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CHAMACO GETS OFF ON HAVANA NOIR

ARTICLE

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The saxophone gives it away. Whenever the characters in Abel González Melo's *Chamaco* pause to consider a moral dilemma or fret over a fatal error, the sax shivers in punctuation. *Chamaco* is classic noir, with a touch of melodrama and a whole lot of beefcake.

The *homme fatale* here is Kárel Darín, a young hustler played with feral sexuality by Adrián Más. His victims all, as it turns out, belong to the same tragic family: father Alejandro (Juan David Ferrer), a judge who walks the night looking for sex; his misunderstood son, Miguel Depás (Lian Cenzano), who also walks the night to escape his controlling dad; and Silvia (Alexa Kuve), long suffering daughter and doting sister, who also happens to be the murderer Darín's lover.

Each male actor is hotter, and hotter tempered, than the next. There were moments, during the knife fights among the men, when I thought the play might take a *West Side Story* turn, with someone

singing to Silvia -- "a boy like that, he killed your brother." But the script stays decidedly in the camp of Tennessee Williams, exploring the deepest of desperation to the delight of the audience.

Speaking of camp, there's enough here, what with all the shirtless, muscle men and the brilliant homeless narrator singing heartbreaking ballads between misdeeds, to make one wonder how much the brilliant director Alberto Sarraín is serving his melodrama tongue-in-cheek. There is enough power in the acting, the lighting, the skeletal set though, to prompt me to suspend my disbelief in the multiple coincidences of the tragic plot and surrender to the thrill ride of this exercise in Havana noir.

Chamaco runs at 8:30pm on Saturdays through October 24 at the Teatro Trail, 3713 SW Eighth St., Coral Gables; 305-444-9278; Tickets cost \$30; In Spanish with English supertitles.

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