

Stuck Between Capitalist Comfort and Castro's Communism

Carmen, the former seamstress at the center of Rogelio Martinez's interesting but overstuffed new play, "All Eyes and Ears," seems to be playing at revision.

**THEATER
REVIEW**
**RACHEL
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It's Cuba, 1961, and Carmen works for Fidel Castro's government, reporting who's been naughty and who's been nice. She talks about the capitalist enemy and five-year plans, but political rhetoric doesn't suit her; she doesn't real-

"All Eyes and Ears" continues through May 22 at the Lion Theater, 410 West 42nd Street, Clinton; (212) 279-4200.

ly understand it. What's real to Carmen is her new house with five flush toilets, the pretty dresses left by its former owner and the importance of her new job. (Carmen's revolution starts to look a lot like the American Dream.)

The conflict between a working-class desire for material comfort and Marxist-Leninist ideals might have made a fascinating play. In "All Eyes," an Intar production at the Lion Theater, it's just one of many intriguing themes toyed with but not satisfactorily explored. Others are the consequences of a job like Carmen's, in which names are ruined; the links between sex, revolution and the Kinsey Re-

All Eyes and Ears

Lion Theater

port; Cuba and Russia's strange-bedfellow friendship; and the human costs of radical change, here depicted as a Ghost of Cuba Past in a white debutante gown.

The director, Eduardo Machado, has created a handsome production with Maruti Evans, the scenic and lighting designer. If only Mr. Machado had found a way to inject some dramatic energy into Carmen's romance with the revolution. The excitement that must have propelled those early years, capturing the imagination of people like Carmen, is in

Mr. Martinez's words but rarely onstage.

Part of the problem is Terumi Matthews, who, miscast as Carmen, can't quite make the character believable. Mr. Martinez means the fancy house to be an uncomfortable fit. Yet Ms. Matthews and Martfn Solá, who plays her husband, have the bearing of people long accustomed to nice things.

Representing the darker forces of the revolution pressing down on Carmen, Ed Vassallo as Stepan, a comrade from Moscow, dominates the stage. Mr. Vassallo takes an underwritten role and gives it unpredictable complexity. The naïve Carmen doesn't stand a chance against this big, bad Russian wolf.