



The Best Theater of 2018



Review: In 'The Cher Show,' I Got You, Babe. And You. And You.



Kanye West Called Out (on Twitter) for Cellphone Use During 'The Cher Show'



Fact-Check of a 'Lifespan'

CRITIC'S PICK
Review: Reliving a Childhood Interrupted in 'The Tricky Part'

How 3 Actors Overcame Trump's Travel Ban to Take the New York Stage



Review: Answering the World

THEATER REVIEWS | THEATER REVIEW | 'RUM & COKE'

A Cuban-American's Wish to Find Her Ancestral Home

RUM & COKE Off Broadway, Comedy, Solo Performance | Closing Date: March 2, 2008 | Abingdon Theater Complex, 312 W 36th St. | 866-811-4111

By CARYN JAMES FEB. 15, 2008



Carmen Peláez in her one-woman play, "Rum & Coke." Kim T. Sharp

At an anti-Castro protest in Miami, the playwright Carmen Peláez's alter ego, Camila, visits her grandmother and hears again about the family's flight from Havana decades before. "You are not free, because you're Cuban and you're not home," her grandmother tells the American-born Camila.

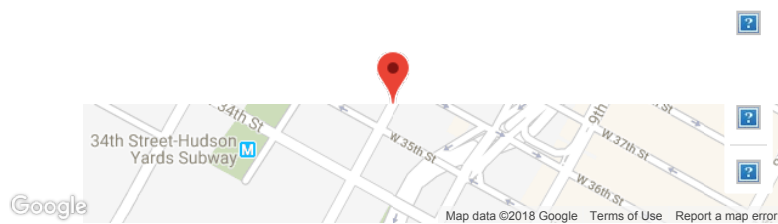
Next Camila visits Iluminata, who on alternate days is a Santeria priestess and a manicurist and who turns out to be an unexpected source of wisdom, advising Camila to make a trip to Havana to visit her aging great aunt while she can. And in Havana, led by the birdlike Aunt Ninita, Camila finally enters her ancestral home and is surrounded by paintings created by Ninita's sister, Amelia Peláez, whose work (some in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art) inspired Camila — and presumably Ms. Peláez — to make this journey to a home she never knew.

As she embodies these and other Cuban and Cuban-American women in the

autobiographical “Rum & Coke,” the actress Ms. Peláez enlivens two overused forms: the one-person show and the personal memoir. That isn’t to say that “Rum & Coke” is terribly original. Ms. Peláez is a better performer than she is a writer, and there isn’t much that seems fresh in what these women say. As Camila narrates her journey and links the characters, Ms. Peláez strains to make points about art and beauty. The comedy, including *Iluminata* shooing chickens around her yard, can be predictable. And because all the characters are women, Ms. Peláez stretches less than solo performers like Anna Deavere Smith.

But Ms. Peláez (who might have stepped out of one of the Dove soap ads featuring real-life women) acts these characters beautifully, from the slumped body language of her grandmother to the defiant stance of a prostitute who was sent out to work by her own mother when she was 12.

Ms. Peláez, who first got a grant to develop this work in 1997, has obviously honed each piece to its essence. Her sketches become poignant as she discovers an identity — the courage of survivors and a heritage of artistic, strong-willed women — that she could not have understood from a distance. The production is simply staged, with family photographs and images of Amelia’s work projected in the background. Like “Rum & Coke,” the Peláez paintings may not be groundbreaking artistically, but they have their own grace.



Rum & Coke

Abingdon Theater Complex

312 W 36th St.
Midtown West
866-811-4111
abingdontheatre.org

Category Off Broadway, Comedy, Solo Performance

Opened February 13, 2008

Preview February 1, 2008

Closing Date March 2, 2008

This information was last updated: Nov. 6, 2017

“Rum & Coke” continues through March 2 at the June Havoc Theater at Abingdon Theater Arts Complex, 312 West 36th Street, Clinton; (212) 868-4444 or smartix.com.

A version of this review appears in print on , on Page E22 of the New York edition with the headline: A Cuban-American’s Wish To Find Her Ancestral Home. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today’s Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)



The Best Theater of 2018



Review: In 'The Cher Show,' I Got You, Babe. And You. And You.



Kanye West Called Out (on Twitter) for Cellphone Use During 'The Cher Show'



Fact-Check of a 'Lifespan'



CRITIC'S PICK
Review: Reliving a Childhood Interrupted in 'The Tricky Part'

Recommended for You

[Go to All Recommendations »](#)

In China, Desperate Patients Smuggle Drugs....











Despite health insurance, terminally ill patients have to hunt around the world and on the internet for ways to stay alive.

He's Built an Empire, With Detained Migrant...

The founder of Southwest Key made millions from housing migrant children. His nonprofit has stockpiled taxpayer dollars...

Deutsche Bank Offices Are Searched in...

The company's headquarters in Frankfurt were raided as part of an inquiry related to the so-called Panama Papers.

1. [Why Michael Cohen, Trump's Fixer, Confessed to It All](#) 
2. [C.I.A. Briefing on Khashoggi Solidifies Senators' View of Prince Mohammed's Complicity](#) 
3. [You Don't Understand Tariffs, Man](#) 
4. [Wisconsin Is About to Make a Huge Mistake](#) 
5. [George Bush and the Obituary Wars](#) 
6. [Stocks Slide After Trump Tweets on Trade, While Bond Market Sounds Recession Warning](#) 
7. [The Conversation: That Christmas When the Trumps Saw Red](#) 
8. [Why Does Alex Acosta Still Have a Job?](#) 
9. [Climate Denial Was the Crucible for Trumpism](#) 
10. [Matter: Yes, the Octopus Is Smart as Heck. But Why?](#) 

[View More Trending Stories »](#)

[Go to Home Page »](#)

NEWS

- World
- U.S.
- Politics
- N.Y.
- Business
- Tech
- Science
- Health
- Sports
- Education
- Obituaries
- Today's Paper
- Corrections

OPINION

- Today's Opinion
- Op-Ed Columnists
- Editorials
- Op-Ed Contributors
- Letters
- Sunday Review
- Video: Opinion

ARTS

- Today's Arts
- Art & Design
- Books
- Dance
- Movies
- Music
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Television
- Theater
- Video: Arts

LIVING

- Automobiles
- Crossword
- Food
- Education
- Fashion & Style
- Health
- Jobs
- Magazine
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Real Estate
- T Magazine
- Travel
- Weddings & Celebrations

LISTINGS & MORE

- Reader Center
- Classifieds
- Tools & Services
- N.Y.C. Events Guide
- Multimedia
- Photography
- Video
- NYT Store
- Times Journeys
- Subscribe
- Manage My Account
- NYTCo

SUBSCRIBE

- Home Delivery**
- Digital Subscriptions**
- Crossword**
- Email Newsletters
- Gift Subscriptions
- Group Subscriptions
- Education Rate
- Mobile Applications
- Replica Edition

