

'August: Osage County' a theatrical tour de force



Daily Sun/Humberto Trías

The cast of the Puerto Rican production of "August: Osage County," starring Gladys Rodríguez and Axel Anderson.

A dream come true



Daily Sun/César Silva

Puerto Rican pianist and entrepreneur Stevan Micheo donated over \$3,000 in musical instruments to a group of low-income children with a passion for music on Tuesday during an event held in San Juan. He said one of his aims as an artist is to open the doors for the new generation of young aspiring musicians in Puerto Rico.

BY IVA YATES

Special to the Daily Sun
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When the lights go down and the actors take the stage, the spectator does not expect to be assaulted by the constant stream of emotions that the cast of the Puerto Rican production of "August: Osage County" elicits.

THEATER REVIEW

The play, which opened to a standing ovation on Friday in the small and intimate René Marqués Hall at the Luis A. Ferré Performing Arts Center in Santurce, is a three-act tour de force set to take you through a roller coaster of emotions during its over three hour run.

Amidst Oklahoma's summer heat, we meet Beverly Weston (Axel Anderson), the patriarch of the Weston family. He is conversing with Johnna Monevata (Cristina Sesto), the girl he has just hired to care for his wife, Violet Weston (Gladys Rodríguez). Violet stumbles onto the scene, visibly af-

fectured by the drugs she has taken. We are not surprised for Beverly has already prepared us for this. "My wife takes pills and I drink. That's the bargain we've struck," he says. The effect is both comic and sad.

During the first act, Beverly has mysteriously disappeared. The entire extended family is activated into action and slowly filters into the Weston asphyxiating household. Mattie Fae (Marilyn Pupo), Violet's sister, her husband Charles (Walter Rodríguez), and Ivy (Yamaris Latorre), Violet's middle daughter are there to provide moral support for a woman who is unkind, particularly to her family members.

By the second act, the entire family is congregated around the dinner table after coming back from Beverly's funeral. Family dynamics are masterfully portrayed as raucous conversations take place between all who are gathered there: Barbara (Cristina Soler), Violet's eldest daughter; her husband Bill (René Monclova); their daughter Jean (Lara González Soler); Charles' and Mattie Fae's son, Little Charles (Jimmy Navarro); Violet's younger

daughter Karen (Sara Jarque) and her boyfriend Steve Heidebrecht (Junior Álvarez).

There are plenty of issues to choose from, ranging from drug abuse to racism. The windows, which have been covered with paper so that there is no way of knowing whether it is day or night since the first act, are uncovered by the third; a metaphor for the revealing secrets that this family has kept throughout the years.

The careful balance between drama and comedy is maintained throughout all three, heart-wrenching acts. Slowly, the dysfunctional world of the Westons unravels before our very eyes and we cannot extricate them off the stage until the very painful end. Even though you leave the theater feeling exhausted, you can't help but yearn for more because it makes you feel more alive than ever before.

Written by Tracy Letts and originally staged in Chicago in 2007 by the Steppenwolf Theater Company, it then moved on to be successfully staged on Broadway. It won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play in 2008.

Feliciano: 'All salsa offshoots are beautiful'

BY OMAR MARRERO
The Associated Press

The return of some salsa singers to interpret the so-called 'salsa romántica' shouldn't be a reason for purists to feel threatened, opined seasoned Puerto Rican singer José "Cheo" Feliciano on Tuesday.

"Salsa romántica" or "monga" burst into the international scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s at a time when "traditional salsa" lost ground among followers of this genre.

Its lyrics mostly focused on romantic topics, some of them sexually explicit to use words or expressions that were considered taboo in popular music. And its arrangements left out the memorable solos and "descargas," or jamming sessions, that were loved by many in the 1970s, in addition to the soloists who turned into commercial figures.

With this offshoot of salsa, many young vocalists made it in the big leagues, including Luis Enrique, Eddie Santiago and Domingo Quiñones.

"I've had the privilege of being part of a very special and prolific generation of this genre that we call salsa, but for me all music is beautiful, all genres are valid," said Feliciano.

"Maestro Don Tite Curet Alonso used to say that each



Courtesy

José "Cheo" Feliciano

generation brings its own style. As far as 'salsa romántica' or 'monga' or whatever you want to call it, is concerned, I have nothing bad to say about it," he added.

In recent years, several "salsa romántica" performers like

Luis Enrique and Domingo have made a comeback, and recorded new material.

According to the veteran singer, "salsa romántica" is nothing else than an expression of the evolution of the genre, as it has happened with the burst of reggaetón.

