable suspicion. The Family is not interested in making anyone appear respectable according to any normative standard. The group is trying to make its members and audience aware of their creative, constructive potential and invite them to use it. That is revealed in watching the company, seeing the response of audiences in and out of prison, and in the way a vision of American life is made available to us. The company is bonded together by mutual trust and affection with Marvin Camillo as its leader, having won that bond over the barriers of mistrust that, for many in the company, have been with them for a life-time before encountering The Family. That bond is visible and powerful, moving people of all sorts, certainly including myself, to a special sense of joy through its productions and the spirit of generosity that typifies The Family.

PART I

The Origins and Development of The Family

"Visiting"

A cold place
detention house
not me
I'm glad not me
I said to him inside
not me
I'm glad not me

But you are
said he
you are¹

¹Sandra María Esteves, Yerba Buena (New York: Greenfield Review Chapbook, 1980), p. 14.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS TO THE BEDFORD HILLS WORKSHOP

I was first introduced to The Family on 16 December 1978 when I attended a matinee performance of the group's adaptation of Anton Chekhov's The Marriage Proposal at the Entermedia Theatre on Second Avenue located in Manhattan's East Village. I went at the invitation of Dr. Charles Elson, who was then Chairman of The Family Board of Trustees, because he felt that The Family, with its special birthplace in prison and unique artistic personality, ought to have a production history. Elson had contacted Stanley A. Waren, Executive Officer of Ph.D. Program in Theatre at the City University Graduate Center to see if a graduate student might be interested in working with the company and researching its background and development. Such a history might serve the group, scholars, the community at large, and specialists in the field of corrections. All might share some insights into this unusual theatre company based in New York City.

Knowing little about the group except that they were best known for their production in 1973 of Miguel Piñero's Short Eyes, I expected to see snaggle-toothed hard-timers in rented frock coats doing Chekhov's amiable "comic schtick." I was totally wrong which was the first preconceived idea of many to be removed from my understanding of the group over the next two and one half years. The Family was appearing at the Entermedia with eleven other theatre companies, such as

The Richard Morse Mime Theatre, Aerodance, and The First All Children's Theatre Company, in a festival called "Family Jam!" that ran from the 15 December to Christmas Eve.¹

The Entermedia is a large theatre, decorated with the splendour of another era, but which previously served a theatre-minded immigrant population, a little out of place now in the East Village which is essentially populated by lower income minority people living in decaying three to five story tenements and not generally interested in the theatre's offerings. This theatre mainly houses Off-Broadway musicals of moderate budget.

I was surprised to find that The Family had adapted Chekhov's twenty-minute one-act play into a full length musical entertainment set in the Caribbean. The characters had been changed from nineteenth century Russians to modern Latin Americans and West Indians with a musical score of West Indian rhythms and popular New York City hispanic music called Salsa.

Chekhov's play had been freely adapted to include a large chorus. Ivan and Natalia - called Natasha in the original - are married in an elaborate ceremony at the end of the Family's version and at one point an obiaman is summoned to fetch Ivan from the jaws of comic death with his white magic. The set consisted of a cartoon-like facade of a house, a palm tree, and a water trough, all of which are still in use

¹"Family Jam!", Program from the Entermedia Theatre December 1978, The Theatre in Prisons Archives, CASTA, CUNY Grad. Center, New York, NY. The Center for Advanced Study in Theatre Arts, The City University of New York, Graduate School and University Center, New York. The Center will be referred to hereinafter as CASTA/CUNY, GSUC, New York.

by the company for this show, with the addition of supplemental vegetation, as production circumstances demand. Photographs of the show appear in Appendix B. Even with all these embellishments, when the matinee was over, it struck me that Chekhov's play remained intact with its bittersweet commentary on the love-hate relationship that often exists between men and women.

What is more, the play had been given a new form of theatricalization and was reaching an audience who might otherwise have never heard the author's name. Around me sat as diverse a mixture as I have ever seen as a play reviewer for various small newspapers in Manhattan. In a theatre that was approximately two-thirds full, sat small groups of white middle-class looking couples surrounded by black and hispanic children and teenagers. The hispanic group applauded and cheered enthusiastically for the brief segments of dialogue, quips, and songs that were in Spanish. Also represented at that performance were a fair number of senior citizens, a few orientals, and judging from his garb, an elderly orthodox Jewish gentleman.

The company consisted of three principals and a chorus of around a half-dozen people reflecting a wide variety of skills and training from the obvious novice performer to the accomplished voice of Gilbert Price, who had recently left the Broadway production of Timbuktu. The actors were accompanied by five highly skilled musicians, a theatrical necessity that seems to be available to The Family in limitless numbers and at very moderate cost.

I was entranced by the warmth and imagination of the production to such an extent that I wanted to do the history. By March of 1979, I was a member of the Board of Trustees of The Family and at the artistic director's request, had begun helping to edit fundraising materials for the group. It seemed a good way to begin at the time, as it would be with a more conventional theatre, but I soon discovered that the formal structure of the board, with its middle-class white members, was perhaps where the group drew sustenance, but not where it lived.

Most members of The Family are in their early twenties according to an informal survey conducted by a board member, Larry Rivera. They are from New York and its environs, many having had at least brushes with the law, or having been imprisoned. The Family has operated an "open door policy," as Marvin Camillo calls it, since the group opened its ex-inmate workshops to the general public in 1975 when they received a grant for this purpose from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Thus the group is constantly changing.

Members are not required to discuss their history and it is frequently impossible to tell what sort of past an individual may have had from watching his behavior with The Family. While this is sometimes a sore point in writing grant materials and in dealing with the board, it is in keeping with a policy that recognizes prisoners as simply an important part of a larger community that the group serves through workshops and productions.

Despite my work with the board and with the administrator of that time, Fred Good, I found that I was not learning anything of substance about The Family itself. As one who has directed extensively and in a wide variety of professional and semi-professional settings, I was surprised both by the tacit cohesiveness of the company and the lack of conventional theatre procedures. For example, a Mr. Woods, who was then the company stage manager, often was uncertain about the rehearsal schedule and yet rehearsals seemed to happen with a minimum of confusion or problems.

It was impossible to engage the staff or acting company in conversation about the group as my presence seemed to arouse suspicion. In time, it became clear to me that the only possible way to make real contact with The Family and its members was through its founder and Executive/Artistic Director, Marvin Felix Camillo. Any description of The Family requires a portrait of Mr. Camillo, or "Poncho" as he is known to his friends and associates, to be complete. It was only when Mr. Camillo would talk with me freely that other members of the company would do so also. I must add, however, that while I had the feeling that I was being presented a united front from various staff members who are used to giving background on The Family to granting agencies and foundations, I never had the feeling that anyone has been in any way primed to create a particular impression on me or had consulted with Mr. Camillo for a "party line" in advance.

I started interviewing Marvin Camillo about his personal life in February of 1980. He was born in Newark, New Jersey, where he has lived for most of his life except for brief periods in the late 1960s and early seventies when he lived in Manhattan and Brooklyn. He left only to do military service and to work in the theatre, and is again living in Newark at this time where he rents a house for himself and his wife and five children and cares for his mother, his father having died in 1977. Family members with financial problems often share this house as well. When asked, he refused to tell me the precise year that he was born on the grounds that he feels people make categoric judgements about others on the basis of their age.

He did tell me that he was graduated from high school in the late fifties. I therefore surmise that if he was graduated in 1959 at the age of seventeen, he should be thirty-nine at this time, 1981. Several times during our discussions he pointed out that his youthful appearance had been a problem for him in getting people to accept his abilities. He remarked to me that in his last year of high school he looked thirteen, and his early press shots do create the impression of a precocious teenager.

His description of Newark gives insight to his later work. He perceived it as a poor community in the process of constant change. Established families of Greeks and Germans found themselves surrounded by a shifting stream of newcomers - blacks, Jews, Irish and a few hispanics. The general atmosphere of the town was "small time." Families took up residence in old three story buildings in varying states

of repair. People watched each other's children and shared each other's possessions. As an example, Camillo mentioned that if someone were going to graduate from school, a neighbor would lend that person a special article of clothing, like a best shirt, for the graduation exercises.

The Camillo home was on Brunswick Street which was destroyed in the fires in the riots in Newark during the late 1960s. The Camillo family lived in an old carriage house in considerable disrepair that was heated by a coal stove converted to burn oil. While he disliked the house, he remarked that its paint encrusted marble fireplaces would have made it just the sort of place people buy now to renovate. Father, Mother, Camillo, two brothers and three sisters occupied a cramped apartment in this house making up a "relatively small family," as Camillo had only a few cousins as an extended family with whom he had limited contact.

None of the other family members had any interest in the arts or pursued lives that are anything like Camillo's. Camillo's mother, whose maiden-name was Maggy Isabella Kornegay, is a black woman from Virginia. Originally, she made her living "cleaning for white people." With Truman's Fair Deal and the Civil Service reform under the Fair Employment Practices Committee, she was able to take Civil Service examinations after which she was employed by the federal government as a clerk. She continued to work to retirement, ending her career as a supervisor with considerable responsibility. The family took pride in her accomplishment.

Camillo's father, Filipe Camillo Calderone,² was part Mexican and part Indian born in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, a fact which gave him great pride as it had been the base of operations for Poncho Villa. Of limited education, he tried a variety of occupations. He worked in the Newark vegetable market for which he earned the derisive nickname "Poncho the Market Man," which, as previously noted, is now Marvin Camillo's nickname.

Filipe Camillo also worked as a boxer, ran his own shoe shine parlor, and a stand in the fish market. Finally, he learned photography from a friend who had learned this trade as part of his veteran's benefits and became known as "Filipe, The Family Photographer." With his photographic skills, the elder Camillo recorded the births, weddings and confirmations, etc. of his neighborhood for a modest fee, or frequently, for nothing at all until his death in 1977. Marvin Camillo deeply loved and admired his father, particularly for his sense of self-respect and enterprise. He followed this example by various small enterprises of his own including a bicycle repair shop that he ran in the late sixties just before the riots. It is this gritty sense of independence that serves Camillo today in keeping The Family alive as he has through some very tough financial periods.

His racial and cultural mixture afforded him the ability to work as an actor in roles for either blacks or hispanics during the 1960s when he and Susan Taylor, a woman who is now a board member of The

²In Mexico, the mother's last name is taken. Marvin Camillo having been born in the United States, took his father's family name. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council will be referred to hereinafter as the CJCC.

Family and editor of Essence Magazine, were "making the quotas" as he calls it, in the theatre business. Camillo is of median height and build with a distinctive face and a broad rather infectious smile. He is now a trifle overweight possibly from eating meals brought to him from a diner near his office at the Black Theatre Alliance (BTA) in Theatre Row on West 42 Street at odd hours of the day and night and which are taken at his desk when he has a free moment.

He is a person of uncommon grace, generally soft-spoken and even courtly as the situation demands. He can, however, also be quite firm with his cast in rehearsal, or relax into an easy streetwise patter with his friends and associates. He is a tastefully snappy dresser which is a good thing, because he was forced to employ his entire large wardrobe to costume the 40-member cast of the original production of New York, New York The Big Apple at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

Marvin Camillo's greatest strength seems to be his deep and sincere interest in people. Witness the fact that he cannot remember dates particularly well, but he can recall people's names and personal incidents relating to them. He treats all people from politicians to the toughest street kid with the same unqualified dignity and respect. He is able to get much volunteer work from the extended Family membership. As both a director and an administrator, he solves problems by bringing together and involving large numbers of people who may not feel that they even possess the skills necessary to the situation.

His talent with people is also his principal tool in dealing with internal political struggles with individuals. When there is disagreement about a new program's feasibility among the board, for example, he tries to avoid overt controversy by simply surrounding the problem with people who share his point of view. Similarly, The Family has distinguished itself by its ability to enlist the aid of important politicians in fundraising, such as District Attorney Eugene Gold of Brooklyn and Percy Sutton, then borough President of Manhattan, when the company sought funding from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

Camillo frankly states that he "never read a book" at either the Miller Street School or at South Side High School. A guidance councillor advised him not to bother thinking about college preparatory courses and directed him to business skills. He was a mediocre student who enjoyed English, history and art while disliking math, physical education and science. He says that he enjoyed school and "went there to play," to be with his friends and would not have thought of cutting school.

As a child, he gave small circuses in his yard which were popular in his neighborhood. People bought tickets for a few cents, or paid nothing at all, if they had no money. Other community events revolved principally around the local school. It was in the Miller Street school in the fourth grade that Camillo met Helen C. Barret who had taught music to several of his sisters before him. She recognized his singing talents and despite his racial orientation, cast him as Kelly

from the Emerald Isle in a school play. Camillo remembers this incident because he had tried to be in plays, but felt that he was excluded because of his race. Ms. Barret later saw Camillo on the Today Show during the Lincoln Center run of Short Eyes and began to correspond with him as well as sending an occasional small contribution to The Family.

In high school he encountered Dorothy Schneider, who according to Camillo was notorious among her students as a disciplinarian of scrupulous impartiality. She was also director of The New Jersey Choral Society, of which Camillo and Melba Moore were members. She introduced him to Brahms, Handel, a variety of Jewish music, and a deeper understanding of black spiritual music. She was honored by a special concert at Symphony Hall on Christmas of 1978.

He did not like television except for The Play of The Week which, being two hours long, was regarded as "torture" by the rest of his family. He went regularly to the movies, but like school, to visit with his friends and freely admits that he remembers little about the movies he attended.

Finding his home crowded and uncomfortable, as well as the scene of a certain amount of domestic discord, he preferred the streets and the company of his friends. Kenny Steward, a member of the original group at Bedford Hills, dubbed Camillo "The Hip Square," because he has often been where the action took place without necessarily taking part.

He and his friends went to playgrounds in Newark a great deal where teachers were provided. Two of them, Leo Reischgott and Bernice Johnson stand out in his memory because they encouraged Camillo as a leader and held him up as an example to the others, which at times incurred his resentment. Ms. Johnson, who is now principal of the Dayton School in Newark, invited Camillo to do poetry readings in the Newark schools in the early sixties. He involved children from school and the community, like his godson, Juan Melendez, in the performance of the poetry. He describes such readings as the beginning of The Family concept of reaching out to create a family feeling through actual family ties and the common bond of artistic creation.

As time went on, some of Camillo's friends became involved in alcohol and occasional petty crime. At fifteen, he was locked up for a few hours when one of his group, over Camillo's objections, stole some whiskey, an experience which proved the source of memorable embarrassment. As the group grew older, Newark became a center for illegal drug traffic and some of his friends became addicts. One of them was killed with an ice pick in a fight while under the influence of alcohol. While many of these people are still close to Camillo, they have lives that are quite different from his, a fact which he sensed would be the case even in late adolescence.

During this period, Camillo was given his first ticket to the Broadway theatre by a Eugene Campbell, who is now the Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Newark. Camillo remembers little about the actual play, which was Shaw's Candida, but he was overwhelmed by the

sight and feeling of the theatre itself, the audience, and the atmosphere of the theatre district.

After graduating from high school at seventeen and doing two years in the army, Camillo worked at assorted jobs around New York City until he took the Civil Service Examinations and became a clerical worker for the Navy. He also started taking singing lessons from a Dr. Winsell in Manhattan and began to appear in various small productions on the Off-Off-Broadway circuit.³

In our second interview, Camillo described to me what he believes was his first direct encounter with racism which came about when he was working for the Navy. He was scheduled for promotion in grade and pay when he was transferred to another job and the promotion was given to a white employee. At the same time, he was cast in the chorus of South Pacific in the 1967 production at Lincoln Center directed by Joe Layton with Georgio Tozzi and Florence Henderson. He quit the Civil Service.

During the late sixties, Camillo studied acting with Vinette Carroll who conducted workshops at the High School for the Performing Arts. He acted with her Urban Arts Repertory in various productions about famous Americans such as Young Tom Edison, Young Tom Jefferson, and others dealing with the childhoods of Mark Twain, M.L. King and the like. He later worked for Ms. Carroll with the Ghetto Arts Program including her adaptation of Alice in Wonderland called But Never

³Interview with Marvin Felix Camillo, The Family Office at the Black Theatre Alliance, New York, NY, 5 February 1980. Black Theatre Alliance will be referred to hereinafter as BTA.

Jam Today in which he played Humpty Dumpty. It was during this production that he met Gwynne Tomlan who would later serve as the first and most effective of The Family's administrators. In 1968, he went on the road with the national tour of South Pacific again in the chorus.

On returning from the road, he was recommended by Johnathan Lawson, another actor in the Urban Arts Repertory, to Polly Siwek who was then the Executive and Artistic Director of the Westchester Council for the Arts. She was in search of a Ghetto Arts Consultant to serve the "culturally deprived" of Westchester. His bicycle-shop--cum-residence in Newark having been burned out, Camillo moved to Westchester and took up living in a carriage house on a large estate in Croton-on-Hudson.

I shall now temporarily redirect my focus to Ms. Siwek. The press and many people connected with The Family have said that it was Colleen Dewhurst who mothered the company into the professional theatre. If that is so, then it is equally true that Polly Siwek mothered it into existence. The widow of a prominent executive for Bantam Books, she is an attractive stylish woman with considerable energy and a refreshingly acerbic sense of humor.

Originally from a family of "farmers and self-taught intelligentsia" in California, she grew tired of their narrow racial and social views and headed east. As her husband preferred that she not work, she became interested in volunteer work supporting local politicians for the League of Women Voters. From there she became interested in

service to the arts, having exhibited some of her own paintings, which led her to participate in the Rye Arts Council.

During this period, she worked with Manhattanville Community College as well as becoming head of the Westchester Council for the Arts which began operations in 1968. Nelson Rockefeller suggested that there should be a working relationship between SUNY/Purchase and the Westchester Council which seems to have led to Ms. Siwek's present position as Aid to the Dean of Purchase in the field of the arts. Her chief concern at the Westchester Council was "service to the artist."

Within the prosperous communities the Westchester Council served were pockets of poor minority groups, chiefly black, in such towns as Portchester, Rye, New Rochelle, and Ossining where the Ossining Correctional Facility is located, better known as Sing Sing Prison. To serve such poor communities distressed some of the more staid businessmen on the Council who, as Siwek puts it, "came to evening meetings after one drink before dinner and left their brains in a wastebasket by the door." The black communities had no expertise in administering arts funding of this type and she quickly saw that a "white middle-class lady" only served to create hostility in trying to help.

She therefore decided to hire a black artist who would be comfortable in these communities and whom the groups would accept. Her applications for funding for a part-time salary for a Ghetto Arts Consultant outraged the New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA) who felt she was presumptuous in trying to serve a community she knew

nothing about. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Siwek met with Harold Youngblood then program head of Special Programs at NYSCA, who, before long, had not only reversed his position but insisted that she apply for funds for a full-time consultant. On the recommendation of Johnathan Lawson mentioned earlier, she hired Marvin Camillo in 1970.⁴

As the Ghetto Arts Consultant, Camillo worked directly with Polly Siwek who sent him to various arts programs in the county such as the public schools, senior citizens groups, the Westchester Lighthouse for the Blind, the Jewish Community Center, and the Yonkers Youth Theatre. His responsibilities carried him far outside the parameters of his original title and he came to think of himself as more of a special programs consultant.

His job consisted of helping to organize and encourage teachers and students in setting up their own workshops and theatre programs. A guiding principal of his approach was that the groups should select their own material, "People always know what appeals to them. What's right for them is what's right for the community." He had gained this sensibility to community theatre while working with the Teatro de la Calle in Newark, a theatre that operated without public funds in the mid-sixties producing works like Teahouse of the August Moon, Casey at

⁴Interview with Polly Siwek, CASTA Office of the City University Graduate Center, New York, NY, 5 October 1980. The New York State Council on the Arts will be referred to hereinafter as NYSCA.

the Bat, and Street Poetry. While with this group, Camillo developed a piece called For My People from street poetry and games which was the first of his improvisational works. While at the Teatro de la Calle, Camillo also worked on a production of The Marriage Proposal with Raul Julia as Ivan. Both Julia and the play came to be important to The Family in the late seventies, which will be discussed in Chapter III. In Newark, Camillo had also formed a small company of his own called the Theatre du Jour, which did plays like Zoo Story and conducted a poetry reading program.

Among the groups that the Westchester Council served was the Street Theatre which was under the direction of Gray Smith, and located in Ossining New York, near Sing Sing Prison. Smith came to Siwek in search of an actor to work with his touring production of Baraka's Dutchman and Ed Bullins' Street Sounds, which was to tour the county and visit Sing Sing. Thus the correctional facility at Ossining became the first experience of prison in Marvin Camillo's life.⁵ Siwek was particularly concerned that prisons get some attention from her organization because in her words, "...in prison everyone is under 25, black or dark-skinned, and trapped by the system for God knows what crimes...not the ones they're booked for necessarily."⁶

What were Camillo's first impressions of prison? He described the experience as sad and startling, "The inmates were people who looked

⁵Marvin Camillo, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 12 February 1980.

⁶Siwek, 5 October 1980.

like me...people I could have grown up with. Their response to the work was overwhelming." The actual feeling of Sing Sing is difficult for Camillo to put into words, "My reaction was more emotional than real, like walking into a mausoleum. At first, I had odd feelings going in. Later, I had those feelings going out - empty, guilty - for having the freedom to go as the last gate closed behind me...especially after a good working session. I came to look forward to the workshop sessions...to hanging out with my friends."⁷

Street Sounds, which is a series of short vignettes and monologues, was the most memorable of the shows that he performed at Sing Sing. He played a "slightly retarded" policeman directing traffic. A man in the audience began to curse at him in Spanish to which Camillo responded in Spanish in character by "Doing-the-Dozens" with him. "Doing-the-Dozens" is a fairly volatile street game that involves trading insults between two individuals about each others' mothers, on the order of the old saw, "...your mother wears combat boots," but with far more lively content and imaginative sexual imagery. The object is to see how far one can go without pushing the situation over the edge into violence, rather like the thumb-biting exchange at the opening of Romeo and Juliet.

The prison audience was amazed at Camillo's self-control and quickness of mind, qualities that are essential both on the street and in prison. Ted Schumann, then warden of Sing Sing, made a special point of congratulating Camillo after the performance emphasizing that

⁷Camillo, 12 February 1980.

it was the first time anyone had tried to relate to the hispanic inmates. It was this comment that first made Camillo consider going into the prisons to do workshops. Shortly thereafter, he met Clay Stevenson through the Street Theatre, a man Camillo describes as a "master teacher," and began working with him as an actor in the first workshops in Sing Sing.⁸

Clay Stevenson is a black man who grew up on Chicago's South Side in the 1940s. A graduate of Columbia College in Chicago in 1955, he has studied and taught in a variety of academic and professional settings in the United States and Europe. While running the original Player's Workshop in Munich between 1965 and 1967, he became concerned about racial conditions in the United States. Convinced that the arts could be used as an effective tool for individual consciousness raising, he returned to the United States and became the artistic director of The Soul and Latin Theatre in East Harlem in cooperation with a woman named Maryat Lee. This theatre produced various improvisational productions that involved "structured kinds of social protest on local issues such as housing, etc."⁹

Funded by NYSCA and the Rockefeller Foundation, The Soul and Latin Theatre was able to take one of these productions into Sing Sing. This experience convinced Stevenson that the theatre could be relevant to the lives of the inmates, and he became interested in conducting workshops inside prison. He wrote to the New York State correctional

⁸Camillo, 12 February 1980.

⁹Interview with Clay Stevenson, Stevenson residence, New York, NY. 15 February 1980.

authorities with little success but was later introduced to Gray Smith by Maryat Lee. In cooperation with Gray Smith and the Westchester Council for the Arts, Stevenson was able to begin the first theatre workshop in Sing Sing in September of 1971. Marvin Camillo worked as his assistant to illustrate acting concepts to the participants and to play roles the inmates found too demeaning to their self-image, such as the traffic policeman in Street Sounds.

Stevenson's parents had made a point of showing him prisons and reformatories as a child to make them vivid for him, telling him that they were a kind of trap and that it was his responsibility "to see beyond the text of street life" if he did not want to be one of its casualties. In time, he came to see his medium, the theatre, as a means of learning to be aware of one's circumstances and developing ways of dealing with them. It was this that he thought would be useful to his new prison constituency.

He and Marvin Camillo met two weeks prior to the beginning of the workshop. They were convinced that it was their first responsibility to simply show themselves to the inmates. The first reaction of the participants, who had seen programs in writing and painting come and go with few tangible results, was one of wary curiosity, wanting to know if this was simply a way of collecting grant money.

Stevenson replied that the workshop was a way "to give expression to your feelings...to know your feelings...to investigate how you respond to the outer world." He did not see himself as a therapist, but as an artist anxious to explore experience. The initial exercises

were based on emotional memory asking the workshop members to recreate extreme experiences - happy, sad, painful - from the beginning of the day on which they occurred to the precise moment of the feeling, in minute detail. These exercises are derivative of Stanislavski's exercises to develop what he called "emotion memory."¹⁰

From this descriptive base, the group moved on the individual improvisations involving the reconstruction of textures, weights, colors and forms which were applied to situations arising out of sense memory from the individual's family life.¹¹ He deliberately avoided subjects that related directly to the prison environment as it caused the work to deteriorate into "rhetorical crap" such as the idea that all inmates are political prisoners. Clay Stevenson prides himself on the honesty that the group had been able to achieve. To the political prisoner argument he replied, "Look, Nigger, you ripped somebody off. You stole his television. This happened. That might have political implications if you were a sociologist, but you needed to get some junk. So let's deal with that."¹²

To the family related improvisations, Stevenson added objectives for individual characters. Finally, the group was able to explore the creation of theatrical reality - who, what, and where the character is, how he deals with the problems before him, and what are his ultimate ends - leading to the elements of his past life that make him

¹⁰Constantin Stanislavski, An Actor Prepares, translated by E.R. Hapgood (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1966), pp. 154-82.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Stevenson, 15 February 1980.

what he is. It was the same syllabus used in Stevenson's workshops at the new Player's Workshop that he had by then established on East Fourth Street, modified only with respect to the fact that no women could participate.

Gradually it became possible to include some aspects of the prison environment in the work. For example, by breaking down the stereotypes the inmates often imposed upon the members of the parole board as white bourgeois, many of the participants were able to handle themselves more effectively in their parole hearings. As Stevenson says, "Acting is solving problems," which is what he and Camillo explored as they worked with the group over six months, for three and then five days a week, five hours a day.

In the group, which remained essentially the same for the life of the workshop, was Miguel Piñero who was acquiring a reputation in the prison as a poet.¹³ Camillo, who was trying to encourage the participation of hispanic inmates, met Piñero, but their relationship was no more significant to Camillo at that time than with any other member of the Sing Sing group.¹⁴

Shortly after the Sing Sing workshop got under way, Camillo was approached by Gray Smith to begin another workshop at Bedford Hills.

¹³Camillo, 12 February 1980.

¹⁴Camillo did submit a poem of Piñero's to a poetry contest of the Greenberg Arts and Culture Committee which won second prize and was printed in the New York Times. He was reprimanded later by the warden for taking the poem out of the prison because it was considered contraband.

CHAPTER III

BEDFORD HILLS TO RIVERSIDE CHURCH

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility is located in the town of Harris in Westchester County New York. In May of 1981, I visited the prison with some of the original members of The Family, J.J. Johnson who is now a member of the board of directors, and Iffe Shipp, who went there with the company to perform The Crucifixion. Except for a high fence that is topped with rolls of barbed wire, the facility looks like a rural college with georgian, red-brick, white-trim architecture reminiscent of the Harvard Yard, set in quadrangles around the spacious grounds. At the approximate center of the facility is a school building, constructed after The Family left, with the appearance of any recently built suburban grammar school in a prosperous Westchester town. It reminded me of the one I myself attended as a child in Croton-on-Hudson. Bedford Hills is now the maximum security prison for women in New York State.

On the day I visited the facility, crews of men were silently clearing the vegetation around the perimeter of the fence. Presumably they were "trustys" from the men's prison, Taconic Correctional Facility, which is across the road from Bedford Hills. At the gate house, one presents identification and is searched for contraband, such as weapons, alcohol, or drugs, by polite but thorough guards, or correctional officers as they are called. In prison, a general atmosphere

of anxiety underlies the overall calm among both the prisoners and the guards. Locks must be locked and unlocked according to officially prescribed sequences. Prisoners must sign in and out of different areas of the prison, and the inmates address the correctional officers as "Sir" or "Ma'am" in what is often the whining tones of a child.

Discussion between the officers and the inmates seems to be exclusively devoted to procedural matters and a certain amount of gamesmanship enters into these interchanges. At Bedford Hills, I heard a female guard ask a female inmate about the whereabouts of another inmate. While the inmate said that she didn't know, the tone of her voice indicated that perhaps she did. A series of almost coy questions followed in which the inmate seemed to be teasing the guard and trying to charm her at the same time. The guard never got the information she was after and did not appear to expect to do so. The incident struck me as depressingly reminiscent of life in the first grade.

The auditorium/gymnasium in which The Crucifixion was performed was pleasantly painted and brightly lit and the women in the audience entered the performance space laughing and talking like children at a school assembly. Dressed in green and white uniforms like the ones little girls wear at parochial schools, they sat in clusters smoking and talking. The reality of the environment was brought home by the advanced age of some of the women, the muscular build of others, and the look of nervous fatigue that marked every face in the room to some degree including the members of The Family.

When Marvin Camillo first came to Bedford Hills, it was half occupied by men, the last in a series of institutions to which inmates were sent before release. When first committed, inmates are sent "upstate," as they call it, to prisons like Greenhaven or Attica. As they near parole and acquire "good time," they are moved closer to New York City where many of them come from in the first place. This makes them feel better as they are closer to home, but more importantly, their friends, lovers, and family are better able to visit them.

Generally, men were kept at Bedford Hills for only a short time before release. According to Marvin Camillo, it was for this reason that Gray Smith had essentially lost interest in Bedford Hills as a location for a major workshop. As Clay Stevenson was occupied at Sing Sing, Smith asked Camillo to run classes at Bedford Hills twice a week for two hours a session to complete the Street Theatre's funding contract. Camillo protested that he was an actor and that he knew nothing about directing, but at Siwek's insistence as the contractor, he agreed to teach and direct at Bedford Hills.

Near the end of 1971, with considerable reluctance, Camillo started the workshop that would become The Family. Clay Stevenson went with him to Bedford Hills for the first week, consulting with him regularly thereafter, but the workshop was Camillo's and he quickly began to create exercises that suited his own style and that of the group.

The beginning of the workshop was hardly auspicious. On the first day, Camillo's car broke down making him late. When he arrived, there

were too few inmates to proceed. The correctional officers regarded workshops as a waste of time and the inmates as "losers, thieves and dope fiends." Like the men in Sing Sing, inmates wanted to know if Camillo was simply there to collect money from a grant at their expense, and if the workshop would have any continuity or just stop when the money ran out as others had before. Camillo, despite an agreement with the Street Theatre, was never paid by Gray Smith for the work he did at Bedford Hills. He could truthfully say that he was not profiting from the men's imprisonment. At the first working session, Camillo read poetry, some of which had been written in the workshop at Sing Sing. The result was total disinterest. Camillo says there were times when he came to hope that his elderly ramshackle car would break down so that he could avoid these sessions.

Eventually, one of the inmates, who now has a home and family in Washington, D.C., came to Camillo and asked that he make a commitment to come to the workshop, saying that it provided an alternative to television and the aimlessness of the yard. Moreover, the workshop was something to count on that was painful to lose if it were unexpectedly withdrawn. It was at this point that Camillo committed himself to the group.

They began working on sense memory exercises similar to the ones done in the workshop at Sing Sing. At first the men found this ridiculous, but by convincing the group leaders to experiment, Camillo could get others to try as well. As Camillo says, "If you are

serious, they are."¹ That the men were willing to experiment in this way was in part due to the fact that they had seen Camillo perform in Ceremonies in Dark Old Men and Street Sounds. On the other hand, having seen the Street Theatre company, the men expected that the workshop would be conducted by women from the cast. Camillo's being a man therefore was something of a depressant. As he had not directed before, Camillo felt somewhat timid, to use his choice of words, toward the men who were used to Clay Stevenson's dynamic style in conducting workshops.

Despite these adverse conditions, a nucleus of six members developed who attended the sessions regularly. Others attended sporadically making the average complement twelve to twenty people. When New York, New York, The Big Apple was first performed before the prison population in its entirety, there were forty members in the cast. At this point, the warden asked that Camillo limit the number of participants by conducting auditions, which he subsequently did.

The group continued to work with emotional memory, sense memory and improvisation. Perhaps the most interesting of these exercises was one in which Camillo asked the members of the workshop to recreate their own homes in mime by acting out the layout of the house, including its physical and atmospheric furnishings. In this way, the actor

¹Marvin Camillo, 12 February 1980.

could enhance his sense of self and his skill at story-telling, an important part of The Family's rehearsal technique for creating new material.

Camillo saw the exercises as a way for the men to explore their personal sense of truth. According to Camillo, "Some really could describe their house. Others described as though they lived in Scarsdale or Upper Montclair. Nevertheless, it was still very, very interesting."² On the day one of the men was released, he took Camillo to his home. It was just as the man had presented it in the workshop, despite the fact that the ambience was somewhat altered by the fact that the man had just gotten out of prison.

In this exercise, Camillo asked the men to do what they would do if they were at home. After that, he asked another person to go into the house to see how well he could operate in the reality created from the life of the first actor. The success of this exercise convinced Camillo that the men had developed a strong sense of themselves and could now use such resources to develop material for production. He was also aware that the workshop had reached the point of needing to target itself toward a performance. For that, they would need a script.

Selecting material for production in prison is somewhat complex. As previously noted, the inmates, through their own choice, do not always attend the workshop sessions and rehearsals regularly, and yet

²Camillo, 12 February 1980.

it would be counterproductive to take a punitive attitude to these lapses in attendance which are often provoked by news of family crises outside the prison. There are two other more basic problems, (1) there are no women in men's prisons or vice versa, and (2) inmates are constantly being called for special work details, parole and disciplinary hearings, visitors, and being released.

Inmates frequently have poor reading skills and little or no knowledge of literature, dramatic or otherwise, having grown up with film and the electronic media. The most important factor, however, which had been Clay Stevenson's premise at Sing Sing, is that inmates are most receptive to artistic exploration of their own life experience. I have seen this enthusiasm first-hand in the overwhelming response of an inmate audience watching The Family's Straight From The Ghetto at the maximum security prison at Rahway, New Jersey. The men laughed, cheered, and cursed at the company's representation of the pimps, whores, junkies, politicians, preachers, revolutionaries, and sundry other types that they recognize from their lives on the outside.

Camillo brought in material from published playwrights like Baraka, Bullins, and Of Mice and Men by Steinbeck. His selection was focused on the material rather than the authors, retaining or discarding a piece on the basis of the men's choice. It was obvious, however, that whatever the text to be performed, it would have to be flexible. The group would have to be able to work on the material collectively so that parts could be interchangeable, and the piece had

to be such that it could be performed by any number of people. Therefore, Camillo began to work with poetry and short segments that could be developed collectively for performance through improvisation, having worked with this sort of material at the Teatro de la Calle in Newark, with the Street Theatre, and with Clay Stevenson. He brought in Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death by Melvin Van Peebles, some material from Pinero done in the Sing Sing workshop, and poetry by Neil Harris, director of the New Rochelle Theatre Workshop.

The group read these works collectively out loud, repeating some selections over and over again to explore their meaning and possible sound variations. It is essential to realize how difficult this activity is in prison. Here are people who dislike and distrust reading, an activity that has been the downfall of many of these men while in school. Their difficulties with pronunciation, vocabulary, and deriving meaning from syntax make reading slow and frustrating. Reading out loud, therefore, carries the added burden of being humiliating. Some of the men simply could not read at all. J.J. Johnson told me that Camillo took these men aside and worked with them quietly until they were able to master their portion of the text from memory.

It was only when Camillo felt that the material had been read and reread to the point of exhaustion that he would let the group improvise with it. As Johnson indicated to me, just as this reading phase was enormously frustrating for the men, it was also a source of enormous pride that they were able to get through it, which was possible,

in large part, through Camillo's respectful patience coupled with their growing trust in him.³

It is impossible to assign a precise date to the first performance of New York, New York, The Big Apple as segments of it were performed over a period of time while the production evolved. The intent of the piece was to explore life in the ghetto. While no copy of New York, New York exists now, portions of this play later evolved into Straight From the Ghetto, which is designed to illuminate the ghetto in relation to the rest of the world. A more detailed discussion of the actual content of New York, New York appears in Part II on the dramatic works of The Family. The final performance of New York, New York, The Big Apple inside Bedford Hills was given on Thanksgiving Day of 1972. Shortly thereafter, the institution was converted to a women's prison, and the members were either shipped out to other institutions like Riker's Island or released.

The rehearsal process of New York, New York was reading followed by improvisation as described. As the men worked with the text, they would add to the material from their own ideas. Individuals were expected to develop ideas as "homework" for different segments of the show while they were alone in their cells. Camillo transcribed these segments himself and integrated them into the text. He describes this process as, "...getting poetry out of people." It is a technique he

³Interview with John J. Johnson, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 21 August 1980.

had developed while working with boys in Westchester. He discovered that they had been exposed only to sports and "had no poetry in their lives." Thus he worked on getting the children to improvise poetry around sports themes.⁴

Games, and their various cultural implications, remain an important motif in The Family's works. For example, The Crucifixion, which was originally read by a solo actor as a part of New York, New York, is now performed with an extended prologue in which mimed street games and team sports evolve from one into the next, exploring both the real and symbolic violence within them. At the same time, this segment of The Crucifixion celebrates the unique exuberance inherent in play. It is this kind of complex moral ambivalence that lends subtlety and maturity to The Family's work.

During the Bedford Hills run of New York, New York, Camillo invited people from the outside to see the performances. They included what he considered "recognizable types," or the family members of the inmates like cousins, brothers, sisters, etc., hoping such personal contact would reduce the prison employees' fear of the inmates. Members of the Westchester community also attended some of the performances. In this way Camillo sought to "...break down some of the myths about riots and sexual carrying-on in prison through art."⁵

⁴Interview with Marvin Camillo, The Family Office at the BTA, 2 March 1980.

⁵Camillo, 12 February 1980.

After the Attica riots of September 1971, riots were fresh in the public mind. Perhaps because of this, New York, New York, The Big Apple began to attract attention from the local Westchester press in November of 1972 with articles of some length giving background on the group and enthusiastically describing the performances. Beatrice Zinzer of the White Plains Reporter Dispatch quotes Camillo at some length. Of particular interest is his remark that, "I am dealing with them as actors, not as prisoners. It's really been the richest experience of my life."⁶ Camillo stresses that he never saw himself in the role of a therapist or a reformer. This quotation is of particular interest because it seems to mark his first public acknowledgement of his company as members of his profession, the theatre.

Joan Potter of the Westchester Patent Trader noted the fact that the group, "...has broken some new ground. Next Saturday [which would have been November 18, 1972] they'll perform for the women's prison across the road - a first for the state correction department."⁷ Given the liberal political climate of the early nineteen seventies coupled with Camillo's growing rapport with the prison administration, it would seem that he was indeed breaking down some very powerful fixed ideas about prisoners and corrections.

As noted earlier, the costumes were in large part put together out

⁶Beatrice Zinzer, "Bedford Hills Male Inmates Cheer Prison Show," The Reporter Dispatch, White Plains, NY, 18 November 1972.

⁷Joan Potter, "First-time Performers Show High Talent Level," Patent Trader, Katonah, NY, 10 November 1972.

of Camillo's wardrobe. The props were made out of whatever cast-off materials were available inside the prison. On one occasion, Camillo brought in an empty wine bottle as a rehearsal prop that was approved by the officer at the gate. The next day Camillo was called to the warden's office to find the bottle on the desk before him being described as a weapon. Ever mindful of the need to maintain peace with the administration, Camillo brought in no more rehearsal props. This sort of diplomatic sensitivity made it possible for him to accomplish extraordinary feats like the performance in the women's section of the prison. It also served as a model for his company and increased their admiration for him as their director.

According to Camillo, the families of the inmates, particularly those invited to the shows at Bedford Hills, became the foundation for The Family itself as sources of emotional support during lean periods. While Camillo did not become involved in the mechanics of the men's family life on the outside, he came to know the people close to them. For example, he brought a gift to one of the men whose wife gave birth to a baby while he was in prison. Others came to regard the closeness of the workshop itself as constituting a kind of family.

Near the end of 1972, most of the men knew when they were going to be released. The group had been asked to perform by organizations on the outside but permission to do so had been refused. The members wanted to continue performing New York, New York after they were released and so they decided to maintain contact with each other through Camillo as a central reference. Kenny Steward, a part of the original company who had a history of problems with addiction asked

Camillo, "What the fuck can I do when I get out? Now I'm hooked on theatre."⁸

Camillo himself had not originally thought to continue the workshop on the outside, but his experience at Bedford Hills had convinced him that, "There are a lot of worthwhile and talented people in these institutions."⁹ His initial encounter with the inmates' suspicions had shown him that if at all possible, workshops should have continuity within the institution, and to have real meaning, should provide a link to society on the outside. The workshop was a source of pride to the men. Its first production came from their selection of materials, was their personal creation, and spoke of their lives. It was a powerful antidote to the feeling of helplessness that accompanies the life of the urban poor and those in prison.

The black and hispanic poetry and music in New York, New York was also a part of Camillo's life and he saw a possible commercial future for the workshop as a means of expressing black and hispanic rhythms and experiences. The theatre increasingly provided a feeling of artistic and personal hope on the outside for the workshop.

While Camillo did know the release dates of the workshop members, he did not know when the men's part of the prison was going to close. In early 1973, he arrived one day at Bedford Hills to find that his group had been shipped to Riker's Island. Camillo immediately contacted the families of the men and let them know that they had been

⁸Marvin Camillo, 2 March 1980.

⁹Interview with Marvin Camillo, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 29 April 1980.

moved. Shortly thereafter, the men began to contact him as they got out of prison at the apartment on East Tenth Street in Manhattan where he was now living. J.J. Johnson, who was the last of the group to get out 6 March 1973,¹⁰ found the group already in rehearsal.

Prior to their release, Gray Smith had said that he would hire the men as actors for the Street Theatre, but he now felt that they were not well enough trained. Clay Stevenson, having re-established the Player's Workshop on East Fourth Street in Manhattan said that any of the members of the group at Sing Sing, or the other institutions in New York State where the Street Theatre was now conducting workshops, could participate in his classes upon release. Few of the men from the other workshops took advantage of this offer. The men from the Bedford Hills group, however, with performances as an incentive, were anxious to continue. Thus Stevenson was willing to give Camillo rehearsal space in the third floor studio of the Player's Workshop. The group began to rehearse and expand New York, New York, The Big Apple for performances in Westchester.¹¹

Joan Potter of the Patent Trader who had seen the show at Bedford Hills was so excited by the group that she contacted Colleen Dewhurst in the hope of interesting her in their work. Dewhurst, who generally rejects any involvement with amateur theatre, went with substantial reservations to a meeting at Potter's house in March 1973 between the members of the workshop and people from Katonah and the surrounding

¹⁰Johnson, 21 August 1980.

¹¹Stevenson, 15 February 1981.

communities. Neither group had encountered the other in this type of setting before, and they sat on opposite sides of the room conversing from a more cultural and emotional, than physical, distance. Dewhurst says that she was particularly surprised by the fact that the workshop was all male and all black. When press shots were to be taken, she suggested that the two groups mix so that the picture, which is simply several black and white people sitting on a couch, would depict a more relaxed heterogeneity.

It was at this meeting that this group officially acquired the name, The Family. While trying to arrive at a name for the organization, one of the men pointed out that he had come to think of it as his family. Dewhurst is credited with suggesting that they use that as the name.

One week after the meeting in Westchester, Dewhurst attended a performance of New York, New York, The Big Apple given solely for her at the Player's Workshop. The men had told her that they wanted to perform, and this event seems to have served as a kind of audition for Dewhurst who had indicated that she might help them with getting professional connections.¹² During this period, The Family prided itself on its flexibility and willingness to go anywhere and to perform for anyone on short notice, a feature that served to breed enthusiasm in people and to enhance The Family's reputation.¹³ Sitting

¹²Interview with Colleen Dewhurst, Dewhurst home, South Salem, NY, 6 January 1981.

¹³Interview with Elizabeth Berger and Charles Elson, the Elson home, Armonk, NY, 28 March 1981.

alone in the Player's Workshop, Dewhurst says she got the full hostility and rage of New York, New York and enjoyed its humor, finding it both, "brilliant and scary."¹⁴

Rehearsals continued at the Player's Workshop. Like many of the men, J.J. Johnson was surprised to discover that the group had actually come together after release, much less that they were going to perform. Because the group had no operating funds, paid no rent to the Player's Workshop, and had no income to speak of among the members, the rehearsal and living conditions of The Family during the spring of 1973 were incredibly difficult. For example, on one occasion the company had to rehearse on a fire escape on a four by eight foot platform outside a third floor window of the building.

Camillo would meet men as they came out of prison when possible and bring them directly to the workshop, even if they stayed only for a brief visit, to give them a point of contact on the outside. They supported each other, on some days unable to afford food. On such days, they often shared only a single bottle of wine. Those who could, found a place to stay with family and friends. Other simply moved in with Camillo in his tiny apartment on East Tenth Street.¹⁵

On 6 April 1973, The Family began a series of performances of New York, New York, The Big Apple, in various schools and churches in Westchester, as well as returning to Bedford Hills, which continued

¹⁴Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

¹⁵Johnson, 21 August 1980.

until they opened Straight From The Ghetto at the Lincoln Center Street Theatre Festival on 24 August 1973.¹⁶

The financial circumstances of the company were not much improved by these engagements. A high point occurred when Colleen Dewhurst bought them all Converse All-Star sneakers. Paid generally in amounts of four dollars each per performance, on one occasion the entire group received a total of eight dollars. They divided these resources according to, "...who needs the dollar and who needs the fifty cents?" as Johnson put it.¹⁷

On the night before performances, the company sometimes stayed at the large Dewhurst country home in Westchester. They were able to gain insight and information about theatre from her and developed a protective relationship toward her and her family, particularly her two sons, who from time to time, participated in the performances. While the men attracted the Westchester audience, Camillo and Dewhurst realized that the novelty would wear off in the not too distant future. They began to focus their attention on developing a professional and public reputation in New York City.¹⁸

There is no extant copy of the script of New York, New York, The Big Apple. An examination of the programs from the show from this period show that it was composed of pieces some of which later formed parts of other productions as I mentioned earlier in the text. The

¹⁶The Family performance calendar appears as Appendix A.

¹⁷Johnson, 21 August 1980.

¹⁸Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

transition from New York, New York to Straight From the Ghetto seems to have been an evolutionary process. Out of prison, the men were able to rehearse full-time and develop a collective piece. Neil Harris provided the base poem, "Straight from the Ghetto" which gave the show its title. The company seems to have adopted this in order to universalize the scope of the production to include the inner city life of the poor across the country, rather than limiting their focus to New York City.

I surmise from talking with a variety of people that it was also a more theatrically complex production. New York, New York was a series of vignettes composed of poetry and prose acted out by a single actor backed up by the rest of the group. Straight From the Ghetto contains numerous fully developed improvisational scenes with considerable interaction between individuals and between individuals and the ensemble. There is extensive use of sounds, mime, and improvised dialogue, and segments of the show flow into the next as parts of an overall collage rather than isolated vignettes. I am told that Ghetto remains today much the same as when it was originally performed despite the fact that its tone has softened and the topical references have been updated over the years.

The description of the rehearsal technique given for New York, New York earlier in this chapter, according to Camillo, became the standard method by which the group rehearsed all its later productions, i.e. extensive reading of written materials, improvisation and ensemble development of the text toward performance employing extensive use

of music, with additional auditory and visual effects created by the actors. This is consistent with my own observations of their rehearsals which will be discussed in Part II.

By early October of 1973, The Family was performing at the Riverside Church on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and using rehearsal space on the tenth floor of the church. They gained access to this space through the influence of Miguel Piñero. It is necessary, therefore, to backtrack briefly to the winter of 1973 in order to clarify this relationship. While operating the workshop at Bedford Hills, Camillo had continued working with Clay Stevenson at Sing Sing in Ossining, and drawing his salary from the Westchester Council for the Arts. In the winter of 1973, Arthur Bartow was in his second year as administrative director of the Theatre of the Riverside Church and in the process of planning his 1973-1974 season. His selections were to include Are You Now or Have You Ever Been by Eric Bentley and a musical adaptation of Dostoyevsky's White Nights by Wally Harper and Paul Zakrewski. Bartow had read several articles in the New York Times by Mel Gussow who had taken an interest in the Sing Sing workshop. Gussow seemed particularly interested in a young poet/playwright, Miguel Piñero.

Bartow wrote to Gray Smith at the Street Theatre who replied only to the effect that they were indeed working with Piñero's material. Bartow then wrote to Piñero himself. Piñero succeeded in smuggling some of his writing out of Sing Sing which was subsequently hand delivered to Bartow. While he could not recall the title of the play,

during our discussion Bartow told me that it was a, "...street piece that had humor and great characters."¹⁹

During that spring, Bartow arranged to visit Piñero at Sing Sing. He went with Reverend Robert L. Polk who was then in charge of the community outreach program of the Riverside Church. Bartow made a point of telling me that he went with Polk to illustrate the fact that he was apprehensive about his first contact with a prison inmate. He stressed that his interest was strictly in finding a good playwright who might generate a successful work for his forthcoming season, not in social reform.

For this occasion, Reverend Polk donned his clerical collar which Bartow says was very helpful in getting through the various layers of security that later confronted him when he returned to visit Piñero alone. At their initial meeting, they were able to talk to Piñero for longer than the usual visiting period. Bartow remembers that he had difficulty hearing Piñero because he spoke so softly. He told them that he could get paroled if he had a job on the outside and the two men, who were impressed by both him and his talents as a writer, agreed to see what they could arrange.

Bartow was able to get a small grant through the Broadway United Church of Christ to pay Piñero as a playwright in residence at the Theatre of the Riverside Church. During the intervening period, at Piñero's request, he had also sent him some of Stanislavski's books on

¹⁹Interview with Arthur Bartow, at the Theatre Communications Group offices, New York, NY, 19 March 1981.

acting. On May 25, 1973, Piñero arrived at the church to take up his new position at \$150 per week.

In early June, Piñero approached Bartow to tell him about The Family indicating that they were a group of ex-inmates who had formed a theatre company and were in need of rehearsal and performance space. Bartow told Piñero that he could not offer them space, but at Piñero's request, he agreed to meet with Camillo anyway. The meeting in June of 1973 left Bartow with an extremely positive impression of Camillo as, "...compassionate...big...warm...a professional artist whose primary focus was on the work."²⁰ By the end of the summer, The Family was occupying rehearsal space on the tenth floor of the tower of the Riverside Church. Shortly after, funds from the New York Foundation and an NEA grant were obtained that paid each man forty dollars per week. While this success is testament to Camillo's persuasiveness, it also reflects Piñero's considerable charm which has been remarked upon to me by everyone who came in contact with him. Bartow, who calls Piñero "Mikey" actually described him to me as "cuddly,"²¹ as did Faith Geer, who was publicist for Short Eyes at Lincoln Center, and later joined the board of directors of The Family.²²

At the end of summer, Bartow asked Piñero if he had a script for consideration for the coming season. Piñero gave him the first act of

²⁰Bartow, 19 March 1981. ²¹Bartow, 19 March 1981.

²²Interview with Faith Geer, the Geer home, New York, NY, 12 July 1980.

Short Eyes telling him that he would write the rest of the play if Bartow agreed to produce it. Bartow later learned that Piñero had offered the play to several other theatres without success.

Bartow had had some difficulty the previous season with his board of directors at the Riverside Church over the language in No Place to Be Somebody. Nevertheless, he was so impressed by the first act of Short Eyes, which deals graphically with child molestation and has some very raw language, that he told Piñero to finish the play. The second act was completed in less than three weeks.

When Bartow said that he liked the second act better than the first, Piñero told him that he wanted Camillo to direct the production and The Family members to perform it. Bartow agreed that Camillo could direct the play but he insisted on open auditions.

Ben Jefferson, J.J. Johnson, and Kenny Steward were in fact selected from The Family for the production from these auditions. Tito Goya and Felipe Torres also appeared in this first production of Short Eyes both of whom had spent time in prison as their autobiographies in the program indicate.²³ So unique was this casting that it attracted considerable attention within the theatre community.

According to Bartow, the group rehearsed Short Eyes for six weeks in November and December of 1973 and the show opened to good notices in a variety of publications on January 1, 1974. During rehearsals, the script underwent considerable modification by the company and

²³Short Eyes, Program from the Theatre of the Riverside Church. This program appears in Appendix B.

Piñero himself added a prologue modelled on a cinematic flashback and an epilogue with considerable moralizing. Neither of these were successful in Bartow's view, but when he complained to Camillo that he wanted these either fixed or cut, the latter replied that he did not know how to approach Piñero to make these changes. Bartow took up the matter with Piñero himself who, after some discussion, consolidated the two segments into what is now the epilogue. Beyond this incident, both Camillo and Bartow saw Piñero as somewhat removed from *The Family*.

Prior to the actual rehearsals, Piñero had discussed the play with Camillo telling him that one of the parts had been written for him to play. Later, Camillo discovered that Piñero had made the same statement about the role to approximately twenty other actors.

The run of Short Eyes at Riverside Church was not without problems. One of the men came into conflict with the stage manager and disappeared briefly. Bartow's defense of the actor with his staff at Riverside Church alienated them from him as it was behavior that would not have been tolerated from any other actor.

During this time, Alexander Cohen began negotiating with Bartow about the possibility of moving the production to Broadway at some point in the near future with limited rehearsals. Colleen Dewhurst had by then seen the show and was sufficiently impressed to approach the Papp organization at the New York Shakespeare Festival. Although earlier attempts to interest the Public theatre made by Charles Elson were unsuccessful, Papp's representative, David Eidenberg, saw Short Eyes shortly before the closing at Riverside and arranged for Papp to see a special performance solely for him at the Public Theatre.

