VILLANOVA THEATRE PRESENTS

Written by SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ
Translated by Catherine Boyle

Directed by James Ijames

NOVEMBER 9th - NOVEMBER 20th, 2022

HOUSE OF DESIRES

NOVEMBER 9th - NOVEMBER 20th, 2022
Our Community Agreements

We welcome and celebrate audiences of all ages, abilities, body types, gender identities, economic backgrounds, ethnicities, immigration statuses, races, religious beliefs, sexualities and overall ways of being human. Without exception.

We Agree:

To treat everyone - including performers, audience members, crew, staff and volunteers - with respect, whether in the audience, on stage, behind the stage, at the concession stand or at the front door.

To laugh when we find something humorous, cry when we are moved to tears and affirm feeling vulnerable.

To create and maintain a space that is open, honest and real.

To celebrate one another and to provide encouragement.

To endeavor to provide appropriate content advisories for our audiences.

To reject and speak out against any discrimination, demeaning behavior or harassment against any of our community members. This includes, but is not limited to ageist, ableist, classist, homophobic, nativist, racist, religist, sexist or transphobic language.

For more information, please visit villanovatheatre.org/community-agreements.
About Villanova University

Since 1842, Villanova University’s Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition has been the cornerstone of an academic community in which students learn to think critically, act compassionately and succeed while serving others. There are more than 10,000 undergraduate, graduate and law students in the University’s six colleges – the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Villanova School of Business, the College of Engineering, the M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing, the College of Professional Studies and the Villanova University School of Law. As students grow intellectually, Villanova prepares them to become ethical leaders who create positive change everywhere life takes them.

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Villanova Theatre Presents

House Of Desires
by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
translated by Catherine Boyle

Directed by
JAMES IJAMES

Scenic Designer
THOM WEAVER

Costume Designer
ASAKI KURUMA

Lighting Designer
JEROLD R. FORSYTH

Sound Designer
JORDAN McCREE

Production Dramaturg
ALISON HYDE PASCALE

Stage Manager
BRENDAN T. COCHRAN

November 9th - November 20th, 2022

“This Sucks” Original Music & Arrangement by Jordan McCree
Translation and Lyrics by Alison Hyde Pascale
CAST

Doña Ana................................................................. Teya Juarez
Celia................................................................. Taylor Molt
Doña Leonor......................................................... Emma Drennen
Don Carlos......................................................... Joshua Peters
Castaño..............................................................Paul Goraczko
Don Pedro..........................................................Sheldon Shaw
Doña Rodrigo......................................................Margo Weishar
Hernando..........................................................Brandon Hunter Smith
Don Juan.............................................................Tomas Alfonso Torres

HOUSE OF DESIRES STAFF

Associate Set Designer........................................Raven Buck
Dialect Coach....................................................Erin Washington
Community Cares Liaison.................................Rachel O’Hanlon-Rodriguez
Stage Management Consultant .........................Allie Emmerich
Educational Dramaturgy Consultant .....................Cristy Chory

Production Manager..........................................Amanda Coffin
Technical Director............................................Jacob Rothermel
Properties Shop Manager & Scenic Charge.............Sharri Jerue
Costume Shop Manager.....................................Janus Stefanowicz
Cutter/Draper....................................................Rosemarie McKelvey
Master Electrician..............................................Michael Hamlet
Buisness Manager.............................................Elisa Loprete Hibbs
Director of Marketing & Public Relations..............Kimberly Reilly

Assistant Stage Managers........... Janos Boon, Abigail Little, Genevieve Windbiel
Assistants to the Costume Designer.............Teya Juarez, Genevieve Windbiel
Lead Carpenter ..................................................Joshua Peters
Light Board Operator ..........................................Ryan Henry
Sound Board Operator .........................................Taahira Davis
Set Construction........... Justin Badoyen, Ethan Rundell, Celia Wusteney, Max Cabral
Wardrobe Managers................................. Lily Nguyen, Anya Speaker, Sarina Sandwell,
Olivia Speaker, Julia Amendola
Costume Technicians.................................Eileen Cha, Isabella Lussi, Allyson Szabo
Properties & Scenic Artists......................... Thomas DeStefanis, Christine Polakewicz
Business Manager’s Assistant.........................Santino Moffa, Sanjay Reo
Sor Juana is Alive and Well and Living in Tenochtitlan (and everywhere else)

The English-speaking world has, quite frankly, been sleeping on Sor Juana. Though many in the United States (including myself, until this past May) may not have heard of the 17th-century Mexican dramatist, philosopher, poet and Catholic nun, Sor (Sister) Juana has enjoyed a long postmortem life in Mexican popular culture. And it’s no wonder why.

