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'Huevos' revisits painful memories

BY MIA LEONIN

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Ulises Regueiro

Imaray Ulloa, Carlos Alberto Pérez and Liset Jiménez are featured in Akuara Teatro's production of 'Huevos.'

Early on in the Cuban drama Huevos (Eggs), José (Christian Ocón) advises his daughter, Margarita, "Don't ever do anything that will weigh on you later." Although José is encouraging his daughter, (Liset Jiménez), to participate in an acto de repudio or public humiliation of her schoolmate and friend Oscarito (Enrique Moreno), he draws the line at throwing rotten eggs, often a part of the condemnation and insults hurled at those who were seen as traitors to the Revolution.

Cuban playwright Ulises Rodríguez Febles has set the story during the 1980 Mariel Boatlift, when family, friends, and neighbors frequently turned into vehement enemies as some chose to leave Cuba in the mass exodus and others stayed. Huevos cleverly focuses on one act of repudiation at a time

when they were endemic, thereby humanizing a dark chapter in Cuba's history.

Presented by Akuara Teatro, La Má Teodora, and the University of Miami's Cuban Theater Digital Archive, the Spanish-language Huevos makes its south Florida debut at Akuara's black box theater in the Bird Road Art District. Alberto Sarraín adapted Huevos and directs it with an impeccable sense of timing.

The play occurs in 1993 at the beginning of the Special Period, a time of extreme economic scarcity. Returning to his homeland after a 13-year absence, Oscarito confronts the traumatic memory of his departure through conversations with Margarita and a series of flashbacks to 1980.

Huevos' cast is excellent. There's not a weak link in the bunch, but Moreno and Jiménez are notable for their gut-wrenching performances of Oscarito and Margarita. Imaray Ulloa brings comic relief to the play's seriousness with her deadpan portrayal of María, the dispassionate wife of Eugenio (Carlos Alberto Pérez), a stalwart Communist. Micheline Calvert is a stand out as Oscarito's die-hard Communist grandmother who is as ferocious in her affections for her exiled grandson as she is loyal to the Cuban Revolution.

It's this brand of human contradiction that makes Huevos compelling. In Oscarito's memory, for example, his friend Margarita participated fully in the condemnation of him and his family;

however, one scene reveals Margarita's tearful struggle to speak out against her friend.

Impressively, Sarraín and set designer Alain Ortiz manage to juxtapose two different political eras and squeeze a cast of 10 onto one tiny stage without one moment of confusion or overcrowding.

The play's numerous flashbacks are also well executed. In one key scene, the actors use the theater's center aisle to carry out the act of repudiation. The brush of the actors running by and the proximity of Eugenio, the ringleader, screaming into a bullhorn creates a chilling scene.

So often movies, novels and plays present one historical moment as a monolithic reality. Huevos reminds us that history is a living, evolving consequence of actions taken in the past whose wounds can fester well into the future.

If you go

What: 'Huevos' by Ulises Rodríguez Febles

When: 8:30 p.m. Saturday, 6 p.m. Sunday, through Jan. 26

Where: Akuara Teatro, 4599 SW 75th Ave., Miami

Cost: \$20 (\$15 groups, students and seniors)

Information: 786-853-1283

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