

# O.K., You Love the House. Now Meet the Neighbors.

By D.J.R. BRUCKNER

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## THEATER REVIEW

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A little, smart, friendly subversion by Beatriz Córdoba, the director, and the cast of Repertorio Español's production of Dolores Prida's "Casa Propia" ("A House of Her Own") makes the performance a more high-spirited comedy than the script might suggest. The company does not mute Ms. Prida's occasional excursions into gloomy comments on the abuse some women suffer from male partners, but the actors focus with so much gleeful invention on developing a handful of memorably funny characters that they preserve the comedy from the intrusions of the playwright's social conscience.

Olga (Denia Brache) realizes a

## CASA PROPIA

By Dolores Prida; production design by Robert Weber Federico; directed by Beatriz Córdoba; assistant to the director, Ignacio Spada-vecchia; English translation, Ileana Fuentes; lighting assistant, David Burke; production manager, Dominic Housiaux. Presented by Repertorio Español, Gilberto Zaldívar, executive producer; René Buch, artistic director; Mr. Federico, associate artistic producer. At the Gramercy Arts Theater, 138 East 27th Street, Manhattan.

WITH: Denia Brache (Olga), Ricardo Barber (Manolo), Lilia Veiga (Fanny), Selenis Leiva (Yarisa), Junior (Joselín Reyes), Marilyn Seri (Marilís) and Carmen Gutiérrez (Fefa).

dream in middle age by buying a house in East Harlem against the futile opposition of her lazy, philandering husband, Manolo (Ricardo Barber), and they move in with their daughter, Marilís (Marilyn Seri), and Manolo's mother, Fefa (Carmen Gutiérrez). A next-door neighbor,

Fanny (Lilia Veiga), the last Italian-American left in what was once an Italian enclave, sets out to teach the newcomers who rules the neighborhood, while the one on the other side, Yarisa (Selenis Leiva), catches Manolo's roving eye. Keeping the whole place from plunging into civil war is the work of the street's plumber, carpenter and jack of all trades, who calls herself Junior (Joselín Reyes).

Not much more is needed for comedy than throwing these broadly drawn strong characters together. Ms. Prida has a good ear for New York Hispanic street language, and this cast exploits it so hilariously that at times even a viewer with no Spanish may want to set aside the simultaneous translation earphones and take it in raw: the grimaces and gestures reveal what is meant, and the sound is too good to miss.

Fanny, Olga, Manolo and Junior are likely to live with you for a long time.

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Gerry Goodstein/"Casa Propia"

Denia Brache in "Casa Propia."