

ARTE Y DISEÑO

Hispanics Seek Their Hollywood Moment

By BROOKS BARNES

LOS ANGELES — After black actors and films that focused on black characters were overlooked for Oscar nominations in 2015 and 2016, the #OscarsSoWhite outcry forced Hollywood to listen. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences began a diversification effort, and last year there were six black acting nominees, a record.

But the minority group that Hollywood excludes the most — Latinos — is trying to create its own moment. “We are expecting that we are going to have to go to the Academy Awards this year and demonstrate,” said Alex Nogales, president of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, a watchdog organization. “We’ve tried to push in less hostile ways. But these studios don’t seem to understand anything else.”

Latinos make up 18 percent

of the population in the United States and 23 percent of its frequent moviegoers — those who go to the movies at least once a month. But only about 3 percent of speaking characters in films during the last decade were Latino, according to a study released in July by Stacy L. Smith of the University of Southern California.

The last Hispanic actor to win an Oscar was Penélope Cruz, from Spain, who was honored nine years ago for her supporting role in “Vicky Cristina Barcelona.” The last time the Academy Awards had a Hispanic acting nominee was 2012, when Demián Bichir was given a nod for his portrayal of an undocumented Los Angeles gardener in “A Better Life” and the Argentina-born French actress Bérénice Bejo was nominated for playing a dancer in “The Artist.” Only one Hispanic man has ever won the best

actor Oscar — José Ferrer, for “Cyrano de Bergerac” in 1951 — and no Hispanic woman has ever been named best actress.

None of that will change this year. When nominations for the 90th Academy Awards were announced, there were no Hispanic acting nominees. “We’re stuck,” Mr. Nogales said. “When will our exclusion matter?”

Thomas E. Rothman, chairman of the Sony Pictures Film Group, said in an email: “Clearly the United States Hispanic moviegoing audience, which is quite strong, is underserved in terms of stories and characters they can relate to.” Sony is remaking the 2011 Mexican thriller “Miss Bala” with Gina Rodriguez and Ismael Cruz Córdova as the leads.

Hollywood’s other major studios declined to comment, though several studio executives privately expressed frustration with the number of inclu-

sion issues they are being asked to immediately address. At the moment, they said, the #MeToo fight against sexual harassment and gender equality has become all-consuming. They are also under pressure from activists for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and for people with disabilities.

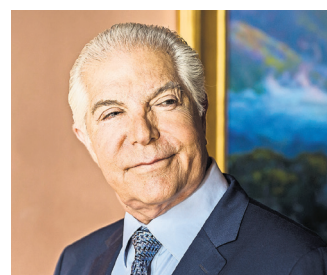
The Academy referred to comments that John Bailey, its president, made in August. Mr. Bailey said then: “The academy is not the industry. We can jump in to work to solve this issue — and we are. But we can’t bear sole responsibility. The jobs have to be there.”

There are signs of progress. In November, Disney released “Coco,” centered on the Mexican holiday honoring the dead and voiced by an all-Latino cast, which was nominated for best animated film. The Guatemalan-born actor Oscar Isaac plays a primary charac-

ter in the latest “Star Wars.” A remake of the Goldie Hawn comedy “Overboard” by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Pantelion Films stars the Mexican actor Eugenio Derbez.

And Latinos have been honored for their work behind the camera in recent years at the Oscars. The 2014 directing prize went to Alfonso Cuarón for “Gravity.” Alejandro G. Iñárritu collected back-to-back directing Oscars in 2015 and 2016 for “Birdman” and “The Revenant.” This year, Guillermo del Toro is a directing nominee for “The Shape of Water.”

But the underrepresentation of Latinos has never truly entered the public conversation. One possible reason is the diversity of Hispanics themselves, with their distinct cultures and races from different regions and countries. It can be difficult, activists say, to orchestrate a cohesive repudi-



EMILY BERL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Alex Nogales said a lack of Hispanic nominees at the Oscars may cause protests.

ation of Hollywood practices.

Christy Haubegger, founder of Latina magazine, has been trying to push for change from within the system. In 2005, she joined Creative Artists Agency, which now represents more than 100 Hispanic clients.

“To create sustainable, long-term change in the entertainment industry, we have to start at the bottom and touch every rung of the ladder on up,” Ms. Haubegger said. “It’s really hard, and it takes patience. We’re still in early days, which I know sounds crazy.”

Nannies Who Write Fairy Tales, Not Diaries

By AIMEE LEE BALL

“His name is No-No, so I didn’t think I needed an explanation of his character.”

