

The American Premiere of *Holiday Out*

The American premiere of Itziar Pascual's *Holiday Out (Postcard from the Sea)* at the Cabaret Theatre at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, on April 16, 2002, was exceptional. Produced and directed by Michael Schlick, the play featured Georgina Richardson as Maria Soledad Bravo Guimaraes. The play, whose title is a pun on the Holiday Inn hotel chain, is about the end of Soledad's first vacation since her mother's death.

As Soledad (whose name means solitude) returns from an idyllic vacation at the Holiday Hotel resort, she runs into trouble as soon as she steps off the plane. She is distressed not only by the end of her vacation and having to return to work the next day, but also by the cold, wet weather that greets her. To top it all off, her cinnamon rolls are crushed, and her luggage has been lost. Soledad resolves to wait at the claims counter until her suitcase is found. During her hours of waiting, Soledad resorts to chain smoking, talking to herself, and arguing with the claims clerk and the security officer who has found contraband in a suitcase similar to hers.

Georgina Richardson, a second year theater arts major at Rutgers University, gave a brilliant performance as a woman whose life is changed by an everyday occurrence. She displayed a wide range of emotions as Soledad oscillated between extremes of anger, nostalgia, self-pity, and resolve.

Michael Schlick's direction brought out the best in Richardson's Soledad. He used music (inspired by Soledad's monologue or mood) and lighting changes to break up the one-woman play into several scenes. He also had Soledad's opening monologue (reading aloud a postcard she has written) done as a voiceover during a blackout.

Although Soledad was the only character, she conversed with other people who were indicated by the set (such as a counter for the claims clerk). Other props on the simple set included a luggage cart that became a seat



Georgina Richardson as Soledad in Itziar Pascual's *Holiday Out*. American premiere, Cabaret Theatre, New Brunswick, NJ, April 2002. Dir. Michael Schlick. Photo: Phyllis Zatlin.

(during a monologue in which Soledad recalled her mother's anti-smoking lectures) and evoked a chaise lounge at the beach; and Soledad's hat, which she throws out the "window" of a "taxi" (two chairs side by side) as a liberating gesture at the end of the play.

Phyllis Zatlin's translation gave the audience a good feel for the word play on Soledad's name. "I learned to sunbathe, solo, ... I learned to eat dinner, solo," Soledad says as part of a long monologue on learning to be alone (in Spanish, *solo*, a reference to her name).

After the performance, Richardson, Schlick, and Pascual took questions from the audience with the help of interpreters from Rutgers's program in translation and interpretation.

Bethany M. Korp and Nydia Otero
Rutgers University

The Architect and The Emperor of Assyria

Thanks to director/translator Abraham Celaya, we have the rare chance to see a play by the Spanish surrealist Fernando Arrabal. *The Architect and The Emperor of Assyria* (which was performed in a different English transla-

tion at Britain's National Theatre in 1971) is a long, wild two-hander about the battle for power and supremacy in life. Elijha Mahar plays a white man called The Emperor who crash lands on a remote island and discovers its only other inhabitant, The Architect (Derrick Demetrius Parker), a black man who appears to be a simple, primitive soul. Arrabal turns the Robinson Crusoe story on its ear, though, with The Architect becoming The Emperor at times and lording it over him, only to have the tables turned and master/slave relationship reversed. Arrabal tosses poetry, eroticism, games-playing, cross-dressing, religion and cannibalism into the stew, resulting in a fiery dish of outrageous, language-drenched, absurdist theatre which goes down like a peppery paella.

Celaya directs the actors with flair and energy, and coaxes daring performances out of them. Set, costumes, lighting, music, and sound are equally colorful and effective, resulting in a production that is a feast for all the senses.

Stages Theatre Center. . . Hollywood, April 4 through May 12 [2002].

Williard Manus
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Derrick Demetrius Parker and Elijha Mahar in *The Architect and The Emperor of Assyria*, Stages Theatre Center, Hollywood, CA, 2002. Dir. Abraham Celaya. Photo: David Seigle.