Arthur Bartow by this time had a large budget deficit and was in the midst of some serious production problems with White Nights. He believed that the Public Theatre might best serve the needs of Short Eyes at that point. Papp could offer a more suitable production and rehearsal set-up than Cohen. Thus the play was signed over to the Papp organization in return for one percent of its proceeds to the Riverside Church. Despite the fact that it meant Bartow lost all personal control or rights to the show, Bartow was convinced that his decision was correct when Piñero approached him on the verge of tears to tell him that The Family had met and decided that the group would prefer to go with the Public Theatre offer. Bartow learned soon thereafter that no such meeting had been held.²⁴ The impact of Short Eyes on The Family is discussed in Chapter IV.

It is not my intent to present Piñero as deceitful, but rather to support the case that he seems to need creative embellishment to bolster his position with people. This tendency has the effect of making people treat him with suspicion after a time, and finally to separate from him, often with great sadness. Many, like Faith Geer and Arthur Bartow have expressed affection and admiration for him, while at a loss to understand his continued sporadic difficulties with the police. I have reviewed several of his plays over the last few years and seen him at a distance. He is a small attractive man, somewhat withdrawn, who looks very young. He is often accompanied by very tough looking individuals. I have not interviewed him myself because

²⁴Bartow, 19 March 1981.

he is hard to find. He leaves messages for people to call him in the next ten minutes. If the call is made later, he is rarely still available.²⁵

²⁵Bartow, 19 March 1981.

CHAPTER IV

Short Eyes to the Black Theatre Alliance

The last major phase in the evolution of The Family took place during the run of Short Eyes and immediately thereafter when the group initiated its open door policy by admitting all who wanted to participate to their workshops and classes which were funded by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. That phase of development was essentially completed in 1976. At that point, the structure and goals of The Family that exist today had been established, and programs were planned and/or in place to implement those goals. The Family has suffered from numerous financial and administrative problems since then which I shall touch upon, but they are no more debilitating than the problems that have beset most non-profit arts organizations of similar size.

Marvin Camillo states that the success of Short Eyes was simply another event in the life and growth of The Family.¹ Nevertheless, no other production of The Family has gained the same sort of critical or public attention, returned the same sort of financial rewards, or reached commercial publication as Short Eyes has, both in print and as a feature film for commercial release. It should be stated, however,

¹Interview with Marvin Camillo, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 12 August 1980.

that The Family has never earned any money from either of the latter enterprises,² nor has the Riverside Church.³

Short Eyes deals with American sexual morality, in this case centering on the crime of child molestation committed by a white middle-class man who is put in the dayroom of a House of Detention with a group of inner-city poor blacks and hispanics. They eventually murder him with the tacit complicity of the prison officials. There are additional social, moral, and literary layers to Short Eyes that will be discussed in Part II, but this description serves to adumbrate the plot. The language is very raw, but more importantly, contemporary to the society in which it was performed and the genuine product of the streets and prisons that provided its cultural context. The prison slang was so specialized that a glossary of terms appears in the back of the published edition.⁴ It was the public's introduction to prison language from the source, the inmates.

At the Theatre of the Riverside Church, the physical treatment of the production (sets by Lee Goldman and lights by Alan Beck) was intended to threaten the audience from the moment they entered the theatre. Camilo, Bartow and the designers had visited the dayroom of the Brooklyn House of Detention which was to serve as a model for the design.⁵

²Camillo, 12 August 1980.

³Bartow, 19 March 1981.

⁴Miguel Piñero, Short Eyes, Introduction by M.F. Camillo (New York: Hill and Wang; A Mermaid Dramabook, 1978), pp. 123-27.

⁵Bartow, 19 March 1981.

According to Spencer Mosse who designed the lighting for the Public Theatre production at the Anspacher, he, Camillo, and David Mitchell (who did the set at the Public) made a visit to the same day-room to develop the design for the production downtown. Mosse, however, saw the institution with its soft green walls and frosted glass windows as designed to be peaceful, so that it would enclose the inmates from the outside world. He chose to imitate, therefore, what he called this "easy-on-the-eyes-green" in his design. He emphasized to me with pride that little time was spent in thematic discussions of the designs for Short Eyes which he felt was the source of their success.⁶ In retrospect, that may be because Camillo's concept had not changed greatly from the designs at the Theatre of the Riverside Church. Arthur Bartow told me that when he refused to allow the Public Theatre rent free use of the costumers from the uptown production (designed by Pamela Dendy), the Public Theatre reproduced the designs themselves.⁷

These physical aspects of production were important in bringing home the reality of the play to its audience which, short of seeing James Cagney dragged kicking and screaming to the death house, or prison plays with specialized subject matter like Fortune and Men's Eyes, was used to very little unvarnished reportage on life in modern American prisons.

⁶Interview with Spencer Mosse, the Mosse home, New York, NY, 13 April 1981.

⁷Bartow, 19 March 1981.

Short Eyes, however, is not a photographic recreation of prison. The group murder of the white man at the end of the second act is a ritual echoing the end of act one in which the group shoves him head--first into the onstage toilet. The language may deal with a variety of gruesome imagery and subject matter, but it is, at the same time, often poetic, such as the scene in act two in which a black inmate describes a luxurious session of masturbating while gazing at a poster of Jane Fonda followed by a recapitulation of a fight with some prison guards who were offended by his symbolic miscegenation.⁸

Camillo had some difficulty in directing the original loosely woven text because in his words, "Miguel seemed to lose the facts of the plot."⁹ For example, the published edition of the text indicates that the play takes place in the House of Detention.¹⁰ Piñero had told Camillo that he had conceived of the play taking place in the Tombs (a notorious jail operated in New York City that was condemned by the courts). However, the racial and social hierarchy of the black and hispanic inmates, their moral attitudes toward different types of crime, and their treatment of the situation indicate behaviour typical of a penitentiary; and indeed the public, the press and the company regarded Short Eyes as a play about a maximum security prison. These and other manipulations of the dramatic reality of the play indicate that Piñero was dealing more with large moral themes rather than simply conditions in city jails.

⁸Piñero, Short Eyes, pp. 75-80.

⁹Camillo, 12 August 1980.

¹⁰Piñero, Short Eyes, p. 5.

After the completion of the epilogue, Piñero did no more rewrites. Camillo feels that Piñero did his best writing in prison, though I would tend to argue this point having reviewed a spring 1981 production of Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon which was done with considerable success at the Theatre for the New City.¹²

As rehearsals progressed at Riverside Church, Piñero became more and more difficult to find. The cast became quite frustrated with him by the time they had moved from the Public Theatre to Lincoln Center. Throughout this period they continued to add to the characterization and dialogue of the play which additions Piñero was rarely available to discuss.

In point of fact, he had by then moved to East Tenth Street where Camillo was still living, and from time to time would visit the director and talk with him. In Camillo's words, "He [Piñero] never matured to working with the group. The notoriety he attracted deprived him of full participation in the growth of the play and The Family, but I loved working with his plays and poetry."¹³

Beyond Arthur Bartow's assistance in consolidating the epilogue, and the company's considerable input, which included the addition of several minor characters like Gypsy, the transvestite, and Mr. Brown,

¹¹Camillo, 12 August 1980.

¹²Steven Hart, "Broadway Grease and Dreams," The Villager, New York, NY, 30 April 1981, p.20. Copies of my reviews of Piñero's plays appear in the Appendix.

¹³Camillo, 12 August 1980.

the black guard, no one else significantly influenced Short Eyes. The company did, however, continue to rehearse and develop their performances throughout the run of the show.¹⁴

At selected performances throughout the run, the audience was invited to talk with the cast members and to ask them questions. Elizabeth Berger emphasized to me that such sessions created contact between people from different social, economic, and racial backgrounds who would otherwise very likely never meet.¹⁵ Arthur Bartow remarked on the fact that it allowed the audience to come in contact with the cast in a quiet, friendly way after having seen them in the frightening context of the play.¹⁶

Marvin Camillo remembers in particular one performance at Lincoln Center attended by a group of high school students brought by Gwynne Tomlan who was then teaching at a Satellite Academy. These institutions are alternative schools for children who have not been able to function well in a traditional public school setting. What Camillo liked best was that the kids, having seen the show, realized that they themselves could perform too.¹⁷

Short Eyes had run for three weeks at the Riverside Church from its official opening on 3 January to 20 January 1974. It then played 32 performances at the New York Shakespeare Festival, 20 as an out of

¹⁴Camillo, 12 August 1980.

¹⁵Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981. ¹⁶Bartow, 19 March 1981.

¹⁷Interview with Marvin Camillo, The Family office at the BTA, New York, NY, 29 September 1981.

town tryout at the Annenberg Center at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and 16 at the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center where it was given an extended run in July of 1974.¹⁸

Peter Lawrence, who was the house manager of the Mitzi E. Newhouse and the Vivian Beaumont theatres at Lincoln Center, was also impressed by the production, and approached Camillo about the possibility of arranging a European tour. Camillo agreed that this would be an excellent idea and Lawrence made inquiries with Ellen Stewart, director of the La Mama Theatre Company, who had experience in arranging such tours. She referred Lawrence to The Mickery in Amsterdam which had a history of importing avant garde productions from all over the world.¹⁹

The tour of The Family represented the first enterprise of Centennial Concerts, Inc., a partnership between Peter Lawrence and Ralph Alswang. The Mickery contracted with Centennial Concerts to pay for the transportation of the company and fifty dollars per actor per week. Lawrence then got in touch with Lucille Lortel, owner of the Theatre de Lys and one of the founders of the Vera Institute for Criminal Justice. She was persuaded to supply the company with fourteen thousand dollars to supplement the tour budget.

The company played at the Mickery in Amsterdam from the tenth to the twenty-second of September. They then toured other cities in

¹⁸The Family Performance Calendar appears in Appendix A.

¹⁹Interview with Peter Lawrence, the Hart home, New York, NY, 4 March 1981.

Holland, like The Hague, and then went to Brussels, finally concluding the tour on October fifth and sixth at Hamburg's Schauspiel Haus. Lawrence described the polyglot audience as a cosmopolitan one who could understand the specialized language in the show, "...as well as eighty percent of the New York audience."²⁰

Lawrence stresses that he had no problems on the tour although various people had discouraged him from arranging it on the grounds that the men were unreliable and undisciplined,²¹ and that such a tour would fragment the focus of the group.²² In fact, during the Lincoln Center run of Short Eyes Camillo had asked both Colleen Dewhurst²³ and Charles Elson²⁴ to talk to the company about minor breakdowns in discipline. Such problems seem to have been eliminated by the time the company went on tour.

Lawrence entered into negotiations with a producer in Puerto Rico to take Short Eyes there, but the necessary funds were never raised. He did succeed in arranging for a series of forty performances that took place at the Hartford Stage Company beginning in mid-October of 1974.²⁵ At this point, the production was halted from further performances because the rights to Short Eyes had been taken over for its publication and production as a motion picture. Colleen Dewhurst

²⁰Lawrence, 4 March 1981.

²¹Lawrence, 4 March 1981.

²²Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981. ²³Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

²⁴Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

²⁵"Mickery" flier, the Theatre in Prisons Archive, CASTA/CUNY, GSUC, New York, NY.

feels that the play could not be produced by any other group,²⁶ and indeed there does not seem to be any record of a successful revival by another company since the 1974 run.

The company enjoyed this tour, particularly Camillo who felt that it was a reward for their hard work. For many of the men, it was their first trip outside of the New York City area to a place other than a prison. Both J.J. Johnson and Camillo remarked to me that they felt less racial tension in Europe and enjoyed the many parties to which they found themselves invited. In Amsterdam, Camillo took pleasure in the "melting pot atmosphere" and in Holland the traditions of cleanliness, like washing down the doorsteps. In short, they seem to have taken much the same delight in travelling that most people do, particularly when they are able to get the attention and personal interest of the population. Camillo did sense some racial tension toward the company in Hamburg and was distressed to see elderly people wandering homeless in the streets in much the same impoverished condition as he saw them in New York.²⁷

Short Eyes won the Drama Critic's Circle Award for the Best American Play of 1973-74 and Camillo won both the Drama Desk Award and the Obie for his direction of the production. The notoriety connected with its success, coupled with the political thrust of the mid-seventies created the impetus that ushered in the last phase in The Family's growth.

²⁶Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

²⁷Camillo, 29 September 1980.

Understanding this phase in the development of The Family requires some investigation of the development of the Board of Trustees and the funding and management histories of the organization, because these factors operated simultaneously to influence The Family's evolution to its present form. The discussion that follows is designed to illustrate the process of that evolution. Initially, The Family operated under the informal auspices of a committee composed of Colleen Dewhurst, Joan Potter, Maria Sobol (who runs the Long Termer's organization at Bedford Hills) and several other women from Westchester. When the group relocated to the Player's Workshop and finally to the Riverside Church, the Westchester committee's connection became increasingly remote.

Elizabeth Berger, who saw one of the performances of New York, New York at the Katonah Church in May of 1973, offered her services as an expert in speech and voice training to the company. She became an informal consultant to Camillo and started working with the company at their rehearsals in Manhattan during the summer of 1973. She was able to interest Charles Elson, a stage designer of international reputation who had served on the faculties of Yale University and Hunter College and who was active in the creation of the Ph.D. Theatre Program at the City University Graduate Center. He obtained the original grant from the New York Foundation. A titular board was needed to file for non-profit corporate tax status in order to obtain the NEA and NYSCA funding that paid the stipends of the company at the Riverside Church. The original applications were drafted by Berger and her son during the summer of 1973.

It was not until the spring of 1974 that the Board of Trustees was actually formed consisting of Dewhurst, Polk, Elson and Rufus Shorter, who was a member of the Board of Education.²⁸

Meetings were sporadic, and called only at the request of the company. Shorter became ill and was ultimately forced to resign. Polk felt that The Family should offer more in the way of counselling and education to its members, a point of view that finally caused him to resign from the board in 1977. The congregation at Riverside Church was also somewhat resentful that a play that had been fostered at their behest had been taken over by the Public Theatre.²⁹ Dewhurst was at this time involved in rehearsing for Moon for the Misbegotten which appeared on Broadway during the 1973-74 season.³⁰ Thus it may be said that the board, which shortly thereafter included Joseph Papp who has attended only one meeting to date to my knowledge, was composed of exactly the right people in terms of influence to help with funding, and the wrong people in terms of having the time to assist with long range planning. It is a mark of The Family's special character, however, that it was able to attract such people less than one year after its inception. Their help and influence were important in obtaining CJCC funding in 1975.

Under the Nixon presidency, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) was directed to fund programs with innovative

²⁸Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

²⁹Interview with Reverend Robert Polk, The Interchurch Center, New York, NY, 5 March 1981.

³⁰Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

approaches to criminal justice.³¹ Charles Elson and Elizabeth Berger had heard about this funding but were unable to discover the local authorities to contact in order to make application. During that summer, Elson visited his brother who was a member of a group of attorneys in Chicago. The attorneys wanted to relocate The Family in Chicago with funding that they felt could be obtained from the LEAA. Elson declined on the grounds that the company was needed in the New York area, but he now had the name of the local agency in New York which administered these funds. It was the mayor's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

Upon returning to New York, Elson arranged with Elizabeth Berger for a special reception for a Judge Benjamin Altman that was organized by Peter Lawrence to follow one of the performances at the Vivian Beaumont. Playing the devil's advocate, the judge probed Camillo about his goals and plans which established that the interest of the CJCC had been garnered. This foothold in place, the intent was decisively incorporated into The Family's planning to open its workshops to as many people as possible.³²

From this point, Gwynne Tomlan figures prominently into The Family's history as the company's first administrator/fundraiser.

³¹Interview with Thomas Jacobs, Commissioner of Probations, Department of Probations, New York, NY, 19 March 1981. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration will be referred to hereinafter as the LEAA.

³²Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

Workshops had started operating among the women at Bedford Hills, and indeed two of the women, Iffe Shipp and Brenda Ragland who had seen the performance in November of 1973 of New York, New York, had become members of The Family. These workshops were being conducted by Gwynne Tomlan under the auspices of the Street Theatre with money from the America the Beautiful Fund (initiated during the Johnson Administration). Tomlan and Camillo had worked together in But Never Jam Today. She had also replaced Susan Batson in Hair, and had been in the Broadway production of Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death. Her workshops were designed along the same lines as those of Clay Stevenson and Camillo, namely improvisation based on the life experience of the inmates. For example, the group did a scenario on what one does when trying to sell a stolen radio in a pawn shop -- exploring what deceptions and maneuvers are involved. The group also worked on the experience of dealing with welfare -- playing the roles of the social workers and minor officialdom.

When The Family was preparing to go on the European tour, the money from the America the Beautiful Fund ran out and was not renewed. Tomlan was therefore free to take over managing the office that The Family continued to maintain at Riverside Church. She agreed to do so, and to represent The Family at an initial interview with the CJCC. Thus it was that Gwynne Tomlan became the first of The Family's seven administrators in the early fall of 1974. Her background in the professional theatre, prodigious charm and energy, and familiarity with

the early stages of The Family itself, made her uniquely successful in this capacity.³³

The acquisition of the funding from the CJCC was a long and complicated affair that would have drained the physical and mental resources of a professional arts fundraiser which Tomlan was not. Furthermore, the funding policies of the LEAA had become a source of some controversy. In many cases allocations were being made to supply local police departments with sophisticated para-military weaponry such as armored vehicles and light automatic weapons. In other cases, funds intended for experimental programs were being used to make up existing budget deficits. The CJCC was also under the control of a mixed bag of political and administrative interests including the Police Commissioner, a representative from the Department of Corrections, the district Attorneys from Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, several judges, representatives from the Office of the Budget and the Comptroller's Office, some City Council Representatives, and the Deputy Mayor.³⁴

Tomlan had been informed by Eric Lowen, an attorney for the CJCC, that she would need political support so she wrote to Percy Sutton, who was then the borough president of Manhattan, asking for his support for The Family. He in turn gave his aide, Thomas Jacobs, carte blanche to help the group. Jacobs did so through 1975 by helping The

³³Interview with Gwynne Tomlan, the Tomlan home, New York, NY, 14 March 1981.

³⁴Jacobs, 19 March 1981.

Family to gain political support and in advising them on how to strengthen their proposals.³⁵

To receive these funds, The Family had to design their program to include all five boroughs of New York City. Of particular help to The Family was Eugene Gold, the District Attorney of Kings County (Brooklyn). Tomlan was able to arrange an interview with him for Camillo and Johnson after their return from Europe. Gold was impressed by the fact that he was not given a sob-story about Johnson's reform from a life of crime, but rather an enthusiastic breakdown of the intended program. It was not until the end of the meeting that Gold was informed that it was he who had prosecuted Johnson and sent him to prison.³⁶

The program they presented to him would have been ambitious for a well-established social service agency with a highly trained staff. They planned to conduct ten workshops in the five boroughs which would be held inside holding facilities and, at the insistence of the CJCC, centers for young people who had been ousted from the school system and/or run afoul of the law. The workshops were to be headed by professional actors who would be assisted where possible by former inmates who had been through a training process of the same sort. One of the key selling points of this plan was that it would include a

³⁵Tomlan, 14 March 1981.

³⁶Interview with Eugene Gold, King's County Office of the District Attorney, Brooklyn, NY, 16 April 1981.

counselling component which Tomlan had arranged with Roosevelt Hospital on Ninth Avenue in Manhattan near Lincoln Center to serve ex-inmates and ex-addicts.³⁷

The Family was also accountable for an enormous amount of statistical and financial reportage, site reports, workshop logs, personal letters of support and profiles on staff and participants. For example, the July 1978 "Workshop Director Implementation Report" is well over one hundred pages in length with every sort of documentation mentioned above plus supplementary press materials.³⁸ This type of reporting was a regular part of the administration of the grant which had to be prepared to rigid specifications and made it not only time-consuming but frustrating and costly. It is a further demonstration of The Family's grit that they were willing, much less able, to live up to these commitments.

The CJCC funds were forthcoming to The Family in the fall of 1975 and continued for two years under the original grant at \$96,000 per annum, a sum that was then renewed through 1978, because as Jacobs told me, the Council was impressed by the fact that The Family had met their stated objectives and the staff reports were positive.³⁹ The funds for such experimental programs were designated for only the initial two years with a possible extension of one year, according to the

³⁷Tomlan, 14 March 1981.

³⁸"Workshop Director Implementation Report; July 1, 1978 to July 30, 1978, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY.

³⁹Jacobs, 19 March 1981.

guidelines of the LEAA. At that point, programs would be recommended for funding through regular administrative channels. This did not happen in the case of The Family because other problems began to weaken their reportage.

After the European tour in 1974, The Family took up rehearsing at the Public Theatre Annex on Astor Place while continuing to maintain offices at the Riverside Church (one hundred and twenty blocks away). The central workshop for the repertory company was operated through NYSCA and NEA funds.

Tomlan continued with limited assistance from Arthur Bartow and others, to develop grant materials. When time allowed, she and Camillo visited the youth centers around the city and were dismayed to find them in dismal disrepair. They often found children sitting on the steps in front of these establishments drinking wine. Little recreational equipment was available that was not broken and which in any case generally consisted of a single ping-pong table. Both of them remarked about the apathy of the staff who seemed more interested in playing bid-whist than in serving their clients. By the spring of 1975, when it became increasingly likely that the funds from the CJCC would materialize, Tomlan and Camillo began to put programs in place in various locations in advance of having the actual money.

The company was now touring a production of James Lee's Shoeshine Parlor (which will be discussed in Part II) to various locations in the New York area as well as a number of prisons in New York State. Camillo was occupied with lectures and guest appearances along with

conducting rehearsals. He was therefore often out-of-touch with the administrative mechanics of the office. The summer of 1975 brought the critical success of Shoeshine Parlor with its tour of the city with the Mobile Theatre unit of the New York Shakespeare Festival. It also brought the announcement that the building called the Annex was going to be sold, and that The Family would have to locate space on its own.⁴⁰ Friction had already begun to develop between The Family and the Public Theatre staff. Berger remembers petty skirmishes over the price of xeroxing,⁴¹ and Tomlan recalls that technical equipment was occasionally lost or damaged through inexperience. Also at this time, The Family Theatre Workshop conducted at the Public Theatre Annex had begun to attract inner-city young people. These were classes conducted by Bette Howard who was designated to administer The Family's workshop program for the CJCC when the funds were issued. Camillo knew Howard through her work as an actress which had brought her to the Public Theatre, and through earlier theatre work they had done together in Newark. She had also had teaching experience with the Satelite Academy program.⁴²

Various productions were developed in The Family Theatre Workshop that ultimately entered the repertoire of the company such as Genet's The Blacks, Bullins' Street Sounds, Clara's Old Man, Lee Hunkin's The Dolls and Steve Carter's One Last Look. Howard was to train students

⁴⁰Tomlan, 14 March 1981.

⁴¹Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981. ⁴²Camillo, 29 September 1980.

some of whom would ultimately be invited to enter the repertory company. Tomlan describes the period at the Annex as an exciting time when the company rehearsed at every available moment when there was space free. Children came in on school holidays to work on productions and parents would call at late hours of the night wanting to know the whereabouts of their children who frequently had to be ordered to leave the rehearsal and go home. Men coming out of prison sought out The Family as a connection on the outside hoping to find employment. Others told their parole officers that they were affiliated with The Family which caused the officers to call Camillo and Tomlan demanding to know the whereabouts of a parolee that The Family might never have seen. As the program expanded, the company was continually spending grant money before it arrived, and members of the company would come to Tomlan seeking a loan or an advance. Individual debts and evictions called upon the collective resources of the company from time to time as well. Tomlan found herself dealing with the personal problems of individual company members, the financial records of the company, its future funding, and trying to maintain her personal acting career. She was rarely at home which meant that she rarely saw her small daughter.

In the early winter of 1976, Tomlan's daughter caught spinal meningitis which almost took her life. Her child's illness, coupled with her own physical and mental exhaustion, caused her to decide to

leave The Family.⁴³ A man by the name of Joe Green was located to replace her who had been administrator of various urban development projects in Stamford, Connecticut, but who had no theatre experience. After six months training, he was expected to handle all the managerial aspects of The Family, fundraising, tour arrangements, office staff, and miscellaneous aspects of productions such as the acquisitions of unusual props and the like. Underpaid and at sea in a mass of work that would have consumed the energies of several people -- accountant, fundraiser, company manager, and tour director -- Green slowly crumbled under the pressures of his job by the summer of 1977 when he was replaced by Elizabeth Berger on a temporary basis, who was in turn succeeded by a chain of others in the position of the administrator of The Family.⁴⁴

With the departure from the Public Theatre Annex, The Family began a search for space that ended only in mid-1978 with the assistance of the Prison Task Force at Riverside Church which put Camillo in touch with St. James Church on Madison Avenue near seventy-third Street. Remarkably, The Family continued to develop a number of productions of note during this period.

In fairness, The Public Theatre was strictly a professional producing organization and the large numbers of young people who gathered around the Family Theatre Workshop were not accustomed to the working discipline of that type of setting. In 1974, when The Family

⁴³Tomlan, 14 March 1981.

⁴⁴Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

had come to the Public, Chorus Line was being rehearsed and shortly thereafter began to render substantial returns. In 1975, funding setbacks began to affect the Public Theatre which at that time was producing shows at the Vivian Beaumont with substantial financial losses. When The Family left the Annex, Papp gave them several thousand dollars of his own money and continues to give the company occasional financial assistance as well as the use of his name as a board member, and consultative service to Camillo.

The Family moved to rehearsal space on Thirteenth Street across from what is now the Thirteenth Street Theatre. This location soon became too expensive for the group and the presence of ex-inmates ceased to be a novelty to the people in this wealthy neighborhood who began to give the group a decidedly frosty reception. The CJCC grant continued to supply revenue for the workshops at the institutions, but there was no money regularly coming in for the company or to cover administrative expenses other than a residue of government funds and sporadic foundation help.

Rehearsal space was rented here and there in Manhattan at places like the Ansonia Hotel on the Upper West Side and an unheated location on the Lower East Side called The Cuando where the company was robbed of a large share of its props, equipment and costumes. Camillo's time was consumed with trying to locate space, keep the company together, and rehearse productions. The group then moved its operation into the house Camillo rented in Brooklyn on Front Street and from there to a house at 411 Claremont Avenue where The Family performed in the warmer

months in a vacant lot next to the house. During this period, equipment was being stored in an otherwise unused warehouse in Brooklyn. Early one morning, without prior notice, the City of New York demolished the warehouse eliminating The Family's supply of costumes, props, set pieces, musical instruments, office furniture, tools, and several typewriters. No compensation was ever obtainable for this loss. Throughout this series of events, the Riverside Church regularly asked The Family to vacate the office at the Church.

The Family also began to rehearse The Marriage Proposal which was described at the beginning of Chapter I. Camillo had made a brief visit to Puerto Rico during which he stayed with the family of a friend named Arafat. Their cultural traditions and gracious manner reminded Camillo of the production of Chekhov's play with Raul Julia that he had worked on in Newark some years before. As West Indians and Caribbean hispanics were beginning to appear in The Family, he felt that a production that reflected the two cultures based on the Chekhov one-act would be appropriate to the company. This was officially presented at a Festival of Plays at the Riverside Church in February and March of 1977, that included Clara's Old Man, The Blacks, and an original script, Looking for Tomorrow.⁴⁵ In the summer of 1977, The Family presented The Crucifixion as a separate production for the first time.

⁴⁵Camillo, 29 September 1980.

Shortly thereafter, Bette Howard left the company to do a showcase production of Runners with Gwynne Tomlan. At the time of the festival, Tomlan had been recalled to The Family and organized meetings of potential board members at the Drake Hotel. Up to this point, the board had not met regularly, and the members were not fully aware of the plight of the group.⁴⁶ The latter is plausible to me as it is often difficult to get Camillo to describe the extent of problems.

In the summer of 1977, Barbara Thomas, who was then CJCC representative administering the funding for The Family, complained that their reportage was beginning to decline. The staff member who had supervised these records had left, and Joe Green was unable to keep up with them. Berger took over from him and joined the board of directors in the fall of that year. She was replaced as administrator by Fred Good who left to be replaced by several others finally ending with the present consultant, Alan Toman, who is employed by Lincoln Center as well as serving as Managing Director of The Family. It is not essential to discuss each of these individuals separately. Suffice it to say that they have all been beset by the same problems which can be truncated to two areas. Firstly, the job of The Family's administrator has always encompassed too large a range of responsibilities. Secondly, there has never been adequate funds to attract a person with sufficient expertise and contacts to cut this job down to size, and train members of the office staff to assume some of the responsibilities. In recent years, the tendency has been for administrators to

⁴⁶Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

seek the advice and support of various board members rather than to work directly with Camillo, who is himself constantly over-extended with work. Needless to say, this situation does little to improve the working relationship between the two principal executives of the company. A more detailed analysis of The Family's administrative structure appears in Part III.

In December of 1977, Charles Elson was elected the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Family. Prior to that time, no one had wanted to be an officer. Regular meetings of the Board have been held on a monthly basis since then. Its history is one of trying to create stop-gap measures as various crises arose in The Family's finances.

The company moved into St. James Church in mid-summer of 1978. With NYSCA and NEA funds, they were able to continue their prison tours and productions at various locations like the Entermedia festival that I attended. In the spring of 1979, when the funding from the CJCC had in fact been withdrawn, CETA funds became available that covered the salaries of the company for one year, but no administrative expenses. This grant was extended for several weeks during the summer of 1980. Also during this period, the State of New Jersey contracted with The Family for a series of prison workshops on an experimental non-renewable basis. New Jersey insisted that the workshops begin despite the fact that official delays held up payment to The Family for as long as six to nine months on various installments of the grant forcing the company to incur debts in the form of loans,

thus limiting their business credit. At the time of writing, The Family is waiting to hear about the renewal of its funding from NYSCA and the NEA Expansion Arts Program. The prospects are not improved by the fiscal policies of the Reagan Administration toward the arts, and in particular the Expansion Arts Program.

During the summers of 1979 and 1980, The Family mounted productions at the Black Theatre Alliance in Theatre Row on Forty-Second Street. These included productions of original plays developed in The Family's Playwright's Forum in 1979 and 1980. Some of these will be discussed in Part II.

In spring of 1979, St. James informed The Family that they were selling the building on Madison Avenue. In this instance, Woody King, Chairman of the Board of the Black Theatre Alliance, stepped forward to offer office space to The Family and St. James arranged performance space at All Angel's Church on West Eightieth Street in Manhattan. Churches, where space must often serve the needs of a variety of constituencies, are not always ideal for theatre companies and that is true of both St. James and All Angels. Lack of space is, of course, one of the accepted burdens of producing on a limited budget in New York City.

In September of 1980, Marvin Camillo told me that, "We [The Family] have outlived the anti-poverty movement" adding later with grim determination that The Family survives like, "the Dutchman rising from the water."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Camillo, 29 September 1980.

He may be right although the last part of this chapter would seem to indicate ever growing signs of stress in The Family's recent financial history. Such difficulties, however, have beset many arts organizations, and if it is true that The Family has had a substantial share of problems, it is also true that they have managed to survive them and continue to produce.

The true metal of this theatre company lies in its choice of literature for staging and its productions, which I shall deal with in Part II, and in its impact on its members and the community it serves, which is the subject of Part III.

PART II

Important Productions of The Family

"At Attica"

At Attica, black men took a stand,
At Attica, human dignity was their plan.
At Attica, black manhood
Hit hard and deep,
At Attica, the black man
Awoke from his sleep.¹

¹ Neil Harris, Straight From The Ghetto (Published privately by the author, 1971), p. 43.

Chapter V

The Development of Central Themes in the Works of The Family

During its nine year history, The Family has worked with almost every type of dramatic literature - from ensemble performance of disconnected segments of poetry made into a theatrical collage as in New York, New York, The Big Apple and Straight from the Ghetto to plays about American life among its deprived members like Short Eyes and Looking for Tomorrow. The group has done productions with children like Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy, which is group recitation on the life of John Jay, and The Crucifixion, which was first developed as a passion play by youngsters in the Family Theatre Workshop at the Public Theatre. As discussed in Chapter II, The Family's adaptation of Checkov's The Marriage Proposal extends the original script to include a variety of cultures and musical styles as well as an elaborate wedding at the end of the show that is not in the original play. In contrast, the company presents Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, or What You Will in an essentially unembellished rendition of the original text.

Part II is intended to explicate the dominant themes, dramatic conventions, and the general feeling produced by The Family's work. As Part I illustrates, improvisation plays an important role in The Family's productions. The final shape of scripts results in part from such improvisation in rehearsal. A serious difficulty in characterizing the company's work arises because the influence of improvisation is

not readily revealed in dialogue and simple stage directions. Individual company members also do not remember the sequence of these modifications. Therefore, I have employed an assortment of historical materials relating to performances of The Family's productions, as well as my observations, in trying to capture the important features of the group's works.

Chapter V is devoted to identifying the evolution of the central themes of The Family in some key original works selected and developed by the company. Chapter VI consists of a discussion and my reconstruction of The Crucifixion and Chapter VII is a discussion of Short Eyes in comparison to other plays on the subject of enforced confinement.

There is a continuity to The Family's style of production and choice of works. They encompass two dominant themes, (1) that reality is not fixed but subject to change depending on the will and the imagination of the individual, and (2) that by playing with reality the individual can see possibilities in himself, and his world, that broaden his horizons and enrich the resources of society in general. This shared potential is what makes civilization possible.

Continuity is reflected in the group's approach to rehearsal. Rehearsal methods have remained the same over the last nine years which may in part have to do with the fact that some of the productions, such as Straight from the Ghetto, have been in their repertory since 1973. Improvisation influences all of their productions, in some case as the binding element that gives the production its form and the play its structure. In others, it lends dimension to scripted material, as with Short Eyes and a variety of other scripts that deal with more or less

conventional characters occupying a narrative dramatic structure. In one instance, The Crucifixion, these two modes of production, improvisation and predrafted text, come together with equal influence on the production.

Many of the people I have met in the course of my investigations of The Family had their first exposure to theatre through this group. Akila Coloumbis, founder and director of another prison theatre group called The Theatre for the Forgotten, is fond of telling an anecdote about an inmate who came to him after a performance in amazement saying, "Hey, man, the actors are round!"¹ The reality of live performance is a source of immense excitement as I have observed sitting in prison audiences.

Much of the success of Camillo and Stevenson in their initial efforts at Sing Sing and Bedford Hills was predicated on their conviction that materials should reflect the inmates' lives and that, where possible, inmates should make the selection of material. It is also true that some of the men had seen Camillo in Street Sounds and Ceremonies In Dark Old Men. If these works were not seminal to the productions of The Family, their success with the prison audience did influence Camillo's choice of materials for the workshops. This concept is supported by the fact that Stevenson produced an original show under the title Prison Sounds at Sing Sing which was similar in construction to Bullins' Street Sounds, i.e. a series of vignettes with

¹ Transcript of "Theatre in Prisons" Workshop Conference, October 1979, Theatre in Prisons Archives, CASTA/CUNY GSUC, New York, NY.

numerous characters.²

Ceremonies In Dark Old Men by Lonne Elder is a two-act play that ostensibly illustrates the hoary moral apothegm, "There is no substitute for hard work." Some time before the opening of the play a young black woman, Adele, took a job when her mother died in order to support her father, Mr. Russell B. Parker, and her younger brothers, Theopolis and Bobby. At the play's outset the temporary job has become permanent in addition to supporting the three men, Adele must supply forty dollars a month to rent a storefront on the first floor of the tenement they occupy on 126 Street.

Marvin Camillo told me that 126 Street is known as a "shooting gallery" or a place to buy hard drugs.³ It is a street in very sorry condition. There are many abandoned buildings with windows covered in rusting sheet metal, and aimless looking individuals camp on the crumbling front stairs.

On the surface, the play has a theme and structure similar to the homilistic drama of network television. In fact, the subtlety of Ceremonies lies in its use of cliché American dreams and virtues to create complex irony. Parker and his son are alike in that they both are ambitious and want to be entrepreneurs in order to be captains of their own fates. Parker has what might be his own business in what looks like a barber shop, but he never has any customers and it is never established that he even knows how to cut hair. What he possesses is a

² Stevenson, 15 February 1981.

³ Camillo, 12 August 1980.

dream in the form of this would-be bastion of male comraderie.

Theopolis is a would-be abstract painter, just as he once was a would-be pilot and before that a would-be financier. Father and son possess the desire, and perhaps even the talent, but not the knowledge and experience to be self-made men. Furthermore, the jobs open to them in the world of white employers are dead-end ones given their lack of skills. They play with reality to make it bearable and to test its possibilities, but they also delude themselves. The only capable male member of the family is Bobby who is known as the best thief in Harlem, a trade that provides him both a substantial income and an early death during the course of the play.

These men dislike their parasitic relationship to the women in their lives who are crushed in the process of trying to support them, but they cannot afford to surrender their manhood by accepting the available legal means. Therefore, they turn to criminal ones, in this case selling bootleg whiskey out of the barber shop, as middle men for a local hood named Blue. They do so under the guise of a pseudo-revolutionary organization raising money for black liberation, another gesture for appearances that fools no one during the course of the play.

Some of the men interviewed for this study found that after leaving prison, they could find no other way to survive than to depend on the support of their wives and lovers. When the relationships cooled, having no other contacts, they went back to hustling on the streets, e.g. selling drugs, pimping, etc.

There is also considerable humor in the struggles of Elder's street-corner desperados and their wheeling and dealing. When,

however, the underlying frustration of their lives is played out, the humor is superceded by an overwhelming helplessness. Bobby is killed in a hold-up and the rest of the family begins a kind of emotional spin-out into numbness and moral exhaustion. Not only has the scam failed, but it has caused the family to destroy a part of itself with the death of Bobby.⁴

Camillo played Theopolis, who in the last moments of the play is driven entirely into the world of his masculine street-corner, beat-the-numbers, dream-world at the news of the death of his brother. Much of his audience came from the neighborhood of Ceremonies and knew its dreams and frustrations. Camillo's background made him not only an actor for them, but also a person who could truly understand his role from experience, and bring that understanding to life through the theatre.

In Ceremonies, the key to survival is a character's ability to play with reality. If he accepts his immediate limitations with defeated resignation, he is lost. If he deludes himself, he is likely to destroy himself affecting powers that he does not possess against opponents that do. But those elements of the play that do express some hope for survival lie in the individual's willingness to tweak reality on the nose, daring it to crush him. To play with reality then, is a way for the individual to change his metier so long as he does not lie to himself in the process. In Elder's world the chances for success are, however, very slim.

⁴Lonne Elder, Ceremonies in Dark Old Men (New York, Samuel French, Inc., 1965) pp. 5-81.

Unable to cope with the outcome of his dream-made-real, Theopolis chooses madness rather than continuing to occupy an unbearable reality. There is an echo of this decision in the Traffic Man Camillo played in Street Sounds, a show The Family itself produced in 1975. Bullins' play has over forty characters each of whom has a single speech that is delivered directly to the audience in some cases, or to an imaginary character in others. They appear as parts of Bullins' consciousness depicting, in a passing parade, the members of the black ghetto community (a comparable litany of sounds, sights and tastes appears in Ghetto). If the characters do not share a common narrative, they do share a common atmosphere, and frequently a common failing, self-delusion. There is Fried Brains who has cooked her wits trying to straighten her kinky hair with curling irons to look straight like a white woman's. She is a grotesque, cut off from both races.⁵ The Loser bears no ill will that he did a short stretch in jail for trying to impersonate a friend on a driving license test. He had no trouble with homosexual advances in jail because he spent years in the gym becoming a boxer. Released from jail, he can no longer box because a man with a record cannot get a boxing license.⁶

Unique among these characters is Traffic Man, in dirty sneakers and greasy officer's cap, who has a job "doing service to mankind" directing the traffic on an uptown avenue. He believes that "somebody" gave him this job at some point in the forgotten past. The problem of his

⁵Ed Bullins, The Theme is Blackness (New York; William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1973), p. 178.

⁶Ibid., p. 171.

sanity does not interest him because he's a "professional man" and he has "to get back to work."⁷ Traffic Man has learned to adjust reality to his needs.

In both Ceremonies and Street Sounds the characters play with reality to push back its limits. They succeed according to how well they know themselves and capitalize on their real potential as opposed to stroking their vanity. Both plays also occupy the ghetto, a world where potential often goes unobserved or is lost in pipe-dreams. As Traffic Man demonstrates, however, a little imagination can make that world better for himself and those around him.

New York, New York, The Big Apple contained twelve segments. Four of these were taken from Melvin Van Peebles' Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death. The balance was made up of (1) selections written by members of the company, (2) the Last Poets, (3) "The Crucifixion" by James Weldon Johnson, and (4) "Workingman" by Ed Bullins. The portions by the company are now unavailable and the Bullins' poem fell into disuse when Ghetto was created. The Van Peebles' selections seem to have influenced the tone of Ghetto. The Last Poets' segments are unavailable except for "Jones Comin' Down" which J.J. Johnson still performs as part of Ghetto.

Written in free verse, Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death is a portrait of an afternoon, evening and the following morning on a block in a poor black community. The lives of its numerous characters are intertwined more by coincidence and cultural proximity than plot. The

⁷Ibid., p. 150.

same element of self-delusion exists here as in Street Sounds, but Van Peebles sees this in some ways as a way of ameliorating the pain of reality. For example one segment that appeared in New York, New York is called "Catch That on the Corner." Each day a blind man is gently touched on the arm by a sweet smelling woman until he is convinced that she is in love with him. He begs a friend to describe the woman who is in fact Funky Girl, a transvestite. His friend refuses to destroy his illusions and leaves the blind man suspended between the pleasures of his fantasy and the pain stemming from the lack of their confirmation.⁸

Funky Girl materialized in another selection performed by The Family called "Funky Girl on Motherless Broadway." Taunted by hookers and roused by the police, Funky Girl, armed with endless hours of attention to his/her physical charms and a blade for protection, cruises along Broadway looking for love. She/he finds it with a sailor who convinces her to go down an alley with him. She/he trusts the sailor because she cannot fulfill his/her metier to do otherwise. Such risks are a part of the illusions that makes his/her life have meaning.⁹

"Lilly did the Zampougie" is a man's sensuous description of a dance that his woman did for him alone. Now in prison, he explores this lost luxury remembering each swaying curve of her body and the joys of their lovemaking. It is only at the final moments of the piece that he is brought up short when he remembers that he murdered Lilly

⁸Melvin Van Peebles, Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death (New York: A Bantam Book, 1973), p. 48-56.

⁹Ibid., pp. 72-74.

out of jealousy. Like the Muse of Sisyphus, his richest memory is also a nightmare that he is doomed to relive again and again.¹⁰ This selection by The Family is interesting because the sexual pleasure followed by suffering is similar to the segment in Short Eyes wherein an inmate relives masturbating to a picture of Jane Fonda and then being beaten for doing so by the guards. Such impromptu recitations are called "prison toasts."

Reality and illusion in the foregoing selections blend into the passions, agonies, pain and pleasure that compose experience. They also seem a remarkably successful description of the feeling of powerlessness that accompanies being either a prisoner of an institution or of an inner-city ghetto.

When The Family was first performing New York, New York, as indicated in Chapter III, they went through some very lean months in the spring of 1973. Kenny Steward, who was living on 125 Street at the time, walked to East Tenth Street every day for lack of car fare. But as J.J. Johnson says, "Theatre was a way of surviving on the outside."¹¹ Illusion, in the form of art, blended with the reality of the company working together, in mutual support, creating a satisfying, tangibly creative experience. That blend is one of the central themes of the company's history and works.

Beatrice Zinzer offered the following description of the production

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 109-17.

¹¹Johnson, 21 August 1980.

in 1972 in the Westchester Reporter Dispatch:

Against a backdrop of graffiti-scrawled walls depicting the streets of New York City--the actors performed monologues, improvisations, sang, danced, and read poetry. "In places like Harlem, wherever there was a big night life, we'd call it the 'apple'." explained Camillo...

There were no intermissions, and no stage curtain to draw. Scene changes were carried out by the skillful use of flashing lights. Inmates responded to the Spanish dialogue with encouraging remarks of their own. Comedy, tragedy, and musical interludes were all adeptly interwoven.

Cast members moved out into the audience and returned again and again, never distracted by the good-hearted heckling of the viewers.¹²

From the above it is clear that the production hoped to supply a point of focus to the company, and a fresh sense of joy to the audience.

Ceremonies, Street Sounds and Ain't Supposed to Die are plays that take an unsentimental look at life in America for the racially and economically disadvantaged. New York, New York shared the feeling of frustration and hostility of such plays. The Family's next production, Straight from the Ghetto, operates within the same cultural context looking for untouched dimensions of that world like the sensory delights of ghetto cooking and the calls of street vendors, and the horror and folly in the death of a young junky. Ghetto plays with the ghetto reality to give us fresh insight into its potential and character.

Various factors governed the shift from New York, New York to

¹²Zinzer, Reporter Dispatch, 18 November 1972.

Straight from the Ghetto. The company was out of prison and anxious to create a new production with original material. Neil Harris had contributed a wealth of new poems including "Straight from the Ghetto" which also served as the title of a privately published book of poems by him. According to Colleen Dewhurst, Gay Smalls who was killed during this period,¹³ had played a number of the key roles in the segments of New York, New York that came from Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death. Camillo was also interested in using some of Pinero's poetry, who was by now at Riverside Church.

There is no published edition of Straight from the Ghetto. A copy of the working script used by Spencer Mosse for the 1977 production contains eleven sections. The first of these is a scenario entitled "Super," an improvised segment in which an actor goes into the audience playing a Spanish-speaking building superintendent in the ghetto. The super harangues the audience directly about the shabby conditions in his building and his neighborhood.¹⁴ He compels a member of the audience to write a note in English to a tenant who has not been cleaning up after his dog. Gradually his speech gathers rhythm and momentum until the voices of the ensemble join his with Harris's poem "Straight from the Ghetto." Harris' poetry has a rapid-fire quality that depends heavily on a dissonant crackling use of consonants. He enjoys lists of things that the actor can pour forth, over-

¹³Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

¹⁴Neil Harris et al., "Straight from the Ghetto" Family working script from 1977 production, Theatre in Prison Archive, CASTA, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY, p. 1.

whelming the listener. For example, this stanza where the Family enjoys the sounds and imagined aromas of soul food:

Pig grease, ham hocks,
Collard greens, corn bread
Sweat and grease in your coffee
West Indians. Puerto Ricans,
Western, Southern, Eastern
Backs like grab in a jar.
Straight from the ghetto.¹⁵

Food types, and styles of cooking, slide metaphorically into the racial mixture represented in the ghetto. Here is another segment:

Classy pimps, sporting whores
Fags, custom rods
Hip Lincolns, Apollo Theatre
Fish and chips, rythem [sic] and blues,
Jazz at the Baron, Jazz at Mittens,
Hotel Cecil. Death on the rooftops.¹⁶

This segment is followed by a list of streets that would be well known to most ghetto members of the audience like, "116 Street, 111, 113th Street, 120th Street, 115 Lenox, 125th Street [which in performance always draws a cheer]..."¹⁷ In short, Harris creates a sound and image collage which is perfectly suited to performance as quick tableaux by actors.

In 1977, The Family was still performing "Black Woman with a Blond Wig On" by Miguel Piñero as a part of Ghetto. This poem is a satirical treatment of the attempt to assume the stereotypical traits of another race. The opening stanza of the piece includes the following lines:

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁶Ibid., p.3.

¹⁷Ibid.

Black woman with the blond wig on
 You're livin' an illusion
 Think that head blanket
 bought from Macy's on a Lincoln sale
 will make the residents of Forest Hills
 Lay out a black carpet to their blond streets
 Because you have some blond horse hair on.¹⁸

Piñero's images are a weave of the woman's self-image in the wig, and the comic recitation of the components of the wig itself. Iffe Shipp performed this segment in the 1977 production about which Mel Gussow said, "It is a rollicking impudent spoof about role models...In common with the show itself, the scene is caustic and funky."¹⁹

"Jones Comin's Down" from the Last Poets is one of the segments that appeared in New York, New York that persists even now in The Family's production of Ghetto. It is a poem delivered by a character who is an addict suffering from heroin withdrawal:

...Y'see...Y'see
 Cause I'm strung out...strung out
 On a white witch
 My timeless bitch
 riding a white horse
 into my main vain
 Damn Baby. Got to kill this pain...²⁰

J.J. Johnson has continued to perform this piece since he first did it at Bedford Hills. His work in this segment is as fascinating

¹⁸Ibid., p.6

¹⁹Mel Gussow, "Stage: 'The Ghetto' Straight and Plain," New York Times, 14 January 1977.

²⁰Harris, "Ghetto," p. 11a.

and terrifying now, as I am told by many people, it was then. The crawling flesh of withdrawal symptoms is followed by the hysterical urgency of searching for a vein and then the rush as the heroin hits his system causing huge beads of sweat to roll down his face. Next comes the near-comic scene of an addict in the first stages of narcotic euphoria with his eyes bugging and his feet moving in an incoherent stumble. The rush of the drug peaks and a subtle change comes over Johnson. His breathing becomes shallow and his eyes roll back into his head. Only gradually does it become apparent that he has overdosed when a few moments later we realize that he is dying. At this point he falls back into the arms of the rest of the company who lift him above their heads with his arms outstretched in the form of a crucifix. This segment was originally followed in New York, New York by the J.W. Johnson poem, "The Crucifixion", read by Kenny Steward as a comment on the loss of young people to addiction in the ghetto. That sequence of segments was maintained until The Crucifixion became a separate show in the mid-seventies.

By 1980, Ghetto contained fifteen segments with additions and deletions from the original such as one entitled "Immortal voices of the Dead" an expansion of one of the poetic listings in the original poem "Straight from the Ghetto." The leaders of the third world including those who are dead like M.L. King, Malcolm X and Che Guevara, are listed along with those who are living like Amiri Baraka, Pope John Paul, and Ayatollah Khomeini. After one performance, I asked Camillo how the Ayatollah and the Pope had come to

be listed as I had a great deal of trouble visualizing them as libertarians. Camillo told me that he shared my doubts to some extent but said that Khomeini had been included at the request of some of the company members who perceived him as an opponent to American imperialism and the Pope as a defender of Poland. Shortly after the abortive commando raid for the release of the State Department hostages in Iran, an interesting brief segment was added to Ghetto.

The set, which is a set of flats with a set unit depicting a front stoop of a ghetto tenement, was silent for a brief time while the company stared enrapt like children at three tiny paper oil derricks that were under attack from three tiny wind-up helicopters. Without dialogue, the segment, which lasted only thirty seconds, asked the rhetorical question, "What were we really trying to repossess in that attempt?" The image was presented in a way that was thought provoking and charming, rather than argumentative, asking the audience to consider the parameters of the hostage situation.

This moment rather nicely captures the thematic character of Ghetto which explores political issues but is not didactic. In the same way, Ghetto explores not only the pain and folly of life in the ghetto, but also its charm, passion, music, rich linguistic and cultural mix, which lend it complexity and sophistication. It is in keeping then with Camillo's objective, "...to paint a picture of the history of the ghetto...an impression...a record."²¹

²¹Camillo, 29 April 1980.

The most striking segment of Ghetto to me is an eight line segment near the end of the show called "Six O'Clock in the Mornin'" that was created by Tito Goya one day in rehearsal. Camillo asked the men to improvise on the experience of prison. The following is my reconstruction. The words change a bit from production to production, but the substance remains the same:

[The cast imitates the sounds of cell door rumb-
ling across cement and then slamming open on the
end of the tier as the guard comes on duty for the
morning prisoner count. These counts go on every
few hours during the course of the day.]

Six o'clock in the mornin'.
The man just came by for the count.
It's gettin' cold out there.
I gotta wash my face.
The fuckin' water's cold.
I gotta take a shit.
[Mimes pulling down pants and squats.]
The fuckin' toilet stool cold.
They should put covers on the toilet stools.²²

Each line is done by a single actor and then a group of eight to ten others repeat it in chorus. At the close of the recitation, which involves mime as suggested by the lines, each inmate/actor snaps to attention, gives his name, his prison number and the facility where he or she was confined at one time. The sequence is repeated, and then repeated again. The pointlessness, helplessness, repetition, and perpetual frustration of prison life are made clear with an absolute economy of language, or a minimum of what Clay Stevenson called "rhetorical crap."

²²Neil Harris et al., Straight from the Ghetto, Adapted for the stage by Marvin Camillo and the Repertory Co. of The Family, taped performance at Rahway State Prison with related interviews, Rahway, N.J., 20 May 1980.

At one rehearsal, I watched the company work this segment under the instruction of J.J. Johnson. Each line calls for a particular action by the actor doing the initial recitation, which, for dramatic effect, must be precisely imitated by the rest of the company. The cast worked hard, struggling for both physical and emotional synchronization. The difficulty here was exacerbated by the fact that Johnson did not precisely repeat the same action each time he did the segment. Rather than become frustrated, the company worked quietly along with him until a kind of common emotional rhythm was attained. Shortly thereafter, they were all in sync, working the segment with intense but relaxed concentration. Johnson had adjusted himself to them as much as they to him. This incident is a good example of the empathy at work between the members of The Family.

As Gussow described Ghetto:

The form is simple. A subject or a theme is introduced and the actors play it as if it were an improvisational score, using themselves as instruments. They sing and dance and they mime to their own street style--eating rice and beans, taking drugs, turning a man upside down and strumming him as if he were a bass fiddle...

There is no artifice in their show. It entertains and it delivers a pertinent message--straight from the ghetto.²³

I will discuss The Crucifixion in Chapter VI and Short Eyes in Chapter VII. At this point, I would like to briefly discuss some of the more interesting plays that have also appeared in The Family's repertory.

²³Gussow, New York Times, 14 January 1977.

At The Family festival of plays at the Riverside Church in 1977 a play by Ringo Reyes called Looking for Tomorrow was presented for the first time. Reyes wrote the script while in prison. The story of a man blinded during the War in Viet Nam, Looking for Tomorrow is composed of three scenes. What is interesting about the play is its manipulation of time which is reminiscent of a film. In the first scene, Victor, the veteran, is in the hospital unable to adjust to his blindness despite the supportive exhortations of the hospital staff and doctors. One is struck by the flatness of these characters who speak in stilted, robotic language, as opposed to Victor.

The second scene is a flashback to the party in Victor's honor given the night before he left for war. It is clear that Victor's friends care for him and admire his courage in going to war. At the same time, it is also true that they and he are sharply divided by the directions that their lives are taking. In effect, his consciousness has already left his friends, whose attention is as much consumed with the mundane events of the immediate future as with Victor's fate in Viet Nam.