Claire, who asked that her last name not be used, is discussing a contrarian goat that’s the protagonist of a children’s story she has written. Like the dozen other women gathered in a back corner of the public library in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood of New York, she is part of a fairy-tale writing workshop for nannies, creating stories for the youngsters in their charge.

The workshop is the brainchild of Jakob Orsos, the library’s vice president of arts and culture. “When I was hired by the library, I noticed all these nannies coming through,” he said, “and I thought it would be interesting to start working with them in this way.”

The workshops are conducted in both Spanish and English. The latter is led by Fadwa Abbas, a writer and teacher who immigrated to the United States at age 14 from Sudan, where her father was a political prisoner. Bringing what she calls “radical thinking” to the classroom drives her curriculum for the nannies. “The idea is for them to go off and write something that sounds deceptively light but is actually deeper,” she said, “something that addresses what we’re trying to raise children to be. One woman wrote about a mermaid who was on a quest to clean up the trash in the ocean.”

Claire, 54, is from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and writing in English is a challenge. But she carries a notebook with her even while she’s on duty for two boys, aged 5 and 10. “Sometimes while they’re playing, I’m writing,” she said.

Some resentment or frustration about raising other women’s children is evident in the nannies’ stories. “We talk about moving the writing from the stage of therapy to the stage of craft,” Ms. Abbas said.

Some of the nannies do not reveal their participation to their employers. “When you try to educate yourself, your employers might think you’re going to leave, rather than take care of their children all your life,” said Carol Ottley, a 57-year-old nanny from Trinidad and Tobago.

But it was actually the mother of the three children in Ruta Miniotas’s care who suggested she take the workshop. Originally from Lithuania, she grew up in a small town. Her fairy tale was about two mother birds who adopt an odd-looking egg. “It was a bit of commentary on how people gossip and judge other people’s choices,” said Ms. Miniotas, 30, who has purple hair, partly shaved.

At the end of the “semester,” many of the nannies invited the children in their care to a celebration at the Brooklyn Central Library, where they read the stories they’d written.

“What they do is not a small undertaking,” Mr. Orsos said. “They’re often writing about the nadirs and zeniths of their lives, camouflaging their experiences with metaphors — some of them are so cheeky and funny. It makes me hugely emotional because they get out of their own reality, and it’s quite liberating. When they start, they’re shy, but even their posture changes as they continue.”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATARINA PREMFORS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES, BELOW, SHARJAH ART FOUNDATIONS

The Materials Man Of the Emirates

By HOLLAND COTTER

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates — Ethnic profiling is business as usual in the contemporary art market. Artists from outside the Euro-American sphere, if they want to be noticed, are required to a) present evidence of their origins, like a badge, in their work, and b) package that identity in forms, styles and images that the West can readily recognize.

The Emirati artist Hassan Sharif (1951-2016), who just had a sensational retrospective, “I Am the Single Work Artist,” at the Sharjah Art Foundation here on the edge of the Persian Gulf, was a born contrarian, making art that belongs to no locatable culture, or maybe to several.

Born in Iran, Sharif was raised in Dubai, which, before the 1960s oil boom, was a low-rise town that made money from harvesting pearls. His father was a baker, and Sharif speculated that his own interest in art began with watching his father make cakes.

A natural draftsman with, as he put it, “a sarcastic outlook,” in the 1970s he drew cartoons for magazines, skewering the newly formed, oil-rich Emirates for their pursuit of consumerist modernization. At the same time, he had some of his Cubist-inflected studio paintings accepted in government-sponsored shows.

This earned him a scholarship to study art abroad, in England, where he gravitated toward Conceptualism. One of his art history heroes was Marcel Duchamp. Sharif’s scratchy abstract drawings from this time, generated by gamelike rules of logic, are among the earliest entries in the Sharjah show, along with photographs of performances which involved having conversations in toilets and stripping while walking up stairs.

Such work was radical in the Emirates, where, in 1983, he did another walking piece, this one an endurance trek in the desert outside Dubai. Two years later, in Sharjah, he exhibited abstract paintings in



an outdoor market, with one picture lying on the ground, another laid flat on four upright water bottles. He was introducing, at home, a new idea of what could be art.

By then, Sharif had finished school and was back in the Gulf region for good. At first he spent most of his time in Sharjah, a half-hour drive from Dubai, where he made common cause with a small community of avant-garde artists, poets and thinkers who called themselves the Emirates Fine Arts Society.

In the Emirates at that time, the acceptable form of advanced contemporary Arabic work was calligraphic abstraction, which Sharif disdained, as he did all forms of “nationalist” art. Yet to an

“Objects in the Ground,” was produced from a sketch by Hassan Sharif, left, in his atelier. Above, the tools and trash he used are part of the show.

