

# Hilo Rains

A Murder-Mystery Walking Tour  
In Historic Downtown Hilo  
© Justina Taft Mattos 2000

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Entertainment  
hed each Friday.

## Arts & Entertainment

Friday,  
August 31, 2001

### Eat lunch, watch a play — and solve a mystery

By John Burnett  
For the Tribune-Herald

**M**yystery theater, a type of interactive play where the audience is welcome to help solve a crime, usually a murder, has become very popular on the mainland with the dinner theater crowd. Usually such productions cost theatergoers in the neighborhood of \$75 - \$85, which includes the price of dinner.

Local playwright-producer-director Justina Mattos is bringing the concept to Hilo, with some changes to make the production more accessible to the local market. "Hilo Rains" will make use of downtown Hilo as a backdrop and keep costs down by serving lunch rather than dinner. "Audience members will

have their lunch orders taken, be given a sleuth sheet and an umbrella, and then be sent around downtown to gather clues to hopefully help them solve the curious demise of C.H. Cane," Mattos said.

If the reader is thinking like a detective, the name of the deceased conjures images of Charles Foster "Citizen" Kane and also C&H sugar cane.

"Those are both deliberate," Mattos said. "This is sort of a far-fetched allegory of the demise of the local sugar industry."

The audience's main guide on this downtown adventure is one Detective Manno, a fedora and trench coat clad gumshoe whose name recalls that of James MacArthur's police detective character in "Hawaii 5-0." Lt. Dan "Danno" Williams. Again, you would be right to make that connection as Manno, por-



T-H photo by William Ing

Some of the cast of "Hilo Rains" accuse each other as they surround director Justina Mattos. Clockwise from top left are Tristan Mathers as "Daniel O'Looney," Rachel Klein as "Fanny Prickler," Crystal Beaumont as "Joanna Brushwell," and Aletha O'Toole as "Helen Millet."

trayed by veteran trouper Ray Campaignha, is the ace detective from 5-0's Special Investigative Unit.

Mattos describes Manno

as a "pidgin character," but Rachel Klein, a young actress who portrays one of the suspects, acupuncturist Fanny Prickler, sees him just a little

differently.

"Manno really tries to speak what he thinks is good English, but a lot of the comedy in the play revolves around him fracturing the language," she said. "It's hilarious."

"Manno is really intelligent and a good detective and he eventually figures out who did it, but not without some help from the audience."

Also in the production are William Wagoner and Steve Sakoda, who share the part of field worker Fernando Delos Fieldos; Kealia Prince as hula dancer Hina Ka'oiwi; Aletha O'Toole as Helen Millet (pronounced Moo-lay'); Tristan Mathers as Daniel O'Looney and Crystal Beaumont as dental hygiene student Joanna Brushwell. All portray suspects whom the audience members track

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## Arts & Entertainment

### Believers or not, 'Simpsone' is a hit

## MYSTERY

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down to various downtown locations and question in hopes of finding clues to solve the "murder."

"At first I had intended to write a role to create an acting opportunity for myself, but after being confronted with all the logistics of producing and directing the event, it just made more sense to hire an actress for the role," Mattos said.

Mattos, a Ph.D. candidate in drama at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, was a performer in a mystery theater production in Oregon and said that she enjoyed it so much, she wanted to bring the concept back to Hilo and localize it. Audience members/amateur sleuths should bear in mind that

they will be doing extensive walking as part of the experience.

"The route goes by the post office, the library, St. Joseph Church, Kalakaua Park, a shop downtown on Waianuenue Avenue and down to the singing bridge," Mattos said. "We provide umbrellas but people should be wearing comfortable walking shoes. The price of admission includes lunch, beverage, dessert, tip, all included."

At the end, the audience will gather at the Hawaiian Jungle restaurant on Kalakaua Street for lunch and a discussion and re-enactment of the clues with the cast.

"This is a really fun play," Klein said. "The audience gets

to take part. During the re-enactment, in fact, we ask one of the audience members to come up and to play the murder victim, C.H. Cane. So there's an acting opportunity as well as detective work for the audience.

"I've been in a lot of productions, both onstage and behind the scenes, but I've never done either improvisational or interactive theater before. Nothing like this has ever been tried in Hilo, as far as I know. There are some challenges here, and one of them is that all the suspects have to make sure we have our stories straight.

