

PROMETEO PLAYS WITH FUEGO

As this year's entry into the XXV International Hispanic Theatre Festival of Miami, Teatro Prometeo's upcoming U.S. premiere of *Filo al fuego* is generating a buzz that is spreading like wild fire.

"The play is about the essentiality of finding yourself, identifying yourself independent of the way others might identify you," said its playwright Oliver Mayer. "It deals with sexuality, but it also deals with language and skin color and the remnants of the *casta* [caste] system that governed our relations all the way back to the Spanish Conquest."

Filo al fuego is not for the faint-hearted. It deals with sexuality, race and ethnicity without pulling punches, diving head first into territory others either tread lightly on or avoid entirely.

But Mayer, author of more than 20 plays, winner of the Zumberge Individual Award and associate professor of Dramatic Writing at the University of Southern California School of Theatre, is ready to take the heat.

Still cutting edge after 16 years

"Despite the successes of some TV shows and the acceptance of gay stories onstage and in film, I have not seen another play that deals with sexuality in as frank terms as *Filo al fuego* does," he said. "It's funny that the play remains so edgy and advanced in terms of its portrayal of gay characters."

Edgy it has remained for 16 years now. His original, highly controversial hit play *Blade to the Heat*, on which this new adaptation is based, premiered at the New York Public Theatre in



Playwright Oliver Mayer brings *Filo al fuego* to MDC.

1994, followed by a revised version in Los Angeles. It has played since in many other cities including Chicago, San Francisco and Mexico City, where it had a run of 100 performances, earning a plaque at the renowned Teatro Lírico.

This new production, under Prometeo Theatre's artistic director Joann María Yarrow, translates *Blade to the Heat* to Spanish and transposes it into the boxing Mecca scene of 1962 Miami.

"*Filo al fuego* of course shares the story, pace and theme with *Blade to the Heat*, but something about the work we did [for this adapta-

tion] makes it more than simple translation," Mayer said. "The very terrain and temperature of South Florida has invaded the play in sexy and sultry ways."

Miami is prime location for play

"Miami is perfect because it has so many Latino identities within it, as does the play; in this new version, we'll be able to feel the way Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Dominicans and Mexicans use their language and their bodies in distinctive ways," explained Mayer, who himself is a Mexican-American writer.

Not surprisingly, while *Blade to the Heat* was finding a new life in Miami as *Filo al fuego*, Mayer's heart found a new beat at MDC.

"I am a big fan of Prometeo, and thrilled to be working alongside truly 21st century Latino artists," he said. "I think that Joann Yarrow is wildly talented, a new kind of Latina, hybridized and brilliantly educated, and committed to doing theater that matters."

"Prometeo is an extremely exciting venue, not least because of the amazing people who keep it going," he added. "The students are learning about acting from an international perspective, and from a place of empowerment. It's not always like that in other cities and programs."

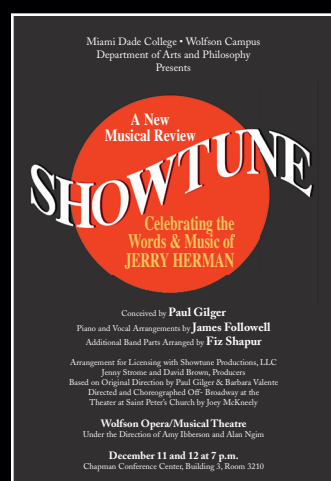
Overall, Mayer is optimistic about the future.

"Plays can be a way of freeing characters and audiences from the ancient shackles of prejudice and denial," he said. "Hopefully, *Filo al fuego* can do that, even a little bit."

— Hector Pino

PACKING THE HOUSE

Wolfson Opera/Musical Theatre draws record crowds



The MDC Wolfson Opera/Musical Theatre ensemble enjoyed an outstanding season this year, with sold-out performances that raked in an impressive \$15,000 in ticket and ad sales.

Showtune, a tribute to Broadway great Jerry

Herman, delighted South Florida audiences with a revue of favorites by this legendary American composer and lyricist best known for scoring hit Broadway musicals like *Mame*, *Hello, Dolly!* and *La Cage aux Folles*.

The Opera/Musical Theatre program continued their season with *Cabaret*, their second production. The original musical made its Broadway debut in 1966, and its film adaptation won eight Academy Awards in 1972, becoming the type of successful

hit which every young actor hopes to be a part of one day.

"These kids come in with a dream and, though talented, most of them probably wouldn't be able to take it any further were it not for our intensive, cross-disciplinary training," said Amy Ibberson, director of vocal studies at the Wolfson Campus.

With 10-plus weekly hours of rehearsal every semester, their talents are honed, putting them on the path to promising futures.

"We have a very successful transfer rate in the areas of classical and musical theater," Ibberson said.

"Our program is a perfect platform for beginners to gain skills in areas of musical theater, acting and classical [opera] training," she added. "Where they go from

here is entirely up to them."

As for the more immediate future, students will be working hard this summer on a variety of scenes from famous musicals to present in their Summer Workshop. For more information about the program or MDC Wolfson's opera and musical theater department, call 305-237-7331.

— Hector Pino

