

Oct. 18, 2005

Latinologues

By Frank Scheck
Helen Hayes Theatre, New York
Through Dec. 4

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The gringos in the audience might not be entirely receptive, but its target audience will surely go for "Latinologues," a revue of comic monologues delivered by a quartet of talented performers. Arriving in New York after numerous successful engagements in various cities, the show will be an interesting test of whether Hispanic theatergoers can be enticed to Broadway in sufficient numbers.

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Created and written by Rick Najera, whose credits include "In Living Color" and "Mad TV," the show features him and three other performers in a loosely connected series of character sketches and monologues revolving around the American Latino experience. Although performed primarily in English, more than a few of the punchlines are delivered in Spanish, a slight hindrance to those not conversant in the language.

Bottom line: Ethnic humor, Latino style.

Directed by Cheech Marin, the production is more than a little ragged and contains few polished technical elements. The sketches, too, vary wildly in quality, with some of them substituting broadness for wit.

Nonetheless, there is plenty of fun to be had thanks to some genuinely funny moments and the engaging cast members. Najera scores big laughs with his impersonations of, among others, a border patrol guard who provides a lecture on Hispanic ethnic differences, a blustery drug lord and a rebellious Elian Gonzalez.

Eugenio Derbez, the most gifted comic performer in the bunch, does a hilarious bit as a Mexican dishwasher begging to be deported so he can score a free flight to Puerto Vallarta and another about a woman who suspects that her son is a vampire. Rene Lavan, the resident heartthrob, utilizes his good looks to humorous effect as a lothario busboy. And newcomer Shirley A. Rumierk displays comic flair as both a Puerto Rican Parade beauty queen who refuses to give up her tiara and a pregnant teen who insists that her unborn baby was miraculously conceived.

Latinologues

Presented by the Tate Entertainment Group in association with Juan Carlos Zapata, Rick Najera, AEG Live, Rene Lavan, Icon Entertainment, Tati Incorporated, Richard Martini Entertainment and Alan Spivak

Credits:

Creator-playwright: Rick Najera

Director: Cheech Marin

Lighting designer: Kevin Adams

Sound designer: T. Richard Fitzgerald

Video designer: Dennis Diamond

Costume designer: Santiago

Cast: Rick Najera, Eugenio Derbez, Rene Lavan, Shirley A. Rumierk

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