



In Dolores Prida's semiautobiographical play *Casa Propia*, a Cuban immigrant family deals with home ownership

Director Sándor Menéndez creates an adult fairy tale, complete with songs.

By Justin Hayford

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CARLOS GARCIA

The late Cuban-American columnist and playwright Dolores Prida aptly called her 1999 semiautobiographical play, about a matriarchal Cuban immigrant family's struggles with East Harlem home ownership, *A Room of One's Own* infused with *Lysistrata*. Conflicted trailblazer Olga, who believes owning land in America is meaningful vengeance against a society that largely denies her existence, fights to purchase property where her cynical daughter, Marilis, and domineering mother-in-law, Fefa, might establish permanent refuge, despite her lothario husband Manolo's insistence he can't be tied to one spot (as it might inhibit his incessant philandering, particularly with curvaceous new neighbor Yarisa). Watching over everything is the aged, enigmatic Fanny, the last Italian-American in this once all-Italian neighborhood.

Casa Propia
through 11/25: Fri-Sat 8 PM,
Sun 6 PM. Aguijón Theater,
2707 N. Laramie. 773-637-
5899. aguijontheater.org.
\$25. \$15 students, teachers,
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Prida also called the play an opera without music, a description director Sándor Menéndez wisely disregards, injecting ensemble and solo songs floor-show style throughout the show's 80 minutes. Even more wisely, he turns Prida's overly familiar material into a kind of adult fairy tale (Olga's home is a five-foot-tall doll's house on wheels, for example), greatly emphasizing the script's metatheatricality and turning nearly stereotypical characters into iconic figures. It's an ingenious solution that elevates everything to a playfully mythic realm, complete with a childlike narrator cum mischievous angel

As usual, Aguijón Theater assembles nimble, judicious players who breathe convincing life into their characters and find intoxicating rhythms in both spoken and sung dialogue. And when Alba Guerra as squeaky-voiced crone Fanny finally opens up and sings, you'll wish she'd go on all night. 

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