

prise possible. IN
r, Classic Stage Company,
-4210. (Feingold)

STIVAL CELEBRATING DAWN
of our five best modern
ck in print, with her major
nced in the Library of
attention to her plays. Like
rs of her day, Dawn Powell
fought with it, but couldn't
ing. Over the next three
l events and readings at a
he festival's two kickoff
most interesting: *Jig Saw*,
ommercially produced, and
Life and Other Cautionary
hree Powell short stories,
cutive nights at the tiny,
heatre, whose brainchild
NS FRIDAY, THROUGH FEBRUARY
URDAY, THROUGH JANUARY 29,
36 West 78th Street, 873-
ld)

sh gallantry and machismo
e when a young courtier
ady in a mansion where a
ecret panel. Pedro Calderón
t cloak-and-dagger comedy
i more acid comments about
tle of the sexes may sound
The Pearl Theatre's resident
ulating escapade in Edwin
station, and we can be sure
ho's read the original, since
Español's artistic director,
NS MONDAY, Theatre 80, 80
(Feingold)

r South African playwright-
to prominence four decades
rothers, one black and one
new play, starting previews
en in post-apartheid South
black, who've shared the
t his funeral. How political
'll have to wait and see.
rong actors; his potentially
its Judith Light against
ohn Glover as intermediary.
OUGH FEBRUARY 24, Second
t, 246-4422. (Feingold)

lizes in short, mesmerizing
t characters, like Virginia
Itz or the young Chinese
es *A Feather on the Breath*
r of her latest fiction, *For*
is reading this week), is a
who grew up in a Staten
works dead-end jobs. It's
h that Nuñez reveals the
at her brief but incendiary
was the high point of her
7:30, Barnes & Noble, 675
ress)

Soaring above an impressive promontory overlooking the LIE and Calvary Cemetery, this former diner almost qualifies as a palace. The food certainly is royal—deeply colored and richly flavored stews of lamb, goat, shrimp, and poultry, including one of the best renditions of chicken korma I've ever tasted. Bindi masala also impresses, offered in a dried-cooked version stir-fried with bell and chile peppers, as does a particularly fiery lamb vindaloo. The staff is very accommodating about adjusting spices to your liking. Open late into the morning (5 a.m.), Tandoori Palace is a notch above the usual Punjabi cab-driver hangs. —ROBERT SIETSEMA

Regulars

CHORO ENSEMBLE Sundays from 8:30 to 10:30, Jules Bistro, 65 St. Marks Place, 477-5560



BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE CHORO ENSEMBLE RESUSCITATES THE BRAZILIAN STYLE.

In keeping with the French's long-standing reputation for recognizing good music (while producing little of their own), some of the better Brazilian sounds in town can be heard at Jules Bistro when the Choro Ensemble is *dans la maison*. There's a precedent for this: About the time the French were embracing the exoticism of Josephine Baker, they also fell for the choro music of Pixinguinha, the first Brazilian musician contracted to play abroad. The Jules crowd is probably seduced by the Choro Ensemble for much the same reason: Their wistful Dixieland sound is incongruous enough that it has to be felt before it can be understood.

Choro is to bossa nova and samba as ragtime is to bebop and later forms of jazz, although it actually predates ragtime by a few decades. It began in the mid 19th century as a Brazilian take on European dance music like polka and waltz, but its identity really came together when Pixinguinha added Afro-Brazilian percussion to the mix. After a couple decades of heavy circulation at home and abroad, choro became an endangered genre in the '50s, when bossa nova broke out as Brazil's calling card. More to the point, the older musical form was assimilated into emergent ones—"Chega de Saudade," the inaugural bossa nova tune by Carlos Jobim, is a camouflaged choro. The Choro Ensemble is alone in their rescue-and-recovery mission in New York, but there's a full-scale choro revival in Rio, where pubescent Cariocas with naval rings and tribal tattoos are reportedly bumping and grinding to Brazil's golden oldies.

The music at Jules is authentic stuff, played in a style you would have heard in Rio cafés in the '20s and '30s, with the traditional instrumentation of that period: clarinet, cavaquinho (a small, ukulele-like guitar), bass guitar, and pandeiro (Brazilian tambourine). The Choro Ensemble's neo-trad approach commits the group to covering lots of Pixinguinha, who's referred to as "our divine master" without a hint of irony. You'll also hear classics by Jacob do Bandolim, like "Noites Cariocas"—you've heard it before, or will feel like you have, even if you haven't.

Ze Mauricio lays down the shuffling Afro-Brazilian rhythmic base on pandeiro, while Pedro Ramos picks a wicked cavaquinho (You can't help thinking that players of miniature guitars necessarily become highly skilled because they can't derive any big-time phallic power from their instruments). Choro's exuberance makes it sound simple, but that's deceptive: Guitarist Gustavo Dantas manages contrapuntal complexity worthy of Bach and throws in some tricky chord substitutions to keep Israeli clarinetist Anat Cohen sharp in her improvisations. Choro means "crying," and probably refers to the lifting or weeping qualities of the lead instrument. To risk some racial profiling: The music's yearning Portuguese melodies and speedy, virtuosic runs are not such a stretch for an Israeli schooled in klezmer, which can also be simultaneously plaintive and frisky.

With the preponderance of all varieties of Musica Popular Brasileira today, choro can sound anachronistic, especially in the hands of young players. But this untimeliness lends it that irresistibly spooky feeling of something forgotten, or not yet arrived. Like all Brazilian music, choro is infectious—it's easy to listen to and, taken with a glass or five of bordeaux, makes for a surefire Sunday-night recovery from the weekend. —MICHELLE MERCER