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BlogCritic Premeditation Review

Posted by [Vince](#) on Friday, April 25, 2014 · [Leave a Comment](#)

Theater Review (LA): ‘Premeditation’ by Evelina Fernández

Posted by: [Kurt Gardner](#) April 22, 2014 in [Arts](#), [Culture and Society](#), [Editor Pick: Culture and Society](#), [Theater](#), [Top Stories](#)

Esmeralda (Evelina Fernández) is a woman who ought to be quite content with her life. She’s an upwardly-mobile socialite, married to a respected UCLA professor whose salary affords her the luxuries she desires. There’s just one problem — her husband, Fernando (Geoffrey Rivas), is driving her crazy. He’s begun to neglect her, he leaves his clothes everywhere for her to pick up and can’t even be counted on to perform the most mundane chores. As a result, she does what every wife in that position would dream of doing — she hires a hitman to kill him.

Tough-talking Mauricio (Sal Lopez) comes highly recommended, so Esmeralda arranges a clandestine meeting at a local hotel. He insists on a good reason for taking out Fernando, and dirty underwear on the floor isn’t justification enough for him. An argument ensues, and they soon find themselves confessing their separate but similar marital woes. Meanwhile, Mauricio’s wife, Lydia (Lucy Rodriguez), discovers the mystery woman’s phone number in the pocket of her husband’s pants and gets the wrong idea, culminating in a comical confrontation between both unhappy couples.



Left to right: Geoffrey Rivas, Lucy Rodriguez, Sal Lopez and Evelina Fernández. Photo by Ed Krieger.

With *Premeditation*, Fernández melds time periods and theatrical styles to great comedic effect. Although the settings and costumes are straight out of 1940s L.A. *noir*, the dialogue vacillates between vintage and contemporary...and it all works surprisingly well.

There are intentional anachronisms in the play. Everyone has a cell phone (but they figure importantly in the plot) and Lydia is a confirmed trash television addict who frequently cites shows like *Dr. Phil* and *Snapped* to compare to their predicament. Fernández and Rivas are fine as the upscale couple, while Lopez and Rodriguez make the most of their flashy roles as the hitman and his wife, with Rodriguez scoring the most laughs as the foul-mouthed Lydia.

Humorous touches are generously sprinkled throughout the piece. For example, when a character delivers a particularly overripe line of dialogue, another will retort, “*What* are you talking about?” And when Mauricio proudly reads a love letter written to him by Lydia during their courting days, it is discovered to consist of plagiarized lyrics from a Marvin Gaye song. Along the way, Fernández also manages to provide some deeper insight about couples growing apart as they grow older.

Technically, the production is solid. Francois-Pierre Couture’s set design and Naila Aladdin Sanders’s period costumes look great. John Zaleski’s sound — and especially Pablo Santiago’s lighting and projection design — really take the work to the next level.

As the actors deliver the piquant dialogue onstage, Santiago’s evocative black-and-white projections of their characters appear behind them, dramatically reinforcing the noir aspect of the play. It literally becomes a film-within-a-film. Zaleski’s imaginative use of sounds — the ominous footsteps of a waiter bringing drinks or the exaggerated flare-up of a cigarette being ignited — add to the atmosphere (and, at times, the humor). Even the scene changes are amusing, as choreographed by Urbanie Lucero. It’s all directed with flair by José Luis Valenzuela.

Premeditation is a thoroughly entertaining theatrical production that’s also a brilliantly-orchestrated piece of performance art. It plays Thursday through Saturday at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. through May 11 at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 South Spring Street. Reservations can be made [online](#) or by calling (866) 811-4111.

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Latin Heat review of Premeditation

Posted by [Vince](#) on Monday, April 28, 2014 · [Leave a Comment](#)

“Premeditation” Film Noir on Stage at the LATC

Posted By [Admin](#) On April 24th, 2014 05:51 PM | [Events](#), [Spotlight](#), [Theater](#)



Evelina Fernandez and Sal Lopez (Photo by Ed Krieger)

By **Bel Hernandez**

The world premiere of the dark comedy *Premeditation* by **Evelina Fernandez** bowed to a full house on April 19th at the [Los Angeles Theater Center](#) and runs until May 11th. *Premeditation* does not take its self seriously. But it does address some serious issues, but enough to put a hit on your husband?

As the play opens the mood is set with the actors literally dressing the set to **Urbanie Lucero's** fluid choreography. It's a sparse stage and we are taken into the 1940's — the clothing, the hair, music, and even the lighting. The mood is broken as we find ourselves simultaneous eavesdropping on two bickering couples. On one side we have the affluent couple. Fernando (**Geoffrey Rivas**), is a UCLA college professor and Esmeralda (**Evelina Fernandez**) his bored socialite wife with way too much time on her hands. Mauricio (**Sal Lopez**) and Lydia (**Lucy Rodriguez**) on the other hand are your typical hit man and his foul mouth wife with the bleached pompadour hair. Both husbands are being read the riot act.