The third scene presents us with Victor as a derelict. He shuns both the emotional and practical assistance of his friends who try to make him see that it is not his blindness that is crippling him but his own unwillingness to accept himself.²⁴

Looking for Tomorrow is flawed by sections of clumsy dialogue, and structural inadequacies, but like Ceremonies in Dark Old Men the play

²⁴Ringo Reyes, "Looking for Tomorrow" Family working script from 1979 production, Theatre in Prison Archives, CASTA/CUNY GSUC, New York, NY, pp. 1-27.

houses some interesting themes within a hackneyed super-structure.

Victor, complete with his ironic name, is psychologically cut adrift in the shifting time reference of the play. Just as we are not sure which elements of the action are real and which are the products of Victor's imagination, Victor operates in a dramatic action that floats between reality and distortion. Not only is his sight impaired, but his other senses are affected. He will not listen to the support of his friends. That he is a cripple is a product of his fear of making full contact with reality, and testing its limits. Like Parker and Theopolis in Ceremonies his limitations are to some extent self-imposed or exaggerated by self-delusion.

As William Harris put in the Soho Weekly News:

It is a succinct and powerful structure, fueled by Reyes' unrelenting anger and despair...he emerges with a portrait of a man obsessed, tortured, and annihilated by his affliction.

The irony that director Marvin Felix Camillo has beautifully captured in his production is that this blind man also cannot listen. Camillo emphasized the auditory rather than the visual elements in each of the three scenes; the sounds of street life, the strains of Motown music, the empty, trying-to-be-supportive rhetoric of friends, the gentle cooing of the woman who loves him.²⁵

In 1977, Barbara Lewis of The Soho Weekly News described it as, "...a casualty play about America, a cruel and bitter ending to a dream."²⁶ It is manifest that Looking for Tomorrow was significant-

²⁵William Harris, "On and Off," The Soho Weekly News, New York, NY, 21 June 1979.

²⁶Barbara Lewis, "An Extended Family," The Soho Weekly News, New York, NY, 10 March 1977.

ly enhanced by the production insights brought to it by Camillo and The Family. When I saw the 1979 production, I was impressed by the fact that every auditory and visual feature of the play had been amplified or distorted, creating a heightened theatrical reality. The results were the auditory exaggerations and surprises that must accompany the initial stages of blindness.

The first scene was played on platforms of widely differing heights that emphasized Victor's isolation and have a vertiginous feeling to his predicament. The second scene was in shifting half-light of multiple colors giving the party a distorted quality that was enhanced by a slow-motion dance segment. The last scene was staged in absolute barren flatness that was strengthened by stark white light. Camillo's treatment of the play allowed us to share something of Victor's feelings - in other words the audience could play with the emotional and physical reality of the character's blindness.

Shoeshine Parlor by James Lee was done by The Family as part of the New York Shakespeare Festival Mobile Theatre series of 1975. David Vidal of the Times adumbrated the play into the following sentence, "Basically "The Shoeshine Parlor" is the story of a man who earns an honest living shining shoes in Corona, Queens, who triumphs over a villain who sells drugs and says the Yankee dollar is his God."²⁷

²⁷David Vidal, "'Shoeshine Parlor' Has Extra Part: The Audience," New York Times, 16 August 1975.

It is an unvarnished study of street life with a large share of losers, fools, villains, hookers, and those who aspire to making life better in their community. City audiences could see the characters that filled their daily lives in its action. What is more, the hero is not a saint, just a street-tough shoeshine man, and the defeat of the villain is messy and brutal. Shoeshine Parlor offered the inner-city audience a chance to watch itself win and to celebrate its own potential. Unlike Ceremonies these characters gamble with reality without self-delusion and thus they are, to some degree, the masters of their fate.

Here is Clive Barnes' description of a performance in the Bronx:

In this audience there were a lot of children some of them scampering around. People were drinking and talking and laughing. They were paying attention to the play as they would have done to television--no more, no less. And yet, the whole audience related to the play with an unaffected zest and gusto. The two high points of the play, a marvelously staged block party and the highly dramatic blinding of the dope pusher, actually seemed to hit the audience like a punch. There was a wonderful sense of involvement, something that could make the most jaded of theatre-goers stop and think about the nature of the theatrical experience.²⁸

Despite Barnes' reputation for the heavy-handed use of superlatives, I can testify to having had the same feeling at other performances by The Family, particularly in outdoor settings where the experience of their work is more open to overt response from their audience. This effect also occurs among inmate audiences.

²⁸Clive Barnes, "Stage: 'Shoeshine Parlor,' Theatre for the People," New York Times, 10 August 1975.

Mel Gussow compared Shoeshine Parlor to the Festival's production at the Delacourt "'Comedy of Errors' plays up to its audience. In direct contrast, Papp's Mobile Theatre production of James Lee's "The Shoeshine Parlor" challenges its audience." Later in the same review he makes this observation about Camillo's direction:

...Camillo, is wonderfully adept at delineating character through atmosphere, at orchestrating shared activity. Like the spontaneous prison jam session in "Short Eyes," in "Shoeshine Parlor" there is an exuberant block party at which everyone is completely caught up in the pleasure of the moment. The stage rocks with joy until, suddenly, tempers spark and inevitably, violence explodes.²⁹

In June of 1981 I attended a performance at All Angels' Church of Shamsul Alam's Benpires. Alam, at this writing, is the Family's playwright-in-residence, who has written several other plays that have been produced at least as staged readings since he joined the company in 1978. The Background material on this particular play that appears in the program is particularly helpful in understanding how The Family develops a play:

Many in our company have had if not first hand experience in street gangs have worked with them. We have gleaned many insights from their viewpoints and have put it into the essence of Benpires. The feelings, desires, and demeanor that we could not seem to derive from amongst ourselves we went out in search of the subject-street members. Some of The Family members talked with "The Guardian Angels," "The Bishops" [a famous street gang in New York City] and old-time street members. We also invited them to our rehearsals and asked their opinions. To further realize the concept of what Benpires was about, we presented small segments of the play when we performed on our prison tours and at our Saturday Cabarets. We improvized; we

²⁹Mel Gussow, "Theatre," New York Times. 17 August 1975.

rewrote; we listened to everyone. The response has been overwhelming.³⁰

Benpires is about a Latino street gang in New York City. The name is derived from the fact that the gang member who is sent with the club jackets to get the name of the gang embroidered on the backs, has a heavy spanish accent and thus pronounces the sounds "b" and "v" interchangeably. When he says "Vampires," his cousin believes that he is saying "Benpires," and inscribes the jackets in that way. Out of cash, the club is forced to accept the jackets and the new name that goes with them. The scene is extremely funny as they rationalize this alteration of their former "handle" on the grounds that being called Vampires suggests that they "...go around sucking on people," which strikes their adolescent prudishness as distasteful.³¹

This incident also allows us to see the club evolve into a gang with all the attendant dangers that ultimately cost the club's president his life before they have really had a chance even to assert themselves on the block. Through the work of the actors under the direction of Camillo, we see each of the members as individuals teetering on the edge of adulthood, and finding in the club gang a unity that is not provided at schools that reject them because of their language problems, by a welfare department that ignores them, by

³⁰"Benpires," program June 1981, The Theatre in Prisons Archive, CASTA/CUNY GSUC, New York, NY.

³¹Shamsul Alam, "Benpires," Family working script from the 1978 readings, Theatre in Prison Archive, CASTA/CUNY GSUC, New York, NY, pp. 19-24.

employers who will not hire them, and by the rest of their immediate families who all face the same chaos and difficulties often compounded by advancing age and ill health.

The play is not, however, written by a condescending "social worker". The characters are funny and charming and if they tend to make poor choices in dealing with some of their problems, the author wants us to admire the romance of their street courage. Nor are they lumped together into a cultural stereotype as are the gangs in West Side Story which by comparison appears to suffer from a patronizing liberalism.

What is perhaps best about Benpires which is still a work in progress, is that it is a slice of the passionate vitality that makes New York City unique in the world with its admixture of cultures struggling, sometimes dangerously, for survival, and for self-realization among their individual members. The gangs continue to be frightening, but at least Benpires allows us to see their members as people.

It would seem then that the major aims in The Family's dramatic works are, by using the medium of the theatre, (1) to push back the apparent limits of reality, exploring its parameters for fresh perspectives, and (2) to provide fresh insight into facets of our culture that are often taken for granted or ignored.

CHAPTER VI

A History, Working Script, and Reflections on The Crucifixion

The Crucifixion has a number of features that make it particularly suited to a detailed discussion as one of The Family's major works. It has been in the group's repertoire from their earliest performances. It is the union of an excerpt from a well-known published work The Creation by James Weldon Johnson, and the Family's improvisational creative methods. Finally, it is a recapitulation of a universally known biblical story, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The last statement is of particular interest because what is clear from watching The Crucifixion in a number of settings and with a variety of audiences, is that the Christian motif is only a symbolic key to the larger themes of the production. The thrust of the work is an exploration of human suffering to which the central myth of Christianity neatly lends itself. The production can be interpreted as a simple dramatization of the crucifixion of Christ, but the images woven into The Crucifixion are far more eclectic. That eclecticism is Camillo's intent.¹ Political, social and cultural themes operate in counterpoint in a play that is at times a processional/ceremony, at others a form of street theatre, and at others a kind of dissonant opera.

As Mel Gussow said in his 1980 review of Straight from the Ghetto, The Family's version of The Crucifixion contains no artifice. There is

¹Marvin Camillo, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 4 June 1981.

no literary attempt to play with the ironies of Christian history or to explore theological issues. As such, The Crucifixion has the directness of a medieval passion play. With its emphasis on communal celebration, passion, and spectacle, audiences respond to the show as a kind of staged festival. Its literary simplicity, use of a highly symbolic recognizable narrative, and special performance style give The Crucifixion an intriguing universality. I shall develop these thoughts after describing the history, content and audience impact of the production in some detail.

Marvin Camillo first used the poem "The Crucifixion" in his improvisational production, For My People, which he conceived and directed with the Teatro de la Calle in Newark in the early 1960s. It appeared in that production as a funeral oration for the young people of Newark whose lives were being lost to drug abuse. As noted in Chapter V, The Crucifixion was first used by The Family as the last selection in New York, New York, The Big Apple following "Jones Comin' Down" as a statement on the loss of young blacks and hispanics to drugs in the ghetto. When the Family Theatre Workshop was in operation in the Public Theatre Annex, the text was used as an improvisational learning tool for the young people in these classes. It was here that it began to develop into its present form as a passion play. By 1977, it had become a part of the repertoire of the central workshop and was included in the festival of plays performed at the Riverside Church in that year. Camillo stresses that material often develops in The Family over just such a

long period of time, while undergoing numerous variations.²

As no complete script is available, I have reconstructed The Crucifixion in a version which follows. My script is based on seeing The Crucifixion in rehearsal during the spring of 1980, in performance at All Angels Church in the spring and summer of that year, at The Lincoln Center Outdoor Theatre Festival, and on tour at Bedford Hills in the spring of 1981. These performances were done by different casts of varying numbers. My reconstruction, therefore, is intended to be representative of the production rather than a blow by blow description of a single performance. It is necessary for me to do this because (1) The Crucifixion, like most Family productions, is constantly changing, and (2) no detailed records or photographs of staging are kept of any of the productions that would provide an accurate fix on a given staging. For example, one stage direction pencilled into the prompt book by some nameless stage manager of the past reads, "The Earth Quakes and the Steeple Crumbles to Floor" without further explanation.

There is a collective memory in The Family that obviates the need for such records to some degree. Someone always seems to remember how a sequence was performed in the past which is enough to get the improvisational ball rolling in rehearsal. More importantly, every show in The Family repertoire travels the prison circuit. No two prison performance spaces are ever alike, and the best of them are multi-purpose auditoriums rather than theatres. Chapels and gymnasiums are more common. Thus an elaborate production scheme would simply encumber the

²Camillo, 4 June 1981.

already complex process of moving the group through the security arrangements, setting up the technical equipment, and having a warm-up session before the performance. The majority of The Crucifixion's special effects, which are fairly elaborate, are created with large pieces of cloth, a variety of simple handprops and some costume pieces. Most of this paraphernalia fits into a large cardboard barrel which is the only set piece used in the show.

There are no production photographs of the show, only press shots, and these reveal little about the staging. I shall therefore include among the illustrations in Appendix B, some sketches designed to help the reader to visualize the shape of the staging at various peak moments when it solidifies into a particular image. That does not happen often. The general impression created by watching this show is that the ensemble operates like an amorphous organism, constantly changing shape.

A Reconstruction from Performance of The Family's Production of

The Crucifixion

by Steven Hart

Based on a poem by James Weldon Johnson

Adapted for the stage by Marvin F. Camillo

and the Repertory Company of The Family

(As the audience gathers on three sides of the performance space which contains a barrel, improvisational jazz piano is heard. The music is low-key and laid-back creating an atmosphere of anticipation tempered by urbane calm.

Lights fade to black. Silence.)

VOICE: (Piercing shout in the darkness)

Hot peas and butter!

(Ensemble enters in darkness to a rhythmic snapping of fingers. They chant/sing "Hot peas and butter" to a calypso beat. Lights fade up slowly. A dozen or so street types are ranged around the periphery of the playing area staring at the audience in a way that is both playful and a little menacing like kids hanging out in a school yard. They chant/sing the following:)

MALE VOICE: Who's got de peas?

ENSEMBLE: Who's got de peas?

MALE VOICE: Who's got de butter?

ENSEMBLE: Who's got de butter?

FEMALE VOICE: Ricky's warm!

ENSEMBLE: Ricky's warm!

MALE VOICE: Ricky's cold!

ENSEMBLE: Ricky's cold!

MALE VOICE: When you're hot, you're hot!

ENSEMBLE: When you're hot, you're hot!

MALE VOICE: When you're cold, you're cold!

ENSEMBLE: When you're cold, you're cold!

(This continues in a version of hide and seek as the ensemble members search the player who...)

MALE VOICE: Who's got de belt!?

ANOTHER MALE VOICE: (Who has been preselected) I got de belt!

(All run trying to reach "base," a preselected point at which they are safe in neutral territory. Any who do not reach this point before the one with the belt are beaten with it in "fun." Members of the ensemble fall into the spirit of the game and start beating the loser forming a circle around him. They scream and we begin to wonder how much of this is play. Slowly this mob evolves into a football huddle underscored by a soft drumlike tattoo that is strummed out on an electric guitar and punctuated by dissonant chords. A scrum is formed and the ball snapped. We see a play in slow motion. Linemen smash each other as the quarterback runs a touchdown. All are in pain. Some seem to take

pleasure in that fact. Cheerleaders leap and emit silent screams in slow motion. Paced in this way they have the faces of aging topless dancers struggling for attention.)

ENSEMBLE: (Emits a long, slow motion cheer in the form of a whisper as the goal is made. It sounds like a protracted hiss.)
Yeahhhhhh!

(Quarterback turns back toward the group. The pantomime ball is reduced in size and the game is transformed to dodgeball. Two teams form. Slow motion ends. Screams of pleasure and pain fill the air as the balls are thrown at those in the middle who are not as yet "out." The sound of the pantomime balls striking the bodies of the players in the middle are theatricalized by sharp plucking of a string on an electric guitar. Finally, only one girl is left in the middle. The ensemble pelts her with mounting violence until we realize that she cannot get up. She seems as paralyzed by fear as pain. Silence. Some of the ensemble seem frightened. Others appear to feel guilty. The howl of a dog is heard. Silence. Then a low horn is heard sounding three low notes that seem to come from a great distance.)

ENSEMBLE: (Sing/chant) Blow Gabriel, blow! Yes, blow, Gabriel blow!

(The ensemble marches into a line as the march cadence begins again. Produced on a guitar with two notes, the cadence sounds like a mechanical version of a human heartbeat. Those at the head of the line march in place and then peel off one by one to form the "pony" in Johnny on the Pony. As they do so, each shouts out the name of one of the books of the Old Testament, "Genesis!" etc. until at last the pony collapses.³

Following the collapse of the pony, the ensemble plays cowboys and indians which culminates in tying an indian man and his wife back to back to each other and then stripping the man of a set of pantomime beads. Two settlers fight over this trinket as we hear clichéd indian music softly underscoring the action as is often the case in western films.

The game transforms to a corrida. A man sings a soulful spanish melody. A trumpet is heard. The battle is joined between the matador and the bull

³This game is best described by Bruegel's painting "Children's Games." In the lower right-hand corner of the picture is a detail of the game in progress. This painting appears among the pictures in Appendix B.

which is killed. The ears and horns are hacked off by the matador and given to a woman who receives them as a compliment to her beauty.

The sound of a great bell is heard tolling slowly in the distance.)

PETER: (In robe with shepherd's crook and sandals enters.) I am Peter the Fisherman, and the Lord has sent me to say--

(The ensemble interrupts him by shouting their own names as they march in a circle.

They then form the garden of Gethsemane. Women dance around a pantomime fountain UR. A tree is created by the men UL at the top of which a boy plays a monkey. They sing "And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own..." etc., echoing Peter.)

NARRATOR: (DR at Lecturn)

Jesus, my gentle Jesus,
Walking in the dark of the Garden--
The Garden of Gethsemane,
Saying to the three disciples

(Christ, a young woman, enters doing cartwheels.
She is joined by the disciples.)

Sorrow is in my soul--
Even unto death;
Tarry ye here a little while,
And watch with me.
Jesus, my burdened Jesus,
Praying in the dark of the Garden--
The Garden of Gethsemane.
Saying: Father,

JESUS: (Echoing the Narrator) Father,

NARRATOR: Oh, Father

JESUS: Oh, Father

NARRATOR: This bitter cup (Jesus continues to echo each line)

This bitter cup
Let it pass from me. (echo stops)
Jesus, my sorrowing Jesus,
The sweat like drops of blood upon his brow,
Talking with his Father,
While the three disciples slept,
Saying: Father, (Jesus echoes these lines as well)
Oh, Father,
Not as I will,
Not as I will,
But let thy will be done.

Oh, look at black-hearted Judas--
 Sneaking through the dark of the Garden--
 Leading his crucifying mob.
 Oh God!
 Strike him down!
 Why don't you strike him down,
 Before he plants his traitor's kiss
 Upon my Jesus' cheek?

(The ensemble approaches Jesus. Judas places a long, lingering hissing kiss on her cheek. The howl of a dog is heard. A marching cadence begins anew as Jesus is mocked and lead before the judges and Pilate.

And they take my blameless Jesus,
 And they drag him to the Governor,
 To the mighty Roman Governor.

ENSEMBLE: To the Mighty Roman Governor!

TWO MEN: Great Pilate seated in his hall.

(A child does a comic imitation of a pretentious trumpet flourish.)

NARRATOR: Great Pilate on his judgement seat,
 Said:

(Before Pilate speaks, a three-headed monster/judge is formed by three people wrapped in an enormous blue robe. The gibbering monster commends Jesus to Pilate's judgement in a rising shriek.)

PILATE: In this man I find no fault.

I find no fault in him.

(Ensemble echoes this thought with decision.)

NARRATOR: And Pilate washed his hands.

But they cried out, saying:

(In various distorted voices)

ENSEMBLE: Crucify him! Crucify him! etc.

NARRATOR: His blood be on our heads.

And they beat my loving Jesus,

(They do so, punctuated by musicians.)

And they spit on my precious Jesus;

(They do so.)

They dressed him up in a purple robe,

(A fifty foot length of red/purple stretch cloth is brought out. It is wrapped once around Jesus' neck and pulled, choking her. Peter is heard off-stage singing a Hebrew lament. Shouts of "Tighter!"

The ensemble covers itself with the two ends of the robe. The outline of faces, limbs and bodies are visible through the cloth in writhing, grotesque outline.)

They put a crown of thorns upon his head.

(Bell is heard)

MALE VOICE: Tu corona espina en tu cabeza para siempre!⁴

(Ensemble repeats)

NARRATOR: And they pressed it down--

Oh, they pressed it down--

And they mocked my sweet King Jesus.

(Blood flows from Jesus' head beneath the crown.

Three people now begin to fight over possession of
the robe.)

SOLDIER: Let us not tear it. Let us cast lots to see whose it
shall be.

(Musicians echo the sound of the diving for the
robe.)

PETER: (Singing) Up Golgotha's rocky road, they crucified my
Jesus--

(The ensemble joins in repeating this line, as a
mimed procession of angular rigid bodies proceeds
like a dance of death.)

NARRATOR: Up Golgotha's rugged road
I see my Jesus go.
I see him sink beneath the load,
I see my drooping Jesus sink.

(March begins again)

⁴This line is delivered with contempt as illustrated by the use of the familiar Spanish pronoun "tu." It means "Your crown upon your head forever."

And then they laid hold on Simon,
Black Simon,

ENSEMBLE: Simon, Black Simon!

NARRATOR: yes, Black Simon;
and Simon bore the cross.

On Calvary, On Calvary,
They crucified my Jesus.
They nailed him to the cruel tree,
And the hammer!
The hammer!
The hammer!
Rang through Jerusalem's street.

(The ensemble sings, "They crucified my Lord and he never said a mumblin's word." etc. with exaggerated slowness.)

NARRATOR: Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,
Shivering as the nails got through his hands;

(Ensemble repeats in a whisper.)

Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,
Shivering as the nails go through his feet.

(Ensemble continues repeating the narrative lines.)

Jesus, my darling Jesus,
Groaning as the Roman spear plunged in his side;

Jesus, my darling Jesus,

Groaning as the blood came spurting from his wound.

Oh, look how they done my Jesus.

(Pantomime spear enters Jesus in slow motion who writhes and emits a silent scream. Mary commences to weep at the feet of Jesus.

Jesus is set upon her feet by the soldiers on top of the barrel with her arms extended and a cross is held up behind her. Many begin to weep at the foot of the cross. One actor mimes swinging on one of Jesus' arms like a child swinging on the branch of a tree. She tentatively sings a child's ditty that begins to gather force and is joined by the ensemble. "Hot Peas and Butter" game is replayed for a few moments.)

PETER: (singing) Oh Mary, don't you weep and don't you moan, etc.

(The ensemble forms a great cross with Jesus at the center. They sway back and forth as they join in the song. Their arms are peaked above their heads like the steeples of churches. The sound of a dog howl is heard. Peter commences to sing the theme from the film Exodus. The ensemble joins him in song.

A round begins in which actors carrying placards containing the lyrics, exhort the audience to sing "Oh Mary, Don't You Weep, etc.", the Exodus theme, "This Land is Your Land" and a spanish song, "No hay dos tan grande como tu, no lo hay, no lo hay" meaning, "No, there are no two as great as you, no there aren't, no there aren't.")

NARRATOR: (With the ensemble repeating each line after her)

Mary,

Weeping Mary

Sees her poor little Jesus on the cross.

Mary,

Weeping Mary,

Sees her sweet, baby Jesus on the cruel cross,

Hanging between two thieves.

NARRATOR: And Jesus, my lonesome Jesus,
 Called out once more to his Father,
 Saying:
 My God,
 My God,
 Why hast thou forsaken me?

(First Jesus and the the ensemble echoes each of the
preceeding lines.)

And he drooped his head and died.

(A dog howl is heard.)

And the veil of the temple was split in two,
The midday sun refused to shine,
The thunder rumbled and the lightning wrote
An unknown language across the sky.
What a day! Lord, what a day!
When my blessed Jesus died.

(the ensemble mimes an earthquake, sounds of same
are produced by the musicians.)

Oh, I tremble, yes, I tremble,
It causes me to tremble, tremble,
When I think how Jesus died;
Died on the steps of Calvary,
How Jesus died for sinners,
Sinners like you and me.

PETER: (enters singing) Were you there when they crucified my Lord? etc.

A CHILD: (singing) Kumbaya, my Lord, Kumbaya, etc.

(The ensemble joins in singing Kumbaya. They act out such lines as "I am old my Lord, Kumbaya" and "I'm in prison, my Lord, Kumbaya"

The company invites the audience to join in the singing. An upbeat version of the song begins in which the narrative lines change to "We are fighting, my Lord, Kumbaya" or "We are free, my Lord," etc. The company moves out into the audience and sings with them.)⁵

THE END

⁵ James Weldon Johnson, The Crucifixion, adapted for the stage by Marvin Felix Camillo and the Repertory Company of The Family, Taped performance at All Angels Church, New York, NY, 22 June, 1980.

James W. Johnson, "The Crucifixion" Adapted for the stage by Marvin Felix Camillo and the Repertory Company of The Family, Taped performance at the Lincoln Center Outdoor Theatre Festival, New York, NY, 19 August 1980.

James W. Johnson, "The Crucifixion," Family working script from the 1980 production, New York, NY.

Depending on the size of the cast and the degree to which the audience enters into the participatory segments, a performance of The Crucifixion lasts between forty-five minutes to an hour. The play is comparatively short, but long when one considers that the original J.W. Johnson text can fit on a page or two.

The Lincoln Center outdoor performance was of particular interest because of the space problems. The play was staged at the fountain between Avery Fischer Hall and the New York State Theatre with chairs set up so that the audience would have their backs to the west toward the Metropolitan Opera. As the performance progressed, I was struck by the similarity of this space to the town squares where medieval passion plays were performed like those at Lucerne and Valenciennes in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁶

Because the acoustics and sight lines were poor, the original seating arrangement in rows of chairs soon became impractical for those who wished to take in the performance in detail. They formed a ring around the fountain and the platform on which The Family played. Another group, farther away from the action took in parts of the performance that caught their attention such as when Jesus and the cross are hoisted into a vertical position. At that moment, the sky happened to become overcast and the audience fell silent. Nervous laughter could be heard here and there. Sounds, like the deep chimes or the baying of the dog would arrest their attention, but in general, this group held

⁶Richard Southern, The Seven Ages of the Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang; A Dramabook, 1961), pp. 104-7.

conversations among themselves occasionally commenting on the events on stage.

On the outer periphery of the playing area was an amorphous tide of people made up on the south side, in front of the New York State Theatre, of passers-by who paused briefly to watch a bit of the play before continuing to Ninth Avenue, and several clutches of Lincoln Center Security Police who gradually became engrossed in the action of the play.

On the north side of the playing area was an outdoor restaurant in front of Avery Fischer Hall and an ice-cream vendor for passers-by. There was a place for every sort of person from those who wanted to pay nothing to those who wished to buy an expensive lunch. One could invest as much or as little attention as one liked without disturbing the performance. Thus if the play had gone on all day like the medieval cycles, these performance circumstances would have served aptly.

It is also true that one could neither see nor hear the show clearly from anywhere, and yet various moments brought dead silence and close attention from the entire audience. For example, when the child started to swing on one arm of the cross, the motion of the crowd ceased even though she sang in a very low voice.

The Crucifixion, however, is not limited to Christian myth. From the opening the mythology of various cultures are played out in the form of children's games, like the American one of cowboys and indians inverted ironically to make the indians the hero/victims. When Jesus is tormented, Peter sings a Hebrew lament and when Jesus dies on the cross, one of the songs that is most focussed is the theme from a

modern movie about the problems of the state of Israel after the Second World War. Furthermore, unlike a medieval passion play, Christ is not resurrected. Instead the play ends on the idea of renewal through communal strength and awareness. The company sings, "We are fighting, my Lord," "We are free, my Lord, etc."

Throughout the play cruelty is acted out in the form of games. One of the games, "Johnny on the Pony," the fifteenth century painter Bruegel chose to add to his painting "Children's Games." Here and there in Bruegel's picture are other representations of the mixture of pain and pleasure that are woven into the play.

The children grow into adolescence and begin to play football, a game involving vast rewards to compensate the sufferings of its professional players, and vicarious pain and pleasure to the spectators. The game, "Dodgeball," is a model of organized brutality that teaches adolescents that courage lies in some morally ambivalent void between being the last man standing on one side of a conflict and being part of the conquering force that destroys him on the other. The endurance of recreational pain becomes a means of demonstrating emotional and physical strength. Those who reject such activity as senseless, therefore, are effete. By contrast, the suffering of Christ in The Crucifixion is unadorned pain--frightening, crushing, the result of brutal mutilation for no clear reason--rising out of prejudice on the part of the citizens and irresponsibility on the part of Pilate.

Christ's crucifixion is dramatized as a ceremony, each blow of the hammer echoed by the loud plucking of an electric guitar string and the beating of a conga drum. He is led to the place of execution by a

chorus doing a dance of death. These ritual gestures seem to reveal some order in this act of mayhem allowing us to examine its emotional and moral parameters.

In The Theatre in The Middle Ages, William Tydeman made a parallel observation about medieval culture:

One reason for this preponderance of ceremonial customs and ritual routines in medieval times is perhaps that in an epoch which feared keenly the outbreak of anarchy, the imminence of chaos, and the uncertainty of the future, a period too frequently made aware of the violence and cruelty underlying civilization's thin veneer, society tended to hallow precious notions by endowing them with idealised forms...a universally felt desire to impose order on disorder finds expression in traditional rites and patterns...⁷

The Crucifixion seems to express a similar trepidation about life in America. Similarly, the play draws strength from a sense of ceremonial festivity and creates a feeling of unity from songs shared as a rite of renewal with the audience.

That the text itself is often lost in the performance does not seem to matter. As Richard Southern remarked, concerning the textural anomalies of the medieval English mummer's plays, "...in theatre, understanding the meaning of the words does not greatly matter. What does matter is that they supply yet another channel through which that deeper, or secondary, impression of the performance can be conveyed." In other words, the theatre can contain an extra-literary mode of communication that is supported by, but not necessarily the product of,

⁷William Tydeman, The Theatre in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 86.

the text. Southern goes on to say, "The words accompanying a spell are rarely comprehensible, and early theatrical speech resembled incantations accompanying a rite. The achievement of magic is not explicable; you may analyse the mechanism, but not by that acquire command of it."⁸

The idea of magic in relation to The Crucifixion is not important here except in the sense that the play is a rite that acts as a unifying force among the performers and the audience. One woman at the Lincoln Center performance was weeping after the show. I asked her why and she told me that she was not sure but that, "...it was so raw...so violent, and this is what everyone's facing everywhere...in prison... everywhere..."⁹

Most remarkable to me was the performance of The Crucifixion at Bedford Hills that I described at the beginning of Chapter II. When the play was over, many of the women were in tears which seemed to relieve the tension that had preceded the performance. It struck me that the childlike atmosphere of the prison with its attendant fear and loneliness, had found expression and an outlet in the show. As we packed the props to leave, a woman prisoner approached me, shook my hand, and assured me very quietly that she would seek out The Family when she was released. That thought seemed to make us both feel happy

⁸Southern, Seven Ages, p. 51.

⁹J.W. Johnson, Crucifixion, performance 19 August 1980.

and then the conversation ended because we were both too close to tears to continue talking. It is difficult to say precisely what about The Crucifixion provokes this reaction in so many people. Mel Gussow characterized it in a general way in the last line of his review of the 1980 production, "The show is a theatrical act of faith that is communicated directly from performers to the audience."¹⁰

The faith expressed is not invested in any particular system of beliefs or ideas, but in mankind in general. The Crucifixion argues that even if we are capable of cruelty great enough to become a basic myth of western civilization, we are also capable of understanding and maturing beyond the assumption that cruelty is a necessary evil. No matter how reduced one's circumstances, whether by poverty, imprisonment, age, illness or what have you, all people possess the capability of trying to understand those around him. The struggle to cope and to understand is then what makes civilization possible. Understanding is also the key word in Short Eyes which I shall now discuss in Chapter VII.

¹⁰Mel Gussow, "Theatre: Improvized Gospel Tale," New York Times, 11 April 1980.

CHAPTER VII

Short Eyes and Contemporary Prison Plays

The Family was born in prison, and its most visible success has clearly been Short Eyes. It was a revelation to audiences about life in American prisons, and what is more, showed the public something about the way people in prison view the world both inside and outside institutions. From 1963, when The Living Theatre first produced The Brig¹ to 1977 when Marsha Norman's Getting Out was staged at the Actor's Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky,² a number of plays on the subject of enforced confinement have attracted public attention.

While it would be an exaggeration to say that these plays represent a genre of American prison drama, there are common features among them that are intriguing. It will illuminate Short Eyes to discuss it in relation to several of these plays. In addition to those mentioned above I shall make comparisons of Short Eyes with Fortune and Men's

¹Kenneth H. Brown, The Brig; A Concept for Theatre or Film, with an essay on The Living Theatre by Julian Beck and Director's notes by Judith Malina (New York: Hill and Wang; A Spotlight Dramabook, 1965), p. 4.

²Marsha Norman, Getting Out (New York: Grove Press, 1979), p. 1.

Eyes by John Herbert which was first presented in 1967 at the Actor's Playhouse in New York,³ and The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel by David Rabe, first produced professionally by the Public Theatre in 1971.⁴

These plays are as dissimilar as they are similar. The Brig which is about a Marine prison in Japan, has no individualized characters; e.g. they are identified more by numbers than by name. Fortune and Men's Eyes is set in a boy's facility, "The Canadian Reformatory, prep school for the penitentiary."⁵ Getting Out is divided between the experiences of a young woman's first few days out of an Alabama prison and her recollections of her life inside. Pavlo Hummel deals with a man's gathering sense of confinement as a member of the military, until he finally destroys himself. Short Eyes, as discussed in Chapter II, is described in the stage directions as taking place in a house of detention, but in fact is more descriptive of the penitentiary milieu.

An ironic feature of these plays is that they are all overshadowed by a feeling of dislocation among those characters to whom movement is denied. Many plays about confinement focus on the mechanics of confinement. Short Eyes opens with the count of the inmates, a boisterous, shouting part of the prison routine during which the inmates hassle the guard by parroting back to him his own clichés, e.g., "Your

³John Herbert, Fortune and Men's Eyes (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. vi.

⁴David Rabe, The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel and Sticks and Bones (New York: Viking Press, 1973; reprinted, New York, 1978), p. 1.

⁵Herbert, Fortune, p. 9.

brains may belong to the state, but your sanity belongs to me."⁶ The Brig is structurally composed around the life of the prison. The routine of a single day is the action of the play and Brown has taken care to avoid anything in the text that might tend to personalize either the inmates or the guards. Getting Out is preceded by the warden's daily announcements as a curtain raiser,⁷ and Pavlo Hummel is chiefly concerned with Hummel's development as a soldier rather than as a person. Fortune presents us with gruesome details of the systematic coercion and torture used to subdue the boys in the institution.⁸

In such a narrowly controlled reality, with such absolute physical limitations, one might expect the central concern of the playwright to be with the specific effects of the confinement on the inmate. In fact, these plays seem to depict prison as a part of a larger social milieu, and it is one in which they find themselves more lost than in conflict.

Most of the inmate characters in these plays have little or no personal identity other than that prescribed by their relationship to other inmates in the institutions. In Fortune, the new boy, Smitty, is introduced to prison life by his three cellmates. Having no doubt been briefed by the guards and officials, he is anxious to find out the real routine of the prison, which even as a prisoner for the first time, he realizes can only be gleaned from the inmates themselves. They all have lives on the outside that are represented by fragments of memory of a past that is willfully forgotten. They do not ask Smitty what he

⁶Pinero, Short Eyes, p.7.

⁷Norman, Getting Out, p. 9.

⁸Herbert, Fortune, p. 24.

has done, which he refuses to tell them in any case, but whether he is the victim of a "bum wrap, or a bad beef,"⁹ or in other words, how has he decided to deal with the criminal justice system. Late in act II we learn that he was imprisoned for joy-riding,¹⁰ which by that time is of no importance as whoever he might have been when he entered the prison has been subsumed by the new person the prison has made out of him, a tough, bitter, faithless young man who has learned that fidelity is dangerous folly.

That transformation is brought about by a character-type that is common to many of these plays, the false protector of which there are sometimes several. The new person, thrust into alien disorienting incarceration, is offered the advice and counsel of a more experienced inmate. Smitty is given a gift by Rocky who explains to him that a new boy needs an "old man" in order to avoid being gang-raped by the other inmates. Grateful at first for this expertise, Smitty soon find himself being forced to have sex with his protector. Queenie, an overt homosexual who cross-dresses when the opportunity arises, offers assistance to Smitty in beating up Rocky and setting up Smitty as a figure of importance on the cell block. Queenie's motives in this transaction are not specific, perhaps driven by an atavistic desire to create turmoil. He wants revenge for Rocky's sarcastic treatment of him, but he also pegs Smitty as one who will do well as a "hippo" or a boss among the inmates. To do well as a "hippo," however, will

⁹Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid., p.78.

inevitably twist and crush Smitty's humanity. In less than six months confinement, Smitty has developed a kind of feral hostility that has no specific object and manifests itself in a frightening moment as the play ends:

(Looking coolly out to the audience with a slight, twisted smile that is somehow cold, sadistic, and menacing, he speaks his last line.)

I'll pay you all back.

(Lights fade to black, and there is heard a final slam of jail door.)

Curtain¹¹

It is certainly true that Herbert's play is primarily driven by his concern about the effects of the prison system on inmates, but it is equally true that prison in this play is symptomatic of a larger malady. Whippings are inflicted on those who cannot manage to make deals with the guards, and the unnatural peculiarities of the reformatory are clearly counterproductive to reforming anybody. Adolescents, at the peak of their sexual energy, are thrown together in a confined all-male situation. They are whipped and put in solitary if they are caught soliciting homosexual attentions from other inmates, but they are encouraged to perform a transvestite show as a Christmas celebration. Thus homosexuality is both punished and encouraged.

Those who disturb the precarious order of the prison by squealing are subject to double retribution from both the inmates and the guards. Relationships are formed as alliances for profit and protection. These liaisons cannot be relied upon as a better offer may come

¹¹Ibid., p.96.

along producing betrayal; thus there can be neither trust nor honor. Above all else, the social system is viewed as undependable. No one can be trusted. Authority is corrupt and the individual survives only by his wits and capacity for brutality. Such a system promotes the fear, hostility and the survival level mentality that Smitty offers as the final sentiment of the play.

Getting Out and Pavlo Hummel are both composed with a shifting action from present to an indefinite past. During the opening of act I of Norman's play, the central character's child/delinquent self, Arlie, watches her adult self, Arlene, leaving her prison for the last time before re-entering society. The metaphor of her divided moral and psychological being is dramatized as a theatrical reality in the play by these two characters. In the end she is able to confront and reconcile with the Arlie part of her character when she learns that she must, and can, rely upon herself to survive. Before that time, she has a variety of protectors like Smitty. During act I, Bennie, her former guard, drives her to her new home and does her other favors in the hope of seducing her. In act II, Carl, her former lover, tries to talk her into supporting the two of them and his drug habit, by letting him pimp for her. What hope there is for Arlene lies not in dreams of a better future, but in accepting the drab existence that she now has open to her as a dishwasher. It is the best life she is ever likely to make for herself if she wants to remain free. She comes to this realization with the help of a fellow ex-con, Ruby, who has come to terms with the world as a matter of survival. To her, their reduced living as dishwashers is enough because it is "outside," and "outside," with all its

compromise, is still better than "the joint."¹²

Pavlo Hummel shifts back and forth between Hummel's life as a soldier and his memories as a child. He tries to succeed at the army, a life that offers him more direction and purpose than any he has had before, but he is such a moral cypher that when he tries to be enterprising he becomes a toady, or to demonstrate loyalty to his superiors, he becomes a "rat" squealing on the other men. His superiors reject him as much as his fellows. He even has trouble getting transferred into a combat unit, and is still treated with suspicion and contempt after he has been wounded twice.¹³

Ironically, the very institution that Hummel has made his surrogate home and family, cannot stomach his shabbiness of character any more than his real family, and yet his subservient desire to please and to belong make him perfectly suited to the military system. At the close of the play, Hummel dies when he throws himself on a grenade, an act that Hollywood has reserved traditionally for the most brave and self-sacrificing of war-hero characters. Pavlo performs this act in a bar when a drunken sergeant chucks in a grenade in a moment of alcoholic pique. Hummel, the dedicated product of a system that loathes him, dies screaming empty obscenities, adrift in a sea of mindless agony.¹⁴

In the entirety of The Brig there is no time when any rationale is presented for the way in which the brig is run or why the inmates are

¹²Norman, Getting Out, p. 73.

¹³Rabe, Pavlo Hummel, p. 102.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 102-7.

there. The characters act out the prison routine, a tedious succession of marching, screaming, scrubbing, stomping, bullying, punching and trembling, which is interrupted by only one event. One might be inclined to think that it is the release of Prisoner Five at the end of act I, but that has no effect on the prison because he is quickly replaced as a part of the routine.

The only time the mechanics of the play are arrested is when Prisoner Six goes insane and reverts to using a name, James Turner. As Judith Malina observed, the guards surprisingly do not take Turner away to beat him. They have him removed from the prison. Not only can he not operate within these confines, but these confines cannot continue operating as long as he is inside.¹⁵ Let me stress that we know nothing about Turner other than his name and that he has been a marine for sixteen years, but the simple decision to have a name makes him the most defined character in the play because he has made a choice that is foreign to the system. It should be added that while he escapes the brig, he does so as a mental case. We do not know where he will be taken--we may assume to a hospital--but his world, while more sympathetic, is not likely to be any more rational. He is regarded as crazy for insisting that he is a human with a name instead of a number and that he cannot understand why he should tolerate the brutality of the brig.¹⁶

¹⁵Brown, The Brig, pp. 104-5.

¹⁶Ibid., p.72-3.

Short Eyes contains the same features, (1) a shifting, alien reality and (2) fragmented characters. Clark Davis, the white man who is accused of molesting a child, is not only at sea in his new prison surroundings, but also psychologically impaired. Before being sent to the house of detention, he was under psychiatric observation because as he tells Juan, his second protector, he cannot remember if he has committed the crime or not. Before his alleged crime is revealed he is under the protection of Charlie "Longshoe" Murphy, the only other white prisoner in the dayroom where the play takes place. Murphy rejects Davis when the guard, Nett, discloses to the men that Davis is a "Short Eyes," or a man who likes to have sex with children.¹⁷

This incident in the first act brings out the shifting uncertain reality in which Davis finds himself. Murphy has acquired the nickname "longshoe" as "someone who is hip, slick, and has his act together."¹⁸ In the scene immediately preceding Nett's revelation, he has been explaining to Davis the complicated social hierarchy of the inmates. Complex rules govern what race would be more reliable as an ally in a fight and how territories in the prison are divided and governed according to a rugged discipline of hand to hand combat. Murphy, however, has acquired the diction of the black inmates and while he describes them as the least trustworthy of the inmate groups, he seems to ally himself with them as the strongest contingency. His

¹⁷Pinero, Short Eyes, p. 29-31.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 29.

moral outrage at Davis' alleged crime evidently does not extend to himself in maintaining what he has described as the strict racial divisions of the prison.

The guard, Nett, who should logically be the stabilizing influence, deliberately exposes Davis' crime to the inmates, and threatens him, "...if...if...if...you give me just one little reason...I'm gonna break your face up so bad your own mother won't know you..."¹⁹ We learn later that Nett's child has been the victim of a child molester; his threat against Davis, therefore, ironically seems to indicate that he has no faith in the criminal justice system of which he himself is an official. As a parting sentiment, he tells Clark to:

...Stay out of my sight...cause if you get in my face just one time...don't forget what I told you...I'll take a night stick and ram it clean up your asshole...I hope to God that they take you off this floor, or send you to Sing Sing...The men up there know what to do with degenerates like you.²⁰

By the end of act I, Nett has sanctioned beating Clark and stuffing his head in a toilet. The second act concludes with Nett passively watching the inmates murder Davis. The epilogue is devoted to Nett and a superior officer coming to the conclusion that it is in the best interests of "the service" to cover up the killing.

Short Eyes, therefore, is a play that opens with all the clang and bang procedures of operating a prison. Gates roll and slam. Commands are shouted and inmates respond to that authority. The prison is a

²⁰Ibid., p. 30.

world unto itself. The officials have rules, jargon, specialized attitudes, uniforms, weapons, rank and authority that should represent the trappings of a well-ordered social microcosm. In fact, they are adrift and must turn to the inmates to affect the justice that they find themselves are too weak to realize.

El Raheem, the black muslim, is an interesting character because he stands aloof from the social regimen of the rest of the inmates. In the production he was staged alone, standing for most of the performance on a window ledge above the heads of the rest of the characters where he would comment on the action from time to time. We look to him for a kind of moral independence from the inmate system of judgement. He has this freedom to some extent, but it rests upon a racist rigidity of mind, "You still expect the white man to give you a fair trial in his court? Don't you know what justice really means? Justice..."just us"...white folks."²¹ At the end of act II, he is offered the opportunity of dispensing justice himself by cutting Davis' throat with a knife. When he cannot, he loses face among his fellows. It is finally Murphy who slashes Davis' throat and another black man calls El Raheem a "faggot." El Raheem replies that, "I'm not a faggot...I'm not a punk...Omar, believe me. It's just that I couldn't kill a man looking at me helpless."²² He has lost face for exhibiting a degree of humanity that is outside the code of the inmates.

²¹Ibid., p. 15.

²²Ibid., p. 97.

Immediately after this incident, a fight starts between Murphy and two black inmates. There is no particular cause except that in the anarchy of the dayroom basic hatreds can be exercised. In the final moments of the act, Cupcakes, the youngster in the group, pleads, "Stop it Godamn it. Stop it...Oh, my God...is this really us."²³

In one sense they are indeed themselves exhibiting in action all the prejudices and narrowness that Murphy described at the outset of the play. In another, they have been transformed to their present state of brutality by the amorphous skittish reality of the prison, a place where the officials support a kangaroo justice far more brutal than the mayhem of the streets. After all, in prison, there is generally no recourse, no appeal, no opportunity for a defense, and no way to remove yourself from the physical threat of those around you.

Davis' defense is also an interesting point. He cannot remember whether he has committed the act or not. During the epilogue, we learn that the person who selected Davis out of a line-up was not in her right mind, a fact which does not necessarily absolve Davis. He was arrested and at least in the eyes of the people in prison, arrest means guilt. It is also true that if he did not molest this child, he has molested others, a fact which he felt he needed to confess to Juan in act I.

Davis' relationship with Juan is indeed peculiar. In the Public Theatre production, Juan sat apart from the group in the down right

²³Ibid., p. 99.

corner of the set. Late in act I, he joins in the teasing of Cupcakes about the possibility of the young man turning "stuff" or providing homosexual services for some of the men in the dayroom. During the opening of the first act as the men enter:

(Cupcakes is the last to come in. The men accompany him with simple scat singing to the tune of "The Stripper." Ad-Libs.)

JUAN: Why don't you cut that loose? Man don't you think that the kid gets tired of hearing that every morning?

PACO: Oh, man, we just jiving.

ICE: Hey, Cupcakes, you ain't got no plexes behind that, do you?

CUPCAKES: I mean...like no...but...

PACO: You see, Juan, Cupcakes don't mind.

CUPCAKES: No really, Juan. Like I don't mind... But that doesn't mean that I like to listen to it. I mean... like...hey...I call you guys by your name. Why don't you call me by mine? My name ain't Cupcakes, it's Julio.²⁴

This is an interesting exchange. It is clear that at least for the moment, the sexual overtone is still essentially in jest. Cupcakes takes it perhaps a little too lightly with the result that he sounds like a kid who is younger and less experienced, trying to get along with older boys. That is precisely what he is. Juan takes the joke a bit more seriously than the immediate situation warrants, perhaps to

²⁴Ibid., p. 9.

put the younger man on the alert and at the same time avoid the trap of being thought his protector.

As mentioned above, the subject of Cupcake's charms comes up again and this time Juan enters into the teasing:

PACO: Put your shirt on your hips like this and
move your ass. Coochie-coochie-coochie...
You got plexes?

CUPCAKES: Told you before that I don't have no com-
plexes.

JUAN: You got no plexes at all?

CUPCAKES: No.

JUAN: Then why not let me fuck you?

CUPCAKES: That's definitely out.

JUAN: People without complexes might as well turn
stuff.²⁵

Juan never again approaches Cupcakes with this sort of suggestion and there is no indication that he has any sexual interest in him. The point seems to be to call his bluff. Cupcakes keeps trying to change the subject of the discussion from his sexual charms to the idea that he has no "plexes," or in other words that he is just one of the guys, should be taken as such, and should be called by his own name as he requested earlier in the act. The others in the dayroom, however, see as a weakness his unwillingness to confront the issue head on and fight for his manhood. Juan is telling him that the lack of "plexes" is a vacant argument, i.e., that logically if he is so well-adjusted then

²⁵Ibid., p. 18.

"turning stuff" cannot do him any harm. He does so by challenging him directly forcing him to say yes or no. That he says no to Juan is enough to temporarily dampen Paco's ardour and the scene shifts to another subject. In so doing, Juan has bought Cupcakes a little time, and forced him to look at the fact that to survive in prison, he must decide who he is and what he is willing to do, or the prison society will use and distort him.

This relationship mirrors as a microcosm the strange relationship that Davis maintains with Juan throughout the rest of the play. Juan appears to be a "trusty" of the prison and for reasons that appear to be pure dramatic convenience, he is left alone with Davis when the other men are locked in for the second count in act I. Juan asks Davis if he did molest the child and Davis replies that he does not know.

At that point he begins what seems to be an involuntary cascade of confession in cloying pornographic prose, "...My hands up her dress, feeling her underdeveloped body...I...I...I began pulling her underwear down on the [toilet] bowl...She resisted...etc." This description of seducing small children continues at length for pages until Davis says, "Juan, try to understand me," to which Juan replies, "Motherfucker, try to understand you...if I wasn't trying to understand you...if I wasn't trying to, I would have killed you...stone dead, punk..."²⁶

For reasons that are never made clear, Davis has never discussed these experiences with the psychiatrists, etc. who have been observing

²⁶Ibid., p. 39.

him. Despite his willingness to try to understand, Juan is not particularly delighted with his role as father confessor, and tells Davis just that. Before doing so, however, he also tells him that, "if you remain on this floor you're asking to die...You'll be committing involuntary suicide..."²⁷ This remark is not a threat but a simple statement of fact from the one person in the prison who seems to understand how the prison social system works.

In act II, Davis and Juan are again alone. In this scene, the thought is introduced through Juan's jailhouse legal expertise that the case against Davis may have been poorly established and prosecuted. The possibility exists that he may therefore go free to, "...scar up some more little girls' minds," as Juan puts it. After assuring Juan with rather sanctimonious earnestness that he would never, "...do that again," Davis spends the rest of the scene building up a modicum of righteous indignation about the way he has been, "...treated like a goddamn animal monster by a bunch of inhuman, incompetent, third-rate, unqualified, unfit, psychopaths calling themselves doctors."²⁸

The scene continues as follows:

JUAN: Yeah. I know the scene.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 78-86.

CLARK: No you don't...electros - sedatives - hypnosis - therapy - humiliated by some crank nurses who strapped me to my bed and played with my penis to see if it would get hard for "big girls like us."

JUAN: Did it?

CLARK: Yeah...yes, it did.

JUAN: My father used to say he would fuck 'em from eight to eighty, blind, crippled and/or crazy.

CLARK: Juan, you are the only human being I've met.

JUAN: Don't try to leap me up...cause I don't know how much of a human I would be if I let you make the sidewalk. But there's no way I could stop you short of taking you off the count.²⁹

We can see Juan as a man who knows who he is. He exhibits powers of survival that seem stronger than the others in the dayroom because he is thoughtful, slow to rancor, and tolerant. By the same token, he is also very clear on what is acceptable to him. Davis arouses his loathing, but he makes an effort to understand him if for no other reason because it makes the environment potentially less dangerous.

Davis' urge to confess in act I foreshadows his death not so much because he is a child molester but because he is unable to operate without seeking the approval of the inmates, in this case Juan. He is trying to apply the methods and standards of civilization as he understands them, to the way he deals with society in prison. After he is

²⁹Ibid. p. 87.

beaten and humiliated, he appeals to the captain of the guard to protect him and is told to report any abuse he suffers from the other prisoners. Juan points out that such an act would brand him a squealer and insure his death which the captain knows as well as Juan. Like Cupcakes, Davis wants to rationalize his position by claiming that he is either insane or the victim of official mistreatment. As his legal situation begins to improve and the captain's assurances give him confidence, he slowly convinces himself that the outside world is willing to take him back and restore him to his family and that his nightmare among the riffraff is almost over. He is partially correct for it is about to end in death.

In the final moments before he is slaughtered, Davis, over Juan's futile attempts to save him, turns into a snivelling, stereotypical white, protesting that his father has money and that he will have them all in prison for threatening him. The gruesome folly of this absurd threat is re-enforced by the fact that the prison guard is standing by watching the killing. In the end it is the haughty contempt with which he threatens to rat on the men in the dayroom that pushes them over the edge into cutting his throat in a ritualistic execution.³⁰

As the play ends, Cupcakes is released. During the killing, he fell in with those who cut Davis' throat. During the epilogue, he has a comic scene during which we learn that he has grown wise in the ways of the prison. He does not rat on the others and so escapes the captain's clumsy, racist attempt to coerce him into confessing. The crime

³⁰Ibid., p. 94.

is covered up by destroying some records and the institution settles back into its uneasy routine.³¹ As Cupcakes prepares to leave, Juan offers him the following thought:

I'll give you something, a cheer, one last hooray, that's yours by law...cuz you're leaving this place...and only becuz of that, I can't give you no life-style pearls...no cues...becuz you, like the rest of us...became a part of the walls...an extra bar in the gate...to remain a number for the rest of your life in the street world...Cupcake, you went past the money and blew it...yah, that's right, this is cop and blow...and you blew it becuz you placed yourself above understanding.³²

It would appear that Cupcakes bears the mark of Cain in the sense that he has dehumanized himself. In seeking the safety of belonging to the group, he has lost himself. He begins the play by failing to see his own position and understand himself. By the end of the play, he has lost his moral independence through this indefiniton.

As one can see, according to these plays, even for those who survive prison, the outside world is none too promising. One area in which that is particularly evident is that of sexuality. That which should be the source of promise, pleasure, joy, closeness, love, and renewal becomes a weapon and/or a threat in many of these plays. In The Brig, it might be argued that sex plays no role, but the punchings and beatings to which the prisoners are subjected from the start to the finish of the play express a sado-masochistic sexuality that is sublimated and then channeled for the use of the system.³³ The rest of these plays reflect a committed, almost morbid concern for the sexual

³¹Ibid., pp. 102-21. ³²Ibid. ³³Brown, The Brig, pp. 103-4.

aspects of enforced confinement.

