

GALA Hispanic Theatre 44th Season Continues with a Washington First Pulitzer Prize Winner Nilo Cruz Directs His Latest Play

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Washington, DC – GALA Hispanic Theatre continues its 44th season, *Great Writers, Great Stories*, with the Washington premiere of *Exquisite Agony*, **written and directed by Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz**. Performed in Spanish with English surtitles, the play will run from February 6 through March 1 at GALA Theatre, 3333 14th Street NW, one block from the Columbia Heights metro station on the Green and Yellow lines. Parking is available in the Giant Food garage on Park Road NW.

Cruz's latest play explores matters of the heart—love lost and the need to experience it once more. But to find it again, the past must be addressed. Millie, an opera singer, embarks on a quest to find the recipient of her late husband's heart. Like the operas she performs, Millie's journey melds fantasy and fiction, drama and heightened emotion to unleash dark family secrets. Laced with humor and pain, memories of the past are revisited as the family looks to move on.

"When I came across stories about heart transplant patients, I was intrigued," states Cruz. "Does a recipient inherit traits of the donor? Does their taste and other senses change? How does a body react when a new element becomes a part of it? My curiosity inspired me to write this play with an opera singer at the center grappling with the loss of her love and their past. I have worked a lot with classical music, and am inspired by musicians, especially singers," continues Cruz. On a conceptual level, the play raises questions around our acceptance or rejection of "foreign" elements into the body.

Press Night and Noche de GALA with artist reception is Saturday, February 8, hosted by Grisella Martínez, Chair of the GALA Board of Directors and Vice President of Government Relations, National Association of Broadcasters.

Exquisite Agony was commissioned and first produced in New York City by Repertorio Español, May 25th, 2018, with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. This production is made possible with generous support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

ABOUT NILO CRUZ

An award-winning playwright, Nilo Cruz was born and lived in Cuba until the family fled to the United States in 1970 when he was 9 years old. He began his theatrical career as an actor, and after directing the play *Mud*, was invited by María Irene Fornés to join her Intar Hispanic Playwrights Laboratory. There he began to write plays in earnest. Since then, his plays have been produced in theaters throughout the United States, including McCarter Theatre, the Public Theatre in New York, Manhattan Theatre Club, Victory Gardens, Repertorio Español, South Coast Rep., Arena Stage, Mark Taper Forum, The Alliance, New York Theater Workshop, Magic Theatre, Minneapolis Children's Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Florida State, and GALA, which produced *Anna in the Tropics* and *Beauty of the Father*. Internationally, his plays have been produced in Canada, England, France, Australia, Germany, Belarus, Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama, and Spain. In 2003, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the Steinberg Award for Drama for *Anna and the Tropics*, which also was nominated for a Tony Award, and in 2009 he received The Helen Merrill and The Laura Pels Mid-Career Playwriting Award, and the Fontanals-Cisneros USA Fellowship in Literature. Cruz is an alumnus of New Dramatist and has taught playwriting at Brown, Yale, NYU and the University of Iowa.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Exquisite Agony features GALA company member **Luz Nicolás** as Millie; **Joel Hernández Lara** as Amér; and **Ariel Texidó** as Dr. Castillo. **Nicolás**, who was nominated for Helen Hayes Awards in 2016 and 2017, appeared in *El viejo, el joven y el mar* and *Como agua para chocolate*, among many others. **Hernández** and **Texidó**, who began their theater careers in their native Cuba, are making their GALA debut.

Also appearing in *Exquisite Agony* are GALA company members **José Antonio González**, **Catherine Nunez**, and **Andrés Talero**. **González** appeared at GALA in *La Foto* and *Cervantes - El último Quijote*, and **Nunez** performed in *La vida es sueño* and *En el tiempo de las Mariposas*. **Talero** was last seen at GALA in *El Paso Blue* and *Elliot: A Soldier's Fugue*.

Scenic design is by **Clifton Chadick**, who designed *Fame The Musical* at GALA, and Lighting Design is by **Christopher Annas-Lee**, who received a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lighting Design for GALA's *In The Heights* en Español and designed lighting for *Fame* and *El viejo el joven y el mar* last season. Costume Designs are by **Moyenda Kulemeka**, who designed *Como agua para chocolate* and *La Foto*. Sound Design is by **David Crandall**, who designed for *Como agua para chocolate* and *La vida es sueño*. Properties are by **Rayna Cook**, who is working on her first production at GALA. **Jessica Pecharsky** is Stage Manager, **Tony Koehler** is Production Manager, and **Devin Mahoney** is Technical Director.

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CONTACT:

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