

## Mrs. Claus heats up stage in 1-woman musical

Andrea Frainier

THE GARDEN ISLAND

It's hard not to let out a chuckle at the title of Kathleen DaHill's one-woman musical, "Mrs. Claus in Menopause." The musical mood swings its way to St. Michael & All Angels' Episcopal Church in Lihu'e next weekend as a benefit show for Kaua'i Hospice.

For DaHill, composer and director of the show, "Mrs. Claus in Menopause" began as a healing project after she saw her female friends fall victim to serious illnesses, including breast cancer and brain tumors.

While DaHill's friends did everything to take care of other people, she noticed they did little to take care of themselves.

That's when inspiration hit — DaHill decided to channel her real-life experiences into a musical.

The end result is an 80-minute musical comedy about a woman that people know little about — Mrs. Claus.

"I wanted to take an unknown person and give her an identity," DaHill said. "She's a mother, she's a friend, she's an aunt, she's an every woman."

The musical opens with a frantic Doris Claus, portrayed by local girl Delia Valentin.

The looming calendar in her office indicates that it's the day before Christmas, and Mrs. Claus is under the gun.

Not only does she have to deal with the in-laws, her two children and hot flashes, but her four phones won't stop ringing and the elves are threatening to go on strike. She copes how she knows best, by bingeing on chocolate.

On the verge of a total



Contributed photo

**Doris Claus, portrayed by Delia Valentin, is overwhelmed by holiday mayhem the day before Christmas in Kathleen DaHill's one-woman musical, 'Mrs. Claus in Menopause.' The show's mission is to entertain and inspire audiences not to let the madness of the holidays take away from the true meaning of Christmas. 'Mrs. Claus in Menopause' can be seen Dec. 10 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. at St. Michael's & All Angels' Episcopal Church in Lihu'e. The show moves to Island School Dec. 27, 28 and 30 at 7 p.m.**

meltdown, Mrs. Claus decides it's time to skip the holiday mayhem and focus on what is truly important during the holidays.

Taking the musical's message to heart, DaHill and Valentin practice what they preach. With their musical opening less than a week away, people won't see them flying into a frenzy.

Instead, the two sit comfortably in DaHill's Wailua home, sipping hot tea and munching on freshly baked muffins, while listening to soft, instrumental music. The duo laugh and giggle as they share how they can

relate to the tribulations of Doris Claus.

"It's a life-changing project for me," Valentin said. "I can really relate to Doris. It's fun, because I can pull back, look at myself and laugh."

While the musical leaves plenty of room for laughter, at its core the musical is about "self-care, self-nurturing and 'ohana," DaHill said.

"It's lifesaving to love yourself, and put ourselves on top of our own list."

And the message doesn't just apply to women.

"We don't bash husbands or boyfriends," DaHill said.

"Most husbands are equally guilty for not taking care of themselves."

"It's not women empowerment, it's personal empowerment" added Valentin. "And it's learning how to say 'no.'"

For this menopausal Mrs. Claus, this isn't her first time around the block.

DaHill, who moved to Kaua'i 14 months ago from the East Coast, debuted her production there.

But for Mrs. Claus' move to Hawai'i, DaHill and Valentin added an island-twist to the wife of Santa. Valentin, a petite Filipino woman, won't be wearing

any padding to add some extra bulk, and her dress is made out of a botanical print.

"We're aiming to de-stress people," DaHill said. "Theater is about teaching people. If we can make it so people laugh and tear up in the end, I know we did our job."

"Mrs. Claus in Menopause" can be seen Dec. 10 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. at St. Michael & All Angels' in Lihu'e, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Kaua'i Hospice. The show moves to Island School after the holiday, on Dec. 27, 28 and 30, at 7 p.m.