One issue is the absence of contact with the opposite sex. In Herbert's Fortune it would seem that the institution encourages sado--masochistic homosexual behaviour in an atmosphere where the strong prey upon the weak. By playing on his fears and weaknesses, Rocky intimidates Smitty into being his sexual servant and general factotum at the beginning of act I. During act II, Queenie appeals to Smitty's desire for revenge in enlisting him to beat up Rocky. There is no tangible reward in winning these struggles other than the fact that the master reverses roles with his slave. The pattern of threats, dominance and submission to extreme brutality is modelled from that officially sanctioned by the administration of the prison. Queenie describes this treatment to Smitty in the following manner:

QUEENIE: It's no game, Honey! They got a nice cold tower here with no blankets or mattresses on the iron bunks and a diet of bread and water to tame you. If that don't work, there's a little machine that fastens your hips and ankles, while some sad-assed screw that's got a rod on for you bangs you across the ass with a leather belt fulla holes, and some other son of a bitch holds your arms over your head, twisted in your shirt. They can make you scream for God and your mother before they let you go.³⁴

Lest we regard this as a lurid description to frighten the new boy, it is pointed out later that Mona, who was subjected to such a flogging, wakes in the night screaming for his mother.³⁵ Herbert, who

³⁴Herbert, Fortune, p. 24.

³⁵Ibid., p. 25.

was himself an inmate at one time, wants to be sure that we do not regard this as an exaggeration from hindsight. For that reason, he has Mona report at the end of act I that he has just seen an inmate having his heart checked by the prison doctor. This ritual is always observed, we learn, before an inmate is flogged. It could be argued that the prison officials are not being sadistic in using these methods and that they regard them as rehabilitative. That is neither here nor there, however, when we realize that Queenie perceives the floggings as deliberate sexual cruelty, and that no one else feels the slightest flicker of disagreement with him in this judgement. The authorities, who set the tone and methods by which the prison society is conducted, are a model of sexually motivated brutality to the people they are assigned to reconstruct for life in the larger society on the outside.

In these plays, this pattern of sexual use and abuse is no better among heterosexuals. Arlie whored for Carl, and Arlene finds that men try to force favors upon her in order to get her to sleep with them. Bennie tries to wear down her resistance by half-whining and half-showing Arlene into bed.³⁶ Carl renews their relationship after breaking out of prison, by breaking down her newly rented front door and trying to force his way into the bathroom where Arlene is taking a bath.³⁷ Violent sexuality seems to be a part of Arlie/Arlene's whole life. As a child, Arlie was terrified of telling her mother that her father had raped her.³⁸

³⁶Norman, Getting Out, pp. 42-47. ³⁷Ibid, pp. 38-39.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 22-25.

Pavlo Hummel does not have sadistic sexual relationships, but he does have perhaps the most reduced ones imaginable, composed of a few minutes in bed with a Viet Nameese whore. Most of his time is spent niggling over the price of his pleasure which is taken with a women who does not even speak English.³⁹

In Short Eyes every aspect of the action relates to sexual issues and bizarre ones at that. As we have noted, the play opens with the attempt to seduce Cupcakes which is followed by the introduction of Davis who is there on what is popularly known as a morals charge. His problems with Nett arise from the fact that Nett's daughter has been the victim of child molestation. At one point during the action, as noted in Chapter II, the action is arrested for one inmate to tell the story of the time when he was beaten by guards for masturbating while looking at a poster of Jane Fonda. It is the nature of Davis' crime that the inmates find offensive about him even more than his white bourgeois character. He has violated the inmates' sexual code.

Indeed Pinero knew Sing Sing and the code of inmates from first--hand experience, but it is Nett who says that he hopes Davis will be sent to that prison where the men will, "...know what to do with him." Perhaps this is best articulated by Marvin Camillo in his introduction to the published edition:

Clark Davis represents an emotionally disturbed man from an emotionally disturbed society. His death is the result of the rigidity of social values and morals in the prison world, because the values we witness in the play are the same as those of the outside

³⁹Rabe, Pavlo Hummel, p. 102.

world, but more intensified. Prison is a society within a society, and Clark Davis' life and death are the result of both societies.⁴⁰

Taking into account the other plays under discussion, the rigidity that Camillo has identified is also characterized by a sexually powered brutality that neither the inmates nor the warders seem to be able to control or avoid. It may also be fairly said that confinement in every play discussed here leaves the inmate with a diminished life, if it does not outright kill them.

The original reception of Short Eyes prompted Camillo to write the following in his introduction:

I urge the readers of Short Eyes not to search for some great social reform message or to analyze the personal motives of the original cast or to fall into the trap of feeling that this play can be done only by ex-inmates or people from a subculture... When the prisoners enter the dayroom, we are witnessing not a prison play but a play about human relationships.⁴¹

The actual response seems to have been somewhat short-sighted, operating under the assumption that the play was designed solely as an exposé of prison life. Brendan Gill remarked that, "...it is a melodrama of extreme actions climaxed by a murder, and every harrowing moment of it bears the stamp of passionate feeling and documentary authenticity,"⁴² at which point Gill goes on to discuss the fact that the cast had developed the play in prison. The improbable aspects of the plot evidently escaped Gill as did the ritual elements.

⁴⁰Pinero, Short Eyes, p. xiii.

⁴¹Ibid., p. xii.

⁴²Brendan Gill, "De Profundis" The New Yorker, 3 June 1974.

The penchant for the idea of naturalism found sympathy in Variety which writer worked himself into a fair lather, "Short Eyes is a horrifyingly realistic play about an ugly and brutal aspect of what's euphemistically known as modern civilization. It's a play that many would want to avoid and some might be unable to endure."⁴³ The review continues in this heated manner until we are again informed that the play was performed by inmates. This fact leant novelty to Short Eyes and undoubtedly sold a great many tickets. It is discussed in most of the press material about the show and indeed in most of the reviews. Unfortunately, it also overshadowed the play's more complex features in the eyes of the reviewers.

John Simon liked the play in a brief review which stated, "There are plays--not the greatest, but not the least, either--that move us not so much through their art as through their authenticity and humanity, by laying bare less known and grubby aspects of life with an emotional insight that no merely documentary account can equal. Short Eyes is such a play, and you warm to it slowly, but are then lastingly in its grip."⁴⁴ By 10 June 1974 he had evidently cooled and wrote a long negative review in New York Magazine the second half of which is devoted to complaining about the audience, which at the Public was notoriously vocal in responding to the play. The first half of the review is given over to moralizing with the thoughts of Walter Kerr and

⁴³"Short Eyes" Variety, 29 May 1974.

⁴⁴John Simon, New York Magazine, 1 April 1974, p. 14.

Stanley Kauffman as a backstop for his own rethinking. He concludes that the play has substance in ways that the playwright never intended and, therefore, by default.⁴⁵

In March of 1974 Walter Kerr wrote in *The Times*: It is no simple slice-of-life but an ambitious construct centered about a single irony. The narrative introduces us inside a tiled, double-tiered cell-block, to a half-dozen richly ribald inmates who are essentially tolerant of one another's aberrations. Homosexual rape is taken for granted, beatings are commonplace, murder is not necessarily out of bounds. But one thing is. Let a man be booked--not convicted, just booked--for child molestation and all camaraderie vanishes.⁴⁶

Kerr has captured something of the appearance of order that overshadows the institutionalized chaos of Short Eyes. There is a kind of perversity in that chaos that allows it to round on and attack what it sees as an even deeper perversity in Davis' alleged crime. We see society from top to bottom trying to repress and annihilate that part of itself that it cannot tolerate. Each time this process is set in motion the means become more brutal. The men are imprisoned. They needle and try to exploit each other. At last they find one who is universally at odds with society and kill him with official sanction.

⁴⁵John Simon, New York Magazine, 10 June 1974.

⁴⁶Walter Kerr, "Life Mixes with Art and We are Frightened" New York Times, 24 March 1974. p. 1, Sec. 2.

PART III

The Organization of The Family and its Relationship With Prison

"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"

The vilest deeds, like poison weeds
Bloom well in prison air;
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there;
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.¹

¹Oscar Wilde, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," selections quoted by Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.; A Signet Classic, 1960), p. 161.

CHAPTER VIII

The Organization and Business Profile of The Family

The third part of this study deals with the organization of The Family as a group of people, as a theatre, as a business and as it relates to prison. In some ways The Family is more rigidly disciplined than a prison. For example, prisons are forced to accept a certain amount of low level crime within their confines in exchange for internal peace. The Family deals swiftly with anyone who seems to be heading back toward crime by expelling them from their activities, e.g., Camillo emphasizes that he has no sympathy with drug addicts, but that those who have rejected drugs are welcome to work with the group.¹

This aspect of The Family's internal discipline was mentioned by several people who are now in the company who claim to have had problems with drugs at various times in the past. One man told me of having tried a number of drug rehabilitation programs, between terms of imprisonment, without success. He had also worked with other theatre companies as an actor in the hope of having some of his plays produced. It was only while working with The Family that he claims to have been able to give up using drugs. He began working with the company at the same time I did, and there has been no indication that he was using

¹Camillo, 29 September 1980.

drugs illegally since that time. According to this man, there are several factors that set The Family apart from other groups. The group's objectives are centered around art rather than rehabilitation. Thus there are tangible results from the work that is done as opposed to a more generalized therapy-oriented program. The results are therefore "real" with the possibility of gaining some degree of professional success and public recognition. He has had several scripts produced by The Family and has worked steadily with the company as an actor. The scripts have also attracted the attention of literary agents and producers outside the company.

The other important factor described to me by this man is that The Family, while pursuing artistic ends, has not lost contact with its roots in the streets. He has worked with another third world company in New York but found himself involved in esoteric discussions on art and theatre that seemed to him more based in intellectual snobbery than any concrete working problem. This left him with the feeling of being an outsider in the first company, whereas his downbeat charm, street savvy, and sense of modern American urban speech make him an integral personality in The Family and a creative force in the repertory company. In other words, this man feels at home with The Family, which may possibly be attributed to the fact that in many ways The Family is his home, or his emotional center.

All of the people I interviewed for this study indicated that they felt that The Family operates in ways similar to a real family. Some, like the actress Verna Hampton, feel that it is their extended

family² acting as a supplement to their biological family. Others, like Rick Ried, who started working with Camillo when they were both in Vinette Carroll's company, do not see themselves in a familial relationship to the group, but they do see that type of relationship in operation with other members of the company. Ried, as company manager, also feels that this relationship impairs the business efficiency of the group at times.³ Some people seem to have made a life commitment to The Family as the center of their professional career, like J.J. Johnson,⁴ and still others regard The Family as a phase in their lives from which they anticipate moving on, like Ellen Cleghorne.⁵ The latter type of individual, generally stresses that he will always feel a part of The Family as his base theatre company, and as an emotional center to which he can return.

I had great difficulty in forming an understanding of the organization of The Family until I began to think of it in terms of its name-sake. The following discussion is not intended to argue that The Family is some sort of new social variation on the traditional family. Its members are not biologically or legally related for the most part.

²Interview with Verna Hampton, Avery Fischer Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, NY, 19 August 1980.

³Interview with Rick Ried, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 20 October 1980.

⁴Johnson, 12 August 1980.

⁵Interview with Ellen Cleghorne, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 13 March 1980.

What is intriguing, however, is that definitions and objectives ascribed to the traditional family fit the description of this theatre company in a number of illuminating ways.

In The Modern Family, the sociologist Robert F. Winch has defined the family as, "A set of persons related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption, and constituting a social system whose structure is specified by familial positions and whose basic societal function is replacement."⁶ In point of fact, there are numerous Family members who are related. Verna Hampton's son, Gregory, appeared in both Ghetto and The Crucifixion during the 1980 season. Many of Camillo's family relations have worked with the company at one time or another. J.J. Johnson has some forty-three nieces and nephews who he has introduced to The Family's activities over the years.

Many of the company feel that The Family is a second family for them. Thus I have come to look upon the relationship between the company members as a kind of mutual adoption that extends beyond professional ties. As discussed in Chapter II, the families of the men leaving prison in 1973 were helpful in supplying moral and financial support to the company members when they first returned to the street and began rehearsing. During the spring of 1981, I attended a Family Cabaret which is an evening of nightclub entertainment that the group operates out of the 42 Street Theatre Row office late on Saturday nights after the regular performances. This particular evening was

⁶Robert F. Winch, The Modern Family, Third ed. (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971) pp. 10-11.

devoted to celebrating J.J. Johnson's birthday and the sixteenth birthday of Kerima Thomas who is the daughter of a company member and who played Christ in the production of The Crucifixion during the spring prison tour and at All Angels Church.

Winch describes the nuclear family as follows, "A nuclear family is a social system having the following three positions: husband-father, wife-mother, and offspring-sibling."⁷ Every person interviewed for this study with any direct connection to The Family stated that Marvin Camillo is the "father" or "father-figure" of the organization. They also describe him in this role as more than simply the founder and artistic director. He was consistently described as the source of the company's vitality and focus. Furthermore, all agreed that the company could not function without him. Mel Gussow described him as "father" to the company in a review of Ghetto in 1977,⁸ and J.J. Johnson is quoted as calling him the "Pancho God" in an article in the New York Times during the same year.⁹

In Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family, Winch qualifies his definition of the nuclear family in the following way, "It should be noted that there may be more than one incumbent of each position, that is, there may be a polyandrous nuclear family (more than one incumbent in the position of husband-father), a polygynous nuclear family (more

⁷Ibid.

⁸Gussow, New York Times, 14 January 1977.

⁹Luisa Kreisberg, "Bedford Inmates' Theatre as Therapy," New York Times, 19 June 1977.

than one incumbent in the position of wife-mother), and of course a nuclear family including two or more children."¹⁰ No one person was described during my interviews with the company as the "mother" of the group, although Shamsul Alam felt that the women engaged in a kind of collective mothering of the children in the company¹¹ which I have observed in touring situations, and during rehearsals.

Children enjoy a special importance in The Family. When they perform with the company, they are treated with the same respect as any other actor. Marvin Camillo relates to them with good-natured seriousness, inviting their opinions, and making sure that he clearly understands what has been said to him. While I have seen female members of the company be quite stern with youngsters when they disrupt rehearsal or fail to pay attention, the need for such reprimand is always understood and the incident passes quickly. When the repertory travels, the children are included in the conversation with the adults and someone is always available to supply them with information or help as may be required. In short, they are regarded as essential members of the company.

It would perhaps be more appropriate to describe The Family, considering its large size and flexible configuration, in terms of the

¹⁰Robert F. Winch and Rae Lesser Blumberg, "Societal Complexity and Familial Organization," in Robert F. Winch and Louis Goddman, eds., Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family, Third ed. (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 75.

¹¹Interview with Shamsul Alam, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 5 October 1980.

extended family which Winch defines as follows, "...(a) unlike the nuclear family, the extended family does not have a fixed number of specifiable positions; (b) the extended family must include at least one non-nuclear dyad; and (c) of course a system involving two or more related nuclear families is an extended family."¹² The Family seems to fit this description rather neatly. The number of people in the group is constantly changing, and the core company members assume different responsibilities, i.e. doing staff and office work, helping with the personal needs of those inside and outside the company, and acting in the productions. While it is true that they are not related by blood ties, as has been pointed out, The Family represents the union of a number of traditional nuclear families, and a "feeling of family" for many others. It was, after all, that feeling that caused one of the original members to suggest the name for the group.

Winch attributes five basic functions to the family which he states must be carried out for a society to remain in existence. They are:

1. Replacements for dying members of the society must be provided.
2. Goods and services must be produced and distributed for the support of the members of the society.
3. There must be provision for accommodating conflicts and maintaining order, internally and externally.
4. Human replacements must be trained to become participating members of the society.
5. There must be procedures for dealing with emotional crises, for harmonizing the goals of individuals with the values of the society and for maintaining a sense of purpose.¹³

¹²Winch, The Modern Family, p. 12. ¹³Ibid., p. 13.

The Family does not engage in the replacement of dying members of society through procreation. It does help to restore to society people who have been effectively dead through imprisonment. What is more, through their theatre work, these people take a creative role in society as artists, rather than a destructive one as criminals. According to Ellen Cleghorne who was Workshop Coordinator for the group until the funds for the New Jersey Workshop program ran out in the spring of 1981, The Family's workshops served five hundred people in New York and New Jersey inside and outside prisons and other custodial institutions.¹⁴

The Family does produce "goods and services" in the form of productions and workshops. Like many people in the theatre, this activity provides only a marginal and sporadic revenue to pay members of the company. Even Camillo, whose entire income is derived from his work as the director of the group, is paid erratically, and has never received the full amount designated as his salary in the budget. On the other hand, The Family does provide some income for its members, many of whom have no other possible source of income outside of welfare.

In the case of ex-inmates, The Family often helps in their initial negotiations to get welfare after being released from prison. Ex-inmates are entitled to such benefits as they generally have little hope of finding employment. According to Ms. Cleghorne, when the inmate is

¹⁴Interview with Ellen Cleghorne, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 3 November 1980.

released, he is given forty dollars. It takes four to six weeks to complete the application process depending on how well the individual is able to interface with the welfare department. It would be difficult for someone to survive in New York City for that period of time on forty dollars, even if he had not just left a highly specialized environment like prison. The Family does not provide financial support for these individuals but does offer referrals and someone with whom to talk and to act as a reference.¹⁵ Camillo offers assistance to members of the company who are in financial difficulty by taking some of them into his home. During the winter of 1981, when he was unable to afford oil for heat in his house in Newark, he allowed a woman with a sick baby to live for a time in The Family offices on Theatre Row. She and the child were dependent upon him and The Family for support for several months.

It is also true that The Family has developed supplemental methods of support. Along with the workshops and productions, the group conducts cabarets as described earlier. The cabarets grew out of one of the group's committees which are formed in order to organize a particular function or solve a problem. For example, there is a committee that answers letters to inmates who want to have contact with someone on the outside.

The Cabarets were organized by such a committee which consisted of eighteen members of The Family. The committee submitted a report on 3

¹⁵Cleghorne, 13 March 1980.

August 1979 to the management of The Family. According to the "History" segment of the report, "The Fundraising Disco/Cabaret grew out of a need to have a celebration to culminate [sic] The Family Festival at the Black Theatre Alliance," which consisted of performing several of the plays from the repertory.

I quote the objectives as they are listed in the "Report":

Objectives

- To sell 50 tickets at \$5.00 totaling [sic] \$2,500.00; which will enable The Family to continue to sponsor free acting and voice workshops, to present free public performances (parks, schools, churches, etc.), to fulfill the commitment of the annual prison tour.

- To spread the goals and philosophy of The Family;

- To celebrate the successful Family Festival 79-80 at the Black Theatre Alliance;¹⁶

The financial section of the report indicates that this first cabaret sold over one thousand dollars worth of tickets and made a net profit of \$229.13. The cabaret has not been enormously profitable but it has at least broken even and has contributed modestly to The Family budget. The evenings themselves are extraordinary affairs which attract every type of talent from comedians to mime troupes to highly accomplished musicians. In addition to an admission charge, food and drinks are sold for a modest fee, and the office furniture is moved to permit disco dancing. It is understood that these weekly events are likely to continue until the early hours of Sunday morning, and they

¹⁶ _____, "Report: Fundraising Disco/Cabaret," (Internal Memorandum) 3 August 1979, p. 2. This report appears in Appendix C.

attract every sort of person from Westchester friends of board members to young people who appear to be in junior high school. In the evening described earlier in this chapter, which was to celebrate two people's birthdays, a large portion of the audience and the performers were in formal attire.

The repertory's productions in Manhattan are not expected to add significantly to company revenues. They serve more to focus and showcase the works of The Family which is chiefly supported through grants for its workshops and prison tours. In that respect, The Family is similar in fiscal design to many Off-Off Broadway non-profit companies operating in New York City.

The Family does seem to realize Winch's third societal functions in that they do provide for, "accommodating conflicts and maintaining order both internal and external." That may even be said of the effect on some members' relationship to themselves. Verna Hampton was referred to The Family as an intern in 1975 when she was studying with Susan Batson at Boston University. She is a tall, attractive, black woman who worked for a time as a model. She describes herself as being at that time hostile, politically and artistically rebellious, and willing to listen to no one. The Family provided her with an opportunity to grow as an artist and to work toward the social ends that fired her anger. She now conducts workshops for The Family and works with other theatre and music groups in New York City.¹⁷

¹⁷Hampton, 10 August 1980.

Shamsul Alam, The Family's current playwright-in-residence, observed that the supportive, unpretentious atmosphere of The Family allowed him to relax and dissipate a restlessness that had pursued him for some years. Since 1978, he has written a steady stream of plays, such as Bullpen, which was produced Off-Broadway, that deals with a group of men awaiting arraignment, and Benfires, the play about street gangs discussed at the end of Chapter V.¹⁸ Perhaps the most vivid member of The Family on this subject is J.J. Johnson who describes The Family as a positive means for survival as opposed to the street gangs he ran as a child. "The Family lets you move around...find yourself. It lets you move on to what feels best." This thought seems to lead naturally to Johnson's ideas on the theatre: "There are no limitations on theatre. The theatre is the whole world. Theatre allows you to express yourself to the utmost...you learn yourself...You can try things without going to prison and learn the dangers of society." He stressed that the street and the theatre share in common a degree of acting and "hustle" for survival, but that the theatre differs from the street in that it offers mutual support. "The Family attracts curious, ambitious people who understand the hustle."¹⁹

Not everyone of the original company fared as well as Johnson. Gay Smalls was killed, as noted in Chapter II, Ben Jefferson was killed on the street in Harlem, Tito Goya either fell or was pushed to his death from a tenement roof. Kenny Steward is "around" although several

¹⁸Alam, 5 October 1980. ¹⁹Johnson, 21 August 1980.

people indicated that they felt he was having problems with alcoholism. Pinero has been periodically accused of a number of crimes. None of these men, however, have been recommitted to the penitentiary.²⁰ Thus some people who were in conflict with society have had a chance to participate in its benefits and contribute to it as artists. Productions like Short Eyes and Ghetto have been developed from their particular insight and made available to American society.

Two of the individuals quoted in this chapter illustrate Winch's fourth concept: replacements must be trained to be participating members of the society. Indeed it might be argued that the whole program of The Family is directed toward this end. In the case of Johnson, he started with the Bedford Hills workshop because he realized that the group had no lighting equipment and no one to work in this area. At that time, only one instrument, a strobe light, was available. By working with the materials scrounged from the prison, Johnson, who knew nothing about lighting at the time, was able to improvise a battery of effects for the performances of New York, New York. To this day, he maintains a close relationship with Spencer Mosse, who is a lighting designer who does the company's more elaborate designs without fee, which is one of mutual respect and admiration.²¹ Johnson grew into becoming an actor over a period of time as he did with his technical skills. He is now the technical director of The Family.

Ellen Cleghorne joined the group because she had heard about it

²⁰Camillo, 29 September 1980. ²¹Mosse, 13 April 1981.

through her brother Rodney Cleghorne, who was working with the company as an actor under Bette Howard at the Public Theatre. Her first assignment was producing sound effects for The Crucifixion at The Family Theatre Workshop. From there she worked her way into doing small roles with the ensemble and finally began playing Natalia in The Marriage Proposal as well as serving as the workshop coordinator for the company.²²

Ellen Cleghorne prefaced our discussion on the workshops by saying that The Family itself had begun as a workshop at Bedford Hills. Marvin Camillo stressed that an actor is generally required to participate in some of the acting workshops before he may enter the repertory company. Other workshop instructors expressed the same feeling, that this phase of orientation and training was essential for an actor in order to integrate with the company and to understand what is often called the "Family spirit." Cleghorne also indicated that instructors are selected on the basis of their expertise and compatibility with that "spirit" as decided by herself and Camillo. The curriculum is decided by the individual instructor but it follows some general guidelines:

1. Material is organized around the individual needs of each group as determined by the instructor in session. Improvisation is used based on the student's life experience. Special accommodations for prison groups are not made except in the sense that material may have to be servicable for a group whose members are all of one sex.

²²Cleghorne, 13 March 1980.

2. The Family is not specifically directed toward therapy; thus teachers are hired to teach theatre skills and personal development for the artist, i.e. "...to explore being bigger than yourself," as Cleghorne puts it, "...to open up students to other human experience."

3. All workshops are directed toward at least a studio performance, "Performing in front of people, expressing your feelings or the feelings of the character...[You] learn to relax and focus on what you want to do...sharing this with others...testing...getting a response...Usually a positive response and a positive experience. Something inbred in theatre is positive...to grow."

4. The participants are encouraged to learn and to work at their own pace. Cleghorne emphasized this concept comparing her experience to public school where she felt that the students' input is unimportant to the faculty and administration. The Family in her view, wants and needs the feedback of its students.

Cleghorne pointed out that for inmates this experience gave them the feeling that they were, "fulfilling their potential; not killing time." According to her estimates, fifty percent of the five hundred participants in the workshops conducted in New York and New Jersey in 1980 and 1981 had been institutionalized at one time or were so then. Approximately 60 others came to The Family workshop program from community centers that referred them to the classes. The balance is composed of word-of-mouth newcomers from the street, the theatre community, and the company itself.²³

²³Cleghorne, 3 November 1980.

The workshops have maintained the same type of exercises that were done with the Bedford Hills group and thus the process as well as the content of the training process has continuity.

J.J. Johnson asks his groups to improvise typical street types--preacher, thief, cop--asking the students to choose the role that he feels is most like himself. He then asks the players to reverse roles, e.g., the cop to play the thief and vice versa. Johnson has worked a great deal in youth centers and tries to maintain contact with as many of the kids as possible after they are released.²⁴

Verna Hampton begins her classes by getting the leaders of a new group to "do the dozens" as described in Part I. She then moves on to a game called "stepping stones," a theatre game in which each major event of a person's life becomes a stone, e.g. "Born X date. Grammar school, X school. etc." This process is repeated several times until the students find areas of their lives that they particularly want to explore and they begin to develop characters out of their own experience into a narrative that can be acted out. These scenarios generally revolve around their family life.²⁵

Isaan Rahim, a graduate of Bennington College in theatre, came to The Family in 1979 through CETA artists' funding. Since that time he has worked with the company as an actor in Ghetto, The Marriage Proposal, The Crucifixion and coordinator of the Playwright's Forum. Plays

²⁴Johnson, 21 August 1980.

²⁵Hampton, 10 August 1980.

are selected for this forum by an informal consensus of the company with the approval of Camillo and others who are asked to read the plays. Plays are submitted through the professional grapevine in New York City, by mail, and through inmates whom Rahim meets while on tour. During the 1979-80 season, The Family had received approximately forty plays from which eight had been selected for readings. Four were then presented in studio productions during the summer of 1980, and one, Jerome Washington's Come Home to Death was performed at All Angels Church as a full production. This pattern would have been repeated for the 1980-81 season, but the funds to employ Rahim as coordinator ran out and it was necessary to suspend the readings in mid-spring. While the Playwright's Forum was formalized in 1978 when the CETA funds were first made available to The Family, all of the plays that have been included in the repertory have undergone a similar sort of developmental process.

No formal assessment of the play is made and traditionally all rewrites are done by the playwright. Commentary from the company is offered after a staged reading and the atmosphere is generally designed to be constructive and encouraging. A tape of the reading and comments is made for the use of the playwright and his chosen director.²⁶

Robbie McCauley was among the first group of teachers to work with The Family under the CJCC Grant in 1975. She studied voice technique

²⁶Interview with Isaan Rahim, The Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 25 February 1981.

from Christen Linklater whose methods she uses in working with The Family workshops. Until recently, she was a member of the New York University School of the Arts faculty, a position she left in order to be more active in the professional theatre. She states the objectives of her workshops in a way that seems to encompass The Family's workshop objectives, "...to break down rigidities--personal and emotional...to spark the intelligence and sensitivity in the actor and bring out what's there." With regard to prisoners she says, "Inmates are rigid through mistrust. Our skills and techniques reduce the fear, not the danger perhaps, but the fear, and people are able to function better. We try to give people a range of possibilities."²⁷

Winch's fifth societal function is that a family must supply a means of dealing with emotional crises, set goals, and maintain a sense of purpose. One might assume that this function would be undertaken by the Board of Trustees. In fact, as Part I demonstrates, the Board assumed an active function with The Family only as a remedial effort in 1977. It has a loose set of by-laws that were drawn up by Colleen Dewhurst's attorney as part of the process of incorporation.

The only time the Board has attempted active participation on other than an individual level in any area other than fiscal management, was in a controversy that began in 1979 with The Family's production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. It was a fairly standard production performed at the Black Theatre Alliance in the summer of 1979 and again at

²⁷Interview with Robbie McCauley, Family Office at the BTA, New York, NY, 19 February 1981.

the All Angel's Church in the summer of 1980 as a fundraising benefit for the company. It drew mixed reactions from the board members many of which were unfavorable and the benefit was not successful as a fundraiser. The afore-mentioned controversy centered around whether the goals of The Family had blurred from the time of the group's inception. Charles Elson, who was then the board's chairman, had become convinced in 1979 that the group was trying to blend in with the myriad other theatre companies in New York City.²⁸ In March of 1980, Dewhurst made one of her rare appearances at a board meeting where she complained that The Family had lost its original direction, and that the focus of the group had softened, an idea that she reiterated to me.²⁹

Elson resigned as chairman in late 1979 to be replaced by two men, Ken Marsolais as chairman and Victor Germak as president. The controversy about the goals persisted as an undercurrent to fiscal and planning discussions until the winter of 1981 when, as the chairman of the Planning Committee and designated historian for The Family, I was asked to draw up a report on the subject that was submitted to the Board for their examination at a workshop/conference held in the spring of 1981. The Family goals as listed therein in part follow:

1. To act as a living window so that disparate segments of American society may have positive access to each other, e.g., professional actors train city children who would normally not even see a play; plays like Short Eyes and Straight from the Ghetto.

²⁸Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981. ²⁹Dewhurst, 6 January 1981.

2. To serve as a means of self-examination and personal expression to those who have not found a medium for these needs and desires in the educational system or the conventional avenues of social and artistic expression, e.g. Ringo Reyes, Shamsul Alam, J.J. Johnson, Miguel Piñero.

3. To open possibilities of self-development through the rigorous discipline of the arts. In this way opening the individual's sense of his own potential to a wide range of social and career possibilities, e.g., Iffe Shipp, Marvin Camillo, Rick Ried, Eddy Rivera.

4. To produce works of art that are created by artists of the unrepresented areas of American life, and in this way to reveal otherwise unseen aspects and possibilities of our culture, e.g. The Marriage Proposal and the plays of Jerome Washington. [Washington is an inmate doing life at Attica State Prison for murder. The Family has produced two of his plays.]³⁰

From these goals and the research that I had completed at that time, I formed the following conclusions:

1. The character of The Family, and therefore its goals, have not changed.
2. The Family has always been primarily an arts organization rather than a social service agency.
3. We would do better to strengthen and seek funding for the programs that naturally arise from The Family pallet than to try to solidify and pursue rhetorical goals.³¹

On 21 March 1981, the workshop/conference was held at Essence Magazine (which was deemed to be neutral territory by both the Board and the members of the company) at which these goals and conclusions were discussed. It was agreed by both groups that they were generally accurate, despite a request for specific objectives for the immediate future.

³⁰Steven Hart "A Historical Evaluation of the Goals of The Family," Theatre in Prisons Archive, CASTA, CUNY, New York, NY.

³¹Ibid.

It is typical of the Board that the chairman and several other officers did not attend this workshop, and perhaps even more illuminating that, despite the request for specifics, no follow up was ever effected.

What is significant about the controversy over goals is that some of the Board felt that the company was abandoning its social mission in favor of artistic aspirations. The company, in turn, felt that it was being pressed into a particular mold by this demand for a renewed interest in the problems of prison and prisoners. While Camillo states firmly that The Family will always work in prison, and its history bears out this commitment, he holds that it might also serve its members and audience by exploring other avenues of drama than modern American plays.

It seems reasonable, then, to conclude that The Family fulfills the essential social functions that Winch ascribes to the family. At this point it seems important to investigate how the company relates to society at large. Its financial relationship is predicated on public funding like many small not-for-profit arts organizations.

Fred Garrett first became familiar with The Family when it was still performing in prison as a workshop in 1972. At that time he was employed as a program consultant for NYSCA, a relationship he had developed while working with the Negro Ensemble Company as business manager from 1968 to 1978.

In his view, the political climate was favorable and the money available when the group left prison in 1972. Marvin Camillo's concept had not been officially codified at that point, but as Garrett understood it, it was that, "...inmates and ex-inmates who had interest or talent would have a chance to develop it."³² He remembers that the initial reactions of correctional officials was cold, but that the people in the program, over a period of time, had proven the concept to be humanly and economically viable. NYSCA was therefore impressed by the fact that The Family had established and even increased its sphere of activity, proven its programs against official resistance, and then come to the Council for money, rather than approaching the Council in an effort to get money to start a new program. This thought is an interesting contrast to the complaints of some board members who felt that The Family should have had funds in hand before getting new workshops and productions underway such as the early start of CJCC workshops. Garrett also saw The Family as unique in that it was a group of ex-inmate artists operating in prison.³³

³²Interview with Fred Garrett, CASTA Office, CUNY/GSUC, New York, NY, 11 March 1981.

³³Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

Garrett did not become actively involved in the internal affairs of The Family until 1977 when a woman by the name of Mary Kaye was the administrator. The company had come into conflict with Kaye over non-specific issues of racism.³⁴ She had come to The Family through Faith Geer and had had no time to learn the group's idiosyncracies or adapt to the "family spirit," because the group was behind in its reports to the CJCC. Having reached an impasse, she left, and Garrett set about trying to find a new administrator in order to bring the financial and programmatic reportage to the CJCC up to date.

Garrett became a consultant to the group, immediately telling the Board that what was needed was an administrator of seasoned ability to work full-time who had contacts in the world of foundations and corporate giving. The funds to pay such a person not being available, a succession of interviews went on during the summer of 1978 to find some reasonable compromise candidate. When none was found, "...a long procession of well-attended board meetings took place," but still no administrator was found. Garrett was able to coordinate funds to pay an administrator from various areas of the budget. Eventually, he left

³⁴Berger/Elson, 28 March 1981.

The Family to pursue his own career. He learned that Fred Good, who had come and gone after Mary Kaye's departure, had "drifted back into the job instead of a new person."³⁵ Good, who did not fit Garrett's criteria, was gone again by summer of 1979.

The Board now consisted of more active members such as Faith Geer, Polly Siwek, Elizabeth Berger, Ken Marsolais, etc., who were also decidedly without the public clout of the original members like Joe Papp, who never attended meetings. As previously noted, the Board served only as a rear-guard in times of trouble. Garrett's comments, coupled with the data in Part I, characterize The Family's ongoing problem of not having a conventional business organization or representative to interact with the funding community. This problem was to a degree attenuated by the group's association with prison.

By the mid-1970s, the political climate, in Garrett's view, was no longer propitious to the arts much less to community based programs such as those like Expansion Arts at the NEA that had funded The Family in 1973. On the other hand, it had been the prison association that had drawn attention to the group in the first place. As popular and political concerns shifted, programs like the LEAA and the CJCC fell from favor and the results were that The Family which had gained official sanction through its social impact, was, according to Garrett, stereotyped into this area of artistic endeavor, thus limiting the

³⁵Garrett, 11 March 1981.

types of funding it could hope to successfully pursue.³⁶

As noted in Part I, Camillo is determined to outlive this image of reformed desperadoes, but it will not be easy as the press has always attached themselves to this aspect of The Family's background with what might be described as disproportionate interest. At any rate, I have yet to find a feature article or review that does not in some way relate its commentary to this aspect of The Family's past. Frequently it has a distorting effect on the group and a compromising effect on the criticism of its work. For example, Ali Wadud titled his 1977 review of The Marriage Proposal in the Amsterdam News, "The Family: A Superb Show," but the second paragraph states that The Family, "...is developing into a fine repertory company of ex-inmates, students, and community members, both Black and Puerto Rican. Mr. Camillo knows exactly what he's doing and is to be commended for taking on a task many would consider impossible."³⁷ One might easily recognize this as damning in the form of faint praise. The rest of the review is glows with praise, but with this preface it is difficult to tell how the reviewer rates the production.

In an article on Off-Off Broadway, Don Nelson of the Daily News described The Family and Camillo as follows:

³⁶Garrett, 11 March 1981.

³⁷Ali Wadud, "The Family: A Superb Show," The Amsterdam News, 5 March 1977, D-6.

Certainly one of the more resolute Off Off survivors is The Family, a group organized 10 years ago and consisting primarily of ex-prison inmates. Its most well-known venture was the 1974 production of Miguel Pinero's "Short Eyes." Perhaps its least-known asset, to the public, anyway, is a chubby cherubic-looking gentleman named Marvin Felix Camillo. Camillo, a director and actor as well as a hopeless optimist, founded The Family and remains, despite changing personnel, its official father figure.³⁸

Again, one wonders what is intended by "resolute survivor." Even prefacing flattering remarks on Marriage Proposal, one has an impression of The Family working in sackcloth and ashes.

In June 1981, Village Voice reviewer, Crispin Larangeira, described Benpires in glowing terms, "Mr. Alam writes in fine, sharply chiseled poetry, rich in nuance, tone and cadence. Nor does he miss the subtle innuendo of street talk, where saying the magic word straight out will at the very least get your face bust." The author goes on, however to describe the company as, "Our gentle tribe of ex-highwaymen."³⁹ One wonders whether it is more deprecating to describe the company in neolithic terms, or as former thieves.

³⁸Ron Nelson, "Off Off Broadway, Where Hope Plus Sweat-Theatre," Daily News, 14 January 1981, p. 37.

³⁹Crispin Larangeira, "Pro-Family" The Village Voice, 24-30 June 1981.

CHAPTER IX

Prison and The Family

This study is intended to disclose the history, techniques and works of The Family and to make some general observations about the impact of the group. Because of that, this chapter is not an attempt to explicate prison in general but to characterize the role of The Family in relation to such an institution.

Some background observations about prison in relation to the theatre will be helpful for this purpose. The French sociologist Michel Foucault makes the observation in Discipline and Punish that the modern penitentiary is predated by public punishment. Often these ceremonious events were worked out as elaborate spectacles such as the execution of Damiens for regicide on 2 March 1757 in an act of public contrition known as the amende honorable. He was flayed, his flesh torn at with hot irons, mutilated, seared with a variety of molten metals and flaming chemicals, and then drawn and quartered. He is reported to have stayed semi-conscious even after his body had been partly drawn apart, which proved a lengthy process because the horses available for this work were not used to doing the job, causing the "patient," as he was called, to linger through their faltering exertions.¹

¹Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977; Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 3-5.

This activity is clearly punishment, and only punishment, with possible rehabilitation to come in the afterlife when the "patient" will be forgiven for having suffered these agonies as absolution. In addition, the public spectacle provided the citizenry with evidence of the awesome, and decidedly dramatic, power of the law. By the turn of the nineteenth century, such methods of correction had been abandoned as extreme, particularly when the judiciary found that in many instances the crowds were inclined to side with the "patient" after seeing him or her in agony, and riots often broke out against the officials of the court.²

At this point "salvation" moved indoors, executions became quick, surgical, untheatrical affairs and in America the idea of the penitentiary came into play. Suggested by the Society of Friends, early penitentiaries were buildings with isolated cells wherein the obdurate convict was left with a Bible to meditate and become penitent for his crimes. This approach produced dismay because it was found that the isolation drove some convicts to masturbation and sometimes violent insanity rather than an attitude of Christian charity. This sort of rehabilitation was, therefore, replaced by a strict regimen of work which was designed to teach the prisoner regular habits and a sense of order.³

Jeremy Bentham, a founder of the University College of London, proposed that penitentiaries be built on the basis of a concept he dubbed

²Ibid., p. 59.

³Ibid., pp. 120-27.

as "panopticism," a description of which follows:

At the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other...By the effect of the backlighting, one can observe from the tower...the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly alone.⁴

One might have the impression that this is a fantasy, but in fact many prisons are constructed in just this way like the New Jersey State Prison in Rahway where the tiers run out perpendicularly from a central cage that is several stories tall, or Stateville Federal Prison which is a precise model of Bentham's design.⁵ Nor is this construction intended only for security purposes, but rather as a moral corrective. Bentham believed that totally exposed to the scrutiny of the institution and seeing his position in common with his fellow convicts, that the inmate would be transformed by the panopticon as a kind of theatre of moral reform.⁶

But it was not only the inmate who was to receive moral instruction from the experience of prison. As Foucault puts it, "Once one made charitable visits to prisoners to share in their sufferings (the seventeenth century had invented or revived this practice); now it is being

⁴Ibid., p. 200.

⁵Ibid., plates 4, 5 and 6.

⁶Ibid., pp. 200-28.

suggested that children should come and learn how the benefits of the law are applied to crime a living lesson in the museum of order."⁷

One might regard the reference to a prison as a "museum of order" as ironic, taking into account the perspective on these institutions presented in Short Eyes, but the prison serves, in this description, the same moral purpose of "pleasure and profit" that Horace assigned to the theatre in the first century A.D.⁸

Lest this comment be taken as facetious, there is a well-publicized program conducted at Rahway State Prison called the Juvenile Awareness Program (JAP) conducted by a group of men sentenced to life imprisonment which formed the basis of the television program called Scared Straight. JAP sessions are held on the stage of the prison auditorium where I saw Ghetto performed. The Lifers, as they are called, curse, threaten and bully groups of adolescents in the hope of scaring them out of their "misdemeanor" ways. While a guard observes these activities from behind the drawn curtain, the children believe themselves at the mercy of the inmates who graphically describe gang rape and so forth to them.⁹ This seems to approach Artaud's concept of the "Theatre of Cruelty" with respect to methods and intended results.¹⁰

⁷Ibid., p. 112.

⁸Barret H. Clark, ed., European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), pp. 24-33.

⁹U.S. Congress, House Committee on Education and Labor, Oversight on Scared Straight, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources. 96 Cong., 1st sess. 1979, pp. 1-8.

¹⁰Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958), pp. 84-101.

As illustrated in Chapter VIII, the aims of The Family differ from those of either Artaud or the Juvenile Awareness Program. Artaud's end was a theatrical purgation of those internal forces that lead the individual to destructive, anti-social and even psychotic behaviour. JAP seeks to replace the feelings that motivate criminal behavior with a horror of prison which is a kind of purgation through displacement. The Family is trying to create avenues of creative expression and activity for the artist/inmate that will allow him to use his passions constructively.

There seems to be a consensus among penologists that the modern prison has three major functions: (1) to confine the inmate thus restraining him from doing damage to society at least while he is under restraint, (2) to punish the inmate in an effort to effect his moral reform, or at least to dissuade him from future crime through intimidation, and (3) to rehabilitate the inmate in an effort to make him fit for return to society and so that he may lead a productive life.¹¹

The first and third of these concepts are designed to relieve society of a threat posed to its equanimity by an individual. The second has the effect of isolating the convict from society as a prison inmate as retribution for the trouble he has caused. The word "convict" is especially interesting in this regard. "Ex-con" is really a misnomer, for while one might outlive being an "inmate," once

¹¹Gresham M. Sykes, The Society of Captives (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 14.

convicted, the convict can never hope to remove this label as it is forever part of his personal history. Even if the state decided to expunge all infractions from the record, as New York State is now considering doing with convicted felons who have stayed "clean" for a substantial number of years,¹² one is forced to account for one's whereabouts during such periods on job applications and the like. The convicted criminal has great difficulty getting work, and should he lie on such an application, he runs the risk of dismissal if the lie is discovered and even the possible accusation of fraud. Thus to be a convict is a role that the inmate is obliged to play for the rest of his life.

The internal workings of a prison are overshadowed by the problem that the three objectives mentioned above seem to be contradictory. It is difficult to believe that in the act of punishing an individual, one is likely to bring him into a more harmonious and/or sympathetic attitude toward society. Similarly, it is doubtful that one will make an inmate better able to cope with the demands and pressures of living in a free society by locking him in a small concrete room and regulating every feature of his life in a specialized society that is one of "enforced homosexuality."

After a while, there is no further restraint that can be imposed on the inmate, and the system appears to disintegrate through entropy. As Gresham Sykes puts it:

¹²Jacobs, 19 March 1981.

The lack of a sense of duty among those who are held captive, the obvious fallacies of coercion, the pathetic collection of rewards and punishments to induce compliance, the strong pressures towards the corruption of the guard in the form of friendship, reciprocity, and the transfer of duties into the hands of inmates - all are structural defects in the prison's system of power...¹³

The Family operates rather like the positive to a photographic negative of these problems, in that it attempts to counter them so precisely. The inmate is invited to participate in workshops and the program is designed so that he can grow at his own speed. There can be no element of coercion because the inmate has himself as his principal judge with the reinforcement of the other members of the workshop and the audience that sees the finished material. The range of emotional and intellectual rewards are limited only by the inmate's imagination as the theatre invites him to expand his conception of reality in contrast to the prison which seeks to impress upon him its limitations and prescriptions.

Punishment in the theatre in particular, and the arts in general, is self-generating in the form of failure. Work that is wrought without discipline may be either chaotic or never completed. As illustrated in Part I, the men had to first overcome the problem of reading before they could tackle the problem of improvisation. If they did not, the punishment lay in the fact that the project would simply have been impossible. Conversely, the reward for their efforts was New

¹³Sykes, Society of Captives, p. 61.

York, New York which had the special savor of expressing their life-experience and their feelings about the world.

It is an interesting point that the guards I interviewed at Rahway found they often came to like the inmates generally although they felt they knew very little about them as individuals. Out of four men, two had taken the job because they had been unable to get any other and were waiting for other types of work to be available. The other two older men were career officers who were happy to describe the workings of the prison and felt that its crumbling paint and deferred repairs did little to help the cause of rehabilitation. All were unsure as to what precisely was the object of the prison, other than the fact that they were themselves there to maintain order. Rehabilitation, they felt, was not much in evidence in the prison in any case.¹⁴

Eugene Gold, the District Attorney for Kings County said that rehabilitation had entered the mandate of the prison system in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In his view, it had never been implemented other than in the form of token programs.¹⁵ He and Jacobs stressed to me that The Family had impressed them because it was a program that had been created by the inmates with tangible results. Jacobs emphasized that for therapy to be effective it has to be "real," i.e., it has to yield concrete results for the participants.¹⁶ The

¹⁴Harris, Straight From the Ghetto, Tape with interviews, 20 May 1980.

¹⁵Gold, 16 April 1981.

¹⁶Jacobs, 19 March 1981.

Family's success with Short Eyes, coupled with its plans for the CJCC, impressed both these men as unique and potentially effective.

Foucault supports the concept of the prison as a theatre for the inmate, "The penitentiary operation, if it is to be a genuine re-education, must become the sum total existence of the delinquent, making of the prison a sort of artificial and coercive theatre in which his life will be examined from top to bottom."¹⁷ Foucault does not, of course, mean a literal theatre but that the prison should operate as a metaphorical one for total self-examination. But why not a literal theatre particularly if the element of "coercion" can be eliminated through the satisfaction provided by artistic accomplishment such as the theatre of *The Family*?

Erving Goffman develops the thesis in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life that one way to understand and interpret social institutions is by seeing the individual participants as playing roles in a kind of scenario for which social and cultural traditions define the parameters:

It does take deep skill, long training, and psychological capacity to become a good stage actor. But this fact should not blind us to another one: that almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in what is being contrived before them. And it seems this is so because ordinary social intercourse is itself put together as a scene is put together, by the exchange of dramatically inflated actions, counteractions, and terminating replies. Scripts even in the hands of unpracticed players can come to life because life is

¹⁷Foucault, Discipline and Punish, pp. 251-2.

itself a dramatically enacted thing. All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify.¹⁸

One may argue that if social reality is a series of dramatic actions, then the improvisational method used by The Family permits the participants to play with reality and broaden their skills in dealing with it.

The above hypothesis is supported by Goffman in his concluding arguments, but he makes the distinction, "An action staged in a theatre is a relatively contrived illusion and an admitted one; unlike ordinary life, nothing real or actual can happen to the performed character..."¹⁹

I have pointed out that freedom from punitive consequences is one of the advantages of improvisation, but I am inclined to stretch Goffman's argument somewhat with regard to The Family and prison. The personal history of the actor/inmate, brought to life through improvisation may be closer to the experience of reality on the outside than is the artificial environment of the prison. The theatre permits the inmate/actor to maintain imaginative contact with the world to which he may eventually return, and perhaps, in this rarefied setting, to develop new ways of dealing with conflicts. This could be compared with the idea of a "positive hustle," as J.J. Johnson calls it.

¹⁸Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co.; Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 71-2.

¹⁹Goffman, Presentations, pp. 254-5.

In Asylums,²⁰ Goffman discusses prisons in the context of what he calls the "total institution," or one that pervades every feature of the inmate's life, including mental hospitals, prisons, and the like. Goffman makes the point that in the total institution, the inmate begins, "a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systemically, if often unintentionally, mortified."²¹

Thus the self that is brought to the total institution is subjected to a series of destructive pressures. The result is that the self that occupied reality outside the institution is to some degree, in Goffman's view, supplanted by a self that is part of the institution; it is, in other words, a role that is accepted both consciously and unconsciously by the inmate. This diminished self-image, or role, is adopted in part as protective covering:

The low position of the inmate relative to their station on the outside, established initially through the stripping process, creates a milieu of personal failure in which one's fall from grace is continuously pressed home. In response, the inmate tends to develop a story, a line, a sad tale - a kind of lamentation and apologia - which he constantly tells to his fellows as a means of accounting for his present low estate.²²

In terms of The Family, this phenomenon manifests itself in the convict as victim "rhetorical crap" that Stevenson was combatting when he first organized the workshop improvisations at Sing Sing around the

²⁰Erving Goffman, Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co.; Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), p. xv.

²¹Ibid., p. 14.

²²Ibid., p. 67.

family and personal experience of the inmates. It would appear that, by comparing Goffman's observations with those of *The Family*, inmates in total institutions are inclined to adopt the roles that are left open to them. The more limited the horizon, the more the inmate seems to retreat into sullen defensiveness. Conversely, the more his imagination is stimulated and his individuality is honored, the more he seems to be willing to deal with life creatively.

The total institution is also one that is so unnatural that it is to some degree outside the bounds of experience at all, and the time of internment becomes a kind of comatose limbo. As Goffman puts it, "...the inmate tends to feel that for the duration of his required stay - his sentence - he has been totally exiled from living."²³ Again the question arises as to whether such a setting can in any way make the individual more capable of dealing with the world to which he is to return. In the case of a mental patient, he may come to see his confinement as benign and view the experience as an aid to his recovery. In the case of the inmate, however, the prison provides simply another demonstration of his adversary relationship with society.

Whatever the official intent of prison, the actual function of such an institution has been generally described as custodial. Unsure what to do with individuals who have irritated society beyond tolerance, convicts are put in prison not because it is believed that this act will alter them, but because no other alternative is available. This

²³Goffman, Asylums, p. 68.

concept has been expressed to me by inmates, ex-inmates, guards, the New York City Commissioner of Probations, and the District Attorney of Kings County.

The stepchildren of the American prison system are parole and probation which vary from state to state according to statute. Such alternatives to prison did not become widespread until the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁴ A report commissioned by the Justice Department in 1979 indicates that there were cultural factors that contributed to this situation:

By the 1890s, the prisons as well as the insane asylums were filled with an immigrant population. First it was the Irish and later the Slavs and other Eastern European groups that occupied the wards and cells. Native-born Americans were quite frank about their disdain for the immigrant; at their best, the aliens were dangerous. If deviant, they were intolerable. All of which meant that no matter how inadequate institutional conditions, they were good enough for the immigrant.²⁵

When I suggested to Eugene Gold that the prisons seem to be populated now by racial minorities, he agreed that this was the case with the following proviso: in his view, minorities are incarcerated more often because they seem to have more difficulty assimilating into the more prosperous strata of the economy. As a result, they tend to live in high-crime areas like the inner-city where crimes that lead to

²⁴U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Incarceration and its Alternatives in 20th Century America, by David J. Rothman (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 9.

²⁵Ibid., p. 5.

imprisonment, such as violent crimes, are more prevalent. Because of their financial circumstances, minorities are also unable to hire legal counsel of the first quality.²⁶ In other words, minorities may be driven into the arms of the criminal justice system because they are economically disadvantaged. Hence, American racial minorities face multiple penalties because when they are finally deemed ready for parole, they face even more difficulties in getting a job than they did before they were imprisoned.

From 1963 to 1973, a series of programs were developed as experimental methods of helping the ex-inmate re-enter society under the Manpower Development and Training Act. In the words of the report on these programs, "Prior to these projects, no serious attempt was made to test the proposition that correctional institutions might be used to create an effective entry into the world of work."²⁷ These programs focused on providing training for vocational skills to inmates, alternatives to incarceration, and developing alternatives to prison for people who had run afoul of the law.

Some of these programs were carried forward to the LEAA in the 1970s. I have examined reports on three programs having to do with job

²⁶Gold, 16 April 1981.

²⁷U.S., Department of Labor, Manpower Administration, A Review of Manpower R&D Projects in the Correctional Field (1963-1973), by Roberta Rovner-Pieczenik, Manpower Research Monograph No. 28 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 6.

training and placement,²⁸ supplementing ex-inmates' income²⁹ and inmate education before release.³⁰ All of them are based upon statistical designs in order to lend a degree of scientific objectivity to their results. The basic component of this statistical measure is figures on recidivism which have become increasingly suspect because they are calculated differently by different authorities. For example, can a convict be said to have recidivated if he is rearrested, tried, convicted, or imprisoned? Police, courts, and prison officials calculate their figures on those events that relate specifically to them.³¹ This thought was reinforced to me by both District Attorney Gold and Commissioner Jacobs. Thus programs that make statistical claims in terms of recidivism cannot be considered conclusive unless one is clear on what basis such statistics are gathered.

A certain naïveté creeps into the thinking of this so-called scientific approach. The criminologist Daniel Glaser remarks, "Almost all criminals follow a zig-zag path. They go from noncrime to crime and to

²⁸U.S., Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Job Training and Placement for Offenders and Ex-offenders, by Phyllis G. McCreary and John M. McCreary (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 1-5.

²⁹U.S., Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Unlocking the Second Gate, R&D Monograph, 45 (1978).