"We all had motive; we all had opportunity. C.H. Cane was not a very popular guy."

The performers are paid,

which makes this somewhat of a departure from most community theater. That should keep actors in the role in case the play should keep on going by popular demand, which is something Mattos is open to.

"Right now, I've got performances scheduled through September and October, but I'd like to make it an ongoing thing if it catches on," she said. "I'm hoping the Monday and Thurs-

day shows will capture the cruise ship market and that the Saturday performances will give local people a good reason to go downtown."

The interactive murder mystery is slated to start Sept. 8, with performances at 10:00 a.m. Monday, Thursday and Saturday in downtown Hilo. Tickets are \$28 including lunch, tax and tip. Kama'aina tickets are \$23 and group rates

are available. Seating is limited so reservations are recommended. Call 936-1193 for reservations or information.



# Out & About

## Roll Up for the Mystery Tour!

By BARRIE SHEETS

**R**oll up, roll up for the mystery tour! No, it's not a retrospective of old Beatle songs, but a brand new theater company that just rolled into town. In producing and directing "Hilo Rains," the interactive mystery/comedy theater tour, Justina Mattos is making a dream come true.



Justina Mattos

Ms. Mattos is a former Hilo resident who left the island in 1990 with her husband and baby daughter, Makana, to pursue a graduate degree in theater arts. But the playwright and director of "Hilo Rains" always wanted to return home and make her living back on the island that she loves. Eleven long years, same

husband and two additional children later, she's back and bringing a new twist to the old murder mystery theater tradition.

"Hilo Rains" offers Big Island audiences the opportunity to act as super-sleuths as they explore charming downtown Hilo in a suspect-interviewing walking tour. The adventure ends with a re-enactment of the crime and a delicious luncheon. Interested parties can either book a reservation in advance (by calling Mahina Productions at 936-1193), or just show up at the East Hawai'i Cultural Center at 10 a.m. on any Monday, Thursday or Saturday. The production opened on Saturday, September 8th.

When the audience arrives, they are greeted by Detective Manuel Corazon Delos Santos. Detective "Manno" gives everyone a sleuth sheet, map and an umbrella. Then he sends them out to question suspects. The mission? Interview suspects to discover clues about the untimely demise of Mr. C.H. Cane, the notorious owner of a large sugar plantation. Each of the six suspects will be found at a predetermined



Everyone's a suspect in this audience-participation mystery with a Hawai'i-based theme.



"Detective Manuel Corazon Delos Santos" wants you to solve the mystery.

"It's always good to have a dream!"

Hilo Rains is by no means Mattos' first script. She is the author of five plays, three of which have been produced in Hawai'i and Oregon. One play, Na Pua'a Li'ilii 'Ekeolu (her local version of the Three Little Pigs) received a prize for a playwriting contest sponsored by the Hilo Community Players.

The cast of Hilo Rains includes veteran actors as well as newcomers to Hilo's theater scene.

Detective Los Santos (Manno) is played by Ray Campaigna. Kealia Prince portrays Hina Ka'oiwi, a lovely hula girl, and Tristan Mathers plays Daniel O'Looney, the young man who loves Hina and sees Mr. Cane as a rival. Rachel Klein sticks it to everyone as Fanny Prickler, an acupuncturist who has been waiting on pins and needles to get even with Cane for past wrongs.

William Wagoner and Steve Sakoda will alternate in the role of Fernando Delosfeldos. New faces Crystal Beaumont and Alethea O'Toole round out the list of the unusual suspects. Crystal plays Joanna Brushwell, a beautiful dental hygienist who has caught Cane's eye and heart and maybe some other organs as well. Alethea sulks as Helen Mullet, who was dumped by the deceased like a fish in a bucket.

If you are looking for an exciting and innovative activity for your next party, club event or get-together, Detective Manno is putting out the call for super-sleuths to help him solve Hilo's most mysterious case.

Audience members are encouraged to wear comfortable walking shoes for the romp around downtown Hilo. Only \$28.00 per person includes the mystery tour, lunch, tax and tip. Kama'aina rates are \$23. Group rates are also available for groups of at least 10 reserving in advance. Seating is limited so reserve your spot early by calling Mahina Productions at 936-1193.

At the end of the adventure, you might be the lucky sleuth to find out who dunnit and then you can say to the local detective, "Book em, Manno!"

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