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FAMILY FARE

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From Adiós to Hello

Moving from the country to the city is enough to turn any child's world topsy-turvy. But for Juan Felipe, it is especially hard. The 10-year-old son of Mexican immigrants, Juan Felipe, called Juanito, has spent his life in migrant workers' camps in California. For him English is a foreign language.

Juanito, the hero of "The Upside Down Boy" ("El Niño de Cabeza"), is the stage alter ego of Juan Felipe Herrera, whose bilingual book of the same title (Children's Book Press, 1999) chronicles his boyhood immersion in English, school and the bustle of an unnamed metropolis.

Staged by the organization Making Books Sing, "The Upside Down Boy" includes Mr. Herrera's poignant and colorful poetry in his lyrics for Cristian Amigo's lively, Latin-flavored score. Barbara Zinn Krieger, who wrote the book and additional lyrics, has made Queens Juanito's new home. She has also added dramatic tension in the form of Calvin, a school bully. While Juanito (Edward Duepner) feels that "my tongue has turned into a rock," Calvin (Joel Bermudez) uses his as a weapon.

Directed by David Schechter, the ensemble cast brings the story vividly to life, with Ric Oquita and Celine Polanco as Juanito's loving parents, Siho Eilsmore and Maria-Christina Oliveras as helpful classmates, and Victoria Lature as Mrs. Sampson, the teacher who shows him that

all languages have poetry.

Juanito also realizes that Calvin, dyslexic and in a foster home, is just as frightened as he. In this touching musical, only when one upside down boy reaches out to the other does the world finally begin to make sense.

"The Upside Down Boy" ("El Niño de Cabeza"), tomorrow at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Queens Theater in the Park, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, (718) 760-0064. Tickets: \$16; children, \$14. Also Feb. 7 at 2 p.m. at Kingsborough Community College, 2001 Oriental Boulevard, Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn, (718) 363-5596. Tickets: \$16.