"But if you have noticed, many local musicians today are blending reggaetón with salsa, even the singers who started in 'salsa romántica' are creating fusions and we have to accept them because they are part of our evolution. I have never done it before, but there's still a chance that I will do it," said the 73-year-old vocalist and former Fania All-Stars legend.

"There's nothing different nor scornful, all types of salsa are beautiful and their main ingredient is salsa. All of them always return to salsa's roots," he added.

However, for arranger and bandleader Luis García, the emergence of various traditional salsa groups offers hope for the genre's future.

García mentioned bands like Sammy García, Julito Alvarado and his Del Sur al Norte band and NG-2.

"We're living a moment when traditional salsa is making a comeback after a five-year slump, and with these new groups I think we have salsa for a long time to come," said García, to whom it was dedicated on Sunday the 26th edition of National Salsa Day.

Countdown is on for 'Saborea 2009'

BY THE DAILY SUN STAFF

Everything's set for this weekend's culinary feast. Over 40 local and international chefs will unite for the second consecutive year at "Saborea Puerto Rico: A Culinary Extravaganza," to be held Saturday and Sunday at "Punta del Escambrón" in Old San Juan.

Throughout the two-day event, over 60 exclusive restaurants will offer food lovers a varied sampling of some of the best dishes that Puerto Rico has to offer as the culinary capital of the Caribbean.

"A who's who list of local and international chefs will present the culinary trends that make Puerto Rico shine before the world. Each cooking show will present the most creative, diverse and explosive cooking tips used by our chefs in preparing typical Puerto Rican food," said the event's executive director Bárbara Pennock on Tuesday, adding she expects more than 2,500 people to attend the event each day.

Among them are renowned chocolatier Jacques Torres of Mr. Chocolate in New York, Efraín Cruz of Gran Meliá, Iron Chef Cat Cora of the Food Network Channel, Robert Treviño of Budatai and Michael Psilakis, owner of Anthos in New York and recently honored as chef of the year 2008 by Bon Appetit Magazine.

Others include Mario Pagán of Lemon Grass and Chayote, Augusto Schreiner of Augusto's, Javier Nassar of Banker's Club, Jonathan Torres of Morton's and Marisol Hernández, to cite a few.

"For the Puerto Rico Hotels and Tourism Association it's an honor that so many international figures want to come to the island to take part in this event and be spokespersons of our resources and our culinary talent because it provides us with a great international exposure and it yanks our local dishes into the spotlight," said Clarisa Jiménez, PRHTA president. Also to be present in the ac-



Daily Sun/Miguel Ríos

A handful of the group of chefs who'll take part in the second edition of "Saborea Puerto Rico: A Culinary Extravaganza" this weekend at Punta El Escambrón are shown during a press conference held on Tuesday in San Juan.

tivity will be Spanish chef Santiago Botas, an olive oil expert and consultant for Betis and many other international companies with offices in Turkey, Morocco and Japan. As an olive oil guru, Botas has traveled the globe for tastings in every continent. He'll be on hand on Sunday along with Mario Ferro, executive chef of the Caribe Hilton Hotel.

For her part, Mexican chef Rosita Sánchez, a well-known figure in international culinary circles, will present her new book "Conversación en la cocina" and she'll join Cielito Rosado and Schreiner for the closing of the activity.

Other notable figures include Bradford Thompson of Lever House Restaurant in New York, pastry chef Keegan Gerhard and Andrew Knowlton of Bon Appetit.

"The importance of this event of international exposure for Puerto Rico as a culinary tourist destination was shown recently in the South Beach Food and Wine Fest in Miami. Since then, we've gotten a dramatic increase not

only in the number of daily hits of our web page gotopuertorico.com but also in the number of applications requesting for information on the island and its culinary offers, generating a lot of interest in the Hispanic and U.S. media outlets," said Jaime López, the Puerto Rico Tourism director.

"The Tourism Company's goal is to promote Puerto Rico as a culinary center destination throughout the Caribbean and the United States. We have a culinary team that has won several international awards, and that's something that we should all be proud of. I think the island is ready to be positioned among the greatest culinary destinations of the world," he added.

For more information about the culinary event "Saborea Puerto Rico" go to www.saboreapuertorico.com or www.tcrp.com

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UPR graphic arts students visit Hera Printing Corp.



Courtesy

Luis García, president of Hera Printing Corp., center, recently gave a tour of the company's facilities to graphic arts students from the University of Puerto Rico (Carolina campus) and answered their questions about the evolution of the printing industry from the analog to the digital era.