

INSIDER VIEWS: A message about *Taking Over*

In performance at the Kirk Douglas Theatre from Jan 21 through Feb 22

Pier Carlo Talenti, Center Theatre Group's Resident Dramaturg and Literary Manager, is intimately involved in the development of many productions presented on our stages. He is an integral part of the research process, providing historical and social context for each work and keeping an independent and critical eye on our creative activities. In this issue of INSIDER VIEWS, he discusses *Taking Over*, performer Danny Hoch's new work exploring the issue of gentrification in his Brooklyn neighborhood.



Hello:

Just as the first play in our Kirk Douglas season, *This Beautiful City*, was a portrait of a community struggling with change, our next play, *Taking Over*, written and performed by the inimitable Danny Hoch, also depicts a community—his own neighborhood of Williamsburg, Brooklyn—struggling no less passionately with change. In this case, though, the community's transformation is occasioned by

an influx of wealth rather than religion.

Gentrification. The word alone raises a lot of people's hackles. To some the word has an unnecessarily negative connotation and doesn't do justice to the process that leads to a community's economic improvement. Others decry the whole process itself because those improvements rarely benefit the community's existing residents, who are quickly priced out of the neighborhood. As one of the characters in *Taking Over*, a long-time Williamsburg resident, summarizes the dilemma, "It's like...right when things start to get better. Less shootings, less crackheads. Supermarket finally got decent vegetables. We're not allowed to be here anymore. We gotta leave."

Although in this play Danny Hoch very specifically documents the changes in his own neighborhood, all of the opinions he highlights have been and continue to be echoed every day in cities all over the country. In a June 2008 *Los Angeles Times* article about a battle taking place on the Greater Echo Park Elysian Neighborhood Council, urban planner Eric Morrow was quoted as saying, "Cities evolve, but when you get down to it, people are just not into change." Mr. Morrow is right, of course, but it is also true that change is much easier for those who can afford it. (To read the article, please click [here](#). Also for a very thorough 2006 *L.A. Weekly* article about the gentrification of Echo Park and other L.A. neighborhoods, [click here](#).)

I hope you will be as provoked by the opinions you hear in the play as you will be entertained by Danny's singular ability to use his body as a conduit for an amazing array of characters—male and female, of all ages, races and backgrounds. And if you'd like a forum in which to discuss your reactions to the play after you've seen it, please consider attending our next AfterWords on Thursday, February 26 in the lobby of the Kirk Douglas Theatre. What's AfterWords? It's our version of a book group—a play group, if you will—with wine and hors d'oeuvres. And all for free. For more information about AfterWords, please [click here](#).

Thank you.

Pier Carlo Talenti
Resident Dramaturg / Literary Manager

Insider Views is the Kirk Douglas Theatre's newsletter. There is no regular schedule or standard format for it. You'll receive it from time to time, when we have interesting, relevant or breaking news about our productions at the Douglas.

Eat, Drink and Be Social: Our newly remodeled Lounge opens one hour before show time, serving drinks and eats from Culver City's newest culinary star, [Ugo ~ An Italian Cafe](#). On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, step into the Lounge after the show to hear our resident DJ's spin the coolest grooves and join the cast and crew for cocktails and conversation. When the applause dies down, your night continues at Culver City's newest late-night spot.

Find out more:

[Taking Over](#)

Jan 21 - Feb 22, 2009

Kirk Douglas Theatre

Downtown Culver City
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Culver City, CA 90232

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