Doña Inés de Asbaje (later Sor Juana) was born out of wedlock in 1651 to a criolla - a woman of Spanish descent born on New World shores - and an often-absent Basque father. The story of Inés de Asabje's early life is, at this point, practically hagiography, a holy recounting of a truly prodigious individual. Apocryphally, she successfully talked her way into a finishing school at age four and taught herself Greek, Latin, astronomy, history and more from her maternal grandfather's library. Her thirst for knowledge was unquenchable, and her desire to attend the university in Mexico City - a goal she would never be able to fulfill due to her gender - brought her to the capital of New Spain at the age of thirteen. Despite being forbidden from attending college, Inés determinedly continued her study, with rumor of the genius girl spreading across the city.

By the age of seventeen, the rumors had travelled so widely that Inés was brought before a panel of forty scholars to be tested publicly. Of course, the court was convinced that a girl could not be as learned or as bright as people had come to be-
lieve. The scholars of the court and university tested her knowledge of history, Latin, Greek, theology, math and a host of other subjects for several hours. They were eventually forced to concede that shockingly (to them) she really was as erudite as the rumors had proclaimed. Following this public demonstration, marriage proposals flooded in for young Inés, despite the fact that she was illegitimate and had considerably fewer means than the average courtier. However, she made the decision not to marry. Inés became Sor Juana, deciding to join the monastic life largely because she would be better able to continue her studies, afraid that a husband would attempt to limit her scholastic pursuits. After an unsuccessful stint with a Carmelite convent from age seventeen to nineteen, she joined the less restrictive Hieronymites. She began writing prodigiously, producing philosophic and religious treatises, hundreds of poems and three major dramatic works, including House of Desires (Los Empeños de Una Casa – literally, “The Pawns/Hostages of a House”), which was presented at a public court celebration in 1682.

Despite the fact that she was a nun, Sor Juana spent a great deal of time outside the convent, essentially serving as the court poet for the royalty of New Spain. Many of the poems she wrote were composed for the wives of courtiers, with whom she had longstanding relationships. Though we will never know all the specifics of those relationships, there is an undeniable queerness surrounding the story of her life: she explicitly entered monastic life to circumvent marriage to a man; she kept a number of female ‘favorites’ in the royal court; and she wrote beautiful love (and lust) poems for those favorites. In fact, through her long life in Mexican culture, one of her most important roles has been as an emblem of queer resistance, including as the namesake of El Clóset de Sor Juana, a prominent lesbian rights group in the 1970s and ‘80s. Sor Juana was brilliant, and an outsider.
She wrote comedies that revel in complication, love poems full of tender vibrance, and incredibly complex and thoughtful theological and philosophical treatises.

Sor Juana's work, particularly her outspoken support for greater female freedoms, drew the ire of the Archdiocese of New Spain. She was censured multiple times before eventually being forced to discard her massive library and renounce her written works. She signed her letter of renunciation and penance to the church in her own blood. This undeniably badass – if a little unsanitary – choice was a message to authority that taking away her scholastic practice was, in effect, killing her. She died a year after that renunciation, at the age of forty-six.

To many scholars of Mexican history, Sor Juana is the first truly Mexican figure. In this fantastic, almost mythically intelligent and independent woman, many Mexican people have been able to see themselves. Sor Juana quickly became a reflection of the Mexican people’s struggle between multiple identities, the fight against oppressive authorities and, most importantly, a symbol of absolute resilience. She is a woman often heralded along with Our Lady of Guadalupe as the mythic mother of Mexican identity. So, yeah, we’ve all been sleeping on Sor Juana. Until now.

The primary reason for this lack of recognition is the fact that her works have only been translated for production in English in the last thirty years or so. Unlike her near-contemporaries of the Spanish Golden Age, Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Lope de Vega, Sor Juana has not yet become part of the English ‘classical’ canon. Her biggest splash into the English-speaking scene came in 2004, when House of Desires was chosen as part of the Spanish Golden Age season at the Royal Shakespeare Company, in which five plays from that era were translated and produced.
In many ways, plays of the Spanish Golden Age do indeed function like Shakespeare's works. There are monologues galore, stunning shifts from high prose to low comedy, tropes repeated and inverted, fluidity of time and space. And, like Shakespeare, Sor Juana is, pardon my French, really *f**king* funny. But, as with Shakespeare, encountering the play as a dramaturg, as a director and as an actor, the distance between the seventeenth century and now has felt, at times, absolutely unbridgeable. My first bridging of that gap, which I shared with the cast at our first rehearsal, is that *House of Desires* is a parody of a near-parodic genre. Sor Juana is riffing on classic *Capa y Espada* (cloak and sword) drama. This genre is hallmarked by absolutely honorable heroes, despicable villains, distressed damsels, mistaken identities, and a healthy helping of sword fights. While cloak and sword dramas are undoubtedly heightened, close to what we would call melodrama, Sor Juana went even further, parodying what was already ridiculous.

