



Kevin Stewart and Carolina Ramos unmask truths about love in *Silly Old Men*.

theatre review

Silly señores

Spanish play gets commedia production **By JON KAPLAN**

SILLY OLD MEN OUGHT NOT TO FALL IN

LOVE by Alfonso Castela, adapted by Robin Patterson, directed by Patterson and Laurie Steven, with Mark Huisman, Deanna Jones, Terry Judd, Harro Maskow, Clare Francis Muir, Lisa Olafson, Carolina Ramos and Kevin Stewart. Presented by Theatre Beyond Words at Artword (75 Portland). Runs to October 17, Thursday-Saturday 8 pm, matinee Sunday 2:30 pm. \$22, stu \$16, Sunday pwyc. 416-366-7723. Rating: **NNN**

MAY/DECEMBER ROMANCES AREN'T so uncommon nowadays. The trio of tales in Alfonso Castela's *Silly Old Men Ought Not To Fall In Love*, though, end unhappily despite some knowing laughs along the way.

Adapted by Robin Patterson for Theatre Beyond Words, the play by the Galician visual artist relies on the company's strengths in mask and physical theatre to create some entertaining if moralistic fables about the foolish pride of older men infatuated with younger women.

The framework is right out of commedia dell'arte—the elderly Pantalone figure is thwarted in his plans to wed his nubile ward—and that comic format is central to the production.

Though all three stories are similar, their telling has enough variety to hold our interest. In the first, the pharmacist Don Saturio is caught up with the flirtatious Lela, while in the second the pompous, drunken nobleman Don Ramon is similarly drawn to the devious Micaela. Only in the more realistically presented third, about the desires of the elderly Señor Fuco, is the woman, Pimpinela, not deceitful.

I wish some of the humour were handled in a less heavy-handed fashion and some unnecessary songs were cut. But there's still lots of charm in the piece, much of it in Karen R. Rodd's masks, distinguished by their imaginatively shaped noses. There are also a number of delightfully staged moments, including the handling of Saturio's quartet of unwed sisters and the animated portraits of Ramon's parents.

Among the cast of eight, Kevin Stewart and Deanna Jones, both playing several characters, do memorable work. Towering above the others, in several senses, is Mark Huisman, who portrays author Castela and a marvellously sinuous, funny Death, whose warnings, delivered in disguise, the key figures never take seriously. ©

jonkap@nowtoronto.com