³⁰U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Correctional Education Programs for Inmates, by Raymond Bell et al. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 1-13.

³¹McCreary and McCreary, Job Training, p. 5.

noncrime again..."³² The problem with such an assertion is that it is predicated on data relating only to the criminal activity that is known and recorded as some form of recidivism. Why are these likely to be the only crimes the recidivist has committed, given his poor employment prospects as an ex-inmate? The fact remains that programs dealing with inmates are obliged to operate from statistical procedures to validate their effectiveness.³³ Thus the result is that the programs that receive official long-term sanction are often ones that deal with isolated features of an inmate's life, such as employment problems, through methods of analysis and verification that are hazy if not simply incomplete.

The Family does not retain statistical records about its members (1) because the group is a theatre company and not a rehabilitation center, and (2) because it would run counter to its philosophy that to be an ex-inmate should not place an individual in a special category for special scrutiny.

What is more troubling about a statistical approach is that it is predicated on the idea that subjective profiles of individuals and programs are faulty because they are subject to prejudice.³⁴ A

³²Daniel Glaser, The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System (New York: The Bobbs Merrill Co., Inc. 1964), p. 85.

³³McCreary and McCreary, Job Training, p. 57.

³⁴Daniel Glaser, Routinizing Evaluation: Getting Feedback on the Effectiveness of Crime and Delinquency Programs (Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, 1973), p. 16.

number somehow appears absolute and objective. But as the problems with recidivism statistics demonstrate, the truth of a number is in the intellectual clarity of the tabulator.

By contrast, The Family's approach offers involvement to all the different facets of its members - emotional and intellectual - without stigmatizing them in a way that isolates them from society. In fact, through performances, they come in sympathetic, constructive contact with the community.

Another difficulty of the statistical approach is that it presumes that people with similar specific characteristics are somehow the same generally and can therefore be handled by the same methods.³⁵ As Commissioner Jacobs pointed out, even if cultural and economic forces produce similar characteristics in people, this does not mean that they have the same interests, needs and abilities, or that they will respond to the same sort of treatment.³⁶

It is not the attempt here to suggest that The Family is a panacea that will replace prisons and eradicate crime. It does, however, provide some former inmates with a way to use what they find best about themselves as a tool for re-entering society. They can work with a group of people who are respectful and supportive of them as individuals and who offer them human contact and in the form of the arts and as a family. They are invited to proceed at their own rate of speed within the confines of the general discipline necessary to the theatre

³⁵Ibid., p. 85.

³⁶Jacobs, 19 March 1981.

* * * * *

and the particular discipline of the group. While the performing arts seem particularly suited to the problems of some ex-inmates, because they touch so many facets of an individual's emotional and intellectual life, possibly similar run programs might be established in other fields, such as technical and vocational training outside the arts for the re-entry of inmates into society.

The most important response is that of the inmates who have come in contact with The Family. Apart from the people interviewed, I also looked over The Family's files of prison correspondence. These are letters written by inmates to members of the company. They were written under the assumption that they would be held in confidence which I shall respect. Some of them were directed toward women in the company as love letters that reflected a mixture of lusty innuendo and a sad feeling of remoteness.

Others were filled with rhetoric about the relationship of blacks and hispanics to white society. These tended to reflect a testy righteous indignation as though nudging the reader for signs of assent. One man wrote to tell Camillo that he was being transferred to a mental hospital. This letter was a mixture of religious zeal, to the point of being somewhat hysterical, and the plea of a small child for protection and approval. He wanted to form a religious group for youngsters to help them stay out of prison modelled, one gathered, on what he imagined to be The Family. He seemed sadly reminiscent of James Turner in The Brig who could only escape from the prison by getting himself declared insane.

Not all the letters are sad. Some of them are filled with a kind of earnest hope. Like the woman I met at Bedford Hills after The Crucifixion performance, they asserted that they would seek out The Family after release and they hoped they could have a place in the company doing whatever was needed. If they are willing to meet the standards of The Family in terms of their personal and professional commitment, there is likely to be a place for them.

In 1976, an inmate sent the following poem to The Family which, for me, best sums up the feeling the group seems to create:

For "La Familia"
(On seeing: Straight from the Ghetto)

La Familia:
Different percentages
of self
bring me
the joy & Sadness
of lear[n]ing
the truths
that I deny.
La Familia:
Former me's
hammering home
the realities
of anger & Pain
that i
was born into,
voicing
the silent cry
for help
that tragic magic
brings.
La Familia:
Former fixtures
within these walls
that now
contain me;
Lending me
the bit of pride
essential

to coping
with
my existence.
La Familia:
Brothers & Sisters
being
their brother's
keepers;
I salute you
hermanos
for bringing me
the new song
of we
that i
want to sing,
the new tune
of
the different piper
that i
want to dance
to...

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

The goals, the methods, the success, the problems and the future of The Family seem intertwined inseparably with Marvin Felix Camillo. Interesting contrasts emerge from his past. While school was not the source of great success for him, he did see it as a positive part of his life and carried away from it a variety of learning experiences in the arts, particularly in the area of music, which study also provided him with the means to transcend racial stereotypes (even as playing Kelly from the Emerald Isle). His leadership potential was recognized by the playground teachers he encountered and he was able to walk the difficult line that allows some people to gain the approval of authority without losing their individuality and becoming a tody. This ability has won him the admiration of others from similar backgrounds in both schools and prisons. Thus it seems fair to say that Camillo is a person who can work within the prescriptions of an institution even to the point of becoming a trusted part of its operation, without being co-opted by it.

The strongest feature of Camillo is that he loves and respects the people he works with in a way that is not patronizing, self-serving, nor is it excessively sentimental. The people he first met in prison

were the people who had populated his childhood and who might have attended the backyard circuses he arranged as a child. To him, they were his neighbors, and while to someone else they might have looked like hardened criminals, he saw them as tough individuals who were surviving under difficult conditions. More importantly, they came alive to his work as an actor and as a director in a way that was unusually satisfying to him. He could not believe the overwhelming response to New York, New York when that show first opened at Bedford Hills, which he thinks arose from the fact that the material reflected the lives of the inmates.¹

With his cultural and artistic background, Camillo was uniquely suited to see, appreciate and develop the artistic talent in his workshop. In addition, as Fred Garrett says, the political climate was favorable for underwriting such a program, but too much should not be made of this aspect of the period in which The Family first came to life. Camillo, after all, was not paid for his work. Grey Smith regarded it as a chore to be completed and forgotten in order to fulfill a grant contract, and everyone initially involved in the workshop including the prison officials, Camillo, and the inmates, did so with little hope of anything coming out of the project.

It does seem clear that Camillo was motivated by the artistic possibilities of the group rather than trying to be a social reformer,

¹Camillo, 12 February 1980.

a notion that is reinforced by the fact that he has absolutely no training, expertise, or contacts in the field of social work. It was particularly satisfying to him, however, that in the winter of 1981, The Episcopal Church Center, Coalition for Human Needs gave The Family a \$10,000 grant to be used at his discretion for special problems of the group, like the woman and infant who lived in the office during that winter. It was an acknowledgement that he was the best judge of the needs of the members of his "family."²

I can find no evidence that The Family's goals have changed markedly from the time the group started. However, when Short Eyes brought the group to national attention in 1974, the focus was broadened to take advantage of the funding available through the CJCC. The possibility of widening its sphere of influence, and having a positive impact on the community, diverted The Family somewhat from its focus on prisons. The attraction here is understandable as the CJCC funds provided the possibility of a stable base of operations for the workshops and a way to reach young people through the arts, an ounce of prevention that more than exceeds in value the legendary pound of cure.

A problem with the CJCC phase of The Family was that while it funded the workshops, it did not fund the central organization which was burdened by an onerous demand for both financial and programmatic reports. The tail, by sheer force of weight, was wagging the dog. The

²James W. Johnson, The Crucifixion, 1981 Program. This program appears in Appendix B.

administration was too complex to be handled by Camillo and the staff and the funds were not available to hire someone who had more experience at this type of work.

The only lasting effect from the CJCC period is that the central workshop, which was Camillo's studio for developing new works, has had to function on a sporadic basis or not at all. Much of his time has been devoted to fundraising and administrative matters, finding space, and fulfilling grant contracts with extant productions. The CJCC funds were also contingent upon a therapy component that The Family was unable to fulfill within its own ranks, and that the Roosevelt Hospital reneged on. The Family is no more equipped to provide therapy than it is to do social work. From time to time, it has been necessary to renew this understanding within board members and funding sources to the end that art is a perfectly satisfactory objective in itself for The Family to pursue.

The difficulty with trying to make a program that is operated by artists offer the benefits of therapy and social work is that, in the final analysis, art is neither one of these things and fails to meet their standards for success when evaluated by experts outside the theatre.

If The Family does not provide these services, it does provide something that is perhaps more "real," as Commissioner Jacobs would put it. That something is the group's workshops and productions that yield individual and social benefits as by-products.

At the McCauley voice workshop, I watched a young man who was so shy that he had barely been able to speak at the beginning of the session, get up and sing a short song for the first time. When he was finished, he smiled quietly to himself in a way that suggested a feeling of deep satisfaction. Without fracturing his dignity, he had gently expanded his range of experience in a way that had not been open to him before.

The Family chooses its instructors in part for their professional expertise and clout, like Raul Julia, but they are also chosen because they seem to have emotional and intellectual access to the world of the students. In that way, like Camillo and Stevenson, they are not inclined to appear exploitive to inmates and the more cynical youngsters, as well as being able to confront them honestly about their work.

The exercises chosen for the workshops do not propound any particular philosophy or system of beliefs, but instead seek to honor special features of the lives of the participants. The work is molded to them, and the subject-matter is chosen that they think is important. Thus it is they themselves who are represented in the product of the workshop and not a culture which they might perceive as alien to their own.

Stated succinctly there are two basic themes that typify The Family's productions: (1) to push back the apparent limits of reality, exploring its parameters for fresh perspectives, and (2) to provide fresh insight into facets of special aspects of our culture that are often taken for granted or ignored.

The Family does not select particularly innovative methods of production or subject matter. Other groups have certainly experimented at great length with improvisational productions based on poetry, and Benpires, for example, can hardly be said to be the first play about New York City street gangs. Benpires may, however, be the first time that members of a New York street gang were invited to create that world as a work of art. Certainly, Piñero's experiences as an inmate supplied him with material that offers a special viewpoint on prisons and their effect on the incarcerated. Piñero, Camillo and Bartow, after holding auditions, appeared to feel that it was the Family members who could best interpret Short Eyes in the original production, and the Papp organization went along with this concept when the show was moved to the Public Theatre.

The Crucifixion searches out the potential for joy and renewal in the myth of the death of "The Son of Man." Ghetto presents us with an ambivalent picture of the inner-city that reflects as much functional potential and beauty as desolation and ugliness. The Marriage Proposal brings together a variety of seemingly disparate cultures in the form of marriage, a symbol of basic human unity. As the play demonstrates, it is not easy to bring such factions together, but the resulting promise for the future makes the effort worthwhile.

What distinguishes The Family is that it is a group whose viewpoint has often gone unrepresented, looking at subjects, like street gangs or prison inmates, that tend to be cluttered with "official" rhetoric, but that many of us really do not understand or know much about. The

Family humanizes that world for us and makes it possible to see its occupants as individuals instead of stereotypes. In other words, it is work that helps us to understand. Unfortunately, as with Short Eyes, The Family is not always able to share in the financial rewards of their work. Beyond these contributions to American culture, it seems to me too early in the group's history to speculate on their long-range impact and significance.

If The Family helps us to understand, it helps its members to learn to work imaginatively and creatively with their reality. In The Empty Space, Peter Brook included the following brief anecdote in his essay about the "Holy Theatre," as he calls it:

Walking along the Reeperbahn in Hamburg on an afternoon in 1946, whilst a damp dispiriting grey mist whirled round the desperate mutilated tarts, some on crutches, noses mauve, cheeks hollow, I saw a crowd of children pushing excitedly into a night club door. I followed them. On the stage was a bright painted blue sky. Two seedy, spangled clowns sat on a painted cloud on their way to visit the Queen of Heaven. "What shall we ask her for?" said one. "Dinner," said the other and the children screamed approval. "What shall we have for dinner?" "Schinken, Leberwurst..." the clown began to list all the unobtainable foods and the squeals of excitement were gradually replaced by a hush - a hush that settled into a deep and true theatrical silence. An image was being made real, in answer to the need for something that was not there.³

In conditions of extremis, by banding together, people can conjure a reality more tractable and habitable than the one they actually occupy. Certainly the children in Brook's anecdote had cause to do so, and the means were made available through art. The food that would crown the celebration of their coming together was conjured through

³Peter Brook, The Empty Space (Avon; Discus Books, 1968), p. 39.

collective imagination. Collective imagination is also what lends savor to the list of soul food in Straight from the Ghetto.

A man in prison wrote to Camillo to complain that extolling soul food and other elements of black culture in the United States was simply a placebo that should not be allowed to undermine blacks in the search for their rights. Camillo replied that soul food was a demonstration of how inventive people could be to produce such delicious and varied dishes under conditions of poverty with limited resources. The Family's work has the effect of bringing this sort of basic inspiration into view. In so doing, there are possibilities where none were there before. For someone who awakens at six every morning in a small cement room with bars at one end, that ability may be his only link to a sense of promise.

Short Eyes is a play that reveals the world of American prison in its portrayal of racial alliances and betrayals, brutality and its ambivalent atmosphere that is now threatening, now comic, and now both. The play, however, deals with larger issues presenting a picture of how the inmate comes to be the instrument of his warders. Nett, the impotent, aging, pot-bellied, middle-class, white guard, accuses, convicts and sentences Davis to death. As Juan tells Davis, his death is inevitable if he stays in prison. That seems to be because the pressures of this prison world, coupled to the distortions of the people in it, are bound to find his weakness intolerable and annihilate him. In this world, the young, like Cupcakes, do not have time to

learn to understand. They must take a position and act in order to survive. It may even be that in a world as unnatural as that of Short Eyes, that understanding is not likely ever to be possible. Distorted as he has been, is it likely that Cupcakes will better understand as he leaves this world for the one on the outside. If Nett and the watch captain do represent the world he is returning to, the hope for such understanding is negligible.

The answer to the question posed about Cupcakes' future applies to some extent to The Family and to the problem of prison in general. The Family's usefulness as a model for other arts programs in prisons can only be determined, it would seem, through comparative examinations with other groups in the field. As a result of this research, I have undertaken other studies relating to the area of the arts in prisons as director of The Theatre In Prisons Project of The Center for Advanced Study in Theatre Arts at the City University Graduate Center. A recent national survey conducted in cooperation with CONTACT, Inc. has shown that there are prison-related arts programs in almost every state in the union. The effectiveness of these programs, which number approximately 150 organizations and individuals, is as yet undetermined. Most of them have not been in existence for even as long as The Family, a group that has considerable longevity for a small theatre company. One factor that the survey does yield is that in some states, arts programs are being phased out because of lack of funds, even though they have the support of prison officials. However, wherever there has been a theatre program in a prison, the officials

have responded enthusiastically to it.⁴

Eugene Gold said that he feels we know very little about prison.⁵ One might add that we seem to know very little about prisoners. In other words, what is the effect of prison? The answer to this question should include more than statistics about recidivism, an area that is itself in doubt. How does prison affect the inmate in other ways? Is society getting any return on this investment?

On 24 May 1981, NBC News quoted Chief Justice Warren Burger to the effect that correctional officers should be trained or, "they are part of the problem instead of part of the solution," and that inmates should be taught basic reading, writing, and cyphering along with viable vocational skills as a mandatory part of their confinement.⁶ He offered these suggestions as a kind of modest proposal to do something about the problems of prisons in a time of fiscal austerity. It seems unlikely that reviving the public school experience for the inmate in the hostile environment of prison for a second time in his life, is going to do much better than it did the first time. Perhaps, however, as Camillo says, "theatre is the way that absolutely anyone can learn." At this point, we simply do not know, and it will require a larger commitment of time and money than is presently in use to find out.

⁴The survey results have been printed in brief in Corrections Compendium, Sandra Nicolai, ed. (Lincoln, Nebraska: CONtact, Inc., spring, 1981), pp. 1-5.

⁵Gold, 16 April 1981.

⁶NBC, "News," 24 May 1981.

Not one person to whom I spoke would speculate on the future of The Family including Marvin Camillo, but all of them felt that it would survive in some form as long as Camillo continued as its head. He and the original group began with no funding and the added problem of their status as ex-inmates. They have survived, "like the Dutchman rising from the water," and hopefully will continue to do so.

There is a kind of heartiness that reminds one of Peter Brook's comments about the "Rough Theatre":

The popular theatre [or rough theatre], freed of unity of style actually speaks a very sophisticated and stylish language: a popular audience usually has no difficulty in accepting inconsistencies of accent and dress, or in darting between mime and dialogue, realisms and suggestion. They follow the line of story, un-aware in fact that somewhere there is a set of standards which are being broken. Martin Esslin has written that in San Quentin prisoners seeing a play for the first time in their lives and being confronted with Waiting for Godot had no problem at all in following what to regular theatregoers was incomprehensible.⁷

Brook's thought suggests a final concluding statement. What The Family lacks in professional smoothness that would represent itself in the form of consistency in the quality of its actors and polish in its scripts, is overbalanced by its genuine energy and the ability the work offers us to see into the potential of American society.

⁷Brook, Empty Space, pp. 60-1.

APPENDIX A. THE FAMILY PERFORMANCE CALENDAR

1973-1980¹

¹The calendar that appears here is based on the one that the company uses to document its performance history to funding sources. There are obvious gaps. I have added some performances about which there is only partial information. Some references will, therefore, be less complete than others, and there are no doubt some performances that were never entered at all. At the least, however, the calendar does reveal the recurrence of productions and the various types of locations where the group has played.

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY/STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME
1973							
4/5	Horace Greely H.S.			New York, N.Y. The Big Apple	1		\$ *contrib. 38.00*
5/11	Educage	White Pl.		"	1		40.00*
5/20	Hitch. Pres. Church			"	1		200.00*
5/25-26	Katonah Pres. Church			"	2		600.00*
6/15	Fox Lane H.S.	Bedford		"	1		15.00*
6/16	Peekskill Drama Fest.			"	1		50.00*
7/21	G. Bridge Comm. House			"	1		200.00*
7/27	Players' Wkshop			"	1		
8/24	Lincoln Center St. Festival	N.Y.C.		Straight From The Ghetto	1		300.00*
8/27	Com. Action	Portchester		"	1		100.00*
6/17	Bed. Hills C/F	Bedford		"	1		
9/1	Bed. Hills C/F	Bedford		"	1		
9/22	Emlin	Mamaroneck		"	1		80.00*
10/7	Media Fest. Riv. Ch.	N.Y.C.		"	1		
10/13	Prison Task Force Riverside Church	N.Y.C.		"	1		
10/28	Club Monterey	Bronx, N.Y.		"	1		
10/31	Hunter College	N.Y.C.		"	1		fee 350.00
11/3	Napanock C/F			"	1		
11/4	Theatre Riv. Ch.	N.Y.C.		"	1		500.00
11/29	Soc. Workers	Conn.		"	1		250.00
12/7	Henry Street Set.	N.Y.C.		"	1		

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY/STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME
1974							\$ *contrib.
1/14/15	Elmira C/F	Elmira, N.Y.		Straight From The Ghetto	2		750.00
1/15	Elmira Free Academy	Elmira, N.Y.		"	1		
2/5	Bed. Comm. House			"	1		
2/21	City College	N.Y.C.		"	1		500.00
3/25	Rikers Island House of Detention	N.Y.C.		"	1		
3/29	Fox Lane H.S.	Bedford, N.Y.		"	1		
1/3-1/20	Theatre/Riverside	N.Y.C.		Short Eyes	21		4,494.50
3/13-4/15	New York Shakespeare Festival	N.Y.C.		Short Eyes	32		NYSF - Producer
4/22-5/4	Annenburg Center	Phila., PA		Short Eyes	20		"
5/9-5/22	Beaumont - Lincoln Center	N.Y.C.		Short Eyes (Previews)	16		"
5/23	Beaumont	N.Y.C.		Short Eyes (Unlimited run)			"
	Wesleyan-Trinity Church			Short Eyes	1		
	Somers Prison	Hartford, CT		Short Eyes	1		
	Bedford Hill C/F			Short Eyes	1		
	Hartford University	Hartford, CT		Short Eyes	1		
	European tour			Short Eyes	18		
	Hartford Stage Co.	Hartford, CT		Short Eyes	40		

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ATTRACTION	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
1975	The Harlem State Cult. Coun.	Street Sounds		1
	Astor Place	The Dolls		4
	NY Shakespeare Festival Mobile Unit	Shoe Shine Parlor		12
	Astor Place	"		12
	Riverside Church	Street Sounds		1
	Arthurkill C/F	"		1
	Satellite Academy, Bronx Chase Manhattan Bk. Auditorium	"		1
	Taconic C/F	Shoe Shine Parlor		1
	Bedford Hills C/F	"		1
	Eastern C/F	"		1
	Ossining C/F	"		1
	Greenhaven C/F	"		1
	Auburn	"		1
	Elmira C/F	"		1
	Elmira Psych. Center	"		1
	Attica C/F	"		1
	Rikers Island	"		2
	Medgar Evers College	"		1

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY/STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME
1976							\$ *contrib.
5/22	Greenhaven C/F	Stormville N.Y.	400	Straight From The Ghetto	1	350	200.00
5/29	Napanoch		500	"	1	450	
5/31	Auburn C/F		400	"	2	700	
9/1	NYS Off. Bldg.	NYC (outside)		"	1	275	
8/21	Echo Park	Bronx, NY (outside)		"	1	400	
8/76	Park	Staten Island (outside)		"	1	250	
8/76	Caribe Village	Bronx, N.Y. (outside)		"	1	250	
10/23	Fulton C/F	Bronx, N.Y.	250	"	1	200	
12/6	Billy's Place	NYC	500	"	1	125	25.00
9/19	Brownsville Y.W.C.A.	Bklyn, NY	500	The Dolls	1	400	50.00

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY/STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME \$ *contrib.
1977							
1/10-20	Theatre For the New City	N.Y.C.	200	Straight From The Ghetto Clara's Ole Man		1,200	345.17
2/17-3/13	Theatre/Riverside	N.Y.C.	250	Festival	25	3,000	2,700.00
4/17	Community Action Agency	New Rochelle, N.Y.	150	Clara's Ole Man	1	100	100.00
6/19	Bedford Hills C/F Fishkill C/F	Bedford, N.Y. Fishkill, N.Y.	300 200	Straight From The Ghetto "	2 2	500 400	
6/28	Sing Sing C/F	Ossining, N.Y.	400	"	2	700	
6/9-14	New Theatre Fest.		350	"	3	1,400	1,700.00
6/9	Baltimore City Jail	Baltimore, MD	175	"	3	500	
6/4	Elmira C/F	Elmira, NY	200	"	2	450	
6/3	Albion C/F	Albion, NY	200	"	1	275	
6/29	Metropolitan C/F	NYC	200	"	1	300	
6/16	JFK Park Bi-Cent.		1,000 (outside)	Crucifixion	1	1,200	500.00
7/23	American Place Th.	NYC	500	Straight From The Ghetto	1	300	481.00
8/8-10	White Barn Thea.	Westport, CO	600	The Marriage Proposal	3	600	1,000.00
8/23	American Place Th.	N.Y.		Straight From The Ghetto	1	300	481.00
8/13	Channel Two The People	N.Y.C.	n/a	The Marriage Proposal	1	n/a	200.00
8/17	NYSF	NYC	275	The Marriage Proposal	1	275	
8/27	Vacant Lot	Brooklyn, NY	300	Straight From The Ghetto	1	300	
28	"		300	The Marriage Proposal	1	300	
9/3-4	"		300	"	2	600	165.00
10-11	"		300	"	2	600	

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY/STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCE	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME \$ *contrib.
1977							
10/15	New England Thea. Conference	Providence R.I.	800	Looking For Tomorrow	1	800	1,000.00
11/23	Nuyorican Cafe	N.Y.C.	75	The Marriage Proposal	1	75	
11/19	Arthur Kill C/F	Staten Is.	400	The Marriage Proposal	1	400	
12/22	Midday Live Bill Boggs	NYC	n/a	The Marriage Proposal	1	n/a	

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME
1978							\$
2/20	New York Shakespeare Festival	N.Y.C.	275	The Marriage Proposal	1	450	95.00
2/24	Lincoln C/F	N.Y.C.	400	The Marriage Proposal	1	400	
3/4	Taconic C/F	N.Y.	200	The Marriage Proposal	2	300	
5/7	Pace University	N.Y.	600	The Marriage Proposal	1	300	
5/22	Henry Street Settlement	N.Y. C.	200	Looking For Tomorrow	1	200	
8/17	Sing Sing C/F	N.Y.	700	Looking For Tomorrow	1	700	
8/19	Caribe Village	N.Y.	outside	Looking For Tomorrow	1	200	
8/21	Fulton C/F	N.Y.	150	Looking For Tomorrow	1	100	
8/29	Lincoln Center	N.Y.C.	OUTSIDE	Marriage Proposal	1	800	500.00
10/18	Metropolitan C/F	N.Y.C.	200	Marriage Proposal	1	150	
10/21	Community for Latin American Theatre	Boston, Mass.	300	Marriage Proposal	1	175	1,000.00
12/10 & 17	Entermedia	N.Y.C.	1100	Marriage Proposal	2	1000	700.00
12/23	St. Anns Church	N.Y.C.	30	Marriage Proposal	1	30	
7/78	St. James Church	N.Y.C.	100	(John Jay) BeCALMED The Sea of Diplomacy Straight From The Ghetto Looking For Tomorrow Marriage Proposal	1	100	

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME \$
1979							
1/4	Metropolitan C/F	N.Y.C.	200	The Marriage Proposal	1	175	215.00*
4/7	Day Care Council of Westchester White Plains, NY	N.Y.	1000	The Marriage Proposal	1	500	1500.00
4/11	Edco Media/Arts Program Boston,	Mass.	1000	The Marriage Proposal	1	1050	1800.00
5/11	Camp Georgetown	N.Y.		The Marriage Proposal	1	175	
5/12	Camp Pharsalia	N.Y.		The Marriage Proposal	1	100	
5/19	Women In Crisis Sheraton Center	N.Y.C.	300	The Marriage Proposal	1	175	500.00
6/1	Red Cross	N.Y.C.	100	The Marriage Proposal	1	100	570.00
6/7-30	B.T.A. Season	N.Y.C.	100	The Marriage Proposal	5		
				Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy	5		
				Food Glorious Food	5		
				Looking for Tomorrow	5		
				Twelfth Night	5		
7/18	IBA - Boston DCA Boston	Boston	open	The Marriage Proposal	1	200	1,000.00
7/19	Summerthing/DCA	Boston	open	The Marriage Proposal	1	300	1,000.00
7/25	Lincoln Terrace Park/DCA	N.Y.C.	open	The Marriage Proposal	1	175	1,000.00
7/28	Prospect Park DCA	N.Y.C.	400	Twelfth Night	1	400	1,000.00
8/1	Union Square	N.Y.C.	open	The Marriage Proposal	1	250	1,500.00
8/4-5	Pier 84	N.Y.C.	open	Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy	1	200	
				The Marriage Proposal	1	350	
8/10	Bronx Museum	Bronx, NY	100	The Marriage Proposal	1	90	50.00 *In-kind Contribution

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	CITY STATE	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	ACTUAL PROJECTED OR EARNED INCOME
1973							
8/21	Woodbourne C/F	N.Y.S.		The Marriage Proposal	2		
8/25	Lincoln Center	N.Y.C.	400	Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy	1	550	\$ 500.00
8/28	Claremont Park	Bronx		Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy	2		1,000.00
9/1	St. Albans	Queens	open	Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy	2	100	1,000.00

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	SEATING CAPACITY	NAME OF PRODUCTION/ATTRACTION	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
1980				
Jan. 23	NY Urban Coalition Pace University		Straight From The Ghetto	1
Feb. 22	Yardville C/F, N.J.		"	
Mar. 1	Clinton Womans C/F, N.J.		"	
Mar. 13	Nuyorican Poets Cafe		"	1
Mar. 20	Bronx Community College		The Marriage Proposal	
Mar. 22	Jins Facility, Cedar Grove, N.J.		"	
Mar. 24	Essex County Jail		Straight From The Ghetto	2
Mar. 27	Nuyorican Poets Cafe		"	2
Mar. 26	Rikers Island		The Marriage Proposal	1
Apr. 10	Nuyorican Poets Cafe		The Crucifixion	1
Apr. 23	Spofford Juveline Detention		The Marriage Proposal	1
May 1	Fulton Correctional		Straight From The Ghetto	1
May 19/20	Rahway State Prison		"	2
May 21	Essex County College, N.J.		The Crucifixion	1
June 1	All Angels Church		"	1
May 5-30	Festival of Plays in Rep		Marriage Proposal, Ghetto, Come Home to Death, 12th Night, Crucifixion	13
July 7,8 & 9	Black Theatre Alliance		Meditations, Look Not in Anger, Rainy Season, Benpires	12
July 27	Doles Center, Mt. Vernon, NY		Straight From The Ghetto	1
Aug. 3	Harbor Island		The Marriage Proposal	1

DATE	PLACE (HALL)	PRODUCTION/ATTRACTION	PERFORMANCES
Aug. 9	Boston, MA LATF	The Marriage Proposal	1
Aug. 10	"	Straight From The Ghetto	1
June 27	N.Y. University	"	1
Aug. 19	Lincoln Center Out of Doors Festival	The Crucifixion	1

APPENDIX B. SELECTED PROGRAMS, REVIEWS AND
PICTORIAL MATERIALS

1.	SELECTED PROGRAMS AND RELATED REVIEWS.....	233
2.	SELECTED PICTORIAL MATERIALS.....	296



THE FAMILY

presents

NEW YORK, NEW YORK THE BIG APPLE

Directed by

Marvin Felix Camillo

.....

New York, New York the Big Apple
by the Last Poets Cast

Workingman
by Ed Bullins Ben Jefferson and Cast

Catch That on the Corner
by Melvin Van Peebles Steve Law and Cast

Funky Girl on Motherless Broadway
by Melvin Van Peebles Gay Smalls and Cast

Lilly Done the Zampougie
by Melvin Van Peebles Steve Law and Cast

The Illusion, Dream, Improvisation, Death
Inmate's Work Gay Smalls and Cast

Hello World
by Jimmy Beasley Johnny Johnson

Two Lost Boys
by the Last Poets Cast

Jones Comin Down
by the Last Poets Johnny Johnson and Cast

Crucifixion
by James Weldon Jones Kenny Steward, Carlos Melendez and Cast

Put a Curse on You
by Melvin Van Peebles Gay Smalls, Kenny Steward and Cast

Dance and Chant
Inmate's Creation Cast

THE CAST**Ben Jefferson****Johnny Johnson****Gay Smalls****Kenny Steward****Carlos Melendez****Marvin Felix Camillo****Debbie Miller — Singer****Tony DeSantis — Costumes and Lighting****Alex Scott — Stage Manager****Robert Montante — Piano, Drums, Conga****THE FAMILY REPERTORY THEATER****Orlando Aponte****Oscar Bright****Luis Camara****Roger Johnson****Donald Kilgore****Ruben Craig****Raul Martinez****Roberto Perez****Larry McNair****Miguel Perez****Vincent Ramirez****Jose Vasquez****Frederick Roper****George Mendez****Timothy Roper****Jimmy Beasley****Richard Webb****James Medina****Kwame Johnson****Melvin Harris****Willie Jones****Willis Phifer****Alexander Sherrod**

**THE FAMILY WISHES TO ESPECIALLY
THANK THE FOLLOWING**

- Charles Barney American Mime Theatre
- Clay Stevenson Player's Workshop
- Theodore Mann Circle in the Square
- Polly Siwek Council of the Arts in Westchester
- Gray Smith Street Theatre of Westchester
- Mr. and Mrs. Donald Devey Newcoe
- Family Britches of Chappaqua
- Fox Lane Art Department Posters
- John Jay Art Department Graffiti
- Colleen Dewhurst Advisor

COVER DESIGN

Winn Smith

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New York, N. Y. 10027

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Gilbert Price.....Workshop Supervisor
Al Black.....Administrative Assistant
Cwen McNeil.....Bookkeeper
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Don Koehler.....Technical Training Consultant
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Joan Potter.....Colleen Dewhurst.....Roy Pools.....Maria Sobel...
Ossining Street Theatre.....Connie Claytor...Mamaroneck C. A. P...
Westchester Co-op.....Kathy Beale.....Eleanor Wakin.....
Viva La Familia.....Lis Berger

5TH ANNIVERSARY

THE FAMILY

in

STRAIGHT FROM THE GHETTO

by Miquel Pinero, Neal Harris
and The Family

Directed by Marvin Felix Camillo

Al Black, Musical Director

THE EMELIN THEATER
Library Lane
Mamaroneck, New York

8:30 PM

June 23 - 24 - and 25th, 1977

STRAIGHT FROM THE GHETTO

by Miquel Pinero, Neal Harris
and The Family

Directed by Marvin Felix Camillo

Musical Director - Al Black

The Cast

(In Alphabetical Order)

Al Black
Ellen Cleghorne
Roy E. Delemos
Lloyd James Evans
J. J. Johnson
Jose A. Maldonado

William Peartree
Felix Pitre
Brenda Ragland
Raymond Ruiz
Ife' Shipp
Kenny Stewart

Musicians

Al Black
John Campagna
Alphonse Douglass

Norman Marcelle
Mike Martinez
Ralph Scarborough

Keifle Campbell

Stage Manager.....J. J. Johnson
Assistant Stage Manager.....Gerardo Gonzalez
Assistant to the Director.....Mark Low
Administrative Ass't to Director.....Ellen Cleghorne
Vocal Consultant.....Gilbert Price

Apprentices: Lavette Maghee
Vickie Woods
Leona Frances

This production is made possible in part with public funds from
The Council for the Arts in Westchester.

The Family is funded in part with public funds from The New York
State Council on the Arts...The National Endowment for the Arts...
The New York Foundation...The New York City Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council.

Marvin Felix Camillo

AKA "PANCHO"

Artistic Director

THE FAMILY / LA FAMILIA

Working on "The Marriage Proposal" play now is a very rich experience for us in La Familia. It seems as though Chekov wrote this piece just for us.....I love story telling. I come from a town that has the most out-of sight storytellers in the world. In fact, my sister Carmen, who first inspired me toward theatre, after taking me to the circus, could really tell stories, and she married Ollie, an even greater storyteller, and there is the real Juan Francisco Arrufat from Puerto Nuevo, Puerto Rico, who I name the character after in Chekov, these people are story tellers in the greatest Chekovian tradition.

I remember when I first started our workshops in prison, sometimes the guys would start telling stories about how it was, how it should have been, and how it can be, etc., and these were always moving moments for all of us. Much of our work is influenced and developed by the stories inside us.

"Looking for Tomorrow" is the most challenging of all the plays I am directing for "Festival '77." It also has a most unusual experience attached to it. Ringo, the author, is presently confined at the Lincoln Correctional Facility on 110th Street, and the Department of Corrections, and the superintendent of the facility allowed him to come out and work on his play with us, (a first).....I met Ringo in 1973 at The Elmira Prison. He was introduced to us by the same Marilyn Wellington (Elmira Teen Family.) Since that time we have been sharing a very warm artistic friendship, in spite of his concinment.

"Looking for Tomorrow" is a work-in-progress and we are all very excited about working on Ringo's play. Each day there is a new development, a new kind of excitement, and a new breakthrough. We are very fortunate to have such good writers moving into the Family process.

Pancho is the founder and Artistic Director of La Familia.....off spring of Maggie and Felipe Camillo, grew up in Newark, New Jersey.

WHO'S WHO

Lloyd James Evans... Born October 28th... (Scorpio)... Jamaica, West Indies. Father worked in a "Sugar Cane Factory," and Mother worked part-time as a bar maid, and doctors clerk. "At age eleven years, I was without a parent (both were in England), and I was taken to live with this lady (my second mother) who weighs about 300 lbs., and who loves kids..there was about 18 of us living together in the three bedroom house..Chinese, Blacks, Indians.. Every Saturday Morning at 5 a.m., she would awaken me to follow her to the market. We were never hungry, everything we needed was always in the house. If anyone ever leave the house or take anything without permission/don't care how old you were..she would give a few head butts then you'd be thrown to the ground and be sitted on, all three hundred pounds of her...and that's not funny. On Sunday, we had to go to Sunday School and Church. Although none of us were related (except, for one or two,) you could never find a more closely knitted Family. We were taught how to love and in loving, how to share it. "The Marriage Proposal" takes me back home..So welcome aboard this The Family's Fifth Anniversary Celebration...with a special West Indian Flavor.....ENJOY!

Ife' Shipp... "I have travelled from the hills of Westchester.... Bedford Hills Correctional Facility....into The Family for the past five years. I have been mother, sister, counselor, and most of the time....a friend, working with The Family. I've had the opportunity to grow and expand my art. I have also worked as Marvin Felix Camillo's assistant for "Shorteyes", also prop mistress, and sometimes as stage manager. I have worked on television, radio, and have given speeches on the conditions of prison life for women in New York and Philadelphia. I have also worked with the Youth Theatre in Yonkers, N.Y...and have done such shows as "Straight From The Ghetto", "The Sun Always Shines For The Cool", "Shoe Shine Parlor", "Crucifixion", and "Looking For Tomorrow", directed by Marvin Felix Camillo. I am also appearing in "Clara's Ole Man" directed by Bette Howard. When I am not acting, I am an instructor in two centers that participate in our Mobile Drama Workshops....Satellite Academy in The Bronx, and the McDougal Diagnostic Centers for Boys in Brooklyn.....Thank you Pancho, B. Moore, and MAMA.

William Peartree... Born in Thiels, New York. I have just been released from Auburn Correctional Facility after serving four years there, and a total of 5 1/2 years on an eight year term which I had been sentenced to. I was attracted to The Family upon their arrival to Auburn to perform for the inmates. Their talent and acting abilities fascinated me and that is when I had made up my mind that I wanted to be an actor..... 1/19/77 when I became a part of The Family.

Felix Fitre... "Born in Cateno, P.R., raised in Brooklyn, and attended The Performing Arts High School, and Hofstra University, where I received a B. A. in Drama. I was an original member of Vinette Carroll's Urban Arts Corps, where I first met Pancho, whose influence has eventually let to my work in The Family."

WHO'S WHO

J. J. Johnson... "Aiken, South Carolina is where I was born. I lived there for eight years, then my family and me moved to Brooklyn, New York where we've lived ever since with our Pop. Arrested a couple of times in 1970/1972, sentenced to Bedford Hills Prison where I got to know Pancho...saw him work with the inmates...I knew then I wanted to be a part of his message to the people. When I got out of prison, I went to see where he was working...after a letter from Pancho put me right to work on a poem called "Jones Comin Down". Since that time, I founded my own workshop, and was able to introduce several young people into The Family. I am also a part of The Family teaching team and now teach acting in The Family's different centers and Prison Workshops."

Credits: "Straight From The Ghetto"
"Shorteyes"
"Shoeshine Parlor"
"Sun Always Shines for the Cool"

Instructor....The Family Mobile Drama Workshops
New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

"Pancho, J. J.'s working for a saddle, better than the street, Bro."

Al Black....Optician...legal typist...counselor...literary volunteer tutor. "In Auburn Correctional Facility I was employed as a music teacher of basic music theory and the practical application of such to musical instruments. During my stay there, I wrote the musical score for a half hour television program titled "Live in Syracuse" and acted in the capacity of Musical Director and advisor for that program. One year later, I saw The Family perform in Auburn and I immediately fell in love with their concept of theatre and song. I listened very hard to what I was hearing and although it was nice, I felt that there was room to enhance the entire musical ensemble...since coming into The Family, I have become the Musical Director on the artistic end, and Administrative Assistant on the Administrative end, being a musician for many years in many places, I can sincerely say that my experience with The Family is an enriched one, full of new discoveries as each hour passes...working very close with the Artistic Director, Marvin Felix Camillo, (Panchol)...has allowed our combined efforts to result in my writing and arranging music for most of his current productions. The musicians I am working with on this production have also been very perceptive in their interpretations of the work, capturing most of the highlights, flavors, and style. For all of us to come together to make the sounds we make, is to feel a true sense of self-worth and accomplishment."

Mark Low... "I met The Family while working as a usher at the New York Shakespeare Festival Mobile Theatre....while they were doing "Shoe Shine Parlor". I felt urged to do something new, so I join The Family workshop. I stayed with The Family where-upon I participated in Festival '76 at the age of 15, I became Pancho's assistant. I would like to thank Pancho for all the help and encouragement, and professionalism he has given me. I would also like to wish all the members of The Family a happy 5th Anniversary, and good luck in the future."

THE FAMILY

THE FAMILY is a professional repertory group that grew out of a prison, and kept on growing. In 1972 Marvin Felix Camillo (Pancho to his friends) started a theatre workshop in the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County. Soon the members of the workshop began to experience a pride in their talent. They were even more encouraged when the other inmates came to recognize their artistic achievements. Then, what would ordinarily have been a happy event, became a sad one. The first member of the group was about to be released and separated from this new strength in his life.

And this is how The Family was born.

To continue to provide the opportunity for the blossoming of talent inside and outside the prison walls, an interested group of people...including Colleen Dewhurst the actress, and actor Roy Poole, helped to form The Family.

A Family on both sides of the prison walls

In 1973, The Family became a resident company at The Theatre of Riverside Church. Its first major production "Short Eyes" written by Miguel Pinero was picked up by Producer Joseph Papp and has since played at The New York Shakespeare Festival, Zellerbach Theatre in Philadelphia, The Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center in New York, The Hartford Stage Company in Connecticut, and in Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

For "Short Eyes", Miguel Pinero received the Drama Critics Circle Award for the best play of 1973-1974, and the OBIE award for best play. For directing, Marvin Felix Camillo received the Drama Desk Award for best Director 1973-1974, and the OBIE for distinguished directing 1973-1974.

A new kind of freedom for people who are locked up

Through the theatre, people who never dreamed they possessed talent, come to new awareness. And more. They come to believe in a chance for a future. They come to this hope because of the way The Family's program is set up.

It is professional. And it is self-perpetuating.

This means that professional theatre people...actors, directors, writers, technical people...go into prisons. Their students, upon release, join The Family, become instructors themselves, and go back into the workshops, now in the role of paid professionals.

Programs of The Family

Productions: The Family performs in theatres, prisons, colleges, high schools, family centres, and other institutions. They also tour all areas of the State.

Training Programs

- . Workshops for all members in acting, dramatic improvisation, voice and diction, American mime and production (directing, stage management, lighting, sound, and set design).
- . Technical training workshops for recently released men and women.
- . citywide Mobile Drama Workshops in 10 centers.

THE FAMILYTraining Programs

. Theatre administration training programs for ex-offenders and others.

The Family and teenagers

The Family is a concept that can inspire any age group. It happened in Elmira, New York, an isolated prison town of lower income families. Young people saw a Family production and were turned on to the theatre. With Pancho's help, funding came from The New York State Council of the Arts. Now, The Elmira Teen Family performs for general audiences and correctional facilities throughout the State.

The Theatre instead of the street, instead of drugs, instead of emptiness, instead of hopelessness.

THE FAMILY - LA FAMILIA is the theatre. It is the chance for individuals who might never have had the opportunity to develop in creative areas. It is a chance to work, to have pride, employment, respect, dignity, communication and expression in art.
 It is light instead of dark.
 Growth instead of recidivism.
 Friends instead of strangers.
 A step forward instead of a slide backward.
 Hope for the future instead of despair of the present.

THE FAMILY - LA FAMILIA is love of theatre. And more. It is love of people.

THE FAMILY wants to survive, to overcome the odds, to keep bringing good theatre, enlightenment, and hope....hope....hope
 Please support our efforts by completing the coupon below, we need your help.

 Yes, I would like to help The Family
 Enclosed please find my contribution of
 \$5 ___ \$10 ___ \$25 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$ _____

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____

(All contributions are tax-deductible)

WHO'S WHO

Kenny Stewart: A founding member of The Family. Actor...Musician.. Carpenter...Electrician. Kenny is a very vital part of The Family, and has assisted in the growth of the organization. He has appeared in the stage and screen versions of the award winning play "Shorteyes" and many of The Family's earlier productions.

Ellen Cleghorne..."I have been an active member of The Family for almost a year. Through my affiliation with Marvin Felix Camillo and Bette Howard, I have been able to grow mentally and within the last year I have been involved technically, musically, and theatrically with five productions. Bette and Marvin have helped me to grow. Now I am teaching drama for The Family, and I am hoping to share some of the love and experiences I have acquired. It's the love, It's the oneness, It's the unity, It's The Family...Viva La Familia."

Alphonso Douglass....Born in New York City, my existence was confined within the concentration camp known as Harlem. My identification symbols for success were those of the pimp, dope dealer, number kid, etc. Unfortunately the avenue of my choice led to the revolving door known as New York City's Criminal Justice System...nine years of my life was spent in and out of N.Y. state correctional facilities.... but while incarcerated I became involved with music, and acting...the instrument of my choice was drums, at present I am playing Timbales and my ambition is to eventually become involved in acting. I first became involved with The Family as a guest playing drums in 1976...I was so impressed by the enthusiasm generated by this group, that I felt compelled to become a part of this progressive force. Since becoming a member of The Family I've found a constructive way to channel my energies so that perhaps one day soon the world will know my existence as a chartered member of The Family.

Gerardo Gonzales...Born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico came to New York in 1957 to experience all those oppressions laid upon you, When you are a poor Rican. Spent over 10 years of my life behind bars, always striving for a way to be a part of a struggle for change; a better new and ideal way of life. In 1972 while serving a year prison term in sing sing I met Pancho who assisted Clay Stevenson workshop there. In which I was very proud to be a part of. From that point on, I started to educate myself and take a whole different outlook on life politically and otherwise. La Familia has been the most beautiful experience in my life....it has helped rebuilt my own family, which was scattered for so long...It has educated my parents in taking a new look on life, and partaking in the extension of my life.... Dona Provi "my mother" is well known by all in The Family for her kindness and understanding towards ex inmates...and people in general. A very humble lady who has influenced her sons...daughters...and in-laws and the entire family in partaking in the extensions of life which La Familia has to offer.

WHO'S WHO

Jose A. Maldonado... I wish you a very Happy Fifth Birthday. This is my third year with The Family, also my third year with Mickey, the mama of New Life. Gracia a todos en La Familia, particularmente, a Pancho.

Roy Delemos... Sagittarius... Actor... Stage Manager... Film Maker, joined The Family in the Fall of 1975. He was immediately put to work as stage manager for productions in preparation for The Family's 1975 Repertory Festival. Roy hails from St. Croix, U. S. Virgin Islands, and is a 1977 speech and theatre graduate of Lehman College.

Credits: Stage Manager: "One Last Look" "Street Sounds" - "The Dolls" "Clara's Ole Man"
Assistant Stage Manager: "Crucifixion" "Shoeshine Parlor"
Actor: "Ghetto" - "Clara's Ole Man" - "Crucifixion."

Brenda Ragland... My first experience with The Family all began when there were only men from Taconic Correctional Facility, came to Bedford Hills Correctional where I was residing, did a performance for the women. I enjoyed myself and as I watched them perform, I said to myself, "If they can do it, I can too." As a child, I always wanted to become an entertainer or an actress. After the performance, I joined the workshop and with my talent, I was more than glad to start putting it to use. The second time The Family performed for the women, I was asked to perform with them, I was so thrilled.... I wanted to give all I had, and I did. I was so overwhelmed that I was asked to perform, that I forgot where I was, it was a hard pill to swallow but I had to make a decision as to what I was going to with my talents. With Gwynne Tomlan, the workshop directors assistance, I became a part of The Family. On August 17, 1973, I was released from Bedford Hill, and The Family, along with Marvin Felix Camillo, Miguel Pinero, Kenny Steward, Ben Jefferson, met me at the gate with.... Champagne and Flowers. I have traveled several places with them. I've also earned my way to teach a drama workshop at Fulton Correctional Facility in the Bronx, along with Clay Stevenson. I've performed with The Family in "Straight From The Ghetto" first came out, and "The Crucifixion".... that particular play, really brought out things in me. Now, I'm studying a part in "Looking for Tomorrow."

Gilbert Price... Was born in Harlem Hospital and raised in Brooklyn. Gilbert Price has been through an extensive show biz career thus far, he has worked his way up through chorus work to becoming a lead soloist in T. V., B'way musicals, club work around the U.S. and Australia. He was nominated twice for the highest theatre award "The Tony." He now is in full force working capacity with The Family. I am very proud to be a member of an important and fast rising repertory company. I feel that The Family of man, the world, needs "La Familia" and it's work as much as The Family needs the world. His motto for the success of the family of man is "togetherness."

Raymond Ruiz....I have been with The Family since the summer of '75, and have been in such productions as "Straight From The Ghetto," "Crucifixion" "Got a piece of the Action" "Shoeshine Parlor" and "The Sun Always Shines for the Cool." The Family prison tour, and the TNT Festival in Baltimore. I am also an Assistant Instructor for the CJCC Mobile Drama Workshops, and was in the first Family Festival, and now in the second. I would like to thank Marvin and Bette, and most of The Family members for helping me to grow and keep growing. Viva La Familia.

Keifle Campbell...Worked with The West Company in Washington D. C. in 1973 and 1974. Also has done some directing with The Hybiscus Theatre Company. He is a costumer and has also worked on props...mainlining in steel drums...worked with Scott Kennedy at the Brooklyn College Theatre Workshop.

Mike Martinez...Musician, is a member of The Family's CJCC Mobile Drama Workshop at Satellite Academy in Jamaica, Long Island, N.Y. Though Mike has participated in some theatre,...he will be making his professional debut in "Straight From The Ghetto." Mike will also be graduating from Satellite Academy on June 24, 1977.

Ralph Scarborough...A member and musician with "The Elmira Teen Family," making his professional debut in "Straight From The Ghetto." Ralph feels this is a wonderful and exciting venture, and looks forward to continued involvement in the world of theatre.....

Lavette Maghee
Vickie Woods

Leona Frances.....are all members of The Family's Mobile Drama Workshop at the New York Foundling Hospital. This workshop is one of ten funded through The Mayor's New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. J. J. Johnson, and Brenda Ragland are the instructor and assistant instructor at this site.

THE FAMILYFUTURE ENGAGEMENTS

Tuesday.....June 28, 1977.....8:30 p.m. Admission \$5.00
The Black Theatre Alliance Festival '77
Harlem Performance Center
137th Street and 7th Avenue

"The Marriage Proposal"
By Anton Chekov
Adapted and Directed by Marvin Felix Camillo
Original Music conducted by Al Black

Friday.....Saturday.....Sunday
July 8, 9, 10, 1977 8:00 p.m.
The White Barn
Westport, Connecticut

"The Marriage Proposal"
By Anton Chekov
Adapted and Directed by Marvin Felix Camillo
Original Music Conducted by Al Black

For additional information, please phone the Family Office
212-666-4900/4901

Stage: 'The Ghetto' Straight and Plain

By MEL GUSSOW

THE STAGE at the Theater for the New City is covered with graffiti—epithets and exhortations such as "Free South Africa and the South Bronx." Members of The Family, that valuable theater composed largely of former inmates, warm up with calisthenics. Then they form a huddle around Marvin Felix Camillo, their director and "father." Mr. Camillo explains to the audience that this is the fifth anniversary of the group and that the show that we are about to see, "Straight from the Ghetto," was the first piece that The Family performed "for the outside world."

"Straight from the Ghetto," a collage of sketches, poems, songs and monologs, written by Neil Harris, Miguel Pinero and The Family itself, has grown organically, taking its shape from its performers. They are its life. This is very much a performance piece. Unpretentious and provocative, it is an authentic stretch of street theater, filled with the pungency and the urgency of New York's pavement.

The form is simple. A subject or theme—barber shops, the Apollo Theater, funeral parlors, salsa, death on the rooftops—is introduced and the actors play it as if it were an improvisational score, using themselves as instruments. They sing and dance and they mime in their own street style—eating rice and beans, taking drugs, turning a man upside down and strumming him as if he were a bass fiddle. A four-piece band provides a tuneful background and, occasionally, the musicians join the free-for-all on stage.

"Straight from the Ghetto" wears its embers lightly. J. J. Johnson, who was El Raheem in "Short Eyes,"



Marvin Felix Camillo, director
He turns ex-offenders into actors

Theater of the Street

STRAIGHT FROM THE GHETTO, conceived and directed by Marvin Felix Camillo, written by Neil Harris. About 200 of the Family, stage manager, Christopher Curtis, Theater for the New City, George Baranoff and Crystal Field, present The Family, Reentry, Ensemble. At 113 Jane Street.

Al Black	Joe Maldonado
Ellen Cleghorne	J. J. Johnson
Kenny Cleghorne	Solis Piere
Roy Delmon	Raymond Ruiz
Luise Evans	He Shiao
Maria-Lu Lundy	Marvin Warrell
Musicians: Al Black, Felian Torres, Norman Warrell and G. T. Senhaon.	

gently needles the customers in the front row. José Maldonado plays a frazzled building superintendent beset with offending house pets.

He Shipp does a grand impersonation of "Black Woman with a Blonde Wig On." This is a poem written—and first dramatized—by Mr. Pinero when he was in prison. (Earlier this week, Mr. Pinero was indicted on a robbery charge.) It is a rollicking, impudent spoof about the foolishness of role models. The Family turns into a commentary on television commercialism. In common with the show itself, the scene is caustic and funky.

The evening ends with the actors sprinting in a circle while singing a breathless song about running. The running itself becomes its own breezy choreography. There is no artifice in their show. It entertains and it delivers a pertinent message—straight from the ghetto.

Though "Straight from the Ghetto" was the first creation of The Family—in previous versions it has been seen in prisons and churches as well as theaters—it was Miguel Pinero's "Short Eyes" that brought the group into prominence. During his visits to Sing Sing for theater workshops, Mr. Camillo discovered Mr. Pinero, and after the writer's release, he staged "Short Eyes" at the Theater of the Riverside Church and later for the New York Shakespeare Festival.

