

Well-paced play about Cuba after invasion

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

It's only as the play progresses that we learn the 'ghost' is real. She's Maria (Maria Helan) the teenage daughter who left with her family for Hialeah, Florida. But, she's back because she didn't like the weather!

Just as important to the play's success are silences whether between the couple as they bask in the newness of their home or during [Carmen]'s interrogation. Despite its music and humor, "All Eyes and Ears" is a withering critique of the early days of Fidel Castro's government. One wonders what playwright [Rogelio Martinez] would make of those market changes Fidel's brother Raul is currently instituting on that island nation. All Eyes and Ears is at the Lion Theatre on 42nd Street Theatre Row through May 22nd.

FULL TEXT

Maruti Evans' all-white set provides the picture-perfect Caribbean living room for "All Eyes and Ears", Rogelio Martinez' smart, well-paced play about Cuba after the Bay of Pigs invasion. It follows Carmen (Terumi Matthews), her husband Emilio (Martin Sola) and their teenage daughter, Yolanda (Christina Pumariega) as they adjust to a new life style.

It's a radical change instituted by Castro's success and results-among other shifts;in the family moving from their old house to a much larger one with (5) working toilets. In fact, the play opens with the comic scene of Carmen insisting that Emilio and Yolanda flush toilets simultaneously. She can't believe they both keep functioning! The house quickly becomes the nexus of issues for the family. Carmen worries about her husband's insistence that a ghost is there and about his fears that the former owners will return. Meanwhile, Yolanda persists in raiding the closets, wearing various dresses and so adds to Emilio's worries.

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Creepiness enters "All Eyes and Ears" early on when shadows and fingers are spotted by the audience outside the louvered doors -the actors, their backs to the doors, don't see them. And the feeling intensifies as Carmen, in her position as neighborhood watch captain (one of Cuba's numerous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution), performs her job with uncommon zeal. She even resorts to spying on her neighbors at night to monitor and report on their bedroom activities.

Her efficiency attracts the attention of Alvaro (Liam Torres) a Cuban official and of Stepan (Ed Vassallo) a Russian who's come to help Cubans adjust to Russia's version of Communism which-includes the introduction of the Petronov Machine, a combination washer-dry, intended to liberate Cuban women from the drudgery of housework so they can join their male comrades in the fight for liberation. (This segues into a witty, R-rated joke between three Cuban women). Stepan's accent, body language, and dancing are lively additions to the play's lightness. Pulsing Cuban music plays throughout "All Eyes and Ears" making for an easy transition to the married couple's sensuous dancing (It's hard to imagine better casting Choices for these two roles as well as the entire troupe). Just as important to the play's success are silences whether between the couple as they bask in the newness of their home or during Carmen's interrogation. Despite its music and humor, "All Eyes and Ears" is a withering critique of the early days of Fidel Castro's government. One wonders what playwright Martinez would make of those market changes Fidel's brother Raul is currently instituting on that island nation. All Eyes and Ears is at the Lion Theatre on 42nd Street Theatre Row through May 22nd.