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Spanish Girl: Unfilmed Before a Live Studio Audience

Posted by Simon Filed in Theatre September 2, 2007



A big part of the problem with getting people to come out to watch theatre in our fair city has to do with an innate image of it being a tedious, high-minded, and just plain fun-free way to spend their time. Well, if anyone came out to see Paige 18 Production's *Spanish Girl* at the Havana this past week expecting an elitist, over-intellectualized night of *thee-ah-tuh*, they went home sorely disappointed.

From the git-go it was clear that we were playing the part of a sitcom studio audience, from the Brady Bunch theme pre-set music to the off-stage "announcer" introducing the actors to us off the top (and then thanking the play's actual sponsor). All that was missing was a flashing applause indicator and a three-camera set up. Accordingly, the four actors threw themselves into their work with equal amounts of verve and gusto, all were cast impeccably in their respective roles and demonstrated an inspiring physical commitment that never flagged over the course of the well-timed one hour piece. Without the concern of a close-up, this was sitcom acting on steroids, and it was a pleasure to watch four actors so obviously having fun on stage.

The set, one of the better that I've seen shoe-horned into the Havana, represented the dormitory of college buddies Bucky and Chet, played by Kevan Kase and Alain Chanoin, respectively. Both demonstrated a firm understanding of the stereotypes they were representing: Bucky the live-for-the-moment solipsist frat-boy and Chet the bro's-before-ho's too-smooth wing man. Rhonda Dent's Jolene, Bucky's overbearing and careerist girlfriend, was a convincing representation of the potential emasculation that every boy who dates hot type-A's fear. Kirsten Kilburn, as Bucky's under-age knocked-up summer playmate, went toe-to-toe with Ms. Dent in a role that could easily have been played overly precious.

Hunt Holman's script itself, full of refreshingly contemporary vernacular, could have come off as shallow pretentiousness if it was presented to us in any kind of cautionary tone, there is no revelatory depth of commentary in it unless the idea of a 15-year-old's wanted pregnancy still has the power to shock you. Peter Huck's sitcom direction was right on the money, and reminded me that it's okay for theatre to sometimes be an escape instead of a sermon. *Spanish Girl's* closing performance is tonight at 8:00.

Photo courtesy of [Rhonda Dent](#)

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