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Eastline's "The Hours Are Feminine" Hits With Hurricane Force

This must-see drama runs through October 5, 2025.



Cindi Sansone-Braff, Community Contributor ✓

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Aiden Falco, Abril López Ruiz, Hector Rivera (Jessica Allers)

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, EastLine Theatre, in partnership with the Babylon Citizens Council on the Arts, presents "The Hours Are Feminine" by José Rivera, a Long Island-raised playwright. Rivera's semi-autobiographical play premiered last year at INTAR Theatre in New York City.

This thought-provoking two-act drama, brilliantly directed by Megan Laguna, takes place in Ronkonkoma, a town on Long Island, a few months before John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic President of the United States. Saturday night's audience sat on the edge of their seats, witnessing an emotionally charged, in-depth exploration of the complexity of human relationships, both familial and platonic, with a focus on female camaraderie.

Set at the dawn of the birth control pill era, a time when women's desire to achieve more and be more became a real possibility, this drama highlights the simmering discontent and seething frustrations that foreshadowed the imminent feminist revolution about to take the world by storm. Hurricane Donna, which struck Long Island in September 1960, served as a powerful metaphor for the ever-increasing tension among the characters and throughout humankind during the second half of the 20th century, as the planet teetered on the precipice of political and social upheaval. The terrifying onstage sights and sounds, as well as the frightened reactions of the characters before, during, and after the devastating hurricane hit, added to the show's overall dramatic impact.

Rivera's well-crafted drama effectively addresses the struggles of assimilation through the poignant story of two Long Island families—an assimilated Italian and an immigrant Puerto Rican family—who share the same backyard, separated by cultural differences and a language barrier.

Michelle Savin's evocative, masterfully designed set features a picturesque porch on the meticulously maintained Italian family's home, complete with a manicured front lawn, an apple tree, and the rundown shack rented by the recently immigrated Puerto Rican family. The authentic 1960s costume designs by Wendy Grimm added a touch of realism to the production, while Nicole Savin's innovative lighting design reflected the different hours of the day and the play's ever-changing emotional atmosphere.

Abril López Ruiz delivered an award-worthy performance as Evalisse, a devout Catholic, devoted wife, and mother with mystical healing powers who longs to return to her beloved Puerto Rico. Christina Thompson provides a nuanced portrayal of Mirella, a kind-hearted but frustrated housewife who befriends and defends Evalisse against the unwanted sexual advances of her bigoted, chauvinistic, pigheaded, and drunken father-in-law, Charlie, convincingly played by Carl DiModugno.

Three standout performers were James Brautigam as Little Anthony, Mirella's old-school, narrow-minded husband, whose violent outbursts both on and off stage inspire him to undertake some deep inner searching; Hector Rivera as Fernán, Evalisse's loving and hardworking husband; and Aiden Falco, a talented young actor, who charismatically portrayed Fernán and Evalisse's beloved young son, Jaivín.

The solid cast, bursting with electrifying onstage chemistry, was the engine that propelled the action forward, moving sometimes at a slow, lyrical pace, as in the touching, spontaneous outdoor pajama party scene, where Evalisse and Mirella solidify their friendship. Other scenes move with the force of a nuclear explosion, particularly the realistically choreographed violent ones, which had the audience gasping aloud.

One of the most memorable onstage moments you will see on any stage involves the passionate and at times pathetic apology scene, where Little Anthony (Brautigam) begs, grovels, and pleads for Mirella's forgiveness.

Many of the scenes juxtapose Mirella's genuine acts of kindness against the backdrop of Charlie's cruel, often barbaric behaviors. At the opening of the play, Charlie calls Jaivín a "monkey child from hell" when he catches the hungry boy eating an apple from his tree. In contrast, Mirella feels great compassion for Jaivín after she sees him fishing food out of the garbage can and encourages the boy to sit with her and share her meal.

Visceral and intellectually engaging, this modern classic proved to be a truly captivating evening of theatre.

Performances take place at the BACCA Arts Center in Lindenhurst through October 5. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at eastline.ludus.com. For more information, visit eastlinetheatre.org or call 516-749-5047.