



Spotlight on Contemporary Spanish Theater 2021



PERFORMING ARTS
ONLINE

Wed, January 27–
Sun, February 28, 2021

Admission
Free

Credits
Presented by the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C., in collaboration with Estreno Contemporary Spanish Plays and AENY – Spanish Artists in New York. Image courtesy of AENY-Spanish Artists in New York

The second edition of this series presents excerpts of works in a virtual format by contemporary Spanish playwrights with U.S. directors.

Spanish theater is a reflection of the land where it is created: culturally rich, and diverse. Rooted in a strong tradition of theater coming from the XVI century, contemporary Spanish theater is a blend of voices and styles exploring the issues of our time.

THE GLASS CEILING

- Original title: *El techo de cristal*.
- By Laura Rubio Galletero, directed by Anita Maynard-Losh.
- Actors: Ashley Forman and Mauricio Pita.
- In English. Translated by Rachel Toogood.

The Glass Ceiling centers on two 20th century American poets, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, and their complicated relationship with one another as well as with their artistic craft. It delves into the lives of these two fascinating women who fought with passion to their death for independence and the right to be writers. *The Glass Ceiling* was first staged in 2016 in Madrid by La Pitbull Theater Company under the direction of Cecilia Geijo.

Laura Rubio Galletero (b. 1979 Barcelona) is an example of today's effervescent Catalan theater scene. Since 2008, many of Galletero's most notable texts have premiered in fringe theaters in Madrid. Galletero is committed and engaged with the problems of contemporary society, and



her texts present a critical viewpoint of today's world filtered through the female lens. In many cases, her protagonists are women artists as in *The Glass Ceiling: Anne & Sylvia*.

DARK STONE

- Original title: *La piedra oscura*.
- By Alberto Conejero. Directed by [Paul Takacs](#).
- Actors: Ricardo Birnbaum and Pablo Sandstrom.
- In English. Translated by Gary J. Racz.

Dark Stone (La piedra oscura) by Alberto Conejero evokes the specter of Federico Garcia Lorca, Spain's most renowned 20th century poet and playwright who was murdered at the outbreak of Spain's Civil War (1936-39). Set in a Nationalist prison, two young men from different social classes and opposing sides of the Civil War—Lorca's former lover, Rafael Rodriguez Rapun, and a young prison guard—manage to bond as on this final night before Rapun's execution. The play premiered in Madrid in 2015 at the Centro Dramatico Nacional under the direction of Pablo Messiez. *Dark Stone* swept the 2016 Premio Max Awards, winning the top five categories including Best Playwright, Best Direction and Best Production.

Alberto Conejero (Jaen 1978) is the winner of Spain's 2019 National Theater Award (Premio Nacional de Literatura Drama). A kindred spirit to his fellow Andalusian Federico Garcia Lorca, his works offer a blend of intellectual depth and poetic sensitivity. Conejero's theater offers plays with stirring plots and multi-faceted characters, whose message and appeal typically transcend the limits of time, space, and culture. The lyricism found in his theater, together with its metaphorical approach to truth, facilitate the impossible task of naming that which often cannot be named: pain, loss, betrayal, discrimination and death.

SEE YOU IN HEAVEN... OR, MAYBE NOT

- Original title: *Espérame en el cielo... o, mejor, no*.
- By Diana M de Paco Serrano. Directed by Scott Levy.
- Actress: Rebecca Myers.
- In English. Translated by Patricia W. O'Connor.

See You in Heaven... Or, Maybe Not by Diana de Paco (b. 1973 Murcia) premiered in Murcia in 2013 under the direction of Mariángeles Rodríguez. Set in the disturbing and claustrophobic space of a forensic morgue, the play's fragmented plot and dialogue darts among the lives of four women from different walks of life who are victims of domestic violence. Their individual stories, colored by delicate hues of dark humor, echo the many shades of discrimination, oppression and abuse suffered by women of all ages and backgrounds.

Diana de Paco Serrano (b. 1973 Murcia) is a scholar of classical Greek



and teaches at the University of Murcia. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of her protagonists are notorious women like Cassandra, Medea and Penelope from Greek drama who are now freed to tell their own stories. In another vein, her plays put contemporary global issues under the microscope. De Paco criticizes the dehumanization of society and the lack of communication among its members. With a healthy dose of irony and black humor, de Paco tackles today's challenging issues of domestic violence, intolerance, and the dire consequences of economic crisis.