Since then Mr. Camillo, who is nicknamed Pancho by his followers, has continued to carry on the spirit of The Family. The group has grown to 150 members and he gets letters from interested inmates around the country. As director and teacher, he has turned ex-offenders into actors. Some of them now teach acting in such places as drug addiction centers and homes for unwed mothers.

"When the family started," says Mr. Camillo, "we had nothing." The group developed its own natural style of performance. "They have no theatrical habits that they have to break." In some cases, "the first play that they are in is the first play that they've seen." As performers they draw from their own experiences. "Rather than removing their life from the theater, they put it in."

PRESENTING
"STRAIGHT FROM
GHETTO"

by Miguel Pinero &

Neil Harris

Conceived & DIRECTED
Marvin "PANCHO"
Felix Camillo

CAST:

John Alam
Ellen Leslie Cleghorne
Verna Hampton
J.J. Johnson
Gloria Perez
Iman Abdul-Rahim
Rick Reid
Pedro Santana

MUSICIANS:

John Davis
Ricardo Gonzalez
Chino Cruz de Jesus
Rector Mercado
Albert Miller
Mitchell Porter
Raymond Rodriguez
Elfin Vogel

Production Staff:
Company Manager,
Rick Reid

Production Manager
Marvin Brown

Asst. Stage Manager
Craig Tankard

Technical Asst.
Iman Abdul-Rahim
Technical Asst.
John Shamsul Alam

Set Design
Abdul Rahman
Consultants: (technical)
set design: David Mitchell
Construction: Victor
Yerdejo

Lighting Design: Spencer
Moss

Technical: Don Koehler
Music in N.Y.: Raymond
Rodriguez
Dramaturg: Steve Hart
Teaching Staff:

Acting / Raul Julia
Scene Study/Billy
Garden
Voice/Gilbert Price
Voice & Diction/
Robbie McCauley
Dance/Dierdre Laughton

THE FAMILY INC.
410 W. 42nd St.
New York, N.Y.
10036
(212) 947-7171

THE FAMILY

GOALS

To bring theater productions to correctional facilities, community arts centers, and other facilities in the inner city, as well as to theaters, colleges and schools.

To develop training methods and mount productions that relate directly to the disadvantaged providing positive alternatives to drugs and crime.

To facilitate the re-entry of ex-offenders into society by providing opportunities for involvement in theater both as actor and instructor, coupled with personal and job counselling. Training and experience in stage management, lighting and set design and theater company administration and teaching are also offered.

To offer an educational program in all aspects of theater arts through workshops for people currently participating in therapeutic and rehabilitation programs and in correctional facilities.

BACKGROUND

The Family was created in 1972 because of the need of inmates participating in theater workshops conducted by Marvin Felix Camillo at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County to continue their involvement in the theater after their release. Since then, The Family has grown to encompass a variety of programs serving inmates who are incarcerated, former inmates, persons who have had difficulty with drugs, juvenile delinquents and the general community. The Family is located at St. James Church, where it maintains its offices and where central workshops are offered. The group is partially supported thru public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Additional support from foundations, corporations and individual contributors supplements performance fees.

ACTIVITIES

THE REPERTORY COMPANY

The nucleus of The Family is the repertory company. The repertory company performs plays for a wide range of audiences. In the past year, more than seventy performances of five different plays were presented at correctional facilities throughout New York City and State, at colleges and universities, public schools, rehabilitation and community centers and at outdoor festivals in New York City and other cities in the North East.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Drama workshops are conducted at several sites in New York City and State and at other arts centers in the North East. These sites include prisons, rehabilitation centers and alternative schools. The Family conducts short term workshops in acting and technical aspects of the theater to include stage management, choreography, set and stage design and administration and teaching. Over 300 persons attend these workshops each year.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive counselling services are provided on an on-going basis. Referral to jobs, education and housing are made.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In our first six years we have:

Performed 12 plays more than 1,000 times at theaters and festivals throughout New York State, New England and Europe.

Developed seven new plays to include Short Eyes and Looking For Tomorrow.

Provided instruction for more than 500 inmates.

Trained 500 actors and theater technicians.

Helped 100 people move on to further their education.

Referred 300 people for jobs.

Toured ten to twelve prisons each year, State and Citywide.

Received awards for our original plays and for our work in the community and in correctional facilities including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Short Eyes.

Conducted workshops and seminars in high schools, prisons, colleges, churches and other institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSGovernment Grants

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 The National Endowment for the Arts
 New York State Council on the Arts
 New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

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 The Beards Fund

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St. James Church, Rev. Hays Rockwell
 All Angles Church, Rev. Carol Ancerson
 The Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center
 EDCO- Boston Mass.
 Pan Carribian Information Center
 American Mime Theatre
 Arts and Business Council
 Business Committee for the Arts
 Caribe Village
 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
 Episcopal Actors Guild
 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival
 New York State Department of Corrections
 New York Urban Coalition
 Prison Task Force of the Riverside Church
 St. Ann's Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.
 St. Lukes Luthern Chruch, N.Y.C.
 New York Shakespere Festival
 Volunteer Urban Consulting Group
 Black Theatre Alliance

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 Gilbert Price...Niomani Nutima, Black Theatre Alliance...Raul Julia
 Ed Bullins...Bernice Johnson, Dayton Street School...Charles Barney,
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 N.J.....Jenny Brown, Director New Jersey Corrections

A MESSAGE FROM Ellen Leslye Cleghorne, Acting Project Administrator
THE FAMILY INC. IN NEW JERSEY

My brother Rodney introduced me to The Family. I went to a performance later to a workshop. I noticed I liked it 'cause even when I was sick I went to the workshop. Then the workshop did a performance. ...I played clave for "Crucifixion" - Went to a meeting where committees were formed - I wanted to be on the Prison Tour and Prison Correspondance committies. To make along story longer, Fate and mi Pancho took over. Pancho had alot of Patience with me and the members of the company became my Family, my best friends. Believe it I chilled out alot! - I'm now coördinating the New Jersey Prison Tour and workshops and it feels good to be able to look back at what happened; the good and the bad - and see where I am now. Hoy, we reherased "Straight from the Ghetto" and some of the workshop students were there and It reminded me of when I was in the workshops and would stay to watch the repertory rehearse "Straight From the Ghetto". The play has changed; evolved, and also there's a new workshop generation they'll soon be in the repertory if they stick with it & be recognized for their talents and perseverance; by their piers and the world.

If you'd like to know more about The Family, be placed on our mailing list, enroll in our workshop program or would like to correspond with us - complete the below form detach and mail to: The Family, Inc 410 West 42nd Street, N.Y.C. 10036

WE'D LIKE TO KNOW HOW YOU LIKED THE SHOW!

THE FAMILY, INC
IN NEW JERSEY

Name _____

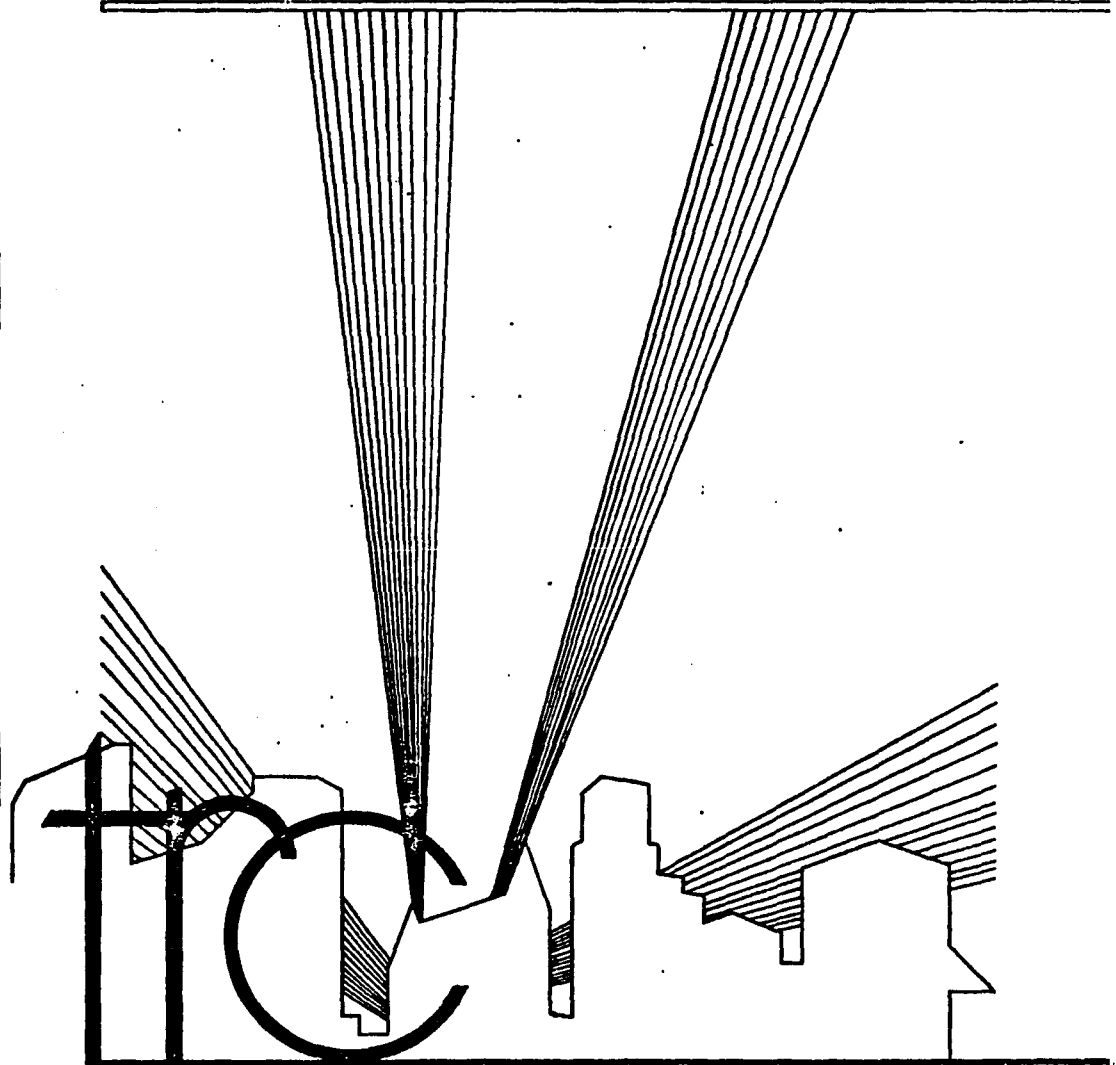
Other Information (# etc.) _____

ADDRESS _____

(circle): a. please send me more information b. add my name to your mailing list c. I would like to correspond d. I am interested in The Family workshops

Comments: _____

PREMIERE SEASON 1973-1974



theatre of the riverside church • 120th street and riverside drive

TRC'S PERFORMING COOPERATIVE

presents the World Premiere of

MIGUEL PIÑERO'S

new play

SHORT EYES

The Killing of a Sex Offender by the Inmates of the
House of Detention Awaiting Trial

directed by

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO

with

(in alphabetical order)

**BIMBO
WILLIAM CARDIN
ROBERT MAROFF**

**ANDREW BUTLER
BEN JEFFERSON
KENNY STEWARD
H. RICHARD YOUNG**

**JOSEPH CARBERRY
JOHNNY JOHNSON
FELIPE TORRES**

Featuring "The Family"

scenic design by
LEE A. GOLDMAN

lighting by
ALAN M. BECK

general manager
REBECCA ALLARD

sound by
THOMAS MARK EDLUN

produced by
ARTHUR BARTOW

costumes by
PAMELA DENDY

production stage manager
DENISE KASELL

technical prod. supervisor
WILLIAM HIGGINS

**TRC's PERFORMING COOPERATIVE made possible, in part, by grants from the
New York State Council on the Arts and the New York Foundation**

CAST
(in alphabetical order)

BIMBO Juan Otero
 ANDREW BUTLER Julio "Cupcakes" Mercado
 JOSEPH CARBERRY Charlie "Longshoe" Murphy
 *WILLIAM CARDIN Clark Davis
 BEN JEFFERSON John "Ice" Wicker
 JOHNNY JOHNSON William "El Raheem" Johnson
 ROBERT MAROFF Mr. Fredrick Nett
 KENNY STEWARD Omar Blinker
 FELIPE TORRES Paco Pasqual
 H. RICHARD YOUNG Captain Allard
 MAURICE WOODS General Understudy

The play takes place in the Dayroom on one of the floors
 in the House of Detention

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERMISSION

Following this performance there will be a discussion
 of the play in the theatre

TRC Staff

Administrative Director Arthur Bartow
 Technical Director Lee A. Goldman
 General Press Representative Allan Eichler
 Special Projects Coordinator Alan M. Beck
 Administrative Assistant Rebecca Allard
 Director of Third World Projects Miguel Pinero
 Ticket Sales Gloria Castleberry, Lois Thomas
 Costume Consultant Pamela Dendy
 Master Carpenter William Higgins
 Assistant Carpenter Christopher Albrecht
 Assistant Stage Manager Al Miller
 Technical Assistant Denise Kasell
 Coordinator for "The Family" Susan Walsh
 Advertising Krone-Olim Advertising Agency
 Attorney Donald Farber
 Photographers Doug Magee, Mark Sick

Costumes for all performances cleaned courtesy of Bon Cleaners; special thanks to Al Castro, Dir. of Public Affairs, Dept. of Correction; the Rev. Robert Polk, Marilyn Percy, Fredrick Vogel, Colin Morgan-Prison Task Force of Riverside Church, Estelle Kelsey, Janet Studholme, Bill Castleberry, Edna Mae Stark, Doris Smith, Robert French, Louis Peteli, Jim Henderson, Fran Lachman, and the Committee for "The Family."

*Appearing through courtesy of Actors' Equity.

three of us, and one dude had a pair of new shoes. We had said, "Don't wear those shoes—you know you just stole them last night." When we were busted the police saw he had just stolen the shoes and they charged us with all the known and unknown burglaries in the precinct. I was sent to Otisville, in Orange County. I stayed 12 months, and got out in 1959, when I was 16.

When I got out of Otisville I started messing with stuff. I continued hustling—never thought about doing anything else. There was nothing else to do—I had never worked. Then I got strung out and had to hustle harder. In January, 1960, I got busted for armed robbery. I laid in the Brooklyn House of Detention 40 days. I beat it at the hearing—no evidence.

I had several other arrests for burglaries and robberies between February and August of 1960. In August I took a burglary beef, stayed in jail 60 days, and was put on probation. I got busted in January, 1961, for armed robbery. I was sentenced to three years, and sent to Elmira Reception Center and then Great Meadows Correctional Facility in Comstock, New York. I was paroled in 1962. I had written about 1,000 letters from prison asking for jobs, but couldn't get one even though I'd completed my apprenticeship in sheet metal.

I stayed in the street six months, working in the garment center. Then I hung it up and stopped reporting to my parole officer. I was strung out and couldn't work. Then I got busted for petty larceny—I had boosted a hi-fi out of a car and got 90 days on Rikers Island.

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I was released from Comstock in May, 1964, came home, and started running around again. I was busted in October with a set of works. I spent two weeks in the joint but beat it. I got busted again in January, 1965, for boosting in Alexander's in the Bronx. I maintained my innocence and got six months on Rikers Island.

I left Rikers in May and was on the street for 40 days when I got busted for armed robbery. It was a meatball beef—not enough evidence. I spent seven months in Brooklyn House of Detention and the Tombs then got fed up with laying there and copped out to attempted grand larceny. I did 20 months on Rikers and was paroled in August,

1967. I finished my parole on the street, working for the glazier's union. I was a token black in the union, and they would harass us to make us quit. From there I went into the plumber's union, but quit because they wouldn't pay the right salary. I went back to the street and got busted in March, 1969, and given ten months for burglary.

I got home in December and stayed on the street about 30 months. I had gotten married in May, 1968, and had to hustle because I had a wife to support. While I was on the street I took a few meatball beefs, and in May, 1971, I got busted for sale and possession of heroin. I bailed myself out and jumped bail.

Six months later I got busted for a set of works. My warrant fell, and they squashed the works, sale and bail jump and I copped out to possession. I laid 22 days, then they cut me loose to a program, Project Return. I hung it up because it was bull-shit.

In January, 1972, I put myself into Trafalgar Hospital for detoxification. I was tired and fed up. I haven't messed with stuff since then. I wanted it to be successful and it was.

In May, 1972, I got busted for my outstanding 1971 warrant. In May I was sent to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. In November, I saw the theater workshop show. I knew they had the workshop but I had never gone because I thought they were jiving. Then I heard they were going to go across the street to the women's prison. I got down as assistant stage manager and worked in New York, New York the Big Apple, part 2. I took a part in the show. At first I didn't dig it but I took it anyway, then I got more parts. As I got to know Marvin I started to dig him, and we decided we'd try to hook up when we got on the street.

After we hooked up on the street I got more parts in the show. I did Crucifixion, Hello World, Lilly, The Last Poets' New York, New York the Big Apple, and the policeman in Funky Girl with The Family.

I am looking forward to delving further into the art of acting, and hope I am allowed by those who have accomplished their endeavors to accomplish my own.

FELIPE TORRES (Paco Pasqual)

Just a few words to introduce myself. My name is Felipe Torres and I'm very happy to be working with The Family. I was first seen by Camillo in a play which I was in, *The Ode to Charlie Parker*. So I was called for a reading for *Short Eyes* and

WHO'S WHO (in alphabetical order)

BIMBO (Juan Otero)

The concerned shush of a mother
echoing through the walls of my chamber
The soft cry of a child
Are truly great sounds to remember.
Though time will pass
and child will grow
and parents grandchildren will tender
These lovely sounds
I'll carry on until my last November.

Bimbo

ANDREW BUTLER (Julio "Cupcakes" Mercado)

This is the first time I'm in a play that is being done in the streets. All of the times that I've been on a stage have been in prison. I was the Master of Ceremonies for a show that was done and filmed in Sing-Sing Prison. There are many other things, but like I've already stated, all have been done in prisons.

JOSEPH CARBERRY (Charlie "Longshoe" Murphy)

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaker
—Emerson

Thank you: William Esper, Robert Neff Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Carberry, Pat and Sal, Kathleen, Helene and my baby Jacklyn.

WILLIAM CARDEN (Clark Davis)

Studied theatre at Brandeis and worked in Boston before moving to New York where he has studied acting with Wynn Handman. He has played Paul in *Barefoot in the Park*, McCam in *The Birthday Party* and Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* at the Pat Jefferson Summer Playhouse. More recently played Bert in *Memory of Two Mondays* and Scotty in *3 O'Neill Sea Plays* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

BEN JEFFERSON (John "Ice" Wicker)

I was born December 27, 1946 in Newark, New Jersey. I came to New York when I was eight months old and was raised by my aunt. I lived on West 126th Street and went to PS 157. I was

graduated from Junior High School 88.

During that summer I got into trouble with the police department and had to leave New York City. I went to Newark to live with my father but it was not successful for him or myself. I stayed for a year, and went to high school there. Then I came back to live with my aunt and went to Harrin High School. I dropped out in 11th grade. I started selling drugs. I was making a lot of money and didn't think I needed school. I started using drugs and things got to be a little rougher for me, but I was still making more money than the average kid my age.

When I was 20 I got busted for possession. I stayed in jail, two days, made the \$500 bail, then jumped bail. I didn't get busted again until I was 24, although I was still doing the same things. Then I got busted for a direct sale to an officer. They set a high bail but I made it then jumped again.

I continued selling drugs until seven or eight months later when a panic hit the city. There was a shortage of drugs—pushers couldn't get any. I started sticking up and burglarizing houses. I got busted for robbery. No warrant fell and my aunt got me out on bail. Then I jumped again.

I had been in jail about a week. When I came out my connection had gotten some dope. I was one of the few who got some. I was making a lot of money. I bought a car and was getting ready to buy a house.

Then I got busted again for possession, and all my warrants fell. I was offered seven years on each case and there were six cases. I hired two lawyers and they got all the cases thrown together. I was given a year for possession. I was sent to Bedford Hills. It was the first time I had done any time, and it scared the shit out of me . . . never again.

When the theater workshop put on their first show at Bedford my friend was the drummer. He kept telling me to come down but I thought it was a lot of bullshit. When I saw the first show I was really overwhelmed with what I saw. When I heard they were going to perform across the street in the women's prison I tried out for stage manager, but Kenny Steward beat me out. I said I'd do anything to get across the street and see those girls. Finally I got a part in the show.

After being involved in the workshop and meeting

Marvin I saw how much closeness those people had. There were not too many things people could do at Bedford. The workshop was a way for me to escape for awhile. When I finally did get to do a show it was one of the greatest moments of my life. It wasn't a big part or anything but it was a big part of my life. For a few minutes I forgot I was inside the penitentiary.

Marvin took my name and address and when I came home from Bedford there was a letter waiting for me. I got out on a Thursday, and on Sunday I came to the first meeting of The Family.

And now I find myself very much in love with the theater and with acting and I think this is what I really want to do. And even though the money is not satisfactory, I am happy and satisfied with what I'm doing and the people that I'm with.

JOHNNY JOHNSON (William "El Raheem" Johnson)

Before I went to prison to remain for one year, I was a drug "pusher." Plus I was doing very well as far as money problems went—I didn't have any. I was using and pushing drugs for a period of seven years. Day in and day out without ever letting up until I had what is called a dealer's habit, but I always did my best to control this habit. Something that all of my so called street friends said couldn't be controlled which I feel that I control fairly well. This gave me confidence in myself because I proved to myself that I could do anything I put my mind to. But the drugs seemed to destroy my money and most of all my body. And so I went to jail in 1972 of June 2 at the age of 21-years-old. I decided now it's time to get my head together and so I drilled it into my head that drugs were not for me so I knew I had to believe it and prove it to myself so I did.

So I sat back while I was in jail and asked myself what have I ever completed in my life and I couldn't find anything. So I got involved in stage work with the lights and I really enjoyed working with the fellows on stage and I knew I would love expressing myself in this way and from what I have learned in the streets. I'm going to put it on stage and make it work for me. Because if a man can sell drugs in the city, he's doing nothing but acting the way I see it. If it could work in the streets I'm sure it will work on stage. To me this is my way. It's all the same!!!

ROBERT MAROFF (Mr. Fredrick Nett)

My background is mainly centered around films

including appearances in *Crazy Joe*, *Serpico*, *Stone Killer*, *A Fanatic Called Joe*, *Pot Luck*, *Education of Sonny Carson*, *Super Cop*. I was an ex-truck driver, teamster, former hacky and now I have joined the theatre and am an actor.

KENNY STEWARD (Omar Blinker)

I was born in New York City in 1941, Feb. 4. I went to PS 157 on 126th Street. We moved, and I transferred to PS 90 on 148th Street. I was kicked out of PS 90 in fourth grade for assaulting a teacher. She was one of those teachers nobody got along with and she stroked me the wrong way. I was sent to PS 614, a school for boys who didn't get along in regular coed public schools.

My first year at PS 614 I stayed out most of the time. I went hustling—stealing, burglarizing, shop-lifting, a few robberies. There was always somebody to do these things with in my neighborhood. I was about 12 years old.

In school we weren't allowed to carry more than ten cents. We were lined up and searched every morning. There was never any explanation—it was probably for weapons. If you were late or absent, they beat you up when you did come back. One day I came to school with a friend. We were late and went up to our class, but they called us downstairs. They had some dudes lined up—they were beating them with sticks and with their hands. We dug what was happening, left school, and never came back.

In the summer of 1957 I got busted for robbing parking meters. I was put in the youth house on 12th Street. For three months I went back and forth to court. My mother told them I would go back to school so they let me go. I wouldn't go back to the same school so I started playing hookey again. I was stealing and robbing, drinking and smoking reefers.

I got busted in November, 1957 for robbery and assault. I went to Warwick, an upstate youth detention center. I was there for ten months, came home in 1958. I stayed in the street about three months. I was supposed to be going to George Washington High School but I didn't go and my probation officer couldn't find me. My family thought I was going to school. I used to make up my own lessons, and I picked up the mail every morning.

In three months I did 25 to 30 burglaries. We were professionals—we would take off three or four stores downtown and then run uptown. The police couldn't catch us. When we were busted there were

three of us, and one dude had a pair of new shoes. We had said, "Don't wear those shoes—you know you just stole them last night." When we were busted the police saw he had just stolen the shoes and they charged us with all the known and unknown burglaries in the precinct. I was sent to Otisville, in Orange County. I stayed 12 months and got out in 1959, when I was 16.

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here I am. I'm also an ex-addict and ex-con, but I don't want to go into my past. What counts is the present and the future.

H. RICHARD YOUNG (Captain Allard)
Worked for years in a stock company in Michigan. His roles included John Proctor in *The Crucible*, Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar Named Desire*, Oscar Madison in *The Odd Couple*, Dr. Winston in *Cactus Flower* and many others. Six months ago he decided to bag it all and head for the big city. Since arriving in New York, he has appeared off-off-Broadway in *Brief Encounter*, *Medea*, and *Deep Method*.

MAURICE WOODS (General Understudy)
A Chicagoan by birth, has studied under such illuminaries as Uta Hagen, Michael Becket and Stephen Strimpell of the famed Herbert Berghof Studios before joining the Negro Ensemble Company in 1972. There he appeared in 3 repertory productions, creating the roles of the priest in *Buy A Little Tenderness*, the junkie in *Galibantín Husband* and Sgt. Bulai in *Crocodiles*. He was then asked to do the role of a policeman in Ossie Davis's movie, *Gordon's War*. He will also be seen in the upcoming TV production of *Legacy of Blood* with Moses Gunn for ABC.

LEE A. GOLDMAN (Scenic Designer) has been Technical Director for TRC for 5 years. Formerly Technical Director for Equity Library Theatre, Teachers College Theatre and The Workshop of The Players' Art. Designed the 300 seat Mansfield Festival Theatre in Mansfield, Pa. and served there as Scenic and Lighting Designer for the '72 summer season. Lighting Designer for *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been* and *White Nights* and Scenic Designer for *Short Eyes*.

ALAN M. BECK (Lighting Designer) has done graduate work in Design at Stanford University, and is currently employed as Community Projects Coordinator and Designer for TRC. He has designed for the Indiana Touring Company, The Centurian Playhouse, the Stanford Repertory Theatre, and has served as Resident Designer for the Burn Brae Musical Theatre. Mr. Beck was the Assistant Designer for *Arturo Ui* at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre and has designed lighting for the Joffrey Ballet. This summer he was the Designer/Technical Director of the Mansfield Festival Theatre at Mansfield, Pa. where he also directed *Angel Street*. Most recently

Mr. Beck designed the set for TRC's production of *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been*.

MIGUEL GOMEZ PIÑERO (Author)
27 yrs.—Sing-Sing ex-inmate—
I was born in a barrel of butcher knives—raised between two 45's—Today—I'm strung out on theatre—mucho thanks to Pancho God—and Adeline Gomez Piñero for my birth—Gurabo, Puerto Rico.

ARTHUR BARTOW (Producer) has for two years been Administrative Director for TRC. Previously, he was an actor for 16 years.

PAMELA DENDY (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for several seasons of Summer Stock and Repertory Theatre, for such companies as the Woodstock Playhouse and Theatre Company-on-the-Hudson, as well as working in television, movies, off-Broadway, including Anthony Perkins' *Steambath* and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, and Broadway on Tom O'Horgan's production of *Inner City*. Ms. Dendy works in restoration at the Fashion Institute of Technology Costume Museum, and at the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute. Previously she designed *Division Street*, *All The Way Home*, and *Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been* for TRC.

THOMAS MARK EDLUN (Sound) has served TRC in several capacities. For *All The Way Home* he composed the sound score and served as sound engineer, in *House of Blue Leaves* he designed the costumes and musical score. Thom made his debut as an opera conductor with *Hansel and Gretel* at the National Conservatory in Saigon in 1970. While in New York, he has had music commissioned by Chimera Foundation for Dance, Hunter College, and several independent film makers. He is presently designing costumes and composing music for Eugenie Leontovitch's production of *Medea*, and has received a commission from the Phyllis Lamhut Dance Co.

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO (Director) has worked on and off Broadway and has toured throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in several productions. He has worked with The American Community Theatre-Maxwell Glanville; Calibar Arts; Spirit House Movers w/Imamu Amer Baraka; P.A.R.T. w/Jay Harnack and Charlie Hull; Teatro della Calle de Newark, and is a member of the Urban Arts Corp. under the direction of Dova Vincette Carroll.

About THE FAMILY

TRC has a repertory company composed of Third World persons, mainly ex-convicts and ex-addicts. THE FAMILY evolved from drama workshops conducted by Marvin Felix Camillo at Bedford Hills and Ossining Correctional Facilities. It is composed of eleven actors and musicians and is designed to continually accept new members from the prison community, as they are released, and from the community at large. Our aim is to present theatrical productions as social, cultural, and educational events in order to facilitate rehabilitation and active participation in community life by providing them with a means of expression as artists. Performances are given in various areas of the community; schools, churches, theatres, and in New York State correctional facilities. For further information regarding THE FAMILY and its performance schedule, contact Susan Walsh at 749-7000, ext. 127.

The Committee for THE FAMILY

JOAN POTTER*Chairperson*
 MARIA SOBEL*Vice-Chairperson*
 ELIZABETH BERGER*Secretary*
 CONNIE CLAYTOR*Treasurer*

WHITE NIGHTS by Wally Harper and Paul Zakrewski. Feb. 5-Feb. 24

A charming and sophisticated musical based on Dostoevski's "White Nights" with a fun-filled curtain raiser based on Mark Twain's "The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton." Group rates and student discounts available—
 Call 864-2929

Life Mixes With Art and We Are Frightened

By WALTER KERR

MAR 11 1974

THE line between life and the theater is a notoriously narrow one; I don't think I have ever seen it crossed so subtly and so frequently, in some ways so frighteningly, as it was at the preview of "Short Eyes" I attended.

First a word about what "Short Eyes" is. Miguel Piñero's quasi-documentary play has its roots in a considerable experience of prisons. The author has served time at Sing Sing, many of his performers first came together as part of a workshop at the men's division of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester. Once freed, and finding theater exhilarating above and beyond mere therapy, the former convicts elected to stay together in an acting ensemble called The Family. Given an extraordinarily sensitive director in Marvin Felix Camillo, and with some professional actors added, The Family's production of "Short Eyes" has now been given house room, immaculately mounted by Joseph Papp, at the Public.

It is no simple slice-of-life but an ambitious construct centered about a single irony. The narrative introduces us, inside a tiled, double-tiered cellblock, to a half-dozen or so richly ribald inmates who are essentially tolerant of one another's aberrations. Homosexual rape is taken for granted, beatings are commonplace, murder is not necessarily out of bounds. But one thing is: Let a man be booked—not convicted, just booked—for child molestation and all camaraderie vanishes.

When a trembling, clean-cut, psychologically naked young man is led into the dayroom, introduced as a pervert who has compulsively pursued little girls, and heard the barred doors slide shut behind him, he is irrevocably marked for death. First he will be spat upon, in time he will be hoisted high in air and then lowered head-first into a toilet bowl. But more is inevitably coming. Among outcasts, there is only one true outcast. The aversion is primal, unquestioned, absolute.

It was about half way through the first act, which I was finding genuinely interesting, that I first became aware of the audience. I don't know precisely why I happened to glance about me at the faces on three sides of the Anspacher Auditorium. Perhaps the young man's monologue—an edgy, run-on catalogue of the little girls he had pursued—had gone on just a shade too long. Perhaps it had become too plainly a monologue, schematically set off against the ram-bunctious choral outbursts of the clan, gratuitously delivered to a listener who would indeed ask "Why are you telling me all this?" before it was done. But I did happen to glance about, and the glance was startling. Approximately half of the audience was deliberately Not Looking.

It was listening, I feel quite sure; I doubt that anyone missed much of the nervous confession. But here were people deep in study of their programs, for undue lengths of time—not bored, avoiding. And here were others perfectly erect in their seats but with eyes turned away from the disclosure on stage. I had the feeling that they would sooner or later turn back, but not until they had suppressed something, come to terms with something. And I suddenly realized that they were—instinctively, unconsciously, in silence—confirming the irony on stage. The convicts' aversion was their aversion, the convicts' exclusion their exclusion.

This sort of thing does not normally happen in the theater. Playgoers normally detach themselves to a considerable degree, formalize what they are looking at—with help from a playwright who is formalizing it for them. They are accustomed to every sort of transgression of taboos, and in fact are—as a rule—scarcely able to take their eyes off vivid demonstrations of the unthinkable. I don't have to tell you that.

Something else was happening here. Instead of responding dramatically to the material set before them, they had been thrown back onto their life-responses; instead of provisionally sharing an emotion on stage in the ordinary way they were testing—may-

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 1)
be attempting to tame—an emotion they would actually have felt, at home. The line had been crossed: Imagination had surrendered to an actual, and disturbing, possibility.

The line was crossed in another way, not long after. As onstage brutality increased, yet another segment of the audience—perhaps a third of it—began literally to scream encouragement, encouragement of the man doing the brutalizing. If an inmate was attempting to rape a boyish newcomer, he was, in effect, cheered on. If a junkie reported that he wasn't on drugs because he was black or the victim of a "personality disorder" but simply because he liked the stuff enormously, he was applauded.

I don't pretend to be able to identify the portion of the audience that was volubly reversing drama's traditional sympathy for the underdog, or for the "hooked." So far as I could tell, it was composed of pretty much the same racial mix—black, white, Puerto Rican—that stirred restlessly about on stage. Conceivably these rooters were simply rooters for The Family, had followed its rough struggle upward; conceivably they were among the once-dispossessed themselves, hard-headed survivors intimate with street-law. Whatever may have prompted their responses, these were once again not dramatic responses as we have known them; they were more nearly acknowledgements that this is The Way It Is for the unlucky, and let every man guard his own groin. The arena was truly an arena, not a showcase.

"Short Eyes," then, is a thoroughly promising piece of work that has not yet freed itself of its initial debt to life, hasn't reshaped events in such a way as to invite objective judgment. It is often close enough to its origins to let several performers work unintelligibly; it is the fact, not quite the form, that counts. It repeats its first-act format in the second: choral group, with magnificently drummed-out salute to a red-jacketed loner who

imagines himself God, followed by soliloquy. The boy's second soliloquy isn't needed; we know him now. And we know that he is to be killed; I found the delay grinding.

At the same time I found much to be admired. Director Camillo has a bold and confident sense of visual design; there is a moment of silence in the half-light, one black guard planted firmly on the catwalk above, boy silhouetted against the frosted glass panes, a lone man eating at the dayroom's only table, that breathes danger in its sheer repose. Ben Jefferson, as a silk-shirted inmate known as "Ice," dances out a near delirium over the likes of Jane Fonda that is liquid ecstasy. William Carden's performance as the shaken target of so much hate, and that of his reluctant listener (the actor's name is simply Binbo), are impeccable.

And Mr. Piñero is a good man with ambiguities when he gets to them. I have mentioned the second act's abrasive repetitiveness; but just when the play seems to have run its course and run down in the process, there is a fresh and tantalizing new puzzle to be explored. Who is honest, and what, in these circumstances, would honesty be? H. Richard Young takes over as a knowledgeable prison inspector to pry into the deed finally done, striking a strange new balance in which lies can be compounded into what may be a harrowing truth. This is playwrighting now: the audience is torn loose from itself and absorbed quite quietly, altogether intently, in the complexity set before it.

At The Other Stage of the Public these nights there is a short, essentially lyrical journey through black streets, black homes (most often middle-class), and black minds called "Les Femmes Noires." The work of a near-poet named Edgar White, it has been beautifully composed in space by Novella Nelson and Otis Sallid, and is evocatively played by an exceptionally handsome company of 18. The vignettes that melt into one another—from high school to subway to a suburban bedroom—are called "studies" in the program, and are exactly that: preparatory sketches for plays yet to be

The Public Theater finally managed, if not to produce, at least to inherit a good play and production from the Theater of the Riverside Church, in the shape of Miguel Piñero's *Short Eyes*. Piñero did time in Sing Sing, and both his knowledge of and sympathy for the prisoners—Anglo-Saxon, Puerto Rican, and black—who cavort, fight, and kill one of their number in this tragicomedy, are real and, at times, irresistibly moving. There are plays—not the greatest, but not the least, either—that move us not so much through their art as through their authenticity and humanity, by laying bare less known and grubby aspects of life with an emotional insight that no merely documentary account can equal. *Short Eyes* is such a play, and you warm to it slowly, but are then lastingly in its grip. It is mostly well performed by a cast largely drawn from prison acting units, the ex-cons proving rather better than the added professionals. Especially persuasive are Ben Jefferson and a young man who calls himself Bimbo. NEW YORK, MAR. 1, 1974

Under Marvin Felix Camillo's brusquely no-nonsense direction, this is a brutal subject examined with one comic and one tragic eye. The end may smack of contrivance. The rest is compelling, revealing, provocative. Which of us hasn't all too often settled for less? ■■

Critic: JOHN SIMON P. 74

NEW YORK, MAR. 25, 1974 OFF BROADWAY
Critic: EDITH OLIVER

THE action of Miguel Piñero's *Short Eyes*, at the Public, takes place in the dayroom of a house of detention. It is a large, bright room, with a urinal against the back wall, a door to a shower upstage left, a card table in one corner, and, above the room, a gallery with cell doors. The characters are prisoners—all but one of them, a fellow named Murphy, black or Puerto Rican—and a few guards. A young white man named Davis is brought in by an angry guard. Davis is charged with the rape of a little girl; in mysterious prison argot, he is a "short eyes." The other men are appalled when they hear the charge, and soon they start to torment him; what they do to him—and, in one instance, for him—is the story of the play. At one point, Davis (William Carden) hysterically pours out a long sexual confession, which may be wholly or partly fantasy—there is no way of knowing. The listener is a steady, not entirely unsympathetic Puerto Rican named Juan, and although his distaste is as great as that of the others (the actor called Bimbo, who plays the role, leaves us in no doubt of his feelings; his wince, his suffering eyes, and the intensity of his silence are more eloquent than words), he tries to protect Davis. Chief among the tormentors is Murphy. The plot is brutal but no more vivid than the life around it, with the men chatting with one another, playing cards or chess, dancing and singing to rhythmic drumming on the table and the floor, their emotions always simmering, and sometimes boiling over into scuffles or fights or an attempt at a homosexual seduction. There is also quite a lot of comedy, my favorite bit being a routine about Jane Fonda, as delivered with a kind of tongue-in-cheek enthusiasm by Ben Jefferson. But the horror of Davis looms over everything. The show has considerable theatrical validity quite apart from what I suppose one could call, under the circumstances, its factual validity. The circumstances are these: The actors of the company describe themselves as *The Family*. Many of them, though not all, have served time at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, where, under the leadership of their director—a professional named Marvin Felix

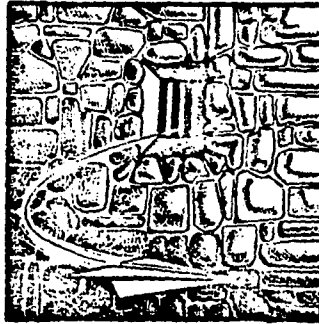
Camillo, who made regular visits to the prison—they took part in a dramatic workshop. As the men were released, one by one, they joined Mr. Camillo and, as a group of amateurs, toured various churches, schools, and colleges in Westchester, and then became a resident company at the Riverside Church in this city. Now, with their appearance at the Public, the ex-convicts of the cast have joined Equity, taking their first step into professionalism; the other members of the cast are already professionals. Everybody does well. The setting is by David Mitchell. 107

NEW YORK, June 16, 1974

Miguel Piñero's prison play, *Short Eyes*, has made it to the Vivian Beaumont, one of our larger and more elegant theaters. I worried about how it would adapt itself to the grand surroundings, but all is well: *Short Eyes* manages to live down that spacious stylishness. It remains effective theater, well put together, tightly acted, and staged with forcefulness and variety by Marvin Felix Camillo in David Mitchell's grimly telling set. I need not rehearse here the already well-known facts about Piñero's criminal youth, his redemption through participation in Camillo's drama workshop at Sing Sing, and his further development by joining The Family, a group of ex-convicts turned into an acting ensemble under Camillo's direction, and constituting most of the present cast.

However, since I wrote my original, rushed and somewhat laconic, review, some noteworthy things have occurred. First, Walter Kerr printed a fascinating notice of the play, in which he graphically conveyed the carryings-on of the opening-night audience at Papp's Public Theater. More about this anon. Then Stanley Kauffmann published a challenging negative review in *The New Republic*, averring that most of this stuff has been told before "on TV, in the press, on film, and in other plays," and that Piñero "hasn't much skill in telling." "There is a strong irony," the critic continued, "but I'm not convinced that he's aware of it." Kauffmann pointed out that when the prisoners forget their racial and personal differences and, with the connivance of a white guard, kill the white man they all hate because he is a "short eyes" (prison slang for a child molester), they assert a badly needed superiority to someone—anyone. "But the inhumanity they then practice toward their 'inferior' is simply an extension of the very inhumanity, the social cruelty, that put them here in the first place. So, fundamentally, they are their own persecutors."

Kauffmann alone perceived this important truth, and he is probably right when he says the author leaves it "muzzy." For Piñero feels obliged to introduce a facile final irony, in which the police captain tells the prisoners that



the dead man was innocent, and so leaves them prey to whatever pangs of conscience they are capable of. Still, we must not minimize Piñero's perception: Juan, the only prisoner who tried to prevent the killing, knows that the short eyes is guilty of some child molesting, even if he is probably innocent of the present charge. Yet Juan keeps silent, most likely because he wants the guilt of murder to have its effect. So Piñero must realize that there are certain things about which convicts can and should feel guilty; we should not blame him overmuch for not having reached, at 27, the deeper insight of an Oscar Wilde in *De Profundis*: "There are many things of which I was convicted that I had not done, but then there are many things of which I was convicted that I had done, and a still greater number of things in my life for which I was not indicted at all." *Page 76*

It is possible, surely, for a work to embody a greater truth than the author himself is aware of. One may then dispute exactly how much credit should go to the playwright; one cannot dispute the pregnancy of the play. Yes, these prisoners commit an act of ultimate swinishness, but are the people in the audience any less swinish? Kerr, in his account of the spectators' behavior, tended to absolve them; I, alas, lack his Christian charity. On two separate occasions, downtown and uptown, I watched an audience composed largely of blacks and Puerto Ricans, but containing also a goodly number of more or less hippified whites, behave with

abominable inhumanity. The fact that they talked or shouted back at the stage (a barbarous habit, admired, oddly, by such different critics as Brustein and Barnes) is merely uncivilized. It does express involvement, but involvement that makes it impossible for others to hear, and for its exhibitor to stop and think, is imbecile, antisocial, and worthless. What truly appalled me, though, was the unbridled ecstasy with which these audiences savored—pealingly laughed, deafeningly cheered and applauded—the victim's being hung head down in a filthy toilet bowl, threatened with sexual assault, brutally hounded and mauled, and finally slaughtered. Similar ovations greeted other homosexual acts, fist fights, and even the least show of violence.

There is no excusing this on grounds of unsophisticated spontaneity, childlike identification, unconventionalized forthrightness. It is, I am afraid, bestiality, and though it may function also as catharsis, there remains the hideous underlying fact that any society that needs that much catharsis, of so gross a kind, can never get enough of it from the theater or other harmless sources, and is in grave trouble indeed.

And there is something else wrong with the play. A recent letter to *The Times*, from Jim Peck, a formerly jailed conscientious objector, objected most conscientiously to the depiction of "prison life as a frenzied interplay of personal conflicts . . . homosexuality and sadism . . . with never a dull moment. Actually, the outstanding characteristic of prison life is its unrelieved monotony, boredom and frustration." And Peck went on to wonder wisely whether this could be conveyed in a play. It is what Wilde described with "time itself does not progress. It revolves. It seems to circle around one centre of pain." In an interview in *The Times*, Piñero made it clear that he was aware of this phenomenon: "I saw all the loneliness there. Guys who didn't know how to read, just passing time, looking at the walls." If he can ever write *that* play, something much harder to do, it will have major dramatic and humane significance. Meanwhile, *Short Eyes* is a worthy preliminary sketch. ■

Critic: JOHN SIMON

DRAMA REVIEWS

Macho Macho Man

By STEVEN HART

THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES FOR THE COOL. AT THE 78th STREET THEATRE LAB, 236 W. 78th ST.

The basic struggle of Miguel Pinero's *The Sun Always Shines For The Cool* is between an impotent, aging pimp, Viejo ("Old man" in English), and a young pimp, Cat Eyes, for control of the old pimp's daughter, Chile Girl. The old man wants to save her from going "the way of all flesh" as he puts it, and the young man wants to "turn her out" as the star attraction in his stable of high class hookers.

Miguel Pinero's great strength is revealing the terror and bravado that lie in the closed societies of crime. In *Short Eyes*, he gave us the soul-numbing world of prison with its violent, bigoted social hierarchy of inmates. *The Sun Always Shines For The Cool* hacks out a chunk of the in-

side world of prostitution, slaps it down in front of us with the entrails showing. The powerful compression of *Short Eyes* is present in the atmosphere of *The Sun Always Shines*, but his characters are trapped in a frustrating state of adolescence. Justice's Bar, where the pimps hang out, is ruled with an iron hand by its owner, Justice, who follows a street-corner code so rigid that it would warm the heart of any neo-fascist. The pimps, or "players," show a prudish obsession with maintaining their brand of macho, sadistic sexuality. The ladies they peddle are dazed to the point of awe by the sexual posturing of their masters.

The play is riddled with petty ego struggles between these men who must constantly proclaim their masculinity with empty threats of violence. Any real fighting is done with one character heavily armed and the other defenseless. The rest

of the time the players satisfy their aimless rage by slapping around their drunk, drugged, hopeless whores. We are to see these men as "cool," when in fact, they are petty criminals enforcing their code through school-yard bullying.

Pinero tries to justify his characters by suggesting, in a long series of monologues, that they were driven to the lives they lead, but these contrived explanations are largely peripheral to his basic dramatic action, producing impatience rather than empathy. In the end, Viejo sacrifices himself to save his daughter, but we have lost interest in the problem after the empty-headed cruelty we have seen in him prior to that moment. It is no surprise that death is the outcome of the play, nor do we care much which man is killed.

Jaime Sanchez's direction lends the play vitality and drive. Seeking to knit together its loose construction, he shifts



Waite, Sanchez, and Pinero at rehearsals

between slow motion and choreographed hysteria to orchestrate the production.

The cast moves well with the play's abrupt mood shifts, but seems to lack control of the discursive sequences where the language is more opaque and protracted than the situation warrants. Izzy Sanabria

is touching and funny as the stuttering barkeep, Lefty G. Gorilla, and Ivette Rodriguez captures the drab used quality of Rosa, one of the numerous ladies for sale.

Galt MacDermot's music for the title song has a promising future, and the costumes, designed by Ticia Blackburn

and conceived by Carrie Koberts, are striking and masterfully executed.

Pinero's rich talent for gripping atmosphere is presented in *The Sun Always Shines For The Cool*, but his play lacks the depth of character and thematic scope of his earlier work.

Broadway Grease and Dreams

BY STEVEN HART

So here we have Joe, played by Harvey Pierce, senior partner and maitre d' of the greasiest spoon on B'way, in the midtown west fifties, and that's pretty greasy. He is an ex-vaudeville man in Miguel Pinero's "Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon", still playing the Great White Way, from behind his formica counter, solidly believing in dreams that could only be conjured from the study of thousands of black and white movies like "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Joe indulges in the jargon of Archie Bunker racism and George M. Cohan chauvinism, but beneath his cliches, Joe is a humanist who inspires a passion for life, however fleeting, even in those who do not share his faith in America and mankind. Against a grimy backdrop of naturalism, Pinero's newest play gives us a look at dreams that are dying, hammering the hackneyed bromides that go with those dreams into poetry. In this way, Pinero forges new meaning into words. Joe, the white man, can call a prosperous westside pimp (Claude Jarmon) a "nigger" because he gave him the start as a child that allowed him to be more than a common garden street hustler. Joe resents that his protegee wasted his talent, hence the epithet. The pimp calls Joe a "nigger" for being dumb enough to believe the myths that keep alive his faith in the USA.

Joe can say lavish things like, "Life leaves no room for celebration" in describing the collapse of his career in show business, not because the line isn't outrageous, but because it is absolutely right for him to say it

and we love him for having the flair to say so. Similarly, a clapped-out actress (Joan Turetsky) can announce that "I have reached the ebb of my tide" and arouse a snicker, followed by the subtle realization

Joe can weep and declare, "... sometimes I feel like a motherless child..." and we are arrested from contempt by the awareness that he has surrounded himself with just such children, giving them his love and



Harvey Pierce and Art Kempf that she is right.

A younger generation of characters—whores, junkies, illegal aliens—flits through the nameless greasy spoon. They have equally breakable dreams set against the cynical movie vision of "Superfly" fleshed out with brassy street glibness. Incredibly,

faith, while able to do little for them. His greatest sorrow, symbolically, is having moved away from his own children who see his dreams of America as senility and threaten to put him in a nursing home.

DIRECTION ON THE MARK

Steve Reed's direction is on the mark. He

has gotten Reagan Cook to build him a joint so crummy that clearly no one but shabby neighborhood regulars would set foot inside. David Belasco would have been green with envy at the neon coffee sign set in a perfectly fly-becrudded window. Reed and his company obviously spent time working out just what drives these fairly common street types and then gave them, with the help of Pinero's play, a special nuance that makes each one glisten.

Both acts are flawed by some speechifying. The pimp, for example, has a tedious harrangue debunking America which could be cut to its key sentence, "Freedom is a whore that opens her legs to the highest bidder." With his maturing sense of structure, Pinero no longer needs these declamatory monologues as he did in "Short Eyes."

"A Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon" is more than his earlier plays. In its final moments, when Joe dies, as we knew he would, in the arms of his frycook friend and partner, he says, "Oh God, Gerry, I can't think of anything famous to say." Their tenderness is overwhelming. Pinero explores and works every time-worn device for arousing emotion. With his special feeling for American urban speech, he mourns a death that gathers significance through the course of the play.

A MIDNIGHT MOON AT THE GREASY SPOON, at the Theatre for the New City, 162 Second Ave., 254-1109.

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Victor	Rick Reid**
Doctor/Man II	Felix Pitre**
Nurse/Woman II	Rhea Ruggiero
Orderly	Raymond Ruiz
Jane Marie	Ellen Cleghorne
Man I	Jarett Smithwick
Woman I	Sheila Davis
Man III/Bum	Alphonso Douglas
Junior	John Alam

PRODUCTION STAFF

Project Coordinator	Rick Reid**
Production Stage Manager	James Wood+
Stage Manager	Marvin Brown+
Assistant Stage Managers	Melanie Hulse+
	Felix Pitre**
	Arsenio Rivera+
	Wesley Sanderson+
	Michael Burgess
Acting Instructor	Raul Julia*
American Mime Instructor	Charles Barney*
Voice Instructor	Gilbert Price*
Voice Production and Diction	Robbie McCauley*
Lighting Design Consultant	Marvin Watkins+
Environment Consultant	John Ranavaro
Costumes Consultant	Vivian Jackson Jones+
Music Composer	Ric Frank
Musicians	Ric Frank
	Shana Sear

ADMINISTRATION

Executive/Artistic Director	Marvin Felix Camillo
Administrator	Frederic W. Good
Administrative Assistant	Migdalia Maldonado
Bookkeeper	Myron Goldstein
Workshop Consultant	Ellen Cleghorne
Special Consultant for The Family	Fred Garrett
Publicist	Faith Geer

This event is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and is partially supported by CETA Title VI funds provided by the Department of Employment of the City of New York. Special thanks to the Black Theatre Alliance.

*Equity members.
+CETA Artists

CAST

JOHN SHAMSUL ALAM . . . A student in The Family's acting class with Raul Julia and a new member of The Family Repertory Ensemble. A graduate of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, and Frederick Douglas Creative Arts. Appeared in show case "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Maracaibo" at the P.R.T.T. Made his debut in "FM Safe" (La Caja De Caudales). Is a playwright with two completed plays Bull Pen and Benpires. He is currently preparing Bull Pen for production, a play that deals with prisoners waiting for court as well as some of his personal experiences in prison.

ELLEN CLEGHORNE . . . Will be appearing in "The Marriage Proposal," "Looking for Tomorrow," "Twelfth Night or What You Will," "Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy" and "Food Glorious Food" (Hunger Project). She has appeared in "Straight From the Chetto," "The Crucifixion," and "Clara's Ole Man." She wishes to extend special thanks to Pancho. Ellen is currently Workshop Consultant for The Family and is a student in various Family Workshops.

SHEILA DAVIS . . . is a gemini. Thank you everyone for sharing the wonderful art of theatre with me. I LOVE IT! Professional credits include television, theatre and night clubs. B.A. degree in theatre. If you need me call 541-7600. Special thanks to B. Cobb, E. Wheeler, Sherry and Len and M. Colby. I love you "audience," you make me what I am. Peace.

ALPHONSO DOUGLAS . . . Born in New York City, my existence was confined within the concentration camp known as Harlem. My identification symbols for success were those of the pimp, dope dealer, numberkid, etc. Unfortunately, the avenue of my choice led to the revolving door known as New York City's Criminal Justice System . . . nine years of my life was spent in and out of New York State's correctional facilities . . . but while incarcerated I became involved with music and acting . . . the instrument of my choice was drums. I first became involved with The Family as a guest playing drums in 1976. I was so impressed by the enthusiasm generated by this group that I felt compelled to become a part of this progressive force. Since becoming a member of The Family, I've found a constructive way to channel my energies so that perhaps one day soon the world will know my existence as a chartered member of The Family.

FELIX PITRE . . . Puerto Rican born and Brooklyn raised, Felix attended Performing Arts High School and received his B.A. in theatre from Hofstra University. He has appeared in commercials, television (currently seen as Hector Ramos in the P.B.S. series Infinity Factory II) and film (Love at First Bite). Felix first met Pancho while touring with Vinnette Carroll's Urban Arts Corps. He has appeared in other Family productions and the 1977 prison tour and has found The Family experience an inspiring, challenging and rewarding one.

