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Calendar

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



Bilingual Foundation of the Arts

Goreti Da Silva, from left, Don Potter and Sonya Smith in "Divine Treasure of Youth."

The Laughs Enrich 'Divine Treasure'

Now a U.S. resident, Cuban-born playwright Raul de Cárdenas taps into the vicissitudes of aging and the frustrations of assimilation in his cheerful but somewhat simple-minded comedy, "Divine Treasure of Youth" at the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts.

The story revolves around Juan (Don Potter, alternating with Hecmar Lugo in the Spanish-speaking cast), an elderly Cuban immigrant who came to the U.S. on a raft. Now living in Brooklyn with his son and his wife, Juan feels increasingly displaced when his grandson brings home his pregnant girlfriend, stretching their extended family to the breaking point. But when Juan moves to his other son's

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apartment in Yonkers, he falls afoul of his demanding daughter-in-law, who eventually orders him out of the house.

Rejected by the local mission, Juan takes to the streets. But he doesn't stay homeless long. Never mind that he is indigent and, as we learn, impotent as well. An attractive and financially independent widow soon offers him a warm heart and a bed.

That falsely feel-good happy ending stretches believability to the breaking point. However, there are enough laughs and sheer energy in this good-natured play to compensate for the plot holes. Di-

rector Ernesto Miyares, who also translated the piece, goes for the obvious in his staging, and that's mostly to the good. The slightly heightened delivery serves the comic rhythms well.

Antonio Nesme, who plays Juan's twin sons, Kiko and Cuco, has the right style down cold, as does Goreti Da Silva (alternating with Ana Alfonso) as Juan's comically affected daughter-in-law, Mireya. **Diana Barrows is adorable as a pregnant teenager whose candid chatter about sex flabbergasts her Old World father-in-law-to-be.**

The problem in the English-speaking production is Potter in

his crucial comic role. Although pleasingly puckish, Potter stumbles over virtually every line, a nerve-racking experience for the audience, as it must be for his fellow performers. Potter's all-too-obvious struggle, and the bag of actor's tricks he employs as stalling devices, badly tarnish this "Treasure."

E.K.F.

"Divine Treasure of Youth," 421 N. Ave. 19, L.A. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. Alternate weekends in Spanish and English. Ends May 19. \$23-\$25. Running time: 2 hours, 10 minutes.

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