



THEATER:GLASS MENAGERIE PRODUCED IN SPANISH: [review]

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Abstract

"The Glass Menagerie" sits well in its Spanish home, and the company is to be commended for its eagerness to bring theater of all provenance to its Spanish-speaking audiences. Would that we had more of the same in English. Universal Chords MUNDO DE CRISTAL (The Glass Menagerie), by Tennessee Williams; directed by [Rene Buch]; costumes, lights and sets designed by [Robert Weber Federico]; background music by [Noble Shropshire]. Presented by Gilberto Zaldivar's Repertorio Espanol. At the Gramercy Theater, 138 East 27th Street. Thomas WingfieldMateo Gomez Amanda Wingfield[Ofelia Gonzalez] Laura Wingfield[Yolanda Arenas] El PretendienteChristofer de Oni

Full Text

THE question of translation means more than making words of one language into words of another language, as the Spanish Theater Repertory's new presentation, in Spanish, of "The Glass Menagerie," the wistful drama by Tennessee Williams, indicates.

Will the work, in its new tongue, be as meaningful to its new audience as it was in its original? Would the topics of Eugene O'Neill, or Arthur Miller, or Mr. Williams be as moving to Asians or Africans as they are to Americans and Europeans? Fortunately, the great themes of great writers strike universal chords, and that would seem to include even such a delicate work as "The Glass Menagerie."

The play about the strong-minded mother whose husband has deserted her and her two children, now grown; a restless son, and a painfully shy daughter, makes an effective transition. The translation by Rene Buch, director of the play at the company's East 27th Street house, is faithful to the original. The play itself is an episodic affair, a memory play, as Mr. Williams has called it.

The mother is a woman who went to St. Louis from the South and still effuses a syrupy Southern charm, is anxious to marry off the daughter, whose slight lameness has caused her to withdraw from the world, playing Victrola records and fantasizing her collection of small glass animals. The son brings home a friend, a possible suitor, from the warehouse where he works, and the evening moves to a sad and lonely denouement.

Ofelia Gonzalez, in the role of the mother, is a powerful performer, who dominates firmly but lovingly. She is able to go from a string of meaningless chatter into the most quietly pathetic reminiscence. Mateo Gomez, as the son, who is also the commentator, plays the part in an effectively matter-of-fact manner. Yolanda Arenas interprets the daughter's role in an appropriately fragile and subdued style. Christofer de Oni, as the young man who has come for dinner, injects a liveliness and all-American enthusiasm into the family circle.

In its current presentation, whether because of the language or because of Mr. Buch's direction, the flow of dialogue seems to rise to peaks of declamation from passages that move quickly along in eventoned flow. This makes the dramatic moments more dramatic, but also makes the intervals less so. It is an interesting approach.

Mr. Buch has staged "The Glass Menagerie" on a stark stage, with only a few chairs on it, that affords little distraction from the words. As scenes and moods change, a half-dozen high-draped curtains shaped to resemble the animals in the daughter's little menagerie make complete circles. The look of the play, designed by Robert Weber Federico, fits well with the glass-tinkling low background music of Noble Shropshire.

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