

Playing GOD

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PLAYING GOD

BY NANCY STETSON

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IF YOU THINK GOD IS AN OLD WHITE man with a long gray beard, you're wrong.

(I always think of Him as probably more like Gloria Foster, or her replacement,

Mary Alice, in the "Matrix" movies: a cryptic

SEE GOD, C4 ►

Miguel Cintron lands the holiest – and most irreverent – role of all

◀ Rob Green, Miguel Cintron and David Yudowitz.





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(I always think of Him as probably more like Gloria Foster, or her replacement, Mary Alice, in the "Matrix" movies: a cryptic black woman sitting at a kitchen table, smoking cigarettes, the wisdom of the universe at her fingertips.)

You might be surprised to learn that God is 5-foot-4-inch, 41-year-old Latino named Miguel Cintron who grew up in the tough Bushwick section of Brooklyn, N.Y.

At least that's how it is in "An Act of God," up next at Laboratory Theater of Florida.

Mr. Cintron — who calls himself a "Nuyorican," which is Spanglish for a Puerto Rican from New York — didn't even have to audition for the lead role in the off-kilter comedy.



God (Miguel Cintron) in the center, with his archangels Gabriel (Rob Green) on the left and Michael (David Yudowitz) on the right. COURTESY PHOTO

"Annette (Trossbach, artistic director and founder) from LAB, she was like, 'This part is yours if you want it,'" the actor says. "She really felt like it was me."

Does that mean he's especially godly?

He laughs.

“The show’s irreverent,” he says. “I think that’s why she wanted me to play this part; I’m good at irreverence.

“I grew up in the church. Both my father and grandfather were Pentecostal pastors — which is why I’m an irreverent person.”

He saw the hypocrisy behind the scenes, he says, but still definitely believes in God and plays the drums every Sunday morning at his church in Fort Myers. He doesn’t want to reveal its name.

“I don’t want any of them to come,” he says of his fellow worshippers.

He’s not sure they’ll get the humor.

While his wife and daughter are very supportive, he says, his sister is a different story.

“My sister, she’s asking, ‘Why are you playing God? Why are you being in a show that’s irreverent like that? You know better than that.’ But she’s still going to come and see it.

“And she’ll laugh. She’ll huff and puff, but she’ll laugh,” he predicts.

He says “An Act of God” is irreverent in many ways as it pokes fun at the ridiculousness of organized religion.

“It’s kind of like God coming down and making a joke about how people take everything so literally,” Mr. Cintron says. “Certain things make sense, and that’s OK. But certain things in the Bible don’t make sense, and we poke fun at it.”

The premise of the show is that God comes down, chooses a local celebrity and inhabits his or her body in order to communicate.

“God goes into my body, but I have no idea that I’m actually on stage at the Laboratory Theater,” he says. God then proceeds to hand down 10 new commandments and talk about certain things that happened in the Bible, explaining what really happened.

“For example,” he says, “God actually did create Adam and Steve first, but had to change things around, because Adam and Steve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge That Your Lifestyle is Sinful. That’s what it’s called in the script. And once they ate of that, then God decided to make Adam and Eve.

“It pokes fun at the whole idea that God is anti-gay,” he says. “It’s not making fun of gays, but of the whole idea that God would be anti-gay or anti-any human being.”

Dave Yudowitz and Rob Green play his archangels, Gabriel and Michael, respectively. “They’ll be dressed to the nines in white suits and wings,” he says, while God wears white robes and sneakers.

The show was a hit on Broadway with Jim Parsons (“The Big Bang Theory”) and then Sean Hayes (“Will and Grace”) playing God.

The script, written by David Javerbaum, multiple Emmy-Award winning head writer on the original “The Daily Show,” jokes about “everyone and everything,” says Mr. Cintron – Christians, Jews, Muslims, racists.

The play was originally a series of Tweets (“Life would make a lot more sense if you could hear the laugh track”: @TheTweetofGod), and then a book, “The Last Testament: A Memoir of God.”

“It’s possible people will come in and be uncomfortable, but if they stick it out, they’ll see it all comes together in the end and it’s very funny,” Mr. Cintron says.

“It’s basically God telling them to believe in themselves, and in all the things they can do, that humanity can do.” |

‘An Act of God’

>> When: Nov. 17-Dec. 9

>> Where: Laboratory Theater of Florida, Fort Myers

>> Cost: \$23 for adults

>> Info: 218-0481 or www.laboratorytheaterflorida.com

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