

Stage: 'Yerma' Now Playing in English

Bilingual Troupe Adds to Spanish Version

BY HOWARD THOMPSON

It should surprise no one familiar with the Greenwich Mews Spanish Theater that the city's only year-round bilingual acting company has done right by "Yerma" in an English-language version. Even to come close to the passion, poetry and economic structural drive of the great Garcia Lorca's text is no mean feat. See what this excellent unit has done at its attractive, downtown lair, 141 West 13th Street.

The troupe has previously been playing its Spanish "Yerma" on Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees. Starting last week, they began alternating the English version on Wednesday and Thursday nights. As of now their double-header "Yerma" will continue at least through May. It should.

Expect intelligence, not a wallop. You won't stagger outside. There's the rub. In any language, the final act of "Yerma" should build shatteringly, as the anguished peasant heroine, rent asunder by her doom of unfulfilled motherhood, murderously turns on her impotent husband. Physically and emotionally, the climax should boil and erupt. It just doesn't.

For one thing, the main thing, an uncommonly fine, disciplined actress like Luz Castaños simply looks too intelligent for this act of madness, even within the playwright's ritual of self-fulfill-

The Cast

YERMA, a play by Federico Garcia Lorca, English version by James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell. Directed by Rene Buch; set design and costumes by Bob Trelis; choreography by Graciela Daniele; lighting by Ray McGuirean; musical direction by Juan Viccini. Presented by the Greenwich Mews Spanish Theater, Gilberto Zaldivar, producer. At the Greenwich Mews Theater, 141 West 13th Street.

Yerma Luz Castanos
Juan Norberto Kerner
Maria Miriam Cruz
Victor Rafael Triana
Vieja Pagana (Old Pagan Woman) Gail Kellstrom
Muchacha Primera (Young Girl) Janice Dean
Muchacha Segunda (Young Girl) Isabel Senovia
Lavanderas (Laundresses) Lina Centeno, Alicia Kaplan, Lina Montero, Magaly Rallo, Milagros Horrego, Elisavietta, Susan Seltzer
Cunadas (Sisters-in-law) Lina Centeno, Milagros Horrego
Dolores Conchita Vargas
Muchacho (Boy) Marcelino Rosado
Hembra (Female Figure) Elisavietta
Macho (Male Figure) Carlos Sawane
Hombres (Men) Pedro Fernandez, Enrique Puebla, Orlando Morfi, Esteban Chalbaud, Jean Rosado, Jean-Paul Delgado, Larry Ramos

Luz Castanos Stars as Anguished Peasant

now runs barely over an hour.

It runs well, too, this English translation by James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell, which sounds simple, thorny, succulent and lovely. This, surely, is the poetical meat of the original.

The text remains the thing, wisely, with Rene Buch's direction unobtrusively clustering the cast around an overlay of slabs at stage center. The famous laundry scene, with peasant women hunched over their wash, ripples as audibly as a brook. The musical and choreographic touches aptly remain theatrical asterisks. Likewise, and as admirably, the costumes and lighting.

As the shepherd spurned by the heroine, Rafael Triana is sufficiently handsome. As her chilly-souled spouse, Norberto Kerner is entirely credible, as is Miriam Cruz, playing a sweet, pregnant wife.

And Gail Kellstrom is splendid as a gusty wise woman of the soil. Here is your Spanish peasant personified.

See "Yerma." You won't be sorry.

ment. Backing up a few scenes, when Garcia Lorca lights the fuse, the heroine has already turned down a perfectly reasonable offer of motherhood and even armed shelter.

No. Miss Castaños's honest, fixed clarity of expression only compounds the old question of why Yerma simply didn't change men. And again, Miss Castaños is a fine actress, whose strapping build perfectly suggests a farm woman meant for childbearing. She looks too bright for what she does and does not.

Now for a personal quibble, perhaps a valid one. One chain-smoker itched for those two traditional intermissions, enabling us to brood and agonize with Yerma in the theater alleyway (one of New York's neatest). A build-up is needed. The three-act play