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**Following Havana Visit, NY's Repertorio Espanol Skeds Cuban Works for 1998-99**

09 Oct 1998



The Cuban drama, *Obscure Rumors*, presented by Repertorio Espanol.

Artists with New York's Repertorio Espanol are continuing their Cuba-oriented series of new work this month following their recent groundbreaking trip to the island nation.

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Company members with the Spanish-language troupe returned Oct. 6 from a weeklong tour of four Cuban cities, including Havana, to plunge into rehearsals toward their Oct. 13 opening of the poetic Cuban drama, *Obscure Rumors*.

The 11 Repertorio company members returning from Cuba were joined by 8 Cuban artists who will contribute to the troupe's "CubaTeatro" initiative, a cross-cultural exchange that began earlier this year with the February staging of *Strawberry and Chocolate* (with Cuban actor-brothers Omar and Jorge Ali).

That play, like others presented in the "CubaTeatro" series, will eventually enter the repertory and be performed by resident Repertorio Espanol members.

This month, under the guidance of Cuban director-playwright Abelardo Estorino, Repertorio Espanol and their Cuban guest artists from Havana's Teatro Estudio will present the Oct. 13 return of Estorino's *Obscure Rumors*, about a Cuban poet's haunted journey of self-discovery, which Repertorio gave its U.S. premiere in 1996.

Upcoming is the New York premiere of Estorino's *She Looks White* (a colonial-set drama about slavery) opening Oct. 29 and, in February 1999, the return of Estorino's 1996 solo monologue, *Troubles Don't Go Away*. Estorino is Cuba's foremost playwright.

Repertorio Espanol productions are performed in open-ended runs in Spanish with simultaneous English translation available at the troupe's home at

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the Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th Street. Founded in 1968, Repertorio Espanol is the oldest Spanish-language theatre in the country.

One of the usual aspects of Repertorio Espanol's repertory system is its utter flexibility, publicist Susan L. Schulman told Playbill On-Line. She said groups may request a special performance of one of the many scripts in the rep, meaning specific "runs" of the show are sometimes unclear to chart. The production schedule varies, so call (212) 889-2850 for reservations or information.

\*

More about Repertorio's Cuba exchange and 1998-99 season:

Repertorio's Cuban visit Sept. 26-Oct. 6 is thought to be the first time an American theatre company has toured the communist nation. The troupe traveled to four cities and performed Eduardo Machado's *Broken Eggs*, a comedy about a Cuban family's life in California.

Of the 11 Repertorio members touring *Broken Eggs* (*Revoltillo* in Spanish), 8 were Cuban. Among them: Playwright Machado; executive producer Gilberto Zaldivar, who initiated "CubaTeatro"; and leading actors Ricardo Barber and Rene Sanchez, who were well-known in Cuba before their exile.

"It's very moving, the idea of seeing friends they haven't seen in 30 years," said Rene Buch, Repertorio Espanol artistic director, who left Cuba in 1949 and didn't return for this trip due to directing commitments. "We're establishing relations with our own country -- we extend a bridge of understanding where there is little understanding; and we want to keep it an artistic experience, not political."

*Broken Eggs*, meanwhile, will continue in the troupe's season repertory of 8-12 scripts.

\*

Repertorio executive director Zaldivar got the notion for the Cuba oriented program in 1995, when he returned to the island he had fled 34 years before. Meeting old friends and colleagues, he thought that his New York company might be reinvigorated by a cultural and personal reunion with the Cuban people. The goal of the exchange, he said, was "to act as a catalyst for a constructive, personal and professional exchange between American and Cuban artists and audiences."

The "CubaTeatro" exchange is sponsored by the Arca Foundation and was made possible by an invitation from Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) and has been authorized by the Cuban and American governments.

The 1998-99 repertory season will include:

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\* *El Publico* begins Nov. 14.

\* *Yerma* begins Oct. 23.

\* *The House of Bernardo Alba* begins March 18, 1999.

#### LATIN AMERICAN CLASSICS

\* *I Swear Jane, I Have an Itch For You* by Mexican playwright Emilio Carballido, in repertory.

\* *She Looks White*, a stage version of the Cuban novel, "Cecilia Valdes," by Estorino, begins Oct. 29.

\* *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, begins Jan. 28, 1999.



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## CUBATEATRO SERIES

\* *Obscure Rumors* , by Estorino, begins Oct. 13.

\* *Strawberry and Chocolate* in repertory.

\* *Broken Eggs* in repertory.

\* *The Blond Man* by Louis Delgado, in repertory.

## NEW VOICES SERIES

\* *La Gringa* by Carmen Rivera, in repertory.

\* *The Barber Shop* by Candido Tirado, in repertory.

\* *The Next Stop* a world premiere by Carmen Rivera, set in New York City, begins April 1999.

-- By [Kenneth Jones](#)

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