Sor Juana employed this parody to deliver what was, at the time, a scathing lampoon of the noble classes she spent so much time observing. The public presentation of *Los Empeños de Una Casa* was essentially 1680s New Spanish *Saturday Night Live*. Rather than celebrate honor, Sor Juana issues a critique, pointing out how easily honor is tarnished and how quickly it devolves into needless violence. Sor Juana, borrowing from Italian *commedia dell'arte* stock characters, demonstrates the dependency of nobles on their much more competent servants. She spends a great deal of time with the women in *House of Desires*, more than is typically spent in *Capa y Espada* plays. The women are given license to explain their thinking, their worldview and the complicated social calculations they have to make. Sor Juana demonstrates how obsessive concern over the virtue and purity of women can quickly lead to ridiculous complications. Through it all, her witty (and dirty) comedy is the major conveyance of this critique.
From early in the Villanova Theatre production process, it became clear that our highest goal was the comedy, presenting the play as the “farce of a farce” that it is. Just as with Shakespeare in the hands of directors Peter Brook and Baz Luhrmann, the classical text of Sor Juana absolutely sings when it is contemporized, allowing her comedy, her wit and the ever-enduring human themes that she so poetically expressed to shine through. Delivering Sor Juana’s scathing wit to a modern audience most effectively demanded a creative, contemporizing hand. A kinda long philosophic song in the middle of the show? Have the Gen Z dramaturg translate it in the most contemporary terms possible. Setting? Magical resort hotel, next question. Lords and ladies? No, the independently wealthy and their personal assistants.

What was magical, what has been magical, is watching that text, from over four hundred years ago, come vibrantly alive in the rehearsal room. I am overjoyed with our finished product. However, I have repeatedly wished that I could invite every single audience member into the rehearsal room. The brilliant actors, director and crew have made such exciting discoveries, working on a classical piece largely unfamiliar to us beforehand. This is the only time I have ever been in a room where we had to call “Hold!” because everyone was laughing too hard to continue. There has been absolute joy in the possibility, the riffing, the levels of absurdity in Sor Juana’s plot dawning on us in waves. We have done our level best to bring you the play that best serves the comedy, the absurdity, the lofty themes and the dirty jokes, stripping away the pretense and pomp that often accompany classical texts.

After all, Sor Juana is still alive and well. She is, as Mexican-American literary and cultural scholar Ilan Stavans puts it, a “pop-culture icon.” She is particularly Mexican. She is particularly queer. She speaks for indigeneity, being one of the first New World writers to critically reflect on the evils of the systemic erasure of native culture. She is resistance, she is modernity, she is pop, she is rebellion.

So, with a legacy like that, we simply couldn’t pretend that Sor Juana, or her work, lives only in 1680. We hope you vibe with our synth wave, our pop pink, our theme song, our telenovela references, our yoga, our selfies, our embrace of gender in its many forms, and our funny, silly, ridiculous show. And I hope you enjoy Sor Juana as she has never been done before.
EMMA DRENNEN (Doña Leonor, she/her) is a first-year MA in Theatre student and tuition scholar. She holds a BA in Theatre from Saint Michael’s College in Colchester, VT, where favorite credits include Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire and Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, both roles for which she was an Irene Ryan Scholarship Nominee by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Her local credits include Puck in Lovers and Madmen: Visions of a Midsummer Night’s Dream in the 2021 Philadelphia Fringe Festival with Forgotten Lore Theatre and many years spent as a member of the ShakesPEER Group.

PAUL GORACZKO (Castaño) is in his final year as a part-time MA in Theatre student. He is also a full-time teacher at Wissahickon High School, where he teaches 11th grade English and Actor’s Workshop. Paul is thrilled to be returning to the Villanova Theatre stage following last season’s production of James Ijames’s WHITE in which he played Gus. While enrolled in the program, Paul has performed in the student-directed productions Hookman (Sean, Adam, Hookman) and Heart’s Desire (Louis), as well as readings including To See A Storm (Curtis), The Gally (Ensemble), The Bakkhai (Pentheus) and Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea (Dolan). While pursuing his undergraduate degree in English Education at Millersville University, his play That Good Night received a staged reading at Region 2 of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival 46. Paul also holds an MA in Education from Wilkes University.

