

## Accent on humor

'Latinologues' takes dead aim at funny bones

By Mark Lowry

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Fort Worth and Dallas have seen a number of productions of Rick Najera's *Latinologues* in recent years, but none was as well-attended as the production that opened in Dallas' Majestic Theatre last night.

That's because it's the national tour of *All-Star Latinologues*, presented locally by Martice Enterprises and Arte Oak Cliff.

Najera, a writer for *MAD TV*, performed alongside Hollywood stars Eugenio Derbez and Rene Lavan, both known for work in Latino soaps and American movies, and Los Angeles actress Ruth Livier from Showtime's *Resurrection Boulevard*. Considering the video projections and star power in the tour, this one has some money behind it.

The show, a collection of vignettes about Latino life in America, has changed a little since Dallas' Cara Mia Theatre Company staged it in summer 2001. Gone is the "Mexican Moses" character, guiding the audience through the show. Added is the Border Patrol officer from another Najera title, *Buford Gomez*. (He puts the "panic" in *Hispanic*.)

All of the pieces drew laughs, sometimes hysterical fits, but the funniest was Derbez as Elian Gonzalez's father, calling Fidel Castro five years after the international incident, wishing he was in the public eye again. This actor is also quite funny as a curlers-in-place mother who realizes that her son is a vampire.

Lavan was at his best as a lady-killing busboy who falls for a blond Highland Park woman. He also got the show's most dramatic piece, as a Dominican janitor who was working in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. He laments the number of dead who didn't receive public memorials because they were illegal immigrants -- including his wife.

Livier has only one solo piece, as a beauty pageant winner (Miss South Oak Cliff) who turns psycho when she must relinquish her crown because her reign is over.

As the show's writer, Najera knows the bits best, so it's no surprise that his performances are the most polished. His skit as a gay Hollywood executive pitching Latino-themed movies (*Aztec Fists of Fury*, *Titanico*, *My Big Fat Mexican Quinceañera*) was another highlight.

Reportedly, Najera hopes to get this show to Broadway. If he can score even more well-known Latinos to play parts (Rosie Perez, for instance), *el cielo* is the limit.

GRADE: B+

### **All-Star Latinologues**

- 8 p.m. Friday at Majestic Theatre, 1925 Elm St., Dallas
- Tickets: \$29.50-\$37.50. Call (817) 467-2787 or (214) 631-2787, or go online to [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).

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