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Play presents struggles that many can relate to

It's fun sometimes to see a caricature of oneself and one's friends. "Queen of Bingo," playing at the Al. Ringling Saturday night, did just that. If there is any group that needs to keep their sense of humor and their sense of the ridiculous, it's women over 50. We have to guard ourselves from the stereotype of the aging pathetic creature.

The two male actors playing the parts of sisters more or less addicted to the game of bingo must have spent time observing mothers, aunts, sisters — all the females in their lives. They had us with all our funny little mannerisms and foibles nailed down well.

I especially enjoyed the opening scene where one sister — the more balanced of the two — is emptying out her purse preparing for the games to begin. Probably nothing is as mysterious to the opposite sex as the interior of women's purses. Even we think they are mysterious sometimes, especially when we are trying to locate some lost object such as a pen or a key way down at the bottom. The seriousness with which she arranges objects around her is hilarious to watch. They say that ritual is one of the ways we can keep ourselves sane. We can imagine this "woman" preparing the scene over and over as she moves from place to place to play her game. Smartly dressed and coifed she has her act together.

Her sister, on the other hand, arrives late wearing a baggy muu muu, her hair in disarray, her possessions scattered and proceeds to launch into a discussion of her weight. What women in the audience could not identify with that? If we don't struggle with poundage ourselves, we have friends



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or family who do. These struggles often enter our conversation.

There is in the female nature a certain cattiness that we all deplore but find ourselves indulging in, in spite of ourselves. Second sister, once she has settled in, looks around the room and points to someone she describes as "the fat one," one who is so big she is sitting in two seats, seats the sisters usually occupy. The fact that they are having to sit in the hall rangles her even though her tardiness may have caused the situation.

As the play progresses one feels sympathy for these lonely women taking refuge in bingo as many do the casino and to understand that, in a way, it's a healthy way for them to deal with loneliness.

I loved the play brought to the Al. Ringling by MSA Professional Series and Pierce's Pick 'N Save. Judging from audience response, everyone did. Once in a while, it's important, it seems to me, to look in the mirror and, instead of seeing the ravages of time, see how gallantly and courageously many of us find ways of coping with them.

All of the things that make human beings objects of ridicule also make them endearing and lovable. Thanks to those who, in gentle ways, show us this.

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