

A Classic Comes to Sunnyside

by Miguel Falquez-Certain



La dama duende by Pedro Calderon de la Barca. From left to right: Axel Cintron, Juan Villarreal, Virginia Rambal, Jose Cheo Oliveras, and Roberto Rodriguez. Photo by Anthony Ruiz.

Last Saturday night was a special treat for Sunnysiders. Pedro Calderon de la Barca's classic play, *La dama duende* [The Ghost Lady], opened at Thalia Spanish Theatre. As directed and set designed by Puerto Rican Carmelo Santana-Mojica, associate director of Teatro Circulo, and with great actress Virginia Rambal in the title role, the break-neck comedy sparkled with wit and repartees.

Teatro Circulo is a recently formed company devoted to stage classics of the Spanish theater. Last season's *Entremeses* by Cervantes was a good omen of what was to be expected of this distinguished ensemble. Aided by the musical gifts of also actor Axel Cintron, both plays added new dimensions to the interpretative powers of the actors, with original musical numbers enhancing the enchanting evening.

This time around, Ms. Rambal recreated the role that earned her her first of many awards, twenty years ago. If there's anyone in the Hispanic theatrical world who's fastly becoming a *grande dame* is Virginia Rambal. The multitalented actress carried

the night with savvy and panache. Strutting her stuff on the stage, richly dressed with costumes from the Seventeenth century, she kept the intricate plot moving under her baton. A well-designed, beautiful yet simple set helped to move along the numerous exits and entrances, with all the stock of mistaken identities, disguises and errors so dear to the Renaissance and Baroque playwrights, making for a delightful, entertaining evening.

Jose Cheo Oliveras, founder of Teatro Circulo, was charming as the blundering and mischievous *gracioso* (clown) albeit high in decibels. The rest of the cast was adequate in their interpretations but Mr. Cintron's musical contributions have to be emphasized. His musical direction of actors and actresses interpreting songs from the purportedly Spanish Golden Age are eloquent and amusing, getting a great performance from the ensemble.

Once again, we are thankful to Silvia Brito for bringing to our neighborhood a delightful comedy, with a marvelous cast and knowing staging. Don't miss it for the world.