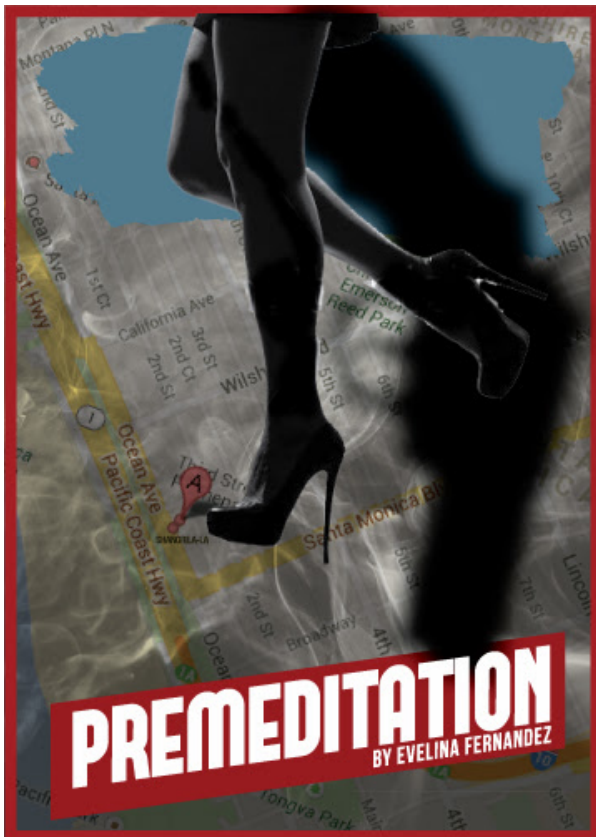
In this highly stylized piece, we find ourselves in the 1940's and only for a second do we wonder why all the characters have cell phones, but the audience doesn't dwell because the plot thickens. Esmeralda decides that after decades of putting up with her husband, who doesn't even look up from his newspaper when she is talking to him, or pick up his underwear from the floor, she has finally had enough. It's time to get rid of him. She picks up her cell phone and calls the Mauricio, the highly recommended hit man.

It all takes place at the Shangri-La Hotel. With all the twist and turns of a 1940's crime romance (well almost crime), the intrigue is palpable. The characters bare their souls; confess their crimes, sins and faults. And Mauricio comes to understand that there is more than the underwear on the floor for Esmeralda wanting to have Fernando killed.



(L-R) Lucy Rodriguez, Geoffrey Rivas, Evelina Fernandez & Evelina Fernandez (photo: Ed Kreieger)

The final scene showdown happens in the hotel room where Esmeralda and Mauricio plot. Fernando and Lydia who found out about their spouses meeting place, coincidentally through their cell phones, walk in them as they find themselves in a compromising position.



Under the direction of **Jose Luis Valenzuela** the actors do a terrific job of playing their characters' reality in such a convincing way that the audience can empathize with them — the plotting wife, the hit man, and even his trash-talking wife. The only odd man out is the intended victim. Fernando's only crime was being boring and uninterested and who wants to empathize with that?

We all have spouses that do little annoying things, but hiring a hit man, when divorce not enough? I'll take *Premeditation* instead.

The play runs until May 11, Thursdays-Saturdays at 8:00pm, Sundays at 3:00pm.

Bringing a richness to the production were set designer by **Francois-Pierre Couture**; wardrobe by **Naila Aladdin Sanders**; sound design by **John Zalewski**, and lighting and projection design by **Pablo Santiago**.

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Los Angeles Theater Review: PREMEDITATION (Los Angeles Theatre Center)

by [Tony Frankel](#) on May 3, 2014

in [Theater-Los Angeles](#)



NOT PREMEDITATED ENOUGH



Despite playwright Evelina Fernández' ability to take clichéd problems about marriage and turn them into humorous complaints about men tossing underwear on the floor and women nagging, her divertingly silly but disappointingly trite *Premeditation* doesn't elevate past the conceit: A woman hires a hit man to off her husband of 25 years. They meet in a hotel room, but a phone number discovered in the hit man's pocket at home leads their perspective spouses to suspect that an affair is at hand. When the foursome finally gathers in the Shangri-La hotel room, the simplistic "Marriage ain't so bad, you just need to dance and say 'I love you, Babe'" is hardly characteristic of the film noir genre Fernández is attempting to spoof. Equally, the usual suspects—Latino Theater Company actors Sal Lopez, Lucy Rodriguez, Geoffrey Rivas, and especially playwright Fernández—have yet to find the proper balance between parody and authentic characterization (they were also tripping on lines well into the run).



