

Pataphysical Science a theater/pop culture blog

Monday, November 09, 2009

Granada (and I'm not talking about pomegranates)



Truth be told, I had reservations about *Granada*, written by Avi Glickstein, when I read it involved such characters as a bear vomiting coins and a princess hatched from a grapefruit. Though I try to be open-minded and support all theater, I prefer linear and realistic story-telling. Luckily, the play proved to be a chance to learn more about Sephardic tradition, a history that I should probably know more about (I'm Ashkenazi), with its use of Ladino (the Sephardic language) music and Sephardic folklore.

Granada, presented by Polybe & Seats, is currently playing at Access Theater Gallery through November 22. It's a great space with huge windows, and director Jessica Brater uses the entirety of the large stage to her advantage.

The main story takes place in 1992, as the King of Spain (Ari Vigoda, who try as he might, cannot seem to master the Spanish accent) officially invites the Jews back to Spain after their expulsion in 1492. A young Egyptian woman (Sarah Sakaan) claiming to be the resurrection of Jewish philosopher Maimonides tells the Prince of Spain that she wants an apology from the King to the Jewish people within 20 days, or he will die. He runs away with his aide-de-camp, Djoha (Indika Senanayake), and the story takes a more mystical turn. There is another plot about a tourist (Elaine O'Brien) backpacking through Madrid who she receives a letter asking for help and is determined to find out who it came from. Senanayake is the standout in the cast acing her multiple characters, most notably the put-upon Djoha.

Some scenes, such as when the woman is explaining how Maimonides came to be resurrected, can be a little heavy, but there are several distinctive elements that quicken the pace and lighten the tone. These include Peiyi Wong's puppetry in the form of two pairs of enlarged hands and several whimsical cutaways, such as a very funny cooking show, "Ritual Recipes With Goat" (O'Brien is hilarious as the goat).

If you want to support an experimental theater company, *Granada* is the perfect opportunity and the price is right. For \$14 tickets, [click here](#) and enter code POLYBE. The play runs through November 22.