

## Performance Review

*No todas lo tienen* by Myrna Casas

Playing to a full house in San Juan's Teatro de Bellas Artes, the four actors in Myrna Casas's *No todas lo tienen* delighted and confused the audience as they stepped in and out of character to trample the illusion of theatre as life. Staged without walls or curtains to separate the action from the audience, the comedy's metatheatrical structure features a parody of theatre within the farce of matrimony. José Llompert's minimal set suggests the comforts and vices of middle-class Puerto Rican life, especially the imported liqueurs and cigarettes. These props and the plastic flowers and crystal ball project problems explored thematically.

The plot concerns the machinations of Gaby, the protagonist, to recapture the affections of Luis, her womanizing husband, and punish his infidelity. The action begins when she chases him out of the house with a gun, her father's legacy when he left Puerto Rico. Gaby resolves to leave Luis and search for her father in Europe, an allusion not only to finding her roots, but her assertive, masculine half. Her ambiguous name symbolic of her amorphous personality, Gaby returns transformed as her twin sister Gaby: no longer a dowdy, crying housewife, but a glamorous, worldly woman confident of her sexuality. Aided by Nico her homosexual confidant and impeded by Aurora who evades her own marital problems by gazing into a crystal ball, the new Gaby plays the *femme fatale* with bemused irony. But while Luis lusts after her, he keeps two lovers on the side. The satire plunges into a parody of theatre when the leading actress refuses to continue playing her role, leaving both audience and actors perplexed as to how to end the comedy. *No todas lo tienen* is an unabashed joke, its title the punch line that reconciles the structural impasse.

Humorously, Casas uses anti-illusionist devices to remind the audience that art and life are not interchangeable. Periodically, minor mistakes jolt the spectator provoking uproarious laughter. The actors fall out of character, forget their lines, mention the audience or speak to it directly; the lights fail to respond to stage action, and props are missing, removed mid-scene or thrown on-stage as

needed. The flowers function as a polysemic metaphor for the falseness of stage illusion, of Gaby's new persona, and of the marriage she tries to save: "Las flores son plásticas. Hasta eso hemos llegado. . . . El problema es que las flores verdaderas no son perfectas y las plásticas sí." Theatre, Casas posits, resolves conflicts too perfectly; in real life solutions are imperfect. The goal of theatre is "hacer pensar"; the spectators must judge for themselves and reach their own conclusions.

*No todas lo tienen* was directed by the playwright, produced by her company *Producciones Cisne*, and superbly represented by Gladys Rodríguez, Rocky Venegas, Elsa Román and Angel Dómenech. It played for seven nights in San Juan after touring the island with a grant from Productora Nacional de Teatro. First written in 1975 and revised in 1994, *No todas* forms a thematic trilogy with *Este país no existe* (1993) and *El gran circo eucraniano* (1988).

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Left to Right: Rocky Venegas, Gladys Rodríguez, Ángel Dómenech y Elsa Román in *No todas lo tienen* by Myrna Casas. Producciones Cisno, 1994.