RICK REID . . . I began acting around seven years ago and have been with The Family most of my acting career. Marvin and I met each other through an acting experience and later when The Family had been formed that I became part of it. My first Broadway experience was with The Family in "Short Eyes," I understudied the role of Ice and El Raheem. Following these roles I was the poet in "The Shoeshine Parlor" as part of the Summer Shakespeare Festival. I gave up my life in the theatre for almost three years. I recently returned a year ago and began working with The Family. The past year I worked with The Family's City-wide Mobile Drama Workshop as an assistant drama instructor. I'm Company Manager for The Family as well as the Project Coordinator under the CETA program.

RHEA RUGGIERO . . . This is Rhea's first production with The Family and not the last! She's done a lot of O.O. Broadway and commercials. She is better known as Rhea Ragu.

RAYMOND RUIZ . . . I'm from Brooklyn, New York, and I attend John Jay High School. I first met The Family in the summer of 1975, when they were in Prospect Park in Brooklyn the production of The Shoeshine Parlor was being performed. I was really overwhelmed with the style and the work. On the second night of the performance a friend introduced me to Pancho (Marvin Felix Camillo). I started to attend the acting workshop and other workshops that were available. The Family gave me a place to come to and put my thoughts into more positive and creative things. Since then I have worked in almost all the aspects of the theatre. I've become one of the repertory members and also one of the instructors in the different workshops that The Family conducts in different types of institutions and schools. I'm recently conducting a workshop with students from Julia Richman High School's Spark Program. They are also going to be a part of the festival with a workshop piece on Sunday, June 17 at 2:30 p.m. I've been in about eight different plays with The Family and have performed in prison, different types of centers, schools, theatres, churches, parks, street corners, and even in a city lot in Brooklyn where we built an outdoor theatre. In this festival I'll be performing in: The Marriage Proposal, Looking for Tomorrow, and Becalmed on the Sea of Diplomacy (John Jay Workshop). La Familia is learning, counseling, working, experiencing and a dream come true. Que Viva La Familia.

JARETT SMITHWRICK . . . Come to The Family after numerous *Off Off Off* Broadway productions. Ceremonies in *Dark Old Men* at the Hudson Guild Theatre, *Sister Sadie* with the New Dramatists, *Benito Cereno* at the American Place Theatre. Television and Film credits include *The Warriors* (don't blink) and *Watch Your Mouth* for P.B.S. And Happy First Birthday to my nephew, Shawn.

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO (DIRECTOR) . . . This is a very special time for all of us working together on this festival of plays in repertory. As I sit here in the theatre enjoying the experience of talented and energetic people who are part of The Family and its festival, I think about where we came from, where we are, and where we are going. I feel especially encouraged. It has been seven years since The Family began. Commitment to it's continuance is evident. Our repertory concept is growing. Our goal to have an inner city school is near. The dream of having our own theatre is still very real. I want to express my gratitude to the cast members and production staff of this festival, to the Black Theatre Alliance for providing us with this very special space, to our dedicated Board of Directors, to the administrative staff of The Family, and to all the people, foundations, and organizations who support The Family.

RAMON (RINGO) FERNANDEZ (PLAYWRIGHT) . . . I am as old as the sun is young . . . a left handed scorpion man-child . . . I am a writer of sorts . . . a some of the time . . . graffiti student . . . who writes only to express certain sentiments . . . on the significance of being alive and out of jail . . . my thanks to Pancho, my father, Beverly, Denise, and to The Family as a whole.

MARVIN BROWN (STAGE MANAGER) . . . (Actor, Director) Happy to be here. I thank Pancho, Alike and God, because "today is the future and The Family is the answer."

October 9, 1977

Ringo Reyes and Marvin Felix Camillo
c/o The Family, Inc.
239 Front Street
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Marvin Felix Camillo and Ringo Reyes:

The purpose of this letter is to express my feelings and appreciation for your play "Looking For Tomorrow," written by Ringo Reyes, which I saw this afternoon in a workshop production at the New York Shakespeare Theatre Festival. As a fellow Poet/Playwright, it was an inspiring experience to see this piece about a man and his relationship to society; how he gave his life, and what was given back to him in return. The work merits value for two important reasons, plus a few others which I will also mention. The First, is that the play is poetically written, beautifully structured and balanced as an artistic work. Secondly, it has significant social value, a rare and necessary quality in modern theatre. As a writer, Mr. Ringo Reyes has fulfilled both artistic and social requirements into a meaningful theatrical production.

The play not only explores the responsibility each one of us, as individuals, must have towards each other and society, but also the responsibility which society, in turn, must have towards each of its members. This reflects on Mr. Reyes as an artist who regards interaction and collective development as necessary to harmonious survival. This is a play of peace, in a time of war. It is a play of social responsibility, in a time of political greed and irresponsibility. The characters are real people who we meet everyday, may even work or live with. People who we often tend to overlook and who have suffered a Christian sacrifice as the ironic victims of civilization in technological progress.

Mr. Reyes needs to be heard, as a dynamic voice from our community, and should be given a serious opportunity to speak out. His message is essential, and his participation as an artist is critical and necessary, like the parent who must help support, develop and nourish its child.

I recommend that Mr. Ringo Reyes be given every consideration possible and be allowed to develop a serious professional production for this meaningful work, "Looking for Tomorrow."

Respectfully,

Sandy Esteves
Hispanic Playwrights Unit
Poetess

Mr. Ramon (Ringo Reyes) Fernandez has recently been released and has rejoined his family and is currently working with The Family on this play and is also seen as an actor in the repertory company.

The Family, Inc.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 1980

Theater: Improvised Gospel Tale

By MEL GUSSOW

THE FAMILY grew out of Marvin Felix Camillo's theater workshops in prisons; its membership consists largely of former inmates. In its eight-year history, this theater company has served a valuable social and artistic purpose. With the volunteer help of profession-



Larry Holman
Verna Hampton in The Family's production of "The Crucifixion."

als, under the leadership of Mr. Camillo as artistic director, The Family has trained actors, dancers and technical personnel. Some members have gone on to careers in the theater. For others, it remains an avocational outlet. For many, it represents a road to rehabilitation.

Miguel Pinero's award-winning play, "Short Eyes," directed by Mr. Camillo, is the most notable achievement to come out of the company. Without fanfare, The Family has presented other plays and continues to offer workshops and out of prisons. This has become an extended Family, with outsiders joining former inmates in creating performance pieces and in sustaining a year-round theater.

The group's current, Easter production is based on James Weldon Johnson's poem "The Crucifixion," a sorrowful lyric about Jesus and his family—a kind of gospel without music. The Family version, under Mr. Camillo's direction, is being performed the weekend at All Angels Protestant Episcopal Church on the Upper West Side and will undoubtedly be seen again as part of the company's repertory.

The work is structured as a group improvisation and in performance it retains a spontaneity; it is as if the company is creating the piece as we watch it. The actors meet on the stage exercises. They tumble, they limbered, they improvise music (composed by Johnson), they enact scenes in the stages to the Crucifixion, at times digressing into contemporary material. For example, as a counterpoint to the agony of Jesus, two actors pretend to participate in a bullfight.

The large cast includes children as well as adults, amateurs and professionals. Among the more talented members of the company are J. J. Johnson, who was in "Short Eyes," and Deidre Laughton, a young dancer undertaking the role of Jesus. Miss Laughton has an expressive face; wearing a crown of thorns and a look of anguish, without words she can communicate suffering.

The ingenuousness and the confidence of the cast overrides the moments of awkwardness. There are many good voices in the company—and then there is Gilbert Price. Mr. Price, who teaches singing to other members of The Family, must have one of the strongest voices in the American musical theater. Unamplified, he could fill a Broadway house and his singing in "The Crucifixion" sends a seismographic tremor through the All Angels Church. Wearing a bur-nose and carrying a staff, he plays Joseph the Fisherman as a kind of one-man chorus. His gospel singing seems to inspire his fellow actors to exceed themselves. The show is a theatrical act of faith that is communicated directly from performers to audience.

The Family and Jesus

THE CRUCIFIXION, based on the poem "The Crucifixion" by James Weldon Johnson, conceived and directed by Marvin Felix Camillo. Presented by The Family Inc., at All Angels Church, 251 West 80th Street

Little Boy	Gregory Hampton Jones
Mary	Lisa Vidali
Gabriel	Mary Hubbard
Disciple of John and Peter	J. J. Johnson
Christ	Deidre Laughton
Matador and Judas	Maria Keith
Joseph the Fisherman	Gilbert Price
Disciple John	Craig Tamaro
Disciple	Pedro Benane
Marrero	Bobby Ritts
Disciple and Jury	Claude Jay and Alberto Martinez
Mary Magdalene and Jury	Kerline Thomas
Jury	Paula Rallo
Believer Who Questions	Keddie Grant
Joseph and Jury	Verna Hampton
Joseph	Ellen Cleghorne
Joseph	Richard Perez
Miguel	Raymond Ruiz
Miguel	Manuela Manzano
Pharisee	Elis Davis and Chino Salas
Pharisee and Pilate	John Cruz
	Erin Vogel

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL 947-7171 OR ENR-9300

THE CAST BREAKDOWN

Gregory Hampton Jones	Little Boy
Lisa Vidal	Mary
Manny Hubbard	Gabriel
JJ Johnson	Disciple John and Moses
Diedre Laughton	Christ
Mark Keath	Matador and Judas
Gilbert Price	Joseph the Fisherman
Craig Tankard	Disciple John
Pedro Santena	Disciple
Bobby Reilly	Narrator
Claude Jay	Guard
Alberto Martinez	Guard
Kerima Thomas	Veronica and Jury
Paula Raflo	Mary Magdeline and Jury
Kadette Grant	Jury
Verna Hampton	The believer who questions.
Ellen Cleghorne	Salome and Jury
Richard Perez	Barabas
Raymond Ruiz	Malisimo
Henrietta Mantooth	Alternate
Kip Davis	Thieves
John Cruz	Pharoah
Chino Melao	Thieves
Elin Vogel	Bull and Riot

The majority of this cast is from The Family Workshops. We would like to take this moment to give a very special thanks to the teaching staff who have been so supportive- Thank You Raul Julia, Gilbert Price Charles Barney and Diedre Laughton.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Government Grants

New Jersey State Council on the Arts
 The National Endowment for the Arts
 New York State Council on the Arts
 New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
 New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Foundation Support

The Jewish Communal Fund
 The New York Foundation

Non Profit Organizations (which have provided technical assistance or in-kind contributions)

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 Pan Caribbean Information Center
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The Family, Inc.

As a bilingual theatre and training organization is dedicated to the growth and development of actors, technicians and playwrights of all backgrounds. The Family's combination of an extensive workshop program, a repertory company and a prison tour provides an unusual mixture of artistic opportunities and social services.

In support of the efforts of The Family, Inc. Enclosed please find my pledge of \$ _____
_____ Paid herewith To paid as follows _____

Signed _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

All contributions to The Family, Inc. are tax deductible as provided by law.

Please hand to an usher or mail to

The Family, Inc.
410 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

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 Bookkeeper Myron Goldstein
 Workshop Supervisor Ellen Clegborne
 Development/Fundraiser Kathryn Napala
 Community Outreach Coordinator Jose Serpa
 Community Outreach Specialist Bert Gibson

PRODUCTION STAFF

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 Technical Director J. J. Johnson
 Technical Assistants Awilda Suarez, Yvette Smith, Craig Tarkard
 Angel Caban
 Stage Manager Shamsul Alam
 Props/Costumes Craig Tarkard/Kip Davis
 Lighting/Design Consultant Spencer Morse
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 Voice Teacher Gilbert Price
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

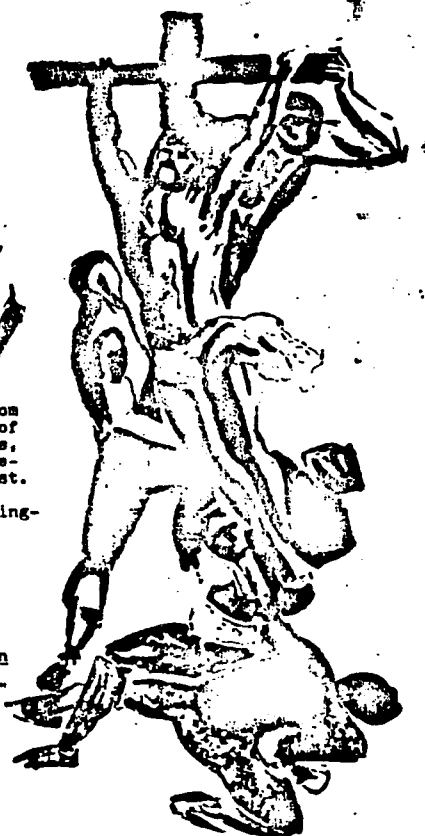
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Corporate Contributions: St. James Church, Episcopal Church Center/Coalition for Human Needs, Chemical Bank, Con Edison, Riverside Church/Benevolence Committee. **Non-Profit Organizations** (which have provided technical assistance of in-kind contributions): Rums of Puerto Rico, All Angels Church, American Mine Theatre, Arts and Business Council, Association of Hispanic Arts, Black Theatre Alliance, Episcopal Actors Guild, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, National Committee on Crime and Delinquency, New York State Department of Corrections, New York Urban Coalition, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, NYC, The New York Shakespeare Festival, Volunteer Urban Consulting Group. **General Support:** District Attorney Eugene Gold, Carla Pinza, Gilbert Price, Paul Julia, Charles Barney, Congressman Ted Weiss, Councilman Sharpe James, Councilwoman Bobby Reilly, Percy Sutton, Mr. & Mrs. Robert H. Bethke, Gideon Chagy, Harry & Henrietta Bagley, Latin Percussions, Inc, Carol and Norman Johnson, Margaret Appe, Mr. & Mrs. R. Todd, Millie Berger, Harold Youngblood, Pansie Sills, Evelyn Clegborne, Mrs. David Nathan, Councilwoman Ruth Messinger, Eugene Campbell, Helen C. Barrett, Doretha Gibson, Al Duckett, Sherrill H. Akyol, Arthur L. Jardine, Dorothy Keller, Jean Rigg, Daniel & Susan Guterman, Lloyd P. Zuckerberg, Thom German Santiago, Leslie Johnson, Melbourne Nunes, Pedro Villanueva, Evelyn Clegborne.

Special mentions go to the Lady Ophelia Devore of the Grace Del-Marco and to Al Duckett for their unmeasurable support. Congratulations and best wishes on your 53 anniversary. Thank you! Holy Trinity Church for enabling us to use your beautiful space for these productions. We are looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial relations.

THE FAMILY

IN
The

CRUCIFIXION
 Adapted and Directed by
 Marvin Felix Camillo
 By James Weldon Johnson
 From the poem "Crucifixion"
 "It's a gift"
 Al Pacino



"....The Family's CRUCIFIXION is a leap from Old Testament to New, from the wilderness of Sinai to the wilderness of New York Streets, from the trouble maker Moses to the troublemaker Jesus Christ. But in its still more vehement way THE CRUCIFIXION stays close to the swirling, singing, self contradicting expressiveness of a crowd, it's innocence and cruelty. Louis Chapin, Christian Science Monitor

The New York times' Mel Gussow calls the Marvin Felix Camillo creative adaptation of James Weldon Johnson's poem, Crucifixion "a theatrical act of faith which communicates directly from performer to audience."

Soho News' Joanne Pottlitzer acknowledges the--"good voices in the large cast," and adds that the "powerful voice of Gilbert Price...rocks the space with brilliance."


THE FAMILY, INC., 410 West 42nd Street, N.Y.C., (212) 947-7171/2 or 3

ABOUT the PLAY

I have been privileged to see this marvellous production, and I loved every electrifying minute - and they are many. The spiritual and creative godfather of The Family - Brother Camillo's loving care and sure artistic touch are given vibrant life by a cast of children, young people and adults.

Some time ago, I heard a fellow author describe outstanding literary work as capable of producing "an explosion in the gut." That is what happened to me as I became a witness to the Black Baptist genre sermonizing, the operatic splendor and the cross-cultural collective identity of the excellent cast - Muslim, Jewish, Hispanic, Black, Caucasian - all racial strains are represented and remind us of the universality of the Jesus whose ecstasy and agony this jewel of a production celebrates. Jesus is played beautifully by a woman and, of course, Gilbert Price sings to the roots of human hair. There is frolic. There is freshness. There is cavernous tragedy and unspeakable triumph in this work which must be seen all over the world. For all over the world, this kind of terrible beauty is needed.

For a work of art and a masterpiece of presentation, I am grateful. Let's tell everybody it is happening!


ALFRED DUCKETT
Executive Vice President
Ministry of Communications

AWARDS

* Drama Desk Award 1973-74, Best Play * Drama Critics Award 1973-74, Best Play * OBIE Award 1973-74, Best Play * The Riverside Church Award, 1974 * The Family Inspiration Award 1975 * Council on the Arts in Westchester - In recognition for enriching the quality of life in Westchester, 1975 * Eastern Correctional Institution Bi-Lingual Education Program, 1975 * United States Jaycees: Eastern Chapter for outstanding performance, 1976 * Caribe Village L.P.D., 1976 * Arthur Kill Correctional Institution, Bilingual Education Program, 1977 * ADELCO for excellence in a repertory season, 1979 * SER, Jobs for Progress, Inc. - In recognition for outstanding service in the area of Equal Employment Opportunities for Youth, 1980 * Boricua College Award of Excellence, for rendering service and displaying concern, 1980 * Key to the City of Newark, New Jersey, 1980 from Councilman Sharpe James * Tufts University - certificate for distinguished achievement, 1981.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

SEASON of PLAYS in REPERTORY

May 1 The Killing Ground by Jerome Washington. Previews begin May 1. Performances begin May 14.

June 11 Respires by Shamsul Alam. Performances June 18 through June 28.

CABARET *

April 25 Cabaret/Disco, 410 West 42 Street, 3rd floor, featuring Gilbert Price and many talented artists of The Family.

May 21 The Family Cabaret (1981-Variety/Talent Showcase). May 21 through May 30.

June 15 Special performance of Cabaret at SYMPHONY SPACE, 2537 Broadway, near 95 Street, 7:30 p.m.

* "That evening at The Family Cabaret at Ophelia DeVore's Media Party was one of the best evenings I've had in a long time. I was very impressed with the young talent I saw. They had such an honesty about them."

LIONEL HANPTON

Cabaret/Disco featured twice a month. For more information, please contact The Family, 947-7171/947-7173.

The Crucifixion may be seen at the following places:
April 15 - Rikers Island Correctional Facility for Men
April 17 - Holy Trinity Church, 341 East 87 Street
April 24 - Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women

OTHER EVENTS

May 9 Book Party for Sandra Maria Esteves' new book Verba Buena

Sept 5 Boat Ride Cabaret/Disco

NOTES

- Playwrights Forum is now in progress. New plays are not being accepted.
- Workshops in acting, singing and dance are also being offered.

THE FAMILY, INC.
 498 WEST 42ND STREET
 NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10036
 212-247-7171

We would like you to participate in our audience participation /reaction survey. Just check off your answers, give us your comments and return the form at the door or mail it in.

Thank you,

THE FAMILY

1. Have you attended a performance of The Family before? yes no
2. If yes, where? _____ Church _____ The Black Theatre Alliance
 _____ Lincoln Center _____ St. James Church
 _____ New York Shakespear Festival _____ Riverside Church
 _____ Other (check as many as apply).
3. How did you find out about today's performance? Newspaper advertisement _____
 Newspaper article _____ a friend _____ Brochure in mail _____
 TDF Calendar _____ Other _____ (check as many as apply).
4. Do you attend theatre regularly? yes no
5. If yes, what do you see most? _____ Broadway _____ Off-Broadway _____ Off-Off-Broadway
6. Which of the following do you read regularly? _____ NY Times _____ NY Post
 _____ Daily News _____ Village Voice _____ Wisdom's Child _____ The Westender
 _____ Soho News _____ (check as many as apply).
7. When you attend theatre, do you usually attend _____ alone _____ with a friend
 _____ a group _____ Husband/Wife (check as many as apply).
8. Why did you choose to come to this performance? _____ because the reviews were good
 _____ to see a particular person _____ because the theatre is near my home _____ because
 someone invited me (check as many as apply).
9. Did you make reservations? yes no.
10. When? _____ 2-3 days ago _____ Last week _____ more than a week ago.

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

11. Was the theme of this play relevant to you? yes no.
12. Did the presentation hold your interest? yes no.
13. Was the evening enjoyable? yes no. If no, why? _____
14. Would you support an extension of the run of this play? yes no.
15. Would you help us advertise this play by - distributing literature _____ calling friends
 _____ organize a group.

Name _____

Address _____

THE FAMILY/LA FAMILIA

presents

THE CRUCIFIXION
 (An Improvised Gospel Tale)

Adapted and Directed

by

Marvin Felix Camillo

Based on
 James Waldon Johnson's
 CRUCIFIXION

CAST
 (In alphabetical order)

Shamsul Alam
 Rasheed Ali
 Jeanette Arroya
 Roberto Badillo
 Michelle Betita
 Buddy Booker
 Ellen Cleghorne
 Kip Davis
 Verno Hampton*

Gregory Hampton-Jones
 Lemy Elijah Hassan
 Barbara High
 Manny Hubbard
 Claude Jay*
 P. Kwame Johnson
 Sheila Kays
 Ruth Kinter
 Joaquin Manzanarez
 Kerimo Thomas

Alberto Martinez
 Stephanie W. Manuez
 Anthony Nicks
 Efrain Nosario
 Gilbert Price*
 Pedro Santana
 Jose Serpa
 Craig Tonkard
 Juan Tenorio

* Courtesy of Actors Equity

CAST

MARVIN FELIX CANTILLO (Pancho) is the Founder and Executive/Artistic Director. He has performed as an actor on Broadway, Off-Broadway and on television. He studied acting with Lloyd Richards, Maxwell Glerville and the Urban Arts Corps where he worked with Virnette Carroll and was a founding member of their repertory company. He was also a member of the Performing Arts Repertory Company and founder of the Teatro de la Calle in Newark, New Jersey, which is his home. He has worked as a special program consultant for the Council of the Arts in Westchester and has taught "Theatre as a Social Tool" at the College of New Rochelle. In prisons throughout this country, he has lectured, conducted workshops and seminars. Both here and in Europe, he has addressed numerous university and professional groups, including Rutgers University, Antioch College, Tufts University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Puerto Rican Family Institute. He is a member of the Paul Robeson Citation Committee, Actors Equity and serves on the special advisory panel for the New York State Council on the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. He is a member of the Board of Directors for Youth Theatre Interactions in Yonkers, New York; Neil Harris Black Onsets Theatre Company, as well as serving on the advisory board for Latino Playwrights. He has received a Drama Desk Award, an OBIE and numerous other awards for his artistic and humanistic work. Mr. Camillo recently received the key to the City of Newark.

ELLEN CLEGHORNE was born in Brooklyn, New York. "The present is past and we must build for the future." Ellen has been studying with La Familia for the past five years and loves every minute of it. She has won an ALDELDO Award for her excellence in a repertory series. "1961 presents a new day for The Family and me."

SHAMSUL ALAM is an actor, playwright, ex-con. He has studied acting with the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, Frederic Douglass Creative Arts and The Family's Workshop. He has appeared in *EM Safe*, *Twelfth Night*, *Looking for Tomorrow*, *Straight from the Ghetto* and *Crucifixion*. With The Family's help, Shamsul had a play produced - *Bullpen by the Prison Theatre*, and this season another of his plays, *Respires*, will be featured in the Family's Repertory. Shamsul is also appearing in *Night Hawks* with Sly Stallone and Billy Dee Williams. "In short, for an ex-convict I've a lot to thank The Family for. Peace."

GILBERT PRICE (Voice Teacher) has for some years now been blessed to be an active part of the New York theatre-world. He has just completed a run as Marc Anthony in the Christmas production of *Julius Caesar* with the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. "The circle of my experience as a person and actor, thank God, brought me as actor-in-residence and voice teacher to the folds of The Family Repertory Ensemble Company. I am truly grateful to The Family for this valuable opportunity to be able to continue my growth as a human being and artist. For me, the words of William Shakespeare, 'The world's a stage' has begun to become a reality through the together and sharing efforts of The Family. In the spirit of brotherhood, Lord, let us pass on through."



Susan L. Taylor
Editor-in-Chief

April 10, 1981

To THE FAMILY

I see you, The Family, as a group of performing artists who choose to be efficient at your life's work. Your company seems imbued with the soulful sense of FAMILY. Each of your constituent elements appear to move in harmony. With a passion that is FAMILIAL, the members of your team seem to encourage each other's creativity and provide unsolicited support and understanding. The lines of communication within the group seem open, free-flowing and strong. I understand that you want breadth - you want to shed some of your old skin - to chart a new course. I view you as pioneers - part of the new spirit that will usher us victoriously into the 21st century.

Your standards seem high. I want to listen.

1500 BROADWAY NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036 (212) 730-4280

JOSE SERPA was born in New York. He has been a musician with The Family for four years. Jose is currently the Family Community Outreach Coordinator. He is a graduate of Bronx Community College where he majored in Music and minored in theatre. Jose is the proud father of a 4 year old boy.

PEDRO SANTANA "I've been in The Family for three years now. I enjoy being with this special group. They taught me things I never knew existed. I'm glad Mrs. Rose Calovito, my drama teacher at JHS 118 introduced me to these special people."

GREGORY HAMPTON JONES is a native of Boston. Greg is the youngest member of The Family Repertory Company and his growth is wonderful. He has been with The Family since 1976 and is a student at St. Stanislaus School. His hobbies are: roller skating, cars, basketball and swimming.

STEPHANIE W. MENEZ has been working with The Family since January 1980. She has participated in workshops and was Olivia in Twelfth Night. Stephanie has also performed in productions of Equus, The House of Bernard Alba, and Romeo and Juliet. She is presently studying with Donald Buka. This performance marks her debut in The Family's The Crucifixion as Mary.

KIP DAVIS. Kip has been with The Family since January 1980. Last season he appeared in The Crucifixion and was Fabian in Twelfth Night. Prior to his involvement with The Family, Kip acted in California with the Oakland Ensemble Theatre and trained at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. Kip has also taught acting in the public schools in his hometown of New Haven, Connecticut.

ANTHONY NICKS 26 is a native New Yorker and has been playing the drums for 12 years. He has worked with the Rod Rodgers dance company and the National Black Theatre, with whom he has traveled to Africa and the Caribbean. He is currently freelancing in the New York area. The Crucifixion marks his debut with The Family.

CRAIG TANKARD. Craig came from Newark a year and a half ago to pursue a career in the theatre. With The Family he has performed in The Crucifixion, Straight From the Ghetto, and Twelfth Night. "It has been great being with The Family."

KERIMA THOMAS is currently a student at Performing Arts High. She has appeared in The Marriage Proposal and Twelfth Night. This show marks her debut as Jesus.

MANNY HUBBARD Manny has performed with the company in the last season's presentation of The Crucifixion. "I have grown a lot. It's fun, but it's hard work too!"

ALBERTO MARTINEZ is an actor/playwright who likes to sing. "My greatest experiences have been directing theatre pieces and involving young people and Senior Citizens from the South Bronx. My focus for this time in my life is to act, sing, discover refine and in the process, contribute to society. La Familia has alleviated for me the anxiety of loneliness in my endeavors. Thank you, Pancho, for having a clear channel from your ear to your heart."

SHEILA KAYE is a Family Workshop member and is making her debut this season with The Crucifixion. She has appeared in Yiddish Theatre and as a specialty singer impersonator on television, last appearing on "The Tiny Tim Show," "Good Morning, New York," "The Easter Seal Show" with Henry Youngman and on cable television. Sheila is having fun with The Family.

CLAUDE JAY has been a member of The Family Repertory for three years and has appeared as Father Joseph in The Crucifixion, Sebastian in Twelfth Night, and William Carmichael in Recalled on a Sea of Diplomacy. Other stage credits include Raisin in the Sun, an original revue - Sunshine and Mozart's La Clemenza Di Tito. His film credits include The Warriors and the soon to be released Endless Love. He has performed his nightclub act at The Cotton Club, the Grand Finale, The Bishes and at The Family Cabaret. "I am grateful to have The Family as part of my life."

MICHELLE BETITA was born and raised in east Harlem - El Barrio. Scholarships at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and New Dance Group Studios, Brooklyn College, etc., enabled her to acquire dance training in various techniques. At the Henry Street Settlement she was an assistant to Frank Ashley and a teacher of modern dance. Michelle has performed in various Off-Off Broadway musical productions. Her opera credits include La Traviata and Carmen.

LEMY ELIJAH HASSAN is a student from The Family Workshop and an international artist from Nigeria. "I am proud to be with The Family."

JUAN TENARIO has participated in The Family workshops and has been involved with the group for approximately one year. "I am excited about being a cast member in The Crucifixion."

JOAQUIN MANZANAREZ recently started in the workshop program and currently joined The Family as a musician for The Crucifixion. "I am really enjoying myself."

JEANETTE ARROYA is an artist/ singer and performs throughout New York City. She made her debut at The Family Cabaret.

ROBERT BADILLO is an actor/dancer. He has appeared in Currents, Piñeros, Romeo & Juliet, Who Killed Roberto, Justice is Weak, and How Would You Handle a Rent Strike. Radio and television appearances include REAL talk show, interviewer on Loisaida WGR, "CUGHFRITO - Street Hustler" an outward bound documentary presented on television in the United States and London. Robert is on scholarship as a student with The Family from the American Mime Theatre. He has danced with Charles Barney, El Puerto Rican Playwrights/Actor's Workshop, Miguel Lperana, Rod Rogers Dance Company and Elso Ponce's Vital-Arts Dance.

THE FAMILY, INC.
410 WEST 42ND STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10036
212-947-7171

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MARY TRANT
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Gilbert Johnson
Larry Rivera
Doris Nicholson
J. J. Johnson

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO
EXECUTIVE/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
ALAN TOMIAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dear Patron,

The Family has been my life's commitment for the past ten years. It has been my belief that the arts are meant for all and that there must be room for sharing and creativity in our homes, our schools, our institutions, prisons, our community and in the hearts of those who govern our lives.

In the difficult, fascinating and rewarding eight-year history of The Family, we share a sense of pride and accomplishment in being able to make major contributions to the artistic community and to the improvement of quality of health and life in our society.

Our future plans include: 1) extended involvement in community outreach; 2) expanded training programs and workshops in the community, prisons, colleges and schools; 3) a repertory season of plays along with the current repertoire; 4) a television project on the subject of child abuse. Our long-range goals are to obtain a fully-equipped permanent theatre-space and to develop an inner-city school for the arts.

We need your help in order to continue this work and move closer toward our ultimate goals. Won't you please make a contribution. We need the support of every individual in the community. Anything you contribute would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Marvin Felix Camillo (Pancho)

In support of the efforts of The Family, Inc., enclosed please find my pledge of:

\$ _____ (paid herewith) or \$ _____ (to be paid as follows:

Signature: _____ Name: _____
(Please Print)

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Performing Space: All Angels Church, 251 West 80th St., N.Y.C., N.Y.
Boxer of All Angels Church: Carol Anderson

-2-

BUDDY BOOKER was born in Harlem and is 24. Buddy plays the bass/upright bass. He received a Bachelors of Arts in Music from Berrington College, Vermont. Buddy has played his varied musical style on both coasts and in Paris. Presently, he is playing in New York clubs, concerts, recording sessions and in theatre productions.

RUTH KINTER has performed off-Broadway in the American Theatre of Actors in *A Death in the Family* as well as several other Off-Off Broadway productions. This fall Ruth appeared in the one-act play *Structure*. "I'm thrilled to be working with The Family, which is a constant inspiration."

P. KWAME JOHNSON is an original member of The Family, 1972-present. He is the Artistic Director of Youth Theatre Interactions, Inc. (YTI) in Yonkers, New York and the YTI Mize Time Players. He is head script-writer on NBC's "Infinity Factory - Scoop's Place" segments. He has appeared with The Family in *Short Eyes*, *Straight from the Ghetto*, and *New York, New York, the Big Apple*. Kwame toured with YTI Mize Time Players throughout the country and in Barbados, West Indies. Highlights Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, Alice Tully Hall, Keys to City of Detroit Philadelphia Folk Arts Festival, NBC TV, New York. Presently, he is serving as a writer, advisor and production consultant to The Family. He appears with the Mize Time Players on Saturdays at The Family Cabaret. Kwame can be seen with his two partners on Sunday evenings at Robyn Dangerfield's in their comedy act, "The Silent Spot."

VERNA HAMPTON "... it's about the work." Verna is a native of Boston and a graduate of the University of Massachusetts. As a resident member of The Family Repertory Company and instructor of their workshops, she has taught at Rikers Island Correctional Facility, Spofford House for Juveniles and the Lincoln Correctional Facility. She has appeared in The Family productions of *The Marriage Proposal*, *Straight from the Ghetto*, *Clara's Ole Man*, *Looking for Tomorrow*, and *The Dolls*. Verna has also appeared at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre in *The Work Gets Done* by Ed Bullins, Brooklyn Academy of Music in *Ballard of Brooklyn*, and the St. Marks Theatre in *Making Peace, A Fantasy*. Radio credits include three radio plays produced by The Family on WBAI, television credits - "Sunrise Semester - CEIA; an Uncle Sam Production and PBS-TV "Reflections, Hispanic Culture in America." She has just been appointed Artistic Director/Theatre Program Coordinator for the B.A.T.A.B.A. City Space Theatre Program in the upper Harlem community.

BARBARA HIGH became a member of The Family in November 1980. She has participated in several Family workshops. Barbara has recently begun studying acting with the Youth Theatre Interactions in Yonkers, New York and has been studying voice for two years. *The Crucifixion* is her first acting experience.

RASHEED ALI is from Trinidad and has been with The Family for a year. "I am on the Cabaret Committee and also have performed there a number of times. I think The Family is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. The people are wonderful and I love it!"

J. J. JOHNSON is a founding member of The Family. He is also a member of the board of directors for the company. J. J. is the technical director and resident member of the repertory company. He has appeared in "Short Eyes" as El-Pa.ii.r, "Shoe shine Parlor", *Looking For Tomorrow*, at the Shakespeare Festival in Julius Caesar and other performance productions there. His credits are numerous both technically and artistically.

WE'D LIKE TO KNOW HOW YOU LIKED THE SHOW!

THE FAMILY, INC
IN NEW JERSEY

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MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO
EXECUTIVE-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
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Dear Patron,

The Family, Inc. is a bi-lingual theatre and training organization dedicated to the growth and development of actors, technicians and playwrights of all backgrounds. The Family's combination of an extensive workshop program, a repertory company and a prison tour provides an unusual mixture of artistic opportunities and social services. To make these programs and this organization work it takes a lot of things: time, patience, expertise artistic know-how and money. We are supported in part by Government grants, foundation support and individual contributors.

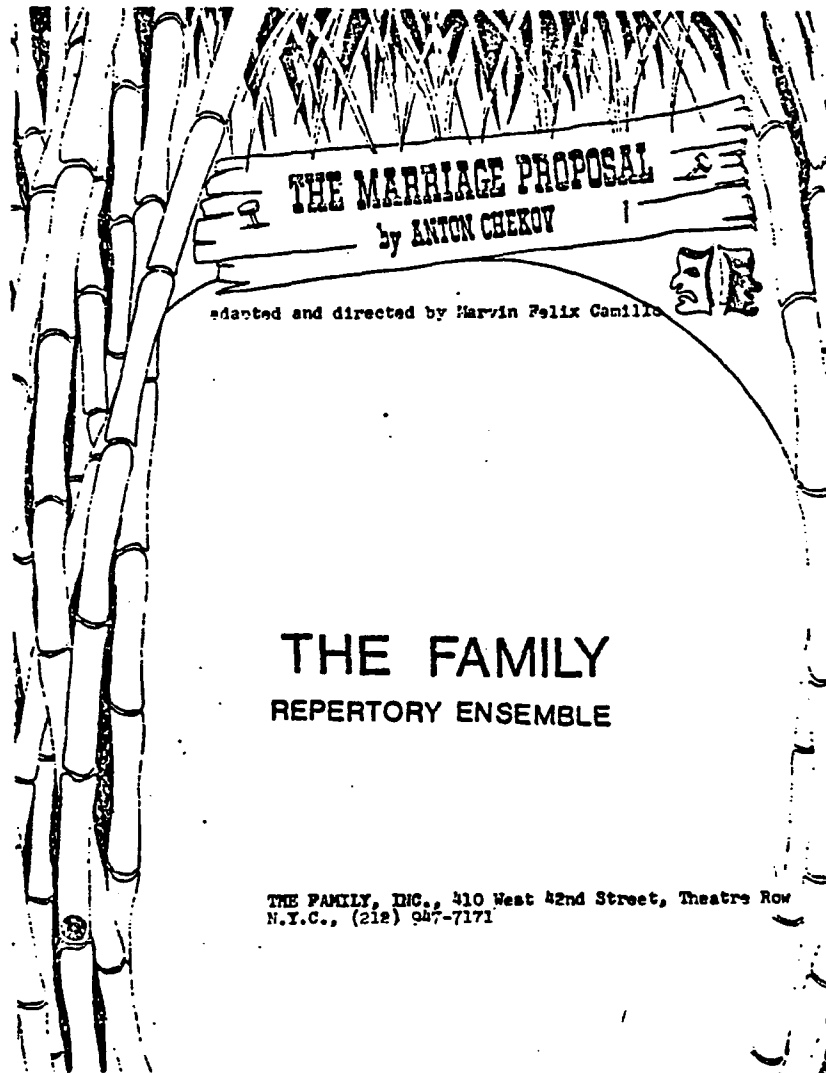
In order to continue these programs we need your support. We are asking for your support by way of a donation. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Thank you. The attached envelope has been designed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Marvin Felix Camillo
Executive/Artistic Director

Performing Space: All Angels Church, 151 West 86th St., N.Y.C., N.Y.
Rector of All Angels Church: Carol Anderson



ABOUT THE PLAY

It seems that Chekov wrote this piece for us. I love the story telling. My sister Carmen (who first inspired me toward theatre after taking me to a circus) could really tell stories and she married an even greater storyteller. My parents were always telling stories. I remember when first working in prison, sometimes the guys would sit around telling stories about how it was, how it should have been and how it could be. This play takes place on an imaginary island somewhere in the Caribbean. There is a real Francisco Arrufat who lives in Puerto Nuevo, P.R., for whom I named the character. We call him Don Paco or Pop. I used to visit him on the island and on Sunday he would set out on his patio with his mandolin and sing beautiful Spanish songs from the past. Dona Isa (Rivera) would prepare good foods and often contributed to the stories. In fact, anyone else nearby would add to them. This piece is being developed in that Family way. On December 1975 we had the first reading of the play. We were preparing for our annual festival of plays, which meant that the actors could choose which plays they wanted to perform in. Other plays included Clara's Old Man by Ed Bullins, Looking for Tomorrow (an original play by Ringo Reyes) and The Blacks by Genet. When they saw a 15 page classical vaudeville play, everybody ran. I wound up with very few actors and even those few who stayed thought it was a silly little classic. After reading, exploring, researching Chekov, some facts about Russia and applying our differences and sameness, the world of 18th and 19th century Russia seemed not much different from our own. It was fun. It enabled many of us to explore roots in the Caribbean and people began to bring song and dance and ideas to give a special life to our version of The Proposal. The early rehearsals took place in my apartment in Brooklyn. The text remains the same. We changed some of the names like Ivan Vacillivich and Natallia Stepanova to give them Spanish and West Indian sounds. In Russia, they bake bricks. In our imaginary Caribbean Island they grow sugarcane. In the original the peasants are talked about but not seen. Here they appear and speak for themselves. We improvised, mimed, danced and sang our way around the story. People brought in songs that enhanced the life of the play, or a moment. This enabled many of the cast to write songs and explore the music inside us. Coming together as a Family working on creative ventures is a wonderful way of working. Everybody has something to bring. It is thru this kind of work that the Family repertory ensemble grows.

Harvin Felix Camillo
aka PANCRO
Executive/Artistic Director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Government Grants

New Jersey State Council on the Arts
The National Endowment for the Arts
New York State Council on the Arts
New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Foundation Support

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The New York Foundation

Non Profit Organizations (which have provided technical assistance or in-kind contributions)

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Craig Tankard.... Comes from a Newark Family. Moved away ten years ago to Martha's Vineyard. He now has returned to New Jersey to pursue a career in the theatre. Craig formally was a student at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School. He has only been with The Family for five months and it's really been a great experience. I've met all kinds of interesting folks and people. Since he has been here he has worked on "Straight from the Ghetto" as the assistant stage manager, and now makes his acting debut in "The Crucifixion".

Karim Thomas.... I am a sophomore at the High School of Performing Arts majoring in drama. I have done many plays at school and am an extra in "Opa Summer Night" which is coming on television soon. I was born in the Caribbean and grew up in New York. I love acting and dancing and singing. I also like sports. Most of all I enjoy every minute working with La Familia.

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THE FAMILY, INC. PRESENTS THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL
by Anton Chekov

Adapted and Directed by Marvin Felix Camillo

Ellen Cleghorne..... is of West Indian, American, Black American and Puerto heritage, a product of NYC school system, NYC projects and the union of Sydney & Evelyn---The 5th of seven---Ellen came to a Family workshop in 1976 and has been here ever since. "Hard work makes dreams come true".

THE DIRECTOR

Marvin Felix Camillo...Aka "PANCHO"

Executive/Artistic Director of The Family Inc. and its founder. A member of the Board of Directors for Youth Theatre Interactions in Yonkers, New York and the Black Theatre Alliance. A member of the Advisory Board for Latino Playwrights. A member of the Paul Robeson Citation Committee Actors Equity.

Attended public schools in Newark, New Jersey. Worked as an actor on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in television. Studied with Lloyd Richards (who recently was selected to head the Drama Department at Yale School of Drama) and Vinette Carroll, Urban Arts Corporation, where he also performed with the repertory and was a founding member of the company. Founded the Teatro de la Calle in Newark, New Jersey, worked as a special programs consultant for the Council on the Arts in Westchester. He has taught in prison throughout New York State, Connecticut, Baltimore, Maryland, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Has lectured in Amsterdam, Holland (Theatre Arts School), conducted workshops and seminars throughout the country including Rutgers University, Antioch College, Ohio, University of Connecticut, SUNY at New Paltz as lecturer, as well as workshop seminars, the New Jersey Society of Psychiatrists, the Puerto Rican Family Institute, and was guest speaker for the Satellite Academy High School Graduation at Chase Manhattan Plaza and I.S. 118 (William W. Niles) in the Bronx, taught at the College of New Rochelle Theatre as a Social Tool and conducted a recent workshop seminar for Boston theatre students under the auspices of the Educational Collaborative Media Arts Program.

Pancho has won the following awards, Certificate of Merit from GRACE VILLAGE L.D.P., Certificate of Appreciation from THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH, Village Voice Off-Broadway Award "OBIE" for outstanding achievement in the Off Broadway Theatre (Short Eyes), DRAMA DESK AWARD for direction of "Short Eyes", DRAMA CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD for the Best American Play 1973-1974 (Short Eyes).

CAST

Ivan Francisco Arrufat Rivers.....Raymond Ruiz
Captain Livingston Mortimer Belgrave.....Marvin Felix Camillo*
Matalia Olivia Belgrave.....Ellen Cleghorne

Islanders

Shamsul Alam.....Insan Abdul Rahim.....Rick Reid*.....
Marion Rolle.....Karima Thomas.....Lisa Vidal.....Gilbert Price*

Musicians

Albert Miller.....Art Jardin.....Houston Powell.....Lawrence Porter.....
John Northington.....Mike Martinez.....Jose Serpa

Production Staff

Company Manager.....Rick Reid
Production Manager.....Marvin Brown
Technical Director.....J. J. Johnson*
Assistant Stage Managers.....Craig Tankard, Herbert Quinones
Acting Instructor.....Paul Julia*
Voice Instructor.....Gilbert Price*
American Mime Instructor.....Charles Barney
Voice Production and Diction.....Robbie McCauley*
Set Design.....David Mitchell*
Set Design Assistant.....Tom Schwinn
Construction.....Victor Verdejo
Lighting Design Consultant.....Spencer Mosse, Sandy Ross
Technical Consultant.....Don Koshler
Properties Person.....Deirdre Loughton
Special Consultants.....Marie Elizabeth Brodis,
Amy Bertrand

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Executive Artistic Director.....Marvin Felix Camillo
Managing Director.....Alan Toman
Secretary.....Marlene Johnson
Interns.....Ida Carillo, Vivian Wilson, Tony (Clarence) Bernette
and Rubin Bonilla
Workshop Supervisor.....Ellen Cleghorne
Publicist.....Faith Geer
Special Consultant for The Family.....Fred Garrett

This event is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and is partially supported by CETA Title VI funds provided by the Department of Employment of the City of New York and by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York.

* Equity Members

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Bookkeeper Myran Goldstein
Workshop Consultant Gilbert Price
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Technical Director J. J. Johnson
Technical Assistant/Box Office Ruth Kinter
Assistant to Director Ife Shipp
Technical Assistants Awilda Suarez, Yvette Smith
Stage Manager Shamsul Alam
Lighting Design Consultant Spencer Morse
Technical Consultant Don Koehler
Voice Teacher Gilbert Price
Voice/Diction Instructor Robbie McCauley
Production Consultant Paul Kwane Johnson
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THE FAMILY PRESENTS

BENPIRO

A WORK-IN-PROGRESS

WRITTEN BY
SHAMSUL ALAM

DIRECTED BY
MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO

ABOUT the PLAY

Benpires first reading was more than two years ago when we were on Madison Avenue. The Family recognized the undercurrents of enthusiasm, realism and vitality to the beginnings of this play and felt that its growth could only come through sharing it with other organizations and theatre companies. Since then Benpires has had quite an exposure.

In 1979 it was produced by the Playwrights Forum. 1980 Black Theatre Alliance presented it and also Intar selected it as one of its 'Intar Playwrights-in-residence' series. Benpires has grown and has been enhanced by its exposure to other avenues of direction. But now The Family has brought it back in to continue its development.

Many in our company have had if not first hand experience in street gangs have worked with them. We have gleaned many insights from their viewpoints and have put it into the essence of Benpires. The feelings, desires and demeanor that we could not seem to derive from amongst ourselves we went out in search of the subject - street members. Some of The Family members talked with "The Guardian Angels," "The Bishops," and old-time street members. We also invited them to our rehearsals and asked their opinions. To further realize the concept of what Benpires was about, we presented small segments of the play when we performed on our prison tours and at our Saluday Cabarets. We improvised; we rewrote; we listened to everyone. The responses have been overwhelming.

The coming home of Benpires to The Family also marks the growing up within The Family of Family members who have been with us since our inception. J.J. Johnson, an ex-inmate, played El Rahim in Short Eyes and is now the Technical Director for Benpires. Ife Shipp was the first woman to get out of prison and was a founding Family member. Her training within The Family has raised her to the position of Assistant to the Director.

Benpires exemplifies The Family method of bringing life to a play. A play-in-progress.

AWARDS

* Drama Desk Award 1973-74, Best Play * Drama Critics Award 1973-74, Best Play * OBIE Award 1973-74, Best Play * The Riverside Church Award, 1974 * The Family Inspiration Award 1975 * Council on the Arts in Westchester - In recognition for enriching the quality of life in Westchester, 1975 * Eastern Connecticut State University Bi-Lingual Education Program, 1975 * United States Jaycees: Eastern Chapter for outstanding performance, 1976 * Corliss Billage L.P.D., 1976 * Arthur Kill Correctional Institution, Bi-Lingual Education Program, 1977 * AUDELCO for excellence in a repertory season, 1979 * SER, Jobs for Progress, Inc. - In recognition for outstanding service in the area of Equal Employment Opportunities for Youth, 1980 * Sorbus College Award of Excellence, for rendering service and displaying concern, 1980 * Key to the City of Newark, New Jersey, 1980 from Councilwoman Sharpe James * Tufts University - certificate for distinguished achievement, 1981.

THE FAMILY'S PRODUCTION HISTORY

PLAY	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
New York, The Big Apple	x	x								
* Straight from the Ghetto		x	x	x	x	x			x	
* Short Eyes			x							
* Street Sounds			x							
The Dolls			x	x	x					
* Shoeshine Parlor			x	x						
* Clara's Ole Man				x	x	x				
* Looking for Tomorrow							x	x	x	
The Blacks						x				
* The Marriage Proposal							x	x	x	x
The Crucifixion									x	x
Becalmed on a Sea of Diplomacy								x		
Food, Glorious Food								x		
Folk Tales								x		
John Jay								x		
Come Home to Death									x	
* Meditations									x	
Look Not in Anger									x	
Twelfth Night								x	x	
* Rainy Season									x	
Benpires									x	x
* In Smoke Velvet									x	
Noah's Ark							x			
* The Killing Ground										x

In our nine year history, we have performed over 1,000 performances in and around New York and New Jersey.

* Selected productions for prison tours; + Work-in-Progress



ESSENCE

Susan L. Taylor
Editor-in-Chief

April 10, 1981

To THE FAMILY

I see you, The Family, as a group of performing artists who choose to be efficient at your life's work. Your company seems imbued with the soulful sense of FAMILY. Each of your constituent elements appear to move in harmony. With a passion that is FAMILIAL, the members of your team seem to encourage each other's creativity and provide unsolicited support and understanding. The lines of communication within the group seem open, free-flowing and strong. I understand that you want breadth - you want to shed some of your old skin - to chart a new course. I view you as pioneers - part of the new spirit that will usher us victoriously into the 21st century.

Your standards seem high. I want to listen.

PROGRAM

Juan	.....	Pedro Lopez
Ralph	.....	Roberto Badillo
Bully	.....	Enrique M. Rojas
Tito	.....	Raymond Ruiz
Cana	.....	Jose Serpa
Vickie	.....	Zoraida Ruiz
Sam the Man	.....	David Hausman
Mother - Ana Quirfones	.....	Carmen Rosario
Man #1	.....	Frank Rojas
Man #2	.....	Felix Rojas

Understudies

Juan - Juan Tenorio (also alternate for Tito); Mother/Vickie - Hilda Elena Garcia

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1	.....	Kitchen in Juan's house
Scene 2	.....	Tito and Vickie's furnished room
Scene 3	.....	Tito and Vickie's furnished room
Scene 4	.....	In front of abandoned building
Scene 5	.....	Kitchen in Juan's house
Scene 6	.....	Tito and Vickie's furnished room
Scene 7	.....	In front of abandoned building

There will be a ten-minute intermission

Act II

Scene 1	.....	Kitchen in Juan's house
Scene 2	.....	In front of abandoned building
Scene 3	.....	Schoolyard
Scene 4	.....	Tito and Vickie's furnished room
Scene 5	.....	Rooftop
Scene 6	.....	In front of abandoned building
Scene 7	.....	Kitchen in Juan's house

CAST

PEDRO LOPEZ (Juan) is fifteen years old and was born in Yonkers, New York. Pedro is attending Sounders Trade and Technical School in Yonkers. "My theatrical career began with the Youth Interaction Theatre in 1979, now known as the Mime Time Players. In the future I plan to finish high school and go to college to study theatre arts."

ROBERTO BADILLO (Ralph) is an actor and dancer. Roberto has been part of the Nuybrican Theatre Festival for the past six years where he appeared in productions of Miquel Laperenas Huile Dance Contest, Tato's Laviero's Pinones, Richard Morse Mime Company's Alice in Wonderland, and Joseph Papp's Romeo and Juliet. As a member of El Grupo Cemi, he has performed at Lincoln Center, schools and community culture festivals around the tri-state area. Roberto is presently studying at the Julliard School and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center.

ENRIQUE M. ROJAS (Bully) has attended Syracuse University studying Political Science and Psychology. His stage experience has been gained while he was Assistant Stage Manager for Short Eyes at Syracuse University, stagehand for Black Christmas and West Side Story and as the character Pablo in A Streetcar Named Desire. Enrique is interested in basketball, baseball and boxing.

RAYMOND RUIZ (Tito) is from Brooklyn, New York. He has recently moved to Newark, New Jersey. "I have been with The Family for six years, I met The Family in the summer of '75 when they were performing The Shoeshine Parlor in Prospect Park. I was really overwhelmed with the style and the work of the company. On the second night of the performance, a friend introduced me to Pancho, and I decided to attend the acting workshop and take any other training available. "The Family has given me a place to come and to put my thoughts into motion, more positive creative things. I have become an actor and also a leader in many areas - from conducting workshops to coordinating The Family Cabaret Disco." Raymond was last seen in The Marriage Proposal as Ivan. He has performed in prisons, schools, theatres, churches, parks, street corners and even in a city lot in Brooklyn where The Family built an outdoor theatre.

JOSE SERPA (Cano) was born in New York. He has been a musician with The Family for four years. Jose is currently The Family Community Outreach Coordinator. He is a graduate of Bronx Community College where he majored in Music and minored in Theatre. Jose is the proud father of a four year old boy.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

SEASON of PLAYS in REPERTORY

June 11 Bansires by Shamsul Alam Opening
Running Dates: June 12-13; 18-20; 25-27
Time: 8 p.m.

• Matinee Dates: June 14, 21, 28
Time: 3 p.m.

All tickets are \$5. TDF Vouchers are accepted.

.....
JUNE 15 - SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OF CABARET AT SYMPHONY SPACE THEATRE, 2537 BROADWAY, NEAR 95th STREET, 7:30 p.m.
SPECIAL PERFORMANCE by GILBERT PRICE.
Tickets are \$6. TDF Vouchers are accepted.
.....

For more information on Bansires or Cabaret, please contact The Family, 947-7171-7173.

Aug/Sept The Family is under consideration to represent America in the Latin American Theatre Festival in Cuba.

Sept 5 Boat Ride Cabaret/Disco

Oct 4. Benefit Gospel Songfest by Gilbert Price*
Holy Trinity Church, 341 East 87 Street
Time: 8 p.m. Price: \$10

* Proceeds will go towards The Family's upcoming trip to Nancy, France.

Oct 15-24 The Family will tour Nancy, France performing its productions of The Crucifixion, The Marriage Proposal, Straight from the Ghetto and a gospel songfest by Gilbert Price.

The Family is quite excited about this invitation to join in in the World Theatre Festival in France.

