

WASHINGTON



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THEATER

'Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter' a transgressive romance

GALA Hispanic Theatre debuts second live performance since COVID

Published 2 months ago on April 17, 2021

By **Patrick Folliard**



**'Tía Julia y el
escribidor' /
'Aunt Julia
and the
Scriptwriter'**

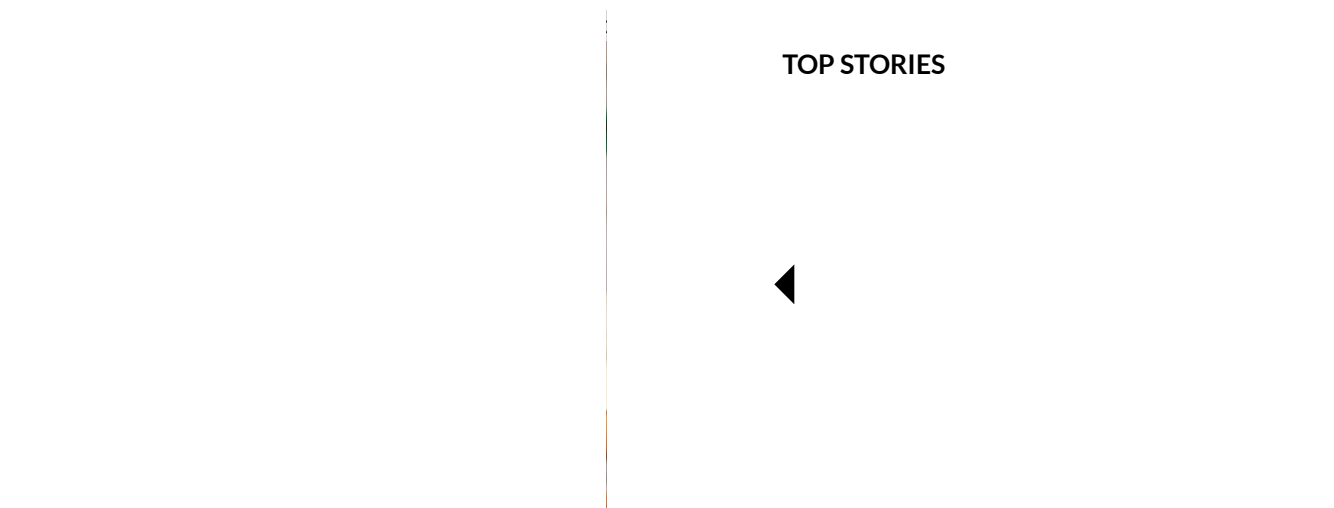
In person
April 22-May
9 (\$45)
Online
starting May
5 (\$25)
GALA
Hispanic
Theatre
3333 14th St.,
NW



Carlos Castillo (seated) and **Delbis Cardona**. (Photo by Daniel Martinez)

[Galatheatre.org](https://www.galatheatre.org)

When GALA Hispanic Theatre reopened its doors in the fall, the actors performed in plexiglass box. And now, for the Columbia Heights company's second live performance production, what looks like "a giant sneeze guard" separates the action on stage from audience.



Opening next week, Caridad Svich's eponymous adaptation of Nobel Prize-winning writer Mario Vargas Llosa's autobiographical coming-of-age novel "Tía Julia y el escribidor, Julia and the Scriptwriter," is a raucously funny, transgressive yet tender romance.

A fun workplace story set against the radio-novela focused world of 1950s Lima, it's told from the perspective of Mario, an aspiring young writer who embarks on an ardent affair with Julia, his all-time favorite older aunt by marriage.

The production's out director José Zayas knows the story well.

He first encountered this peek into Vargas Llosa's youth with "Tune in Tomorrow," an Americanized 1990 screen adaptation (relocated to New Orleans) starring Keanu Reeves and Barbara Hershey. Smitten with the film, Zayas promptly sought out the source material, which is an especially autobiographical, genuine Latin American comedy. Truly a delightful work of art.

When tapped to direct something for Repertorio Español's 2015 season, Zayas requested that his longtime collaborator Svich adapt "Tía Julia." Both she and the esteemed New York theater

agreed.

“We’re very simpatico,” he says. Zayas and Svich are equally adroit in Spanish and English, and together they share a passion for classic Hollywood screwball comedies like “The Front Page,” “Twentieth Century,” and “His Girl Friday,” and their love for the genre is evident all over the play and production.

“It’s an especially unique adaptation with different influences coming into play,” says Zayas, a Harvard grad who was born in Puerto Rico, grew up in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and now lives in New York. “It’s one of the interesting things that happens when you adapt in the United States and you’re working in Spanish – the rhythms are different.

“And while there’s nothing explicitly LGBTQ about the play, besides me and some of the characters,” he adds, “it has a feel – the fascination with the comedies of the period – the strong sense of the time like Rosalind Russell, the style, and form of it. It’s all there, maybe coded, but it’s there.”

