

With *Ranchera Los Empeños de una Casa / House of Desires* Delivers

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Washington, D.C. – Hugo Medrano's deft direction has delivered a riotous 350 year old comedy by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Los Empeños de una casa*, to GALA Theatre's stage that lightens our Washington winter. The first published feminist writer of the Americas still connects with comedy.

Here's the long and the short of it from GALA. Don Pedro loves Doña Leonor who loves Don Carlos, who is desired by Doña Ana. *Los empeños de una casa* is a romantic Spanish Golden Age comedy of intrigue that mixes lyrical poetry, puns, songs, cross-dressing, and mistaken identities. Written in the 17th century, but staged by director Hugo Medrano in 1940s Mexico with its machismo and sounds of mariachi, this farce examines the idea of free will for women at a time when they were still subject to a strict moral code.

GALA company stalwarts Luz Nicolas as Celia and Catlos Castillo as Castano weave a wonderful web of intrigue and desire that gives this comedy fleet feet in flashes.

Featured in the cast are guest artists from New York Natalia Miranda-Guzmán shining in the role of Dona Ana and the snappy dandy Mauricio Pita as Don Pedro. Alina Collins Maldonado is in turns indignant and adolescent as Leonor. Erick Sotomayor is the preening Carlos.

"To remind ourselves that many of the characters and situations still resonate, and also just for fun, I have set the play in a Mexican *hacienda* in the 1940s and staged it in that boisterous and musical style of the *ranchera* movies, where the hyper masculine charro disrupted the bucolic pastoral life" says Mr. Medrano. The charming vocal talents of Miguel Alejandro Amaguana and a sterling piece, that's far too short, by Mauricio Pita stand out in the *ranchera* motif.

Los empeños de una casa/House of Desires, a comedy of errors, will run through March 1, 2015. GALA is located at 3333 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20010. The play is presented in Spanish with English surtitles on Thursday and Friday evenings at 8 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 8 pm, and Sunday afternoons at 2 pm. There will no matinee on Saturday, February 7, 2015.

ABOUT PLAYWRIGHT SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

Born in Mexico in 1648, Sor Juana was an illegitimate child whose desire to learn was so strong she dressed as a boy in an attempt to study in school. The Viceregal court of New Spain heard about her and at 15 she became a lady-in-waiting as the Vicereine's favorite. She wrote and read voraciously, and her scholarship and intelligence provoked admiration and envy. Then suddenly at age 20 she entered a convent, where she continued writing poetry that expressed a feminism centuries ahead of her time, and she became known as La Decima Musa (the tenth muse) of poetry and was acclaimed for her *Repuesta a Sor Filotea*, which defends women's rights to educational access.

Sor Juana mastered the range of poetic forms and themes of the Spanish Golden Age, and her writings display great originality and wit. Unrestricted by genre, she wrote dramatic, comedic and scholarly works and her most important plays include brave and clever women.

Two years before her death in 1695 she gave up writing as demanded by the church – writing her final defiant words in blood. Since then, Sor Juana has become a symbol for the education and emancipation of women across the world.

Her poems are read by Mexican children in schools to this day and her famous poem "Foolish Men" is one many Latin Americans can quote from memory.

She is an icon of Mexican identity and her image appears on Mexican currency. The National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago holds an annual festival in her honor and celebrates women of Mexican descent with an award for achievement in the arts and culture, and the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Prize is awarded by the Guadalajara International Book Fair to recognize the literary work of women in Spanish.

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