NOTES

- Workshop registration is now open. * Registration fee is \$25. Fee is for a year's membership with The Family and entitles you to participate in any of the 6-8 week workshops currently available in addition to any 1 and 2 day seminars offered. Workshops/Seminars: ethnic, speech, steel drum, basic music theory/ear training, play development and ensemble work, Playwrights Forum. There will be day and evening hours. Teaching staff for the Family: Gilbert Price, Raul Julia, Robbie McCauley, Marvin Felix Camillo, Tina Pratt, Charles Barnes.

* Final registration dates: July 1-3 & 6.
Reception: July 7 - Meet your teachers and fellow members.

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO (Executive/Artistic Director). He has performed as an actor on Broadway, Off-Broadway and on television. He studied acting with Lloyd Richards, Maxwell Glenville and the Urban Arts Corps where he worked with Vinnette Carrol and was a founding member of their repertory company. He was also a member of the Performing Arts Repertory Company and founder of the Teatro de la Calle in Newark, New Jersey, which is his home. He has worked as a special program consultant for the Council of the Arts in Westchester and has taught "Theatre as a Social Tool" at the College of New Rochelle. In prisons throughout this country, he has lectured, conducted workshops and seminars. Both here and in Europe, he has addressed numerous university and professional groups, including Rutgers University, Antioch College, Tufts University, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Puerto Rican Family Institute. He is a member of the Board of Directors for Youth Theatre Interactions in Yonkers, New York; Neil Harris Black Osmosis Theatre Company, as well as serving on the advisory board for Latino Playwrights. He has received a Drama Desk Award, an OSIE and numerous other awards for his artistic and humanistic work. Mr. Camillo recently received the key to the City of Newark.

SHAMSUL ALAM, (Playwright). Shamsul has spent five of his years in and out of Rikers Island for various infractions of the law. However, the total of his experiences have given him reflections and intuitiveness into the character of man which he has turned toward the theatre arts for the illumination of his ancylsas.

Of Black and Hispanic heritage he grew up on the streets of New York and New Jersey. He attended the College of New Rochelle and has studied acting with the Puerto Rican Travelling Theatre and the Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Group. He has been a member of The Family since 1978 where he studied acting with Raul Julia and Gilbert Price in The Family's workshops. As an actor he has appeared in *FM Safe*, *Looking for Tomorrow*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Marriage Proposal*, *Straight from the Ghetto*, *The Crucifixion* and can currently be seen in the movie *Night Hawks* with Sylvester Stallone and Billy Dee Williams. He has studied playwriting with Dan Owens.

Shamsul Alam has written several other plays, two of which have been presented at the University of Syracuse, *Just Like You and Boys of Bone*. *Bullpen*, the story of those caught on the wrong side of the legal system, was performed off-Broadway, well received and widely acclaimed. It was said of Shamsul in a review of *Bullpen*, "It's to Alam's credit that the audience leaves the Wander Horse Theatre entertained . . . enlightened - no small accomplishment for a first try at theatre." His newest play, *Visits*, will be produced and directed by Carlo Pinza of Latino Playwrights.

J. J. JOHNSON (Technical Director) J. J. is a founding member of The Family. He is also a member of the company's Board of Directors, and a resident member of The Repertory Company. He has appeared in *Short Eyes* as El Rahlim, *Shoeshine Parlor* and *Looking for Tomorrow*. J. J. has also appeared in several Shakespeare Festivals including *Julius Caesar*. His credits are numerous both as a technician and as an artist.

IFE SHIPP (Assistant Director). Ife is a founding member of The Family. She has worked as an assistant to the director and has worked in other aspects of the theatre. Ife has appeared in many of The Family's plays. "For a thing of beauty is a joy forever, it will never pass into nothingness."

RUTH KINTER (Technical Assistant/Box Office) has performed Off-Broadway in the American Theatre of Actors in *A Death in the Family* as well as several other Off-Off Broadway productions. This fall Ruth played in the one act play *Juncture*. "I'm thrilled to be working with The Family which is a constant inspiration."

1981 PRISON TOUR

Each year The Family has performed in from ten to thirty prisons, rehabilitation centers and alternative schools throughout the state. Productions are made up of from fifteen to twenty actors, musicians and technicians, and are part of The Family's repertory. The company also provides theatre seminars or full-scale workshops after these performances.

Because The Family's roots are in the prisons and since many of the members and some of their works have come from the prisons, this tour is of great importance to the company. However, due to the fact that this tour must be totally funded (because booking fees or admission cannot be charged), it is becoming increasingly difficult to travel to as many institutions as are anxious to have The Family perform.

The Board of Directors and staff are beginning to develop a more commercial tour and workshop program which will bring the company to communities, colleges and universities who can afford to pay, thereby helping to underwrite the institutional tour. The Family has just completed a successful four-day seminar and tour to Tufts University, and prospects look good for others. The Family Cabaret is also becoming part of the program as a smaller, lower cost touring production. The Family is planning to tour during 1981-82 throughout the following counties: Cayuga, Chemung, Wyoming, Orleans, Clinton, Genesee, Washington, Columbia, Ulster, Putnam, Orange, Nassau, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Westchester.

THE FAMILY, INC.
410 WEST 42ND STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10036
212-M-1171

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO
EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
ALAN TOBIAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR

COLLEEN DE WILHELM
ADULTS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS
LEN WARDEN
PRODUCTION
VICTOR GERBER
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
POLLY WOOD
SECRETARY
MICHAEL BOLES
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
L. ELIZABETH BERGER
DAVID HENNINGSON
DR. CHARLES LEON
CYCILE WALKER
PATRICIA
STEVEN HART
CHARLOTTE BARNES
MELISSA BARNES
JULIA BARNES
DEBRA WARDEN
WALTER WARDEN
WENDY WARDEN
Dyanne Brown
Gilbert Johnson
Lory Rivera
Doris Nicholson
J. J. Johnson

Dear Patron,

The Family has been my life's commitment for the past ten years. It has been my belief that the arts are meant for all and that there must be room for sharing and creativity in our homes, our schools, our institutions, prisons, our community and in the hearts of those who govern our lives.

In the difficult, fascinating and rewarding eight-year history of The Family, we share a sense of pride and accomplishment in being able to make major contributions to the artistic community and to the improvement of quality of health and life in our society.

The requisite discipline and ensemble playing have given The Family not only the pride of achievement but also artistic and critical acclaim. The Family has been invited to tour the churches and cultural centers in Europe's "World Theatre Festival" where we will present The Crucifixion, Straight from the Ghetto, The Marriage Proposal and a gospel songfest by Gilbert Price. Of course, we have accepted. Even though our share of the cost is minimal in relation to the entire cost to the festival to bring us over, it is still monies that we are hard pressed to get. We will be facing the same problem again since we have been selected to attend "The Latin American Theatre Festival" which will be held in Cuba. And, we are being considered to tour several countries in Africa.

We need your help. Won't you please make a contribution. We need the support of every individual in the community so that we may share our talents to those around. Anything you contribute would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marvin Felix Camillo (Pancho)

In support of the efforts of The Family, Inc., enclosed please find my pledge of:
\$ _____ (paid herewith); or \$ _____ (to be paid as follows)

Signature: _____ Name: _____

(Please Print)

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

-2-

CARMEN ROSARIO (Mother - Ana Quinones) has just returned from touring Europe where she received marvelous reviews for her role in Simpson Street. Carmen will also be in the upcoming Family Cabaret.

ZORAIDA RUIZ (Vickie) "I met The Family in the year of '77 through Raymond Ruiz. I have performed in many of their productions such as The Marriage Proposal and Looking for Tomorrow and Beckled on a Sea of Diplomacy. I also have worked with the props and costumes for most of the productions. Today I try to volunteer most of my time to The Family in as many ways as I can."

DAVID HOUSMAN (Sam the Man) first joined The Family in its production of Short Eyes. He has portrayed roles as varied as Petrachio in The Taming of the Shrew and Perchik in Fiddler. David's television appearances include "One Life to Live" and "Edge of Night." He is featured in the film Between the Lines They All Laughed and The Wolfen.

FRANK ROJAS (Man #1) has been studying theatre for the past four years at Syracuse University. He relates his best experiences so far have been the production of Short Eyes at Syracuse where he was not only part of the technical and artistic end of the production but played the character Cupcakes. Frank also played one of the aids in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. His first professional piece outside of college was at the Salt City Playhouse in Syracuse, New York where he played the role Mich. Frank has worked with La Familia on the technical end of The Marriage Proposal. Benjires marks his debut as an actor with La Familia.

FELIX ROJAS (Man #2) began with La Familia a year and a half ago. He attended Syracuse University for two years. At Syracuse he made his stage debut in Short Eyes as a prison guard and as the Collector in A Streetcar Named Desire. "My goals are to be happy and surrounded by a lot of love and fulfill my objectives in life."

HILDA ELENA GARCIA (Understudy/Mother/Vickie) is a graduate of John Jay College with a B.A. in Government. Hilda studied dance at Madam Paurrich. During her school career, she has performed in South Pacific, Bye Bye Birdie and Ball of Confusion. Her background in theatre arts is varied. She has worked with props, scenery, design and scoring music. Hilda is presently attending The New York School for Music. "I feel that I have a lot to learn, yet I have a lot to give in the way of inspiration, creativeness, freshness of insight, and the dept of human experience."

JUAN TENARIO (Understudy Juan/Alternate for Tito) has participated in The Family workshop program and has been involved with the group for approximately one year. "I am excited about being a cast member of Benjires."

Mr. Camillo, executive artistic director of the Family, an invaluable theater company consisting largely of former prison inmates, has transposed the play from Russia to an imaginary Caribbean island. This is a sunshine paradise with singing in the cane fields and a calypso band in the back yard and perched on the roof — a cozily atmospheric setting by David Mitchell. Despite the dislocation, Chekhov, or rather this free-handed variation, proves to be at home in the West Indies. As the director says in the program, "It seems that Chekhov wrote this piece for us."

The play's three characters have been turned into a retired Caribbean captain, his nubile daughter and her suitor. The youngsters are eager to wed but are always embattled. Every time they meet, before they can approach courtship they have a dispute. They squabble over property ownership or the comparative merits of their pet dogs, or they simply end up insulting each other.

Raymond Ruiz plays the young man as a nervous, self-effacing soul who frequently suffers "palpitaciones de mi corazon." We and his prospective bride keep wondering if he can possibly survive until the wedding. Ellen Cleghorne is the ardent, fiery-tempered love of his life, and the role of the father, the impatient intermediary between this apparently irreconcilable couple, is played with gusto by Mr. Camillo. Singing and dancing, he oversees the proposal as if he were a referee in a divorce court.

As adapter, he has opened the play up to include not only a troupe of straw-battled musicians playing a variety of island instruments, but also the people of the village, who seem constantly on parade. Led by the clarion-voiced Carmen Rosario as chief serenader, the chorus sings a slew of carefree folk songs of its own creation.



Gerry Goodstein

Marvin Felix Camillo in a scene from "The Marriage Proposal."

Theater: A Caribbean 'Marriage Proposal'

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1971

CABARET COMMITTEE STAFF

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO—PRODUCER
 ELLEN CLEGHORNE—ASST. PRODUCER
 J. J. JOHNSON—HOUSE MANAGER
 RAYMOND RUIZ—STAGE MANAGER/
 TALENT COORDINATOR
 CRAIG TANKARD—ASST. STAGE MGR.
 RASHEED ALI—LIGHT TECH.
 GILBERT PRICE—MUSICAL DIRECTOR
 CLAUDE JAY—PUBLICITY DIRECTOR
 KWAME JOHNSON—ASST. PUBLICITY
 CHERYL HAMILTON
 BARBARA HIGH
 ALBERTO MARTINEZ
 ANGEL CUBAN
 JUAN TENORIO
 ISASIA TENORIO
 GEORGE GUBERT



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 KERRIA THOMAS
 HERBERT QUINONES
 MERVIN ROCHE
 VERNA HAMILTON
 J. J. JOHNSON
 ELLEN CLEGHORNE
 JOSE SERRA
 THOMAS BURET
 GILBERT PRICE
 NOVE THEE PLAYERS

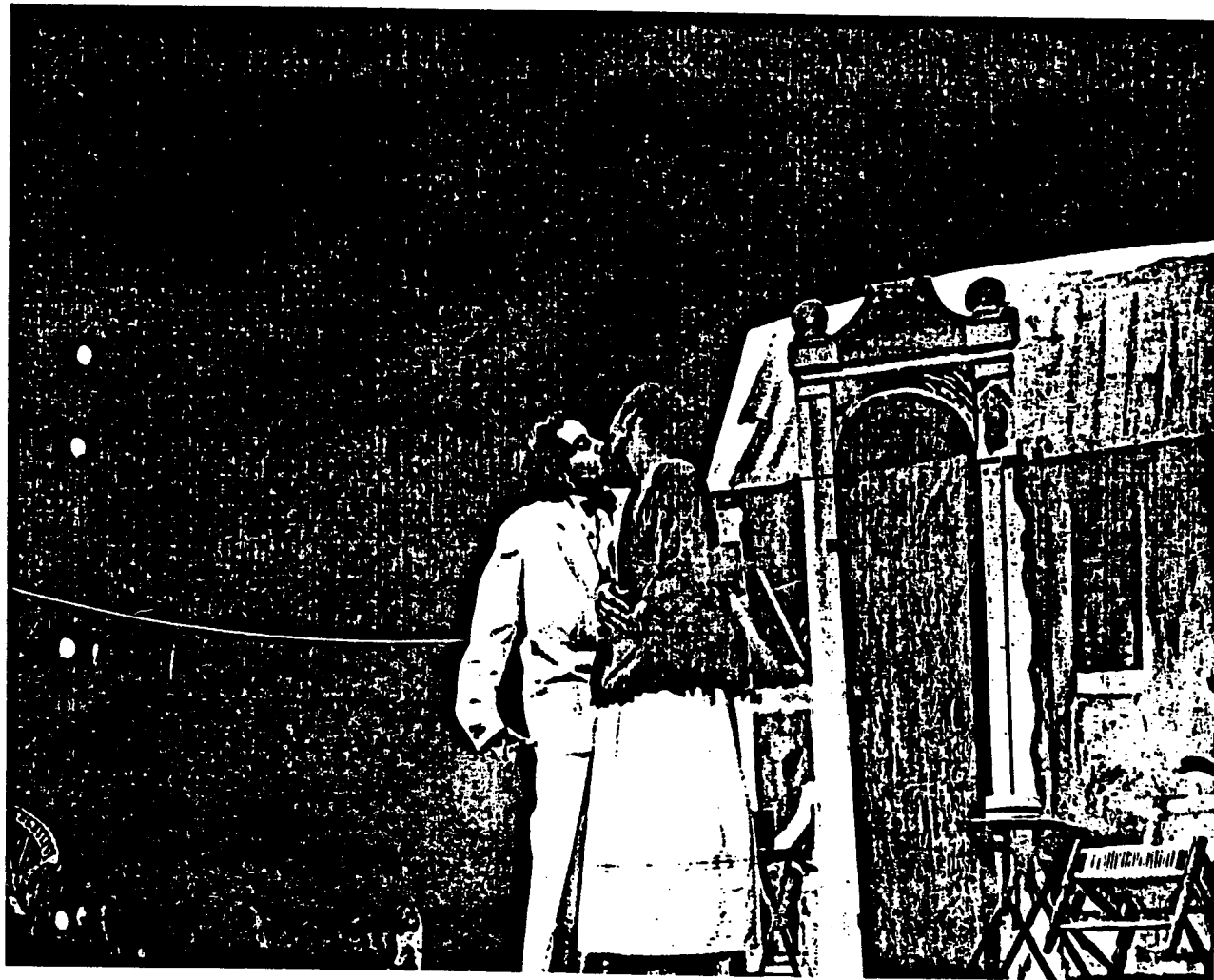
ROSALIE MCALLEY
 CLAUDE JAY
 CRYSTAL JOY
 CRAIG TANKARD
 GERDIE AGUIRRE
 LISA YVETTE VIDAL
 JOSE GASCA
 FELIX MORA
 CIPRIANO MELAO
 BELENDA BAGLAND

MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO, EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

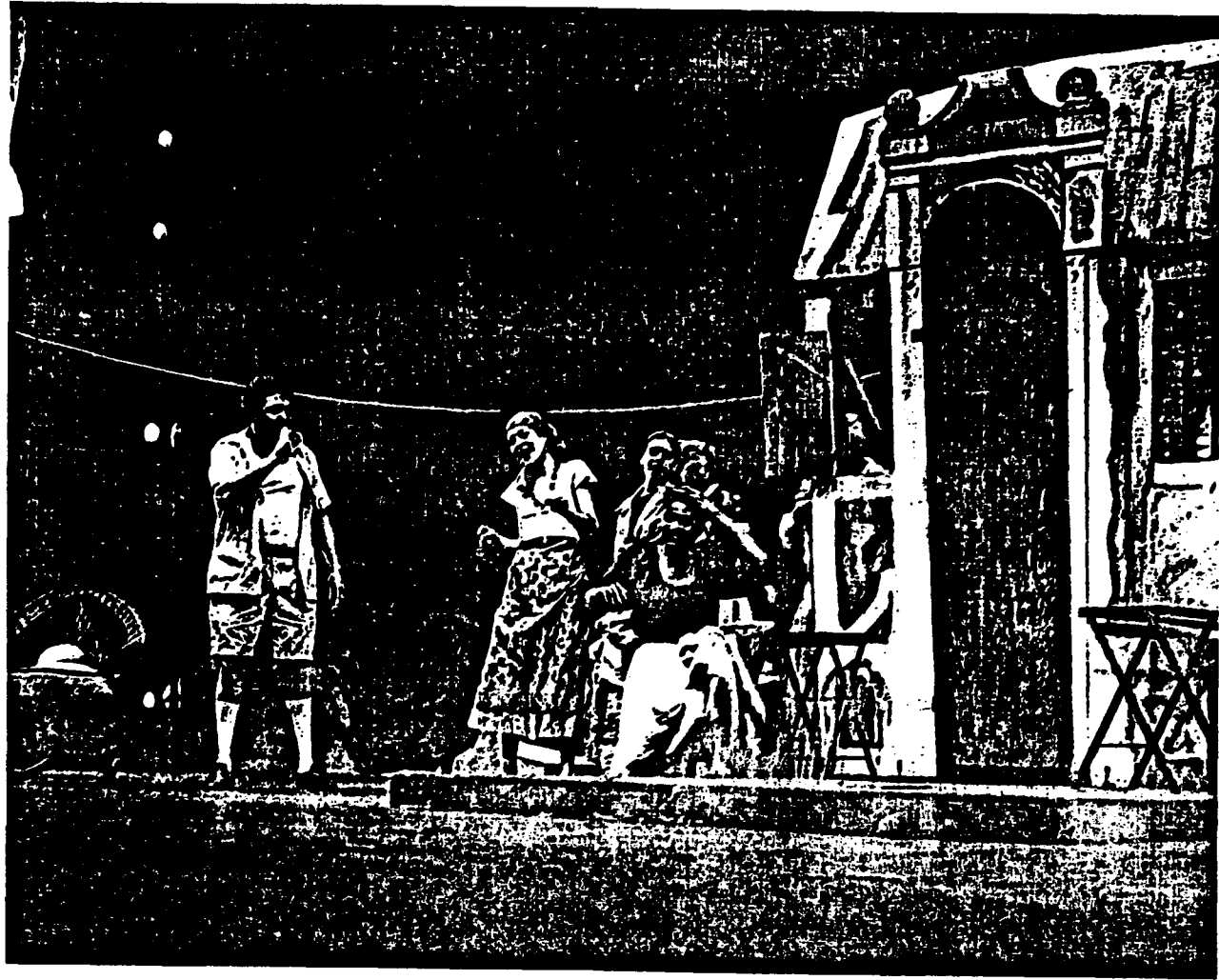
RESERVATIONS (212) 547-7171
 DOGS CONTRIBUTIONS \$5



Marvin Felix Camillo in The Marriage Proposal 1978 production at the Entermedia Theater



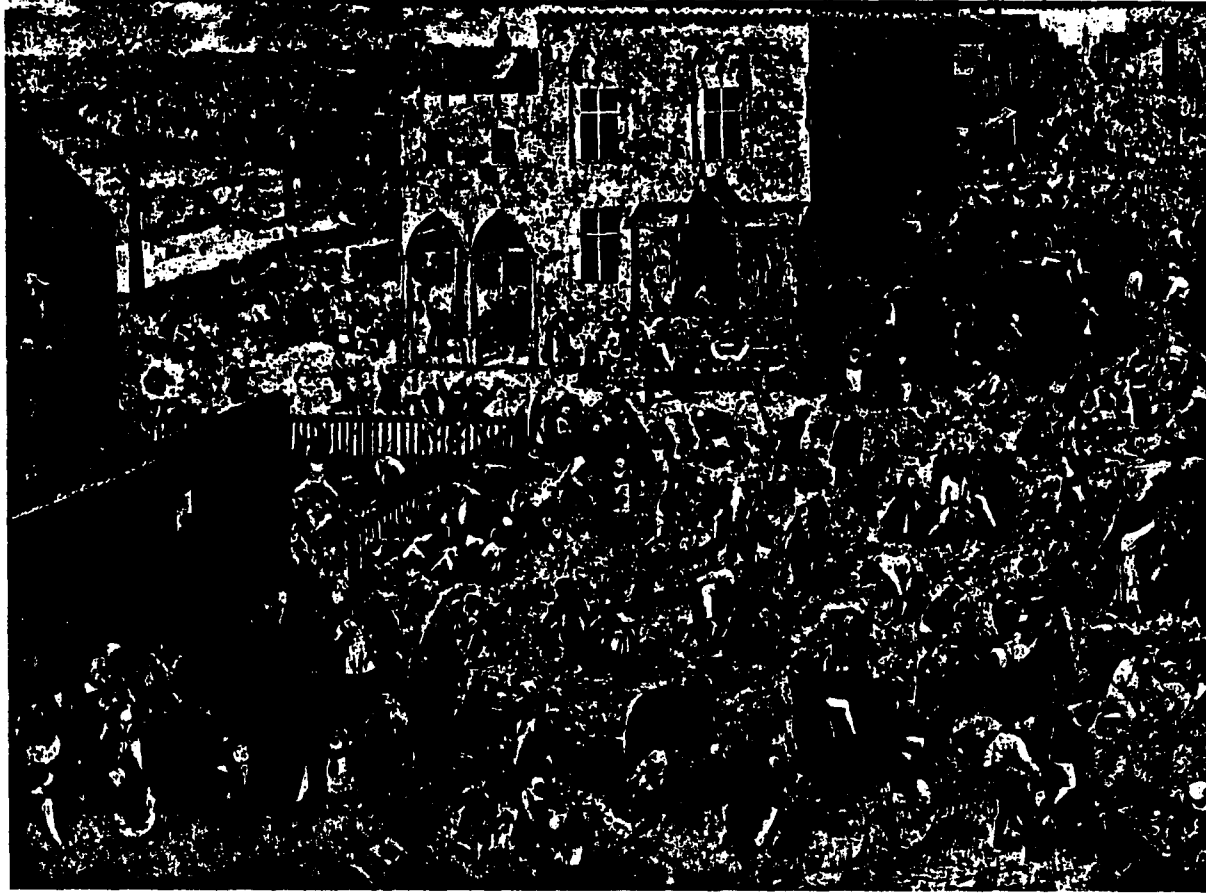
The Marriage Proposal 1978 production at the Entermedia Theater



The Marriage Proposal 1978 production at the Entermedia Theater



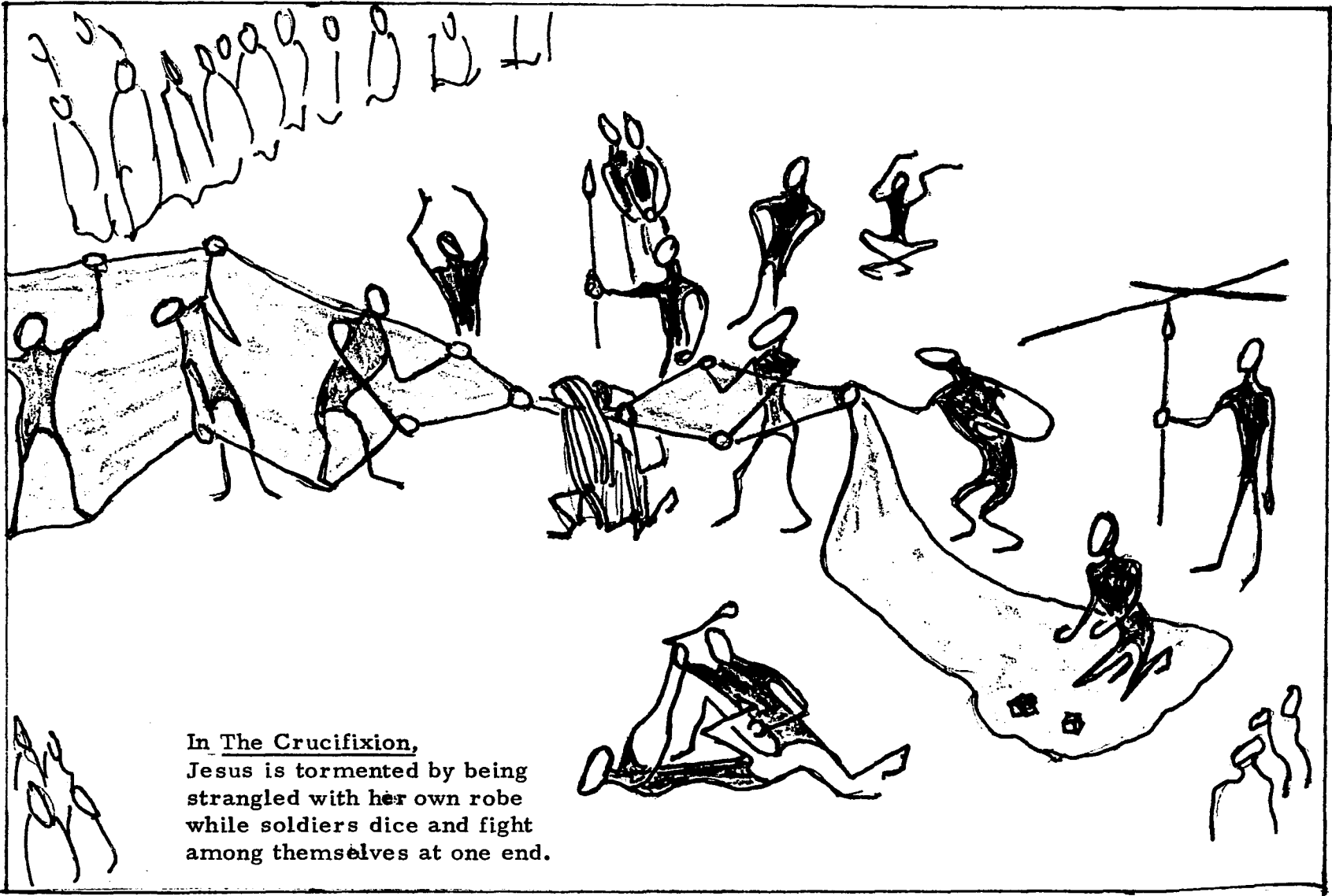
The Crucifixion Summer 1980 production



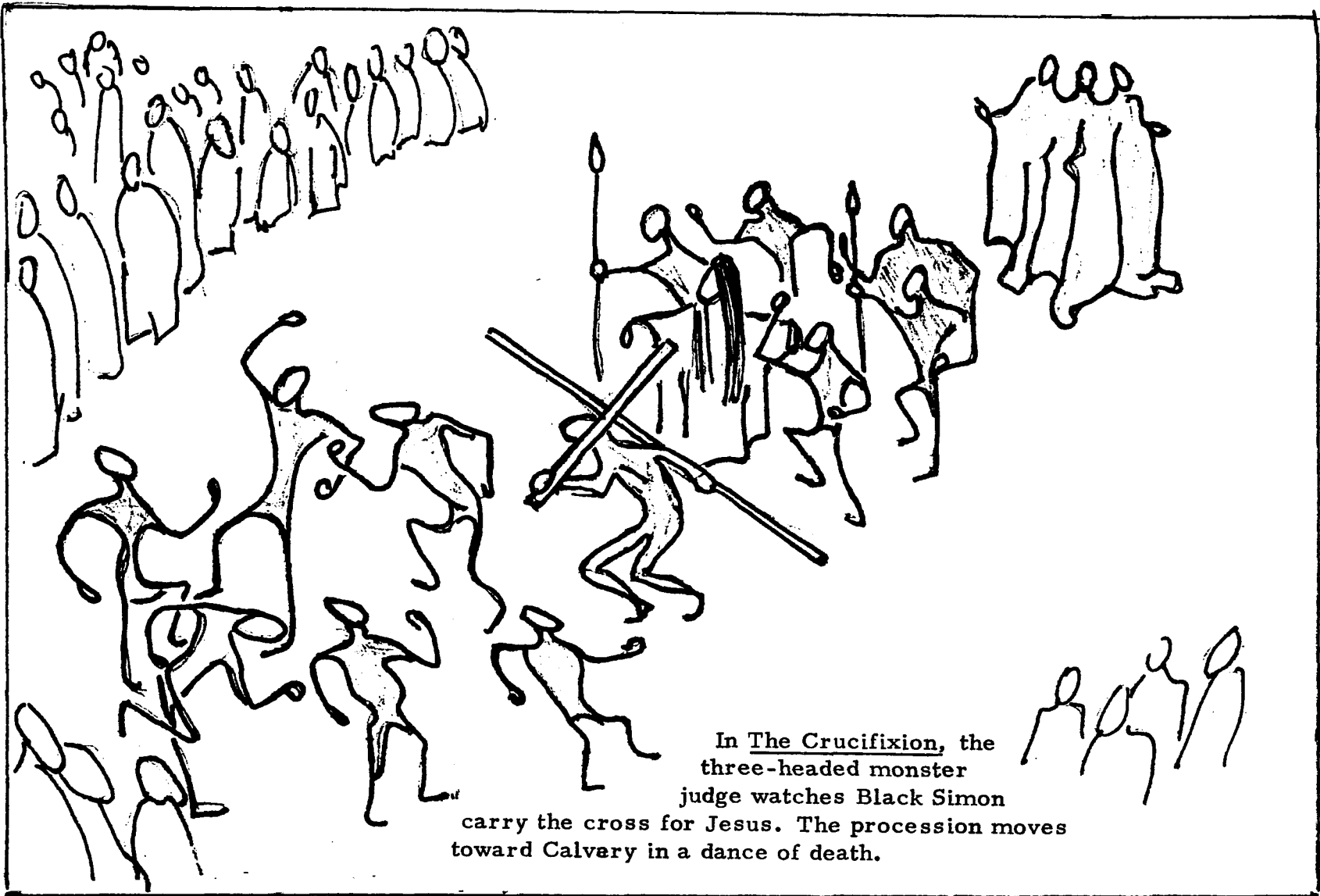
3. *CHILDREN'S GAMES*. 1560. Panel, 118 x 161 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



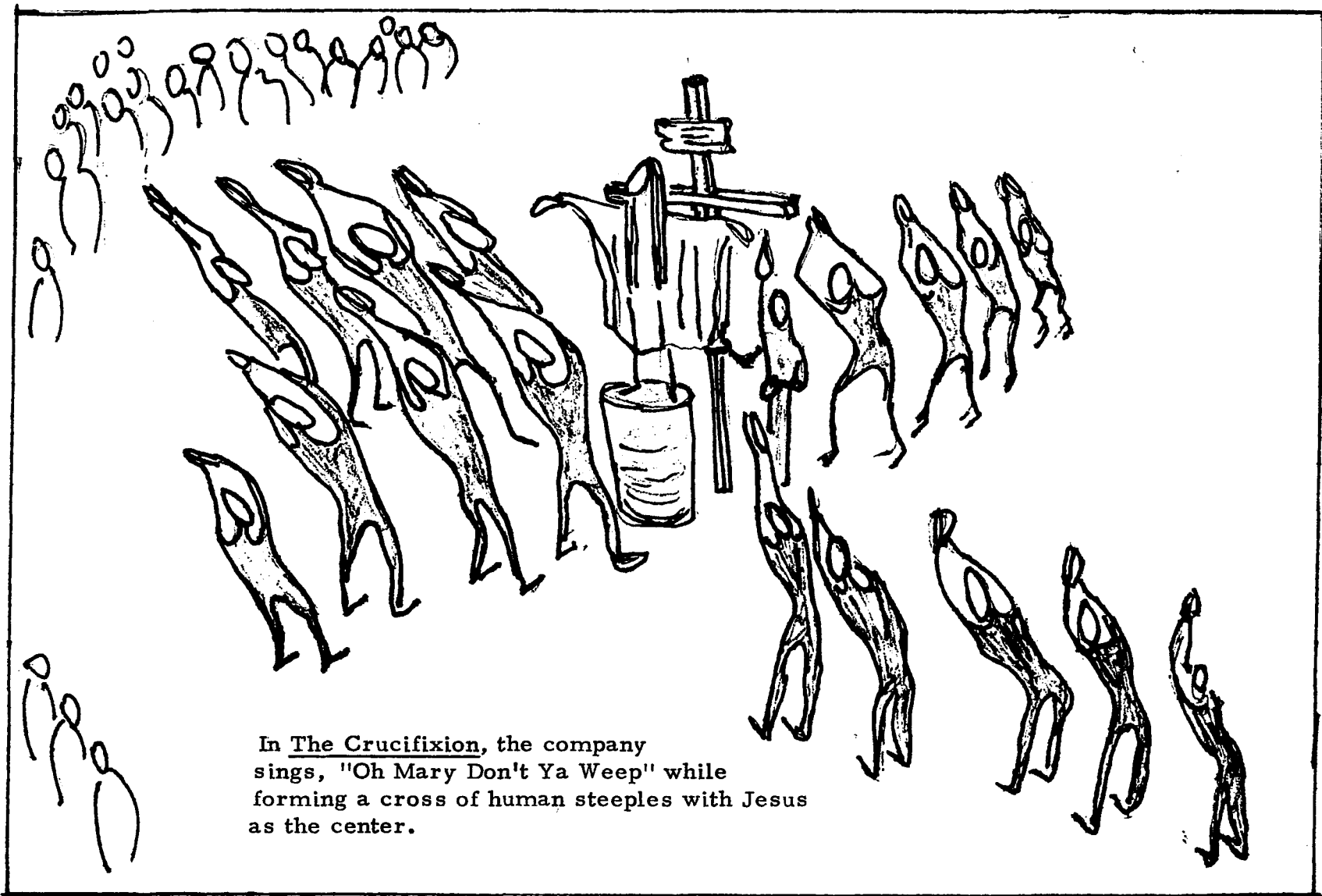
10. Detail from *CHILDREN'S GAMES* (Plate 3). 1560. Vienna, Kunathistorisches Museum



In The Crucifixion,
Jesus is tormented by being
strangled with her own robe
while soldiers dice and fight
among themselves at one end.



In The Crucifixion, the three-headed monster judge watches Black Simon carry the cross for Jesus. The procession moves toward Calvary in a dance of death.



In The Crucifixion, the company sings, "Oh Mary Don't Ya Weep" while forming a cross of human steeples with Jesus as the center.

APPENDIX C. MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

1.	SELECTED FAMILY AWARDS AND CITATIONS.....	306
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The Riverside Church

presents this certificate of appreciation to

Marvin Felix Camillo and The Family

resident director and company of the church

in recognition of your achievement through "Short Eyes".

We salute you for:

- staying with the struggle*
- sharing yourselves with us*
- helping engage us in the struggle*
- contributing your unique talent to the theatre arts*
- advancing the cause of criminal justice by your example*

June 2, 1974

Catharine Sutton

Robert L. Hall

Council for the Arts
in Westchester INC.
CITATION
presented to

Marvin Camillo

in recognition of your contribution to enriching the quality of life in Westchester.



Date:

11.19.74

George Christian Dewlin
Chairman of the Board

Polly Sussak
President



Drama Desk Award

1973 - 1974

presented to

Marvin Félix Camillo

for his direction of

"Short Eyes"

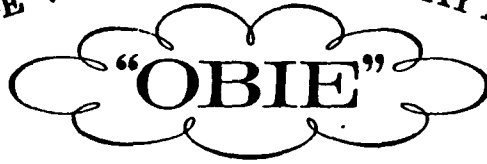
Emory Sewie

CHAIRMAN, AWARDS COMMITTEE

Henry Kerner

PRESIDENT, DRAMA DESK

VILLAGE VOICE OFF-BROADWAY AWARD



FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE OFF-BROADWAY THEATRE
A VILLAGE VOICE OFF-BROADWAY AWARD IS HEREWITH PRESENTED TO

Marvin Felix Camillo
Distinguished Direction
"Short Eyes"

Clara B...

1988

Z...

1988

Emory Lewis

1988

Arthur...

1988



MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO

Riverside Church honors you, a member of The Family and the cast of "Short Eyes," for your achievements in many areas.

We salute you for staying with the struggle and for helping engage us in the struggle.

We thank you for sharing yourself with us at Riverside.

We respect the courage it took to begin this venture of acting, especially in the early days of preparing "Short Eyes" for its Riverside opening.

We appreciate the gift of your unique talent to theatre arts.

We commend your efforts to advance the cause of criminal justice by your example.

We rejoice with you in your success in "Short Eyes."

We wish you well in all of your future endeavors.

Arthur Buntin
Robert L. Hall

June 2, 1974



ON BEHALF OF THE INMATE POPULATION OF
EASTERN NEW YORK CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

THE FAMILY

IS AWARDED THIS

Certificate Of Appreciation

FOR

Volunteer Service

GIVEN THIS 26th DAY OF APRIL NINETEEN HUNDRED AND 75

Nancy D. Doon
Co-ordinator, Volunteer Services



Certificate of Merit

CARIBE VILLAGE L.D.P.

This award is given to

MARVIN CAMILLO - LA FAMILIA THEATER GROUP

*for the outstanding work, time
and spirit He/She has contributed
grately to Caribe Village , Latin
Dialogue Program.*

Caribe Village - L.D.P.
Caribe Village L.D.P.

UNITED STATES JAYCEES: EASTERN CHAPTER

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IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

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29 DAY OF M a y 19 76

Alis King
P r e s i d e n t
Janis A. Brown
Internal Vice-President



BENJAMIN WARD

Department of Correctional Services

ALBION CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

ALBION, N. Y. 14400

TE. 736-859-5111

JANICE WARDLE CUMMINGS

August 22, 1978

Mr. Marvin Felix Camillo
 Artistic Director
 THE FAMILY, Inc.
 867 Madison Avenue
 New York, New York 10021

Dear Felix:

Thanks for the updated material on THE FAMILY.
 I am so glad that all your work and efforts have created
 such a success. You have helped a lot of people and that
 is no small thing in this day and age!

I was pleased that Ife, J.J. and Kenny are still
 with the group. I think Ife has a great voice and hope
 she gets the opportunity to use it often.

Please remember me when you have "things happen"
 to THE FAMILY. I'll always feel like a part of THE FAMILY
 and even though I am along ways away from you, I think
 of you often.

All the best to everyone -

Sincerely,

Janice W. Cummings
 Janice W. Cummings
 Superintendent

JWC:laf



**COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICAN
THEATER IN BOSTON**

The Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs
One City Hall Plaza, Boston, Mass. 02201
Telephone (617) 725-3005

November 15, 1978

THE COMMITTEE

ANDRES AQUINO
Title VII Bilingual Theatre Arts
in Education

GRACE BEARSE

LORRAINE ELENA BEN-UR
Wellesley College

SACHSEL CARLSON
Consulate of Ecuador

VICENTE CAYRO
Artyto: Loeb Drama Center,
Harvard University

MARCIA ERICKSON
Pan American Society

GABRIEL GARCIA
Galaxy Multimedia Center:
Hispanic Theater Co.

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Boston University

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Dept. of Transitional Bilingual
Education, Boston Public Schools;
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Hispanic Theater Co.

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Northeastern University

FINA ANTONIA WUPPERMAN
La Casa Española
Boston University

Mr. Marvin Felix Camillo and
The Family, Inc.
490 Riverside Drive
Riverside Church
New York, N.Y. 10027

Dear Mr. Camillo and The Family:

The Committee for Latin American Theater in Boston would like to express its deep appreciation to you for having participated in our 1978 Festival with your performance of "The Marriage Proposal." The event was a stunning and inspiring dramatic experience for those attending and of great significance to the public that attended-- Bostonians of many different ethnic origins.

The Committee is proud to have had a group of your stature and quality as part of its Festival. It was a pleasure to work with all of you in this community effort. Boston will long remember "The Marriage Proposal" in your extraordinary Caribbean synthesis and its message of brotherhood.

With deep appreciation and thanks,

Lorraine Elena Ben-ur

The Committee



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
 OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE
 CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATOR

HERBERT STURZ
 DEPUTY MAYOR

E. GORDON HAKSLOOP
 STEPHEN P. SAWYER
 DEPUTY COORDINATORS

ROBERT S. DAVIS
 COUNSEL

JOHN P. ENGEL
 ASSOCIATE COUNSEL

250 BROADWAY
 NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007
 966-0442

September 21, 1978

Mr. Marvin Felix Camillo
 Artistic Director/Administrator
 The Family
 867 Madison Avenue
 New York, New York 10021

Dear Mr. Camillo:

I want to thank you for your kind letter. I am pleased to have been associated with The Family, and salute your achievements in building a creative and constructive program which has helped so many ex-offenders to change the direction of their lives. You and your colleagues in The Family have my warmest good wishes for the future.

Sincerely yours,


 Herbert Sturz

HS:jcs

edco
METROPOLITAN EDUCATION CENTER

14 Beacon Street • Boston, Massachusetts 02108 • Tel. 742-0180 • John Moynihan, Director

April 17, 1979

Marvin Felix Camillo
 Artistic Director
 "La Familia"
 867 Madison Avenue
 N.Y.C., N.Y. 10021

Dear Pancho and all members of "La Familia":

On behalf of the EdCo Media/Arts staff, our heartfelt thanks for your magnificent performance of "The Marriage Proposal" at English High School last week. We felt extremely satisfied with the performance on many levels. First of all, the excitement and enthusiasm of the students and teachers who attended, -- you clearly reached a lot of folk! The nature of the theatre experience you construct with drama, dance and music is truly unique in that it allows the Hispanic students to have their particular identification and receive the special cultural acknowledgement they deserve, as well as to involve and include all kids in a highly captivating and positive way. We had twenty schools represented in the audience of 1,000 and they all walked away "high" from the experience. And the buses rolled away smoothly which marked another important point of success. No problems. No riots. The headmaster, originally wary of the idea of housing such a large congregation of students from all over the city in his school, was extremely pleased with how things turned out!

Thirdly, we got back to the office that afternoon to find out that we were awarded the grant from the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs in support of the performance and that they were very interested in getting La Familia for a residency during the summer in Boston. You'll probably be hearing from them soon!

And last, but certainly not least, is to express the deep regard with which we hold your entire company. To observe how you work together and to feel the commitment and energy that each member invests in being a creative part of this unique company is impressive. The warmth and care that each one extended to support each other as well as to "outsiders" such as ourselves, was very moving.

Once again, many thanks. We hope to work with you again in the near future.

Libbie Shufro
 Sincerely,
Libbie Shufro
 Libbie Shufro
 Arts Coordinator
 on behalf of,

Ellen Glanz
 Ellen Glanz
 Director

José Masso
 José Masso
 Media Coordinator

Gerry Field
 Gerry Field
 Program Assistant

Education Collaborative for Greater Boston

524.

Lock Box R
 Rahway NJ
 07065

To the Family:

To say thank you, in my opinion, is not really what "it's" all about. The "it's" are my feelings towards what you gave of yourselves here at Rahway State Pen.

I don't know what performers see, hear or sense of their audience from way way up there on that stage but I was out there, as one of many who ecstatically responded to all the funky, sad, sarcastic, humorous, serious and even sexy moods that you portrayed. If you didn't see "me", maybe you heard my particular applause and laughter, if not, maybe you felt some of the tension that had damed, even in the form of a tear or two (which I said for lack in time) In any case I took you (the Family) and what you were doing very personal, personal enough to wish I could have thanked you in person, for the high you gave.

I hope to experience you again within the next few years that I'm here, if not I'll be sure to check you out "streetside". In the mean time I hope you survive. You're doing something that's good and unusual; giving of yourself, telling a truth and than leaving that stage as if to say to
 (over)

us in here that maybe we can leave this one too.

I've got some surviving to try to do too, thanks for the assistance. — I think I speak for many of us inside and out.

This is a love letter to y'all and what you'd

Family Plan

peace
Linda

feeling like an orphan,
got some hopes without a home;
got no dreams for hopes to own;
got some blues and debts, and
dues I just can't share
and just can't pay,
just can't bare, and can't evade.
Got some feelings folks won't claim;
got a number but no name.
Got some heart but deep within
Gotta find myself,
gotta find some kin.
Gotta live and grow and give
among the others hopeless bound,
among us causes,
lost and found among a family.

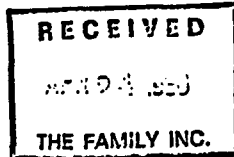
by
RH



THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE • SUITE 456 • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027 • 749-1214

Robert L. Polk, D.D.
Executive Director



April 24, 1980

Dear Friends,

Thank you for reminding me to see the extended performance of the "Crucifixion" at All Angels Church last week. I was indeed impressed with the production, the young cast, the work of Mr. Price and how it all came together so beautifully. You are to be commended for your continued work with THE FAMILY.

I trust your Spring and Summer repertoire will be filled with new pieces that will both stretch you and deepen your work in that you mean so much to audiences who can identify with your productions.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely,

Robert L. Polk, D.D.

RLP:eeo

Messrs. Rick Reed and Marvin Camillo
THE FAMILY, INC.
410 W. 42nd Street
New York, N. Y. 10036



November 21, 1978

Mr. Marvin Camillo
The Family Repertory Company
867 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

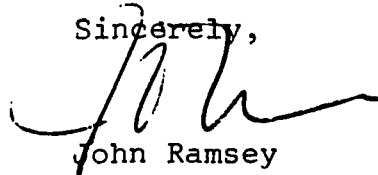
Dear Pancho:

I want to formally express my gratitude to you and members of the Repertory Company who participated in the Oxfam-St. James' hunger event November 17th.

Your extraordinarily creative, brilliantly conceived dramatization was a special gift to your audience. The spirit of your work, the magic of it, lingers with me even now.

I look forward to closer and more varied collaboration with The Family -- a family which will always have a home at St. James'.

Sincerely,



John Ramsey

JR:ps

REPORT: FUNDRAISING DISCO / CABARET
JUNE 30, 1979, STUDIO 8
252 W. 38TH STREET, NEW YORK

AUGUST 3, 1979

HISTORY

The Fundraising Disco/Cabaret grew out of a need to have a celebration to culuminate The Family Festival at The Black Theatre Alliance. And in this vein the Disco Committe was formed: Claude Jay Chairman, Sophie Donarumo Co-Chairman, Wayne Friedman Co-Chairman, John Alam, Charles Barney, Barbara Briggs, Al Berreana, Marvin Felix Camillo, Ron Harris, Kathy Hansen, Richard Perez, Fred Price, Gilbert Price, Ringo Reyes and Cecilia Sheppard, and Lydia Stratter, and Ruth Beckman, *HELEN E. GOODWIN*

OBJECTIVES

- To sell 500 tickets at \$5.00 totaling \$2,500.00; which will enable The Family to continue to sponors free acting and Voice workshops, to present free public performances (park, schools, churdhs, etc.), to fulfill the commitment of the annual prison tour.
- To spread the goals and philosphy of The Family;
- To celebrate the successful Family Festival 79-80 at The Black Theatre Alliance;

THE AFFAIR

At 10:00p.m. Saturday, June 30, 1979 at Studio 8 252 w. 38th Street The Family Fundraising Disco/cabaret began, music by D.J. Randy Johnson. The physical layout include a large dance floor, lounge area, and a intimate cabaret room. At 12:30a.m. the cabaret began which included performances by students from the Julia Richmond Theatre workshop, directed by Ellen Celleghorne, and Raymond Ruiz, The Yonkers Mime Timers, directed by Quamie Johnson, selections by Claude Jay and special added attraction selection by Gilbert Price. Music, mime, food, fun, frolic, laughter and love filled the air and marked The Family Fundraising Disco/Cabaret.

THE FUTURE

As a result of a successful Fundraising Disco/Cabaret the committee has set out to enhance the future of The Family and is in the process of outlining goals and objectives. Too, a second project has been taken on the The Family Festival -By The Rivar: August 4&5, Pier 84 10:00 a.m. 8:00 p.m.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Expenses-	
Space	\$400.00
Disc Jockey	90.00
Food	178.43
Tickets, flyers	117.44
Piano Player	<u>50.00</u>
	\$835.87
Received in Cash	\$1040.00
" " Checks	<u>25.00</u>
Total	1065.00
Cash & Checks	1065.00
Paid Expenses	<u>835.87</u>
Profit	229.13*
Monies Owed to Family	74.00

CABARET! DISCO!

Presented by
THE FAMILY
REPERTORY CO.

410 W. 42nd St

Theatre Row
btwn. 9th & 10th

GUEST ARTISTS
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT!

Tony Award Nominee
GLBERT PRICE
and Others

REFRESHMENTS

JUNE 7
SATURDAYS 14
21
11pm until 28

\$5 in ADVANCE
\$7 at DOOR

(212) 947-7171

These Cabarets
Are Part of the
Family Repertory
Spring Season 1980

2-88-9000

FOR INFORMATION:

*TICKET ENTRIES YOU TO MAKE IN RAFFLE.

10:00 AM. to 8:00 P.M.

\$1 GENERAL ADMISSION
\$0.50 UNDER 12
SENIOR CITIZENS FREE

ATI
ON 44th ST & 12th AVE
\$4
AUGUST 4+5

THE FAMILY FESTIVAL BY THE RIVER 79-80

AS PART OF
"Becoming On a Sea of Diplomacy"
-AND-
"MARRIAGE PROPOSAL"

Show Time
2:00pm Sat Aug 4th
+
2:00pm Sun Aug 5th

THE Family
REPERTORY ENSEMBLE, INC.

La Familia
presents

The Marriage Proposal
A CALYPSO LATIN MUSICAL COMEDY

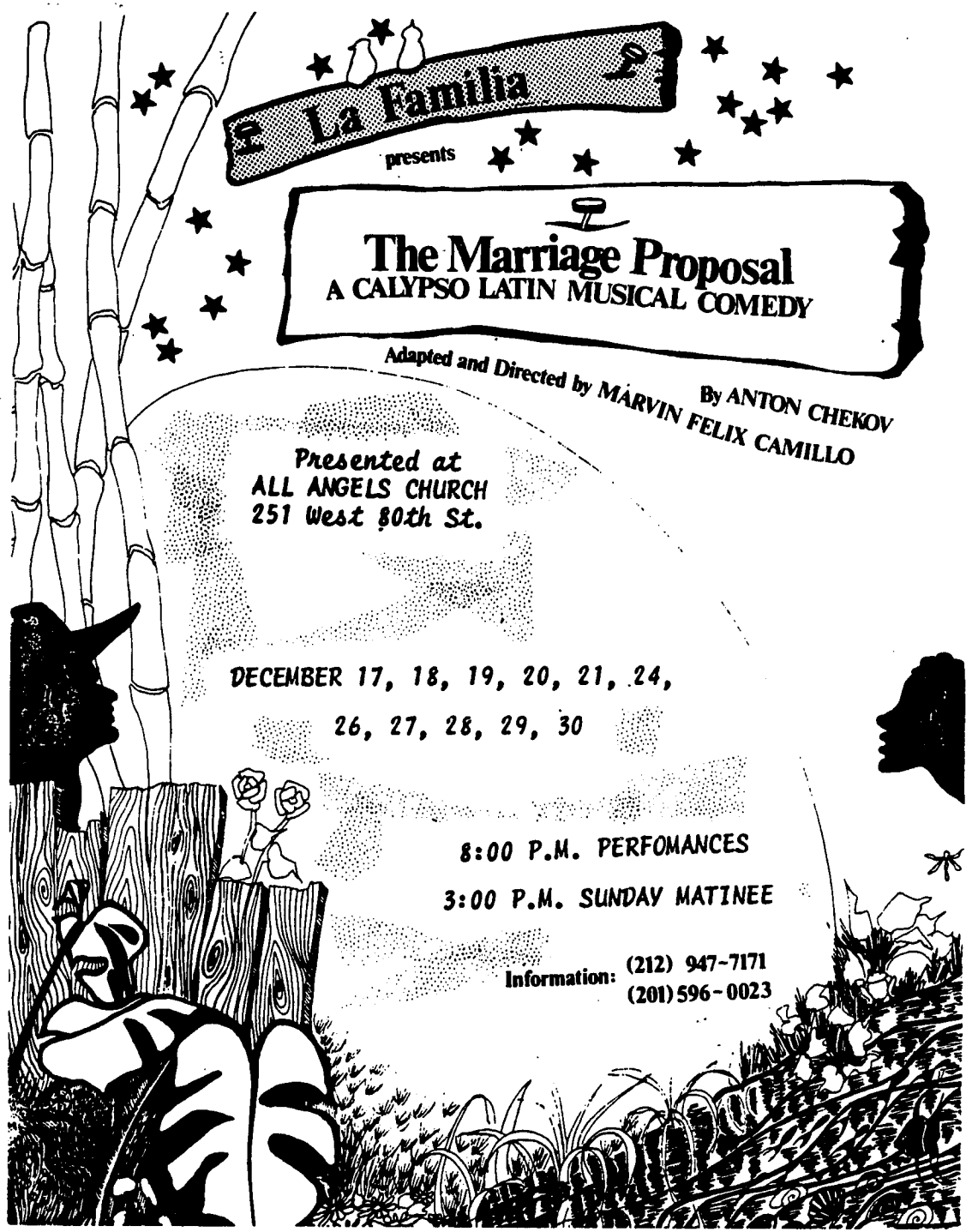
Adapted and Directed by **MARVIN FELIX CAMILLO**
By **ANTON CHEKOV**

Presented at
ALL ANGELS CHURCH
251 West 80th St.

DECEMBER 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24,
26, 27, 28, 29, 30

8:00 P.M. PERFORMANCES
3:00 P.M. SUNDAY MATINEE

Information: **(212) 947-7171**
(201) 596-0023



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