

# Rare Perspectives on Stage

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

only expression in his language deserves that description.

In the world envisioned here, the indigenous characters are accorded due respect, and spiritual and historical connections are sensed and honored. Although the stories here evoke sorrow, they also inspire reverence. The act of creation in which these artists participate holds the potential to transform. [Runs through Oct. 27.]

Mexican-born playwright Karen Zacarias, tired of having Latinx theater compared indiscriminately to telenovelas, set out to create an unapologetic telenovela when she penned the glorious “Destiny of Desire.” The inapt comparison she reacted to, often meant to be dismissive, minimizes the value and influence of telenovelas, not to mention their comic and political potential. Zacarias finds both in her play, which pairs telenovela storytelling conventions with Brechtian theatrical self-consciousness. The result is a story of female empowerment that is both fun and political, in all the best ways.

Telenovelas are hugely popular in Latin America (though also in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East) and are characterized by stock characters and overblown plots, costumes, and music. While often evincing conservative values, they also influence social



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM, OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL  
Pilar Esperanza Castillo (*Esperanza America*, right) shares a jail cell with Hortencia Del Rio (*Adriana Sevahn Nichols*), the woman she believes to be her maid in “Destiny of Desire,” a story about female empowerment running through July 12 at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

progress as well by highlighting story lines involving hitherto controversial topics like migration and family planning.

Zacarias has employed the genre of this play to tell a story of women seizing control of their

destinies and even changing the world. On the same night in Belarica, Mexico, two baby girls are born -- one sickly, one healthy; one to a rich family, and one to a poor one. Due to the machinations of the rich girl’s mother, a

former beauty queen, the babies are switched at birth. When they meet 18 years later, unaware of their connection, they quickly become friends and switch their identities to pursue their passions. Further complications of course

ensue and, as often happens in telenovelas, the play turns the tables on the upper class, but also reveals the emptiness of dominant culture values and challenges power imbalances that are often taken for granted.

Director José Luis Valenzuela, a visionary leader of Chicana/Latinx theater, has directed each of the four productions of this play, and strikes a deft balance here of respect and celebration. His production takes telenovelas seriously without taking itself too seriously. The colors are vibrant, the emotions intense -- and while Valenzuela shows us the humor, the production is not making fun. The play’s use of Brechtian conventions brilliantly aids the storytelling here; the actors stop the action to add facts and statistics which illustrate that the plot is not as outrageous as you might think, or to rewind the action to highlight what the plot mechanics are pointing to. Like Bertolt Brecht, this play is less concerned with involving us emotionally than with helping us to see unnoticed ways in which life imitates even the most outrageous art. It seeks to make us laugh, and also to motivate us to seize our destinies. [Runs through July 12.]

How do we make space for those for whom there has been no space? How do we point out

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

## Allen Temple CME Church Pastor Appreciation

In Honor of Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr.

Pastor ~ Teacher ~ Civil-Rights Leader ~  
Counselor ~ Author

Theme: “A Servant’s Heart”  
Mark 10: 42-45

When: Sunday, June 03, 2018 at 4:00 P.M.

Where: Maranatha Church  
4222 NE 12th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97212

Guest Speaker ~ Bishop Grace Osborne,  
Pastor of Grace Covenant Church



Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr.



Bishop Grace Osborne

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