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The Portland Observer 44

'City of Roses'



Volume XLIV
Number 27

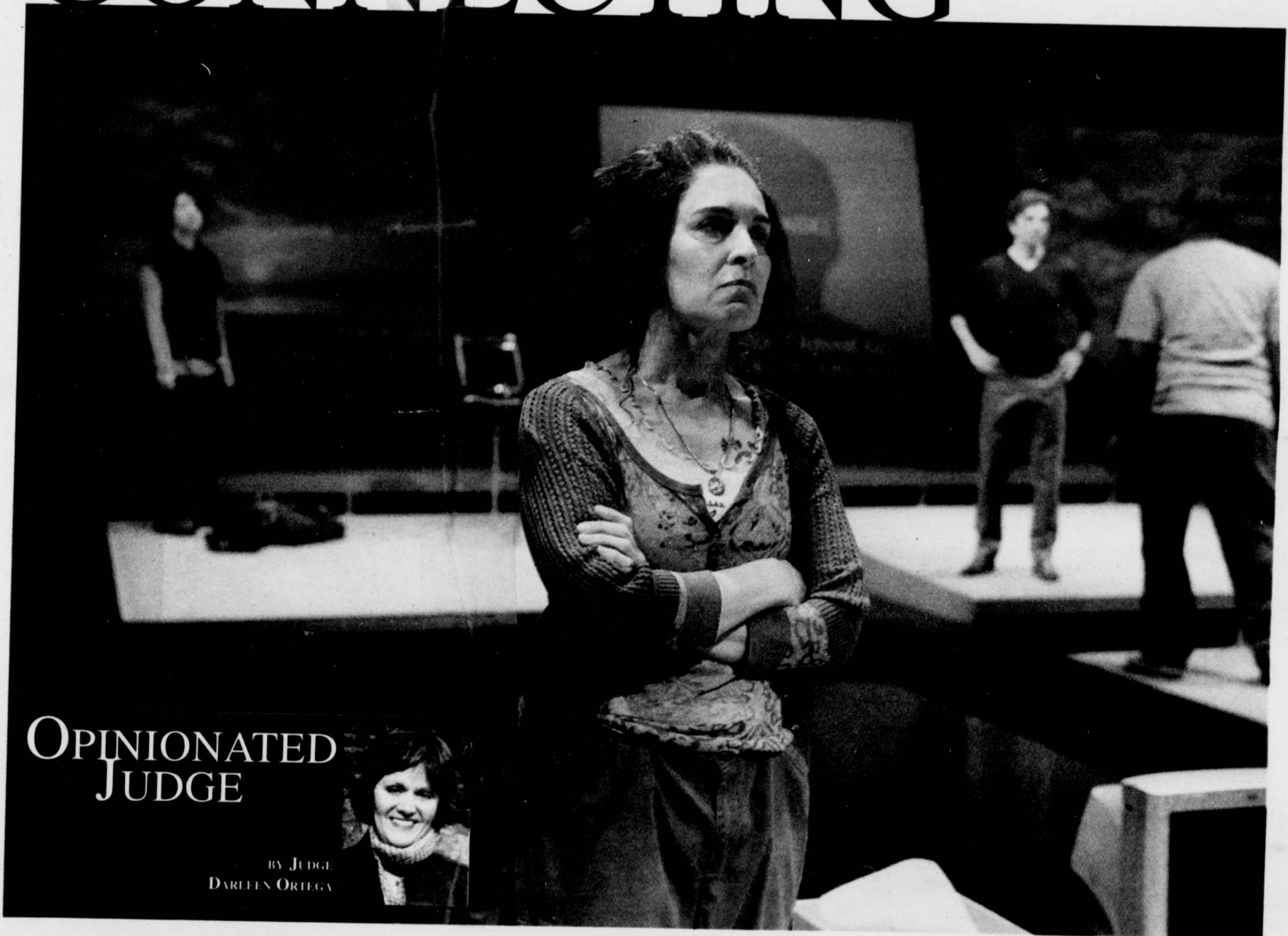


www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • July 9, 2014

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44 years of
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CONNECTING



OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY JUDGE
DARLEEN ORTEGA



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM.

Odessa (Vilma Silva) monitors the conversation in her online chat room in 'Water By the Spoonful.' The Oregon Shakespeare Festival play delves in the sometimes messy and sometimes beautiful connections that make family relationships. Also features (from left) Celeste Den, Barret O'Brien and Bruce A. Young.

Play about broken relationships and other works highlight Oregon Shakespeare Festival

BY DARLEEN ORTEGA

There's nothing more important than family. I would never make the mistakes my mother made. People don't change. Much of what gets expressed about family and community in life and popular culture is full of absolutist thinking like that reflected in such statements. But the reality of community is much messier, less linear.

So is the world of family and community

reflected in "Water By the Spoonful," a play by Puerto Rican-American playwright Quiara Alegria Hudes that played at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival this past spring and resumes in September.

In the world of this play, communities (including families) are made up only of broken people. Young Elliot, recently returned from the Iraq war with a leg injury, is underemployed and caring for his aunt Ginny, who

raised him when his biological mother (Ginny's sister Odessa) couldn't. Ginny is everything Odessa is not — a true matriarch connected to place and community. Elliot seethes with nursed anger toward Odessa, a recovering crack addict living "one notch above squalor."

But the woman we meet isn't the one frozen in Elliot's memory. Odessa, who works as a part-time janitor, founded and adminis-

ters a chat room for recovering addicts, and in that cyber world, she is a mama. Using the handle "Haikumom," she keeps the conversations safe, prods the participants to take care of themselves, and creates space for people at all stages of recovery.

Mother and son, however disconnected in life, are connected in ways neither recog-

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