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**TEXTY THE CLOWN:  
The Inner Workings of Language in the Poet-Modern Ear  
at The Kitchen  
Begins October 20**

In the past few years a number of mesmerizing writer/performers, devoted to language as both conveyor of ideas and free-standing aural event, have emerged from the New York spoken word scene. Their particular genius, honed in front of mike stands at poetry bars and performance spaces around the world, is to make words work on every level of sound, sense and volume. Starting Sunday, October 20, eight of these writers will do their inimitable thing at The Kitchen in the four-part series **TEXTY THE CLOWN: The Inner Workings of Language in the Poet-Modern Ear**.

TEXTY THE CLOWN reveals what the shoestring readings of the early 90s only hinted at: that spoken word is fast becoming a full-fledged art form. These performers take poetry beyond its (grass)roots without forfeiting the do-it-yourself freedom, outsider edge and what-the-heck-is-this-stuff charm that attracted attention in the first place. TEXTY THE CLOWN illustrates how distinctive voices are now uniting under a common aesthetic: poetry as performance; words as music; sound as sense.

"What we're doing has not really existed before," explains **Emily XYZ** who, with fellow performance poet **Edwin Torres**, organized and appears in the TEXTY series. "There's been performance art, there've been poetry readings, but there has never been a whole category of performance based on words alone and what can you do with them. Maybe because it is so based on words alone and what you can do with them. Maybe because it is so new and there's no money in it yet, spoken word people are more willing to try to do things just for the hell of it, just to see what happens. It's pretty much like 'What have I got to lose?'. It still has that burst of energy that you get with any new art form."

Not surprisingly, TEXTY THE CLOWN is also a protest against what its organizers see as audience uneasiness with non-commercial experimentation. Having mastered the risky art of making something happen on stage using only words, voices, attitude, these spoken word artists want to promote greater enthusiasm for the unheard-of on both sides of the stage.

"There seems to be this idea that anything that can't ultimately be sold is not worth making," says XYZ. "I don't believe artists should produce into a void, but I also don't think commercial viability is the best guiding principle."

"Artistically, things have gotten a little too safe," agrees Edwin Torres, "and I think that neither artists nor audiences want to admit that it's the romantics and eccentrics who are

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willing to do weird things on stage that may not always 'work' who really keep things alive.

The participants in TEXTY THE CLOWN straddle both worlds -- one foot in the real world, one foot in the deep end."

The eight writer/performers appearing in TEXTY THE CLOWN include members of New York's **REAL LIVE POETRY (formerly the Nuyorican Poets Cafe Live!)**, the world's first and only spoken word touring company; performers featured in the PBS series **THE UNITED STATES OF POETRY**; and recording artists for the spoken word label **MOUTH ALMIGHTY**. Many of the readings will incorporate live instrumentalists, taped music and sound, video, film, dry ice, etc. In addition, the intermission of each performance will feature short readings on tape by some of the poets who helped shape and inspire the New York spoken word scene.

XYZ and Torres believe that staging TEXTY THE CLOWN at The Kitchen constitutes a major step forward for spoken word. "TEXTY is different from any other reading series presented in New York so far because the technical capability of The Kitchen allows us to realize all kinds of ideas for staging the work," says XYZ. "It's still about a person or two in front of microphone, but this just brings it to a whole new level."

"To perform our work at a space as prestigious as The Kitchen has been a long time coming," Torres explains. "To nurture this art form, we need the support and interest of places like The Kitchen. Normally, a show like this would take place in Kansas City or Ann Arbor. But we're all New York artists -- and we want to bring this work home and let people see how far it's come."

TEXTY THE CLOWN is produced in conjunction with The Kitchen. The Kitchen is located at 512 West 19th Street (between 10th and 11th Avenues) in the West Chelsea district of Manhattan. Tickets are \$12. Information and reservations can be obtained by calling (212) 255 5793.

### **PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

**Sunday, October 20, 7 pm:** Edwin Torres, author of *I Hear Things People Haven't Really Said*, with drummer Sean Meehan, intricately cabling word-music-rhythm and other worldliness; *United States of Poetry* performers Emily XYZ and Myers Bartlett with drummer Virgil Moorefield open the poetic and acoustic floodgates.

**Sunday, November 24, 7 pm:** Mike Tyler reflects truth-by-destruction from the world's stage and celebrates the release of his new book, *From Colorado to Georgia* (Carlton Arms Press); author Gina Bonati's organic landscape of language with body and wonder with dance.

**Tuesday, December 17, 8 pm:** *United States of Poetry* performer Tracie Morris with (musicians) elevates the inner music to the outer hear; FRESH Award winner Xavier Cavazos weaves a vortex through Earth and Desire.

**Sunday, January 26, 1997, 7 pm:** Paul Skiff, producer of the Nuyorican Symphony CD (Knitting Factory Records) blazes epiphanies from the center of the edge; Mouth Almighty recording artist Sekou Sundiata revolting the groove into infinite bop.