

Puerto Rican talent storms mainland

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — New York Yankees Bernie Williams, Ricky Ledee and Jorge Posada helped win the World Series. Singer Ricky Martin is burning up the charts. Boxing champ Felix "Tito" Trinidad just unseated golden boy Oscar de la Hoya.

They all hail from the Spanish-speaking U.S. territory Puerto Rico — part of a wave of new stars that also includes New York-born singers Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony.

Although some Puerto Ricans lament that it is their athletes and singers — not scientists and writers — who are achieving all the fame, many more are loving their day in the pop culture sun.

"It's like the world is suddenly discovering the talent we have," said Tito Peraza, owner of the Milagros Barbecue in Cupey, Puerto Rico, where Trinidad grew up eating seasoned red beans and sweet yellow plantains.

Trinidad's upset of Mexican-

American Oscar De La Hoya in September was watched by millions. Martin, Lopez and Anthony have stormed Billboard charts, and 10 Puerto Ricans were nominated for Grammys this year.

Puerto Rican successes are not unprecedented. They include baseball great Roberto Clemente, actor Raul Julia, singer Jose Feliciano and boxer Wilfredo Gomez. But the magnitude of the current crop is impressive considering there are only 4 million Puerto Ricans here and 2 million on the mainland.

The phenomenon is rooted in social and cultural factors.

Puerto Ricans credit their wealth of athletes to strong sports leagues, including six professional baseball teams.

The island is also fertile ground for musicians. Official news conferences often feature live music, and no political rally is complete without a roster of bands.

Small recording studios churn out

jingles for a booming radio market and inexpensive albums featuring salsa, merengue, plena, bolero and rap-reggae groups.

The U.S. Hispanic population will become the largest minority group by 2010, according to the Census Bureau, and such growth feeds demand and easier artist access to producers and scouts.

"It is all linked with the rise of Hispanics in the United States," said Martin's manager, Angelo Medina.

Martin and Anthony have also expanded their audience with English-language albums.

The cultural successes have accompanied a surge of Puerto Rican nationalism, fueled by the release from prison of 11 Puerto Rican independence activists and the controversy about live U.S. Navy bombings on the populated outlying island of Vieques.

Martin, Trinidad and others have pushed for the closure of the bombing range.

Martin — whose World Cup soccer

anthem, "La Copa de la Vida," was adopted by Puerto Rico's pro-statehood party — has promised to bring up Vieques when he meets President Clinton in January.

Sociologist Ricardo Alegria complained that while the United States knows the island's athletes and musicians, the language barrier, and ignorance of Latin American culture, has blinded Americans to other contributions.

Writer Luis Rafael Sanchez, for example, is one of Latin America's most acclaimed writers but has published only one book in English. Novelist Rosario Ferre was barely known in the United States until her first book in English, "The House on the Lagoon," was nominated for a National Book Award in 1995.

The island also boasts historians and political theorists, a small group of respected filmmakers and a flourishing art scene led by internationally known painters Rafael Tufino, Arturo Martorell and Luis Alonzo.

Play deals with desire for better life

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this purpose, because the characters are equal throughout, Dobson said.

Although the play may sound as if it is serious, it has a definite comic undertone. Chekhov himself even described it as a comedy.

Dobson said, "The way these people deal with their longing and suffering provides a little bit of comic relief."

Serious and funny, the play will continually make reference to one theme, which points to humans as always being unsettled.

Chekhov wrote, "We struggle to change life so that those who come after us might be happy, but those who come after us will say as usual: 'It was better before, life now is worse than it used to be.'"

'Pee-wee' producer Shapiro to present lectures at UNL

By **SHELLEY MIKA**
Staff writer

"Pee-wee's Big Adventure" isn't exactly a journey to the heart of the American dream. OK, it's about a guy who wears too much rouge and wants to find his bike.

Nevertheless, it represents one man's climb to the top of the ladder of success.

"Pee-wee's Big Adventure," along with "Empire of the Sun" and "My Favorite Martian," were produced by Robert Shapiro's own production company, Robert Shapiro Productions.

Friday, Shapiro will visit the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to talk about his experiences in film.

Shapiro's career didn't start at the top. Instead, his own journey toward the American dream began in the mailroom of the William Morris Agency, a talent and literary agency whose clients include Arnold Schwarzenegger, Whitney Houston and Tom Clancy.

Shapiro quickly worked his way through the ranks at William Morris, eventually working as head of its television talent department and vice president of its motion picture department. By age 28, he was the managing director of William Morris' London office.

Then, in 1974, after moving back to the United States, Shapiro became the head of the international motion picture department at William Morris. In this position, Shapiro counseled writers and directors about their material in order to get it closer to the production process.

But he could stay on the periphery of production for only so long.

After several years at William Morris, Shapiro left the agency to form his own production company. At the same time, Warner Bros. hired him as president of its theatrical production division. There, he maintained a close relationship with writers, directors and actors.

Shapiro's previous experience taught him about the process prior to filming, but his years at Warner taught him about the process beyond that, including the physical production, marketing and distribution of films.

After six years at Warner, Shapiro decided to focus on his own company. Since then, Robert Shapiro Productions has released a number of films. Shapiro has also been nominated for a Golden Globe Award and received the Christopher Award and the Genesis Award for best picture for "Black Beauty."

Friday, Shapiro brings his experience to the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery as part of the Harris lectures, sponsored by Chris and Ron Harris. The free lecture series is designed to expose students to working professionals in the areas of film and television, but it is also open to the public.

Shapiro, who has lectured at universities such as Harvard in Cambridge, Mass., and New York University, should provide a well-rounded and realistic view of the film industry. Shapiro's lectures will be held on the first floor of the Sheldon on Friday at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. and at 2:30 p.m.

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