Pablo Santiago's smoky, noirish film images of the characters as others see them are projected onto François-Pierre Couture's large backdrop, containing two doors and painted to resemble the type of stained walls one would expect in a seedy motel. Los Angeles Theatre Center's 320-seat Theatre 3 feels like a barn for this intimate show, but Santiago creates mood with effective GOBOed lighting effects that simulate neon. Director José Luis Valenzuela fills the large, stark playing area using rolling 1940's furniture, with which the actors tango during the scene changes (choreography by Urbanie Lucero). There's a nuclear amount of smoking, and the use of dry ice and hair spray cans illuminate the constant puffing typical of noir cinema. These clever, often comical devices are particular to inventive director Valenzuela, Fernández' real-life husband, yet his ability to mine gold from a troubled script, such as his [Melancholia](#), is not in evidence here.



Film noir chestnuts—double-dealing, guns, cynicism, Femme Fatales, shadows, smoke, funny lines, detective work, fedoras, and reflective conversation—are all parodied here, but they don't jibe with the script, an amalgam of noir, vaudeville, and stand up-type commentary about modern marital squabbles (you always know a script needs filler when topical references such as "Cheetos" and "Dr. Phil" are used). This is yet another 90-minute one-act stretched out from a *Saturday Night Live*-esque sketch, and all the accessories and accoutrements cannot hide the slender plot. Had there been dialogue at the level of great noir lines such as "She tried sitting on my lap while I was standing up" (*The Big Sleep*) and "If I knew you were coming I'd have set fire to the place" (*The Killers*), I probably wouldn't have become so restless at the halfway point. Without murder, a story, and actors better able to pull off noir, this escapist entertainment is probably best-suited for women who have been married for a quarter-century or so and are too tired to fight. The novelty and intentions are swell, but, to quote Barbara Stanwyck in *Clash by Night*, "What do you want, Joe, my life history? Here it is in four words: big ideas, small results."



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Thursday, 24 April 2014 19:31

“Premeditation” a Wickedly Funny Look at Married Life

Written by Marianne Fritz

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Premeditation, a new play by Evelina Fernandez, depicts a marriage very much on the rocks, its deterioration caused not by anything so glaringly despicable as infidelity or spousal abuse, but rather by an accumulation of minor annoyances. The beginning of any romantic relationship is invariably marked by puppies and rainbows (whether real or imaginary), but over time they

mutate into formulaic sex and incessant bickering. Although at the start of the relationship, you just want to spend every waking hour with the object of your affections, there is inevitably a point of diminishing returns, past which the presence of the other person only makes you agonizingly aware of how much you want to be left alone. And you know you've reached that point when, as Esmeralda (Evelina Fernandez) observes in the play, you are no longer captivated by the sounds of the other person's breathing, chewing, burping, farting in fact, you realize that you find it extremely *irritating*. And who among us has not thought of assassinating our significant others when we make that sobering realization? Unlike most other disillusioned wives who simply learn to live with toilet seats not put back down, Esmeralda opts for a somewhat more radical, and definitely more comical, approach to solving her problem: she tries to get her



Evelina Fernandez and Sal Lopez

Premeditation

Directed by Jose Luis Valenzuela
Opening April 19, 2014 at The LATC

Photo by Ed Krieger

husband whacked, with the help of professional hit man Mauricio (Sal Lopez).

As Esmeralda and Mauricio meet in a hotel room to work out the details of the planned murder, Mauricio's wife, Lydia, finds Esmeralda's name and phone number, left by accident in one of Mauricio's pants pockets. Jumping to the wrong conclusion, Lydia calls the number, and Esmeralda's husband answers. Lydia and Fernando (Geoffrey Rivas), now both suspecting that their spouses are cheating on them, follow further clues that eventually lead them to Esmeralda and Mauricio's hotel room. What truly animates this show is Evelina Fernandez's witty and astute dialogue, and from this point in the play, when Lydia and Fernando have burst into the room to catch Esmeralda and Mauricio in a particularly hard-to-explain position, the show's hilarity reaches a climax.

Francois-Pierre Couture's austere and versatile set requires the actors to bring set pieces onto the stage during scene changes. This interaction between the performers and the set pieces is emphasized rather than downplayed; in the show's earlier scenes in particular, the actors play and dance with the furniture as if with human partners. This suggests the extent to which communication between the characters and their respective partners have corroded, their spouses have become as unresponsive to their emotional needs, as the inanimate objects with which they are dancing.

The show's somewhat gratuitous use of fog machines and herbal cigarettes render it potentially unsuitable for the asthmatic, but everyone else will find this funny and thought-provoking look at marriage a delight. We should all see *Premeditation* this weekend, and



Lucy Rodriguez, Geoffrey Rivas, Evelina Fernandez and Sal Lopez

Premeditation

Directed by Jose Luis Valenzuela
Opening April 19, 2014 at The LATC

Photo by Ed Krieger

share a laugh.

Premeditation runs April 17, May 11, 2014 at the Los Angeles Theatre Center located at 514 S Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013. Show times are Thursday through Saturday at 8pm, with a Sunday Matinee at 3pm. General Admission is \$40. Students, seniors, groups of ten or more, LATC members are \$20. A limited number of \$10 tickets are available on Thursdays. For reservations call (866) 811-4111.

Online ticketing: www.thelatc.org

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