

t h e a t e r

Lovin' la Marga loca

The fearless comic blows the whistle on lesbian sexual repression in her new one-woman show **By Edward Guthmann**

It took a long time for Marga Gomez to figure this out, but it's not sex or love that puts the kibosh on a relationship—it's the choices one makes in a partner. "It's going after unavailable women," says Gomez, who realized something important about herself after years of mistakes: "I'm only attracted to someone I think is easy to break up with or will dump me."

Gomez, the gifted Latina actor-comedian, discovered this while performing her newest one-woman play, *The Twelve Days of Cochina*. Described as Charles Dickens mixed with the Marquis de Sade, *Cochina* tells a tale of lesbian lust, sexual abstinence, faith-based charities, and the evils of Pampers disposable bibs. It was first workshopped at Dixon Place in New York in December 2000, played recently at Boston's Theater Offensive and at Austin's Off Center, and runs November 8 through December 9 at San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros.

"The story is *A Christmas Carol*, but instead of being a miser with money, she's a sexual miser," says Gomez, who is currently single and living in Brooklyn, N.Y. The title derives from the Spanish word for pig, which is what *Cochina's* repressed maiden aunt warns her she'll become if she indulges her desires.

"The character starts out as a sexual scrooge testifying before Congress as to how she has been controlled by sex her whole life," Gomez says, "even though she never really got as much sex as she wanted."

From there *Cochina* shifts back in time, as our heroine sells a kidney and drops \$80,000 to buy every kind of Christmas present her girlfriend could possibly want—only to get dumped with a curt Christmas card message.

"And then," Gomez continues, "this girl begins to manifest symptoms that one manifests when you haven't been getting any for a while. Her ass clenches, she has shifts in temperature, she starts grabbing people and fondling herself." Eventually she strips down to bra and half-slip—"the least I've worn onstage so far"—while shopping for kidney medicine at Walgreens. Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell also appear, played by Gomez's handy dildo puppets.

Cochina is the sixth solo show Gomez has created in 15 years as a stage performer. *A Line Around the Block* and *Memory Tricks* told of her late, New York-based parents, a Cuban comedian and a Puerto Rican exotic dancer. And *Jaywalker*



(which she'll reprise starting January 8 at San Diego Repertory Theatre) was Gomez's "loathe letter" to Los Angeles, where she spent a year trying to break into mainstream showbiz.

Gomez would like to do more films—she still gets checks for her tiny part in the sci-fi fantasy *Sphere*—but gets so caught up in her stage projects that "there isn't enough time to be an on-the-ball auditioning actress with résumé and head shots."

Being out probably has limited her job opportunities, she figures, "but at the same time, I'm a quirky person and a quirky performer. Whether I was out or not, the way I am in life is not the way that roles are written for women. I just don't see anything for someone who looks like me and sounds like me and moves around like me."

Gomez also dislikes Hollywood networking. She mentions that a friend of hers, actor and writer Guinevere Turner (*Go Fish*), is heard laughing on *Cochina's* audio track, but when asked if she'd ever hit up Turner for a movie job, she says, "I don't really like to go to people I know for those things."

Are they good buddies? "Oh, you know, there's seven lesbians," Gomez says. "We all know each other. We've all slept with k.d. lang. Hey, wait a minute, take out that part about k.d. lang!" ■

Guthmann is a film critic and reporter at the San Francisco Chronicle.

To find more information on Marga Gomez and *The Twelve Days of Cochina* as well as links to related Internet sites, visit www.advocate.com