Already in rehearsal at GALA when COVID hit in March 2020, the play’s production in Spanish with English surtitles was postponed until now. Resuming rehearsals after a long hiatus means hearing the play in new voices, new ideas, new textures, and in some cases new faces, says Zayas. Fortunately, out actor Carlos Castillo, a talented GALA vet, reprised the role of young Mario’s mentor, the exceedingly eccentric scriptwriter Pedro Camacho.

Zayas adds, “Before the show was cast, I immediately saw Carlos as Pedro. He’s biting the bullet and loving it.”

Zayas also staged GALA’s reopening in October with “El Perro del Hortelano” (“The Dog in the Manger”), a classic Spanish comedy. Part of a pilot program, the show observed myriad COVID protocols including masks, socially distanced seating, and a dramatically improved air filtration system. Zayas conferred with out set designer Clifton Chadick on a contained terrarium like set that addressed the concerns of COVID-19 while telling the story in bright light.

For “Tía Julia,” safety measures are again in place (though now there will be 50 rather than 30 seats available per performance in the 364-seat house). Moreover, Zayas and Chadick reunited. “This time,” Zayas says “there’s a giant sneeze guard between the stage and the audience house. In the context of the play, it feels like the audience is in the radio studio watching through glass. It makes sense. I think we came up with a fun way of doing it. “

Much of Zayas' career has been making theater for Spanish speaking and Latinx audi
"It's tricky. While you want to get as broad a base as possible, I find it edifying to hav
conversations with Spanish speakers. But I like to invite others to join in too. See, it's
complicated."

"But ultimately, theater is about experience and connection. Being an adventurous
theatergoer is really exciting. It makes you a better listener and a better person – you
more empathetic, attuned to language, and different behaviors. And this is one more
connection."

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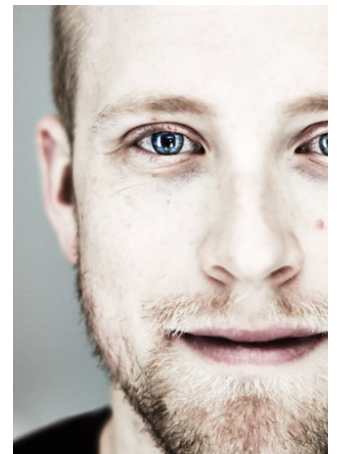
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THEATER

Local theaters come to life to celebrate Pride

Kennedy Center, GALA, Olney and more offer live and virtual events

Published 6 days ago on June 9, 2021

By **Patrick Folliard**



Solomon Parker is Echinacea Monroe in 'Olney in Drag,' coming to Olney Theatre Center in August. (Photo courtesy Park

With reopening comes opportunities to celebrate Pride with live performances.

For the first time in more than a year, the **Gay Men's Chorus of Washington's Potomac Fever Ensemble** will be performing together live. The small, close-knit harmony a cappella group is presenting a fun mix of contemporary pop, crowd favorites, and Broadway songs National Christian City Church at 5 Thomas Circle, N.W., on Saturday, June 12 at 3 p.m. Admission is free. Gmcw.org

And if you move fast, there's still time to catch an outdoor performance of Solas Nua's production of "**In the Middle of the Fields.**" Penned by Deirdre Kinahan ("Wild Sky," "Th

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THEATER

'Will Power's Flow' a hip-hop tour de force

Justin Weaks on playing multiple parts, theater scene after COVID

Published 2 weeks ago on June 3, 2021

By **Patrick Folliard**



Justin Weaks (foreground) and DJ Nick 'Tha 1da' Hernandez in 'Flow.' (Photo courtesy of Studio Theatre)

'Will Power's Flow'

Studio Theatre

Streaming through June 27

\$37

[Studiotheatre.org](https://www.studiotheatre.org)

Out actor Justin Weaks really digs hip-hop. So, when Studio Theatre asked him to take on title role in a filmed remount of "Will Power's Flow," an early 2000s hip-hop theatrical pie about music and the storytelling of contemporary urban denizens in the West African griot tradition, it wasn't an impossible stretch.

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THEATER

A mix of laughs and sadness in '2.5 Minute Ride'

Studio virtual production penned by Tony-winning Lisa Kron

Published 3 weeks ago on May 27, 2021

By **Patrick Folliard**



Dina Thomas in '2.5 Minute Ride.' (Photo courtesy of Studio Theatre)

'2.5 Minute Ride'

Streaming through June 6

Studio Theatre

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[Studiotheatre.org](https://www.studiotheatre.org)

Tony Award-winning lesbian playwright Lisa Kron writes about families. Sometimes her o and sometimes other people's.

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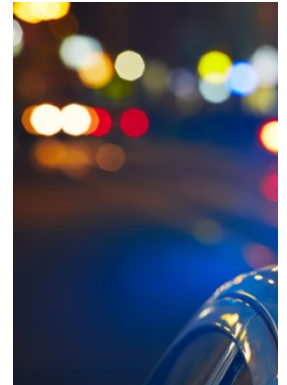
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