

THE ARTS

The supporting power of community

BY DARYL H. MILLER

'The Mother of Henry,' LATC

The essentials: Lifelong Angeleno Evelina Fernández looks back at 1968 to ponder how that wrenching year would have been experienced by a single mom, much like her own, with a son in Vietnam. By day, the protagonist of "The Mother of Henry" works at the Sears distribution center in Boyle Heights, caught up in the camaraderie of colleagues, but when that distraction melts away, she faces nights of worry about her son, with only the Virgin of Guadalupe to console her.

Why this? The 1968 assassination of Robert Kennedy robbed Latinos of a progressive champion, and frustration over the disproportionate number of men of color being sent to fight in Vietnam built toward the Chicano Moratorium march in 1970. "It was an iconic year for the country," Fernández says. "Everything was changing. The country was really polarized; either you were for the war or against the war. I remember my mother thinking that the country was never going to be the same again. But we got through it." Patriotism and faith propel the story, as does the difficult process of change, which can tear a community apart or compel people to find common ground. Fernández's husband, José Luis Valenzuela, directs this production for the Latino Theater Company, of which they are founders.

Details: Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., downtown L.A. 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, 4 p.m. Sundays; ends April 14. \$20-\$50. (866) 811-4111, theladc.org



ANDREW VASQUEZ

MARY-BETH MANNING, left, Cheryl Umaña and Ella Saldana North in "The Mother of Henry" at LATC.