

## Truth Be Told — "The Liar" is Good

**T**he Liar," was written in the 17th Century by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, who was born in Mexico City, but spent most of his life in Spain, where he was considered a poet dilettante because he only wrote plays to while away his time while he was waiting for a court appointment. Despite the 24 plays he produced in the ten years of his office-seeking, and despite the fact that "The Liar," or "La Verdad Sospechosa (The Truth Can't be Trusted), eventually became a major influence on the "comedy of character" plays of writers like Moliere. Alarcón was never taken seriously. In the 21st Century, Dakin Matthews has succeeded in producing a masterful translation of the play in contemporary English, retaining the flavor of the Spanish Golden Age, the lively rhythm and rhyme of the verse, and the high humor of the original comedia. The Antaeus Company, a troupe of ultimate theatrical professionals, brings the pages to life in a delightfully stage-worthy production.

Don Garcia, a young law stu-

dent, just returned home to Madrid from the University of Salamanca, has a number of redeeming features - he's handsome, charming, educated and verbal, but he has an overly vivid imagination. In other words, he has an aversion to the truth. Don Beltrán, his father, fears for his son's future and quickly arranges a marriage that will keep him from mischief. Meanwhile Don Garcia falls for the beautiful Jacinta, whom he's been misled into thinking is Lucrecia, her good friend. Tied up in lies and charming deception, aided and abetted by his servant, Tristán, he weaves a tangled web through the emotions of the two young women, his servant, his harried father, and Jacinta's jealous lover, Don Juan de Sosa. The complications pile up, involving mistaken identities, misunderstanding, a log-pile of lies, a duel, a few heartbreaks, and a final comeuppance for the "imaginative" Don Garcia.

"The Liar" is double cast, with a vigorous ensemble of gloriously talented players from this superb company. Among them, on opening night, John DeMita



by madeleine shaner

was sensational as the adorable liar - witty, cute and light on his feet - a master of the verbal swordplay and the highly physical shenanigans. Dakin Matthews, translator/actor/scholar, does an outstanding turn as Tristán, Don Garcia's faithful and very funny servant, in on the deception and active in resolving it. Nike Doukas is exquisite as the perky Jacinta, whom Don Garcia believes to be Lucrecia. Alicia Wollerton has sweetness on her side as the overlooked real Lucrecia. Mikael Salazar is attractively sturdy as the feisty swain of Jacinta, backed up by his good and loyal friend, Don Félix (Jason Kuykendall). Marcelo Tubert, as Don Beltrán, is nicely confused and conflicted by the behavior of his rascally son, although he was 'up' on his lines on opening night. Carl



photo by John Apicella

Mikael Salazar and JD Cullum star The Anaetus Company production of "The Liar," now running at the Secret Rose Theatre, 11246 Magnolia Blvd. in North Hollywood.

Smith (composer/performer) is the sidelined musician who tells the tale in song.

Directed by Anne McNaughton with the same dedication shown by the ensemble, with minimal, but effective, set and colorful costumes by Dean Cameron, including a very silly, but appropriate one for the central character, lighting by John Grant, and fight direction by Michael Salazar, "The Liar" reaches a millennium zenith

though it's only February. The production has an old-fashioned, in the best sense of the word, feel to it. There's no posing, no pretension, just a solid dedication to the work. This is a company that knows, and puts into action, all that theatre should be.

The Antaeus Theatre Company at the Secret Rose Theatre, 11256 Magnolia Blvd., NoHo; Fri. Sat. at 8:00pm, Sun. at 2:30pm, only until Feb. 27; \$16.00 - \$20.00, s/s discounts; (818)506-5436.