DARWIN'S TORTOISE

- Original title: *La tortuga de Darwin*.
- By Juan Mayorga. Directed by Dado Gyure.
- Actors: Charin Alvarez, Dano Durán and Shawna Franks.
- In English. Translated by Iride Lamartina-Lens.

Darwin's Tortoise premiered in Madrid in 2008 at the Teatro de la Abadía, under the direction of Ernesto Caballero. Mayorga received the Max Award for Best Author in 2009 and the Teatro de Rojas Award for Best Author in 2008. *Darwin's Tortoise* offers a satirical reading of modern history through the perspective of the biologist's now ancient tortoise, Harriet. Over the course of 200 years, Harriet has been an eye-witness to major global events spurred by human folly, and has evolved into a woman-tortoise hybrid. Her interpretation of humanity's evolutionary *involution* and moral bankruptcy sparks an alternative perspective on the notion of "progress."

Juan Mayorga (b.1965 Madrid) belongs to the first generation of Spanish playwrights to come of age under democracy. Internationally acclaimed, and widely respected in the theater and academic spheres, Mayorga stands out as one of Spain's most frequently staged, and studied contemporary dramatists. He has written over 30 plays and adaptations of classical texts, and his work has been translated into more than 27 languages. Among his numerous accolades are the Borne, Max (five times), National Theater Prize (2007), the Valle-Inclán Prize for Theater (2009), and the National Dramatic Literature Prize (2013). In 2018, Mayorga was chosen as a member of the Real Academia Espanola. Mayorga's intellectually charged plays heighten our understanding of the relationship between history and historical memory, power and violence, language and identity, and literary fiction and reality.

SCARRED BY THE WIND

- Original title: *Las heridas del viento*.
- By Juan Carlos Rubio. Directed by Tara Elliott.
- Actors: Bill Buel and Eshan Bay.
- In English. Translated by Iride Lamartina-Lens.

Scarred by the Wind premiered in Miami, Florida in 2005. It was staged by Hispanic Theater Guild and directed by Juan Manuel Cifuentes. In 2013,



Juan Carlos Rubio directed the first Spanish staging in Cordoba, Spain. The play received a special award at the San Javier International Theater Festival (2015) and Best Playwright Andalusian Theater Award (2015). *Scarred by the Wind* takes today's audience / readers beyond propaganda, politics or cynicism, and opens the doors to a much-needed discussion about love. *Scarred by the Wind* centers on the unlikely encounter between David and Juan, two men defined by loneliness and an unfulfilled yearning to love. They are now united by the death of David's father Rafael and a secret box of love letters. The playwright debunks today's romantic myths and stereotypes surrounding love and awakens a vintage awareness of love through a stirring poetic dialogue.

Juan Carlos Rubio (b.1967) born in Montilla (Cordoba), Spain, is a multifaceted and internationally recognized playwright and director. He has written dozens of plays and received many literary prizes. Rubio's theater employs tragicomic action to address contemporary matters as well as unsettled issues from the past.

About the organizers

Spotlight on Contemporary Spanish Theater is a initiative organized by the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C., in collaboration with Estreno Contemporary Spanish Plays and AENY – Spanish Artists in New York to provide a platform for unheard stories to U.S. audiences.

SPAIN arts & culture aims to promote Spanish culture in the U.S. through fruitful cultural exchanges among institutions and artists, fostering positive bilateral relations between our two countries. Among its objectives, the program enhances shared knowledge on the cultural and creative industries and facilitates professional opportunities for artists, drawing on our common Hispanic heritage.

[Estreno Contemporary Spanish Plays](#), co-edited by Iride Lamartina-Lens and Susan Berardini, is a non-profit literary press that publishes stage-worthy English translations of some of the best and most current plays from Spain. Since its inception in 1992, this annual series comprised of 42 volumes has been committed to showcasing dramatic works representing a plurality of voices, perspectives and artistic visions of more than fifty dramatists.

[AENY – Spanish Artists in New York](#) is a non-profit organization that promotes interdisciplinary artistic collaborations and intends to build a cultural bridge between Spain and the United States. AENY fosters a multidisciplinary collective of Spanish artists, joined by a common heritage and a mission to produce cutting-edge contemporary work that reflects the needs, longings, and uncertainty of the cross-cultural society in which we



live.”

This project seeks to create a collaborative space where American directors and actors connect with the Spanish theater, focusing on Spanish playwrights directed by U.S. directors. This year's edition has gone fully virtual due to the pandemic and includes excerpts of Spanish works with actors playing via Zoom from their own homes.
Stay tuned to our series as we will release one video per week.