Emirati audience, his own art looked nationalist — Western — and met with rejection. Sharif’s art had started to change in response to Emirati life. The materialism that he had mocked in his political cartoons had grown exponentially. Sharif commented on this not with direct statements — he dismissed his early cartoons as heavy handed — but through a series of sculptures, called “Urban Archaeology,” that took the market itself as raw material, and that would become his best-known work.

He fashioned the earliest examples from street trash, elaborately knotting lengths of ordinary rope, bundling broken-down cardboard boxes and braiding strips of recycled cloth. He soaked newspa-

per in water and glue, mashed it to a pulp, then kneaded the pulp the way his father had kneaded dough. He molded loaf-like cakes — some resembled phalluses or turds — and displayed them in stacks and piles, like the baked goods in markets from his childhood.

His art didn’t come across as polemical. It was, first and foremost, visually delightful. And it was accessible in an I-could-do-that-too way.

His studio — including a beat-up desk scattered with pencils, pipe tobacco and notes-to-self — has been transferred to the Sharjah Foundation and installed in the show. It gives some sense of Sharif’s work habits: Basically, he never stopped. For him art-making seems to have been a form of existential busywork, part child’s play, part labor, part meditation.

Sharif, the social skeptic, viewed consumerism as addictive waste. But Sharif’s art insists that nothing is wasted if you make waste your creative source.

Small School Takes On Classical Music’s Diversity Issue

By ELIAN PELTIER

BOULOGNE-BILLAN-COURT, France — On a recent afternoon, the French counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky greeted the parents of children who had enrolled in a music academy he founded a few months earlier here outside Paris. For some, it was their first classical music concert.

One of the children was Amine Jerbi, the cheerful 7-year-old son of Tunisians. He tore around the room.

“If we manage to calm Amine down through music, it will be a huge victory,” Mr. Jaroussky said.

The new academy is rooted in the need for more diversity in classical music, he said. As the audience for classical music ages and fewer young people embrace it across Europe and the United States, the genre is facing a serious challenge to renew its devotees, let alone to fill its venues.

Mr. Jaroussky hopes to



JULIEN MIGNOT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

change that. His new institute, the Académie Musicale Philippe Jaroussky, provides free music lessons to 23 children from working-class or immigrant backgrounds.

Half of those who attend classical music concerts in France are executives or managers, and their average age is 54, according to a 2015 study.

“Whether in Hamburg, in New York or in Paris, I sing before the same kind of people,” Mr. Jaroussky said. “And as much as I love my audience,

Amine Jerbi, far left, a Tunisian during a cello lesson at a music academy outside Paris that loans instruments to children.

I’m worried that if we don’t bring more diversity onto the stage, we won’t get a younger and more diverse audience.”

The children in the academy, ages 7 to 12, were given the choice of learning the piano, violin or cello, and receive instruments to keep throughout the three-year program.

Yasmine Souhir, a 7-year-old violin player whose favorite artists are Rihanna and the French rapper Maitre Gims, said he enjoyed listening to Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons” on

YouTube; Macéo Menneson-Lorrente, also 7, said he was drawn to the cello because he could feel the vibrations of the instrument in his chest.

And Amine, who lives with a foster family, picked up the cello after he discovered 2Cellos, a pair of Croatian cellists who perform pop and rock.

Mr. Jaroussky said his academy was inspired by the Demos project. Started in 2010 and coordinated by the Philharmonie de Paris, Demos now has 30 orchestras in France, each with more than 100 children from working-class backgrounds. Roughly 4,500 children have benefited from Demos’s free three-year program.

“When children get used to a cultural habit at a young age, they keep it,” said Gilles Delebarre, one of the founders.

Critics argue that while initiatives that reach a few thousand people yield positive results, more should be invested in music education in schools

or public music academies.

Stéphane Dorin, a sociology professor at the University of Limoges in France, said that projects such as Jaroussky’s academy were too expensive to roll out more widely.

Such programs “won’t transform in depth the relationship that kids from working-class backgrounds have with classical music,” Mr. Dorin said.

Three-quarters of the academy’s annual budget of €500,000 comes from private institutions and donors.

On that day at the academy, the auditorium was filling up, and Mr. Jaroussky took his place in the front. Near him, Amine sat restlessly. But halfway through the concert, as a trio performed Sergei Rachmaninoff’s “Trio Élégiaque number 1,” Amine calmed down.

“These sounds, they’re so beautiful,” he whispered. “Maybe I’ll try to play like them at home.”