TEYA JUAREZ (Doña Ana, she/her) is a second-year MA in Theatre student and costume shop assistant who last appeared on the Villanova Theatre stage as Frank Goodman in Men on Boats. She earned her BA in Theatre Arts-Acting and minor in Philosophy from California State University, Fresno where her acting credits include Native Son (Mary), Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley (Lydia), The Wolves (#8) and Anon(ymous) (Nemasani). She also appeared in Selma Arts Center’s Be More Chill (Christine) and Stagework Fresno’s Urinetown (Ensemble). She wrote, directed and produced an original ten-minute virtual play, Z, with the CSU Fresno Experimental Theatre Company. Last year at Villanova, Teya served as the assistant to the costume designer on WHITE and Curtains and assistant stage manager for Beckett Bites. At CSU Fresno, Teya was a member of the 2020-2021 College of Arts and Humanities Honors Cohort.

TAYLOR MOLT (Celia, she/her) is a second-year MA in Theatre student and props assistant. Her previous Villanova Theatre credits include Bradley in Men on Boats, Bambi in Curtains, and Eva in the 2022 Studio Show Do You Feel Anger? She earned her BA in Musical Theatre with a minor in Music from Washburn University in Topeka, KS, where she appeared as Cathy Hiatt in The Last Five Years, Helena Rubenstein in War Paint and Georgia Hendricks in Curtains. Some of her other credits include working with Emporia Summer Theatre as Flora in No Way to Treat a Lady, interning with KC Friends of Alvin Ailey and participating as a finalist in the 2021 Region Five Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Musical Theatre Masterclass.

JOSHUA PETERS (Don Carlos) is an actor, director, playwright and stage manager from Nigeria. At Villanova, he is a second-year MA in Theatre student and set assistant. He runs a devised and movement-based theatre outfit focused on contemporizing past indigenous works and has been featured in groundbreaking works like Death and the King’s Horseman, Fences, A Raisin in the Sun, The Island and The Gods are not to Blame, to mention a few. He received the 2019 DASA Award for Best Direction for Langbodo and won the IfeDrama Awards for Best Actor in a Tragedy for bodo and won the IfeDrama Awards for Best Actor in a Tragedy for Death and the King’s Horseman. Joshua received his Bachelor’s Degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, where he was awarded the Best Graduating Student from the College of Arts.

SHELDON SHAW (Don Pedro, he/him) is a second-year MA in Theatre student and Belle Masque endowed scholar. This is his third role with Villanova Theatre, having appeared in Curtains and WHITE. Previous roles include The Last Saint On Sugar Hill by Keith Josef Atkins with The Rooted Theater Company, NYC. Sheldon is also a playwright. Sheldon’s play CNTL+ALT(RIGHT)+DEL was performed during JAGfest in Vermont at the Briggs Opera House. During Covid, Sheldon’s play Billy.Shelly.Ally workshoped with the Eden Theater company in NYC. Sheldon’s play Clair was a finalist in The Isle of Shoals 2020 playwriting competition. This past June, his play Jailbird was part of the Urban Downtown Theater Festival at the Henry Settlement theater, NYC. Sheldon was named one of 2020’s Black, LGBTQ+ 2020 Playwrights You Need To Know by Time Out magazine. Sheldon has a BA from Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. He studied acting at The William Esper Studio and playwriting at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC under Gary Garrison, Jacqueline Goldfinger, Careen Jennings, and Mark Bly.
BRANDON HUNTER SMITH (Hernando) is a part-time second-year MA in Theatre student who last appeared on the Villanova Theatre stage in Curtains. Brandon is a Front of House Managing Apprentice at People’s Light, located in Malvern, PA. As an undergraduate at West Chester University, Brandon took on numerous acting roles including the 2020 production of The Visit by Friedrich Dürrenmatt and also served as a dramaturg for the 2021 Production of House Arrest by Anna Deavere Smith, where he received a Certificate of Merit for his contributions on the production by the Region 2 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Brandon’s undergraduate experience included involvement in the Alpha Epsilon chapter of the Phi Sigma Pi (Honors Fraternity), as well as the Rho Mu chapter of Alpha Psi Omega (Theatre Honors Fraternity).

TOMAS ALFONSO TORRES (Don Juan, he/his) is a second-year MA in Theatre student and props assistant. He was last seen on the Villanova Theatre stage as Harv in Curtains. He earned his BA in Creative Writing and Theatre Studies at Susquehanna University, where he most recently served as dramaturg for their production of Three Sisters. Also at Susquehanna, he served as the secretary of his chapter of the Phi Mu Alpha fraternity and was inducted as a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honor Society.

MARGO WEISHAR (Doña Rodrigo) is a Certificate in Practical Theatre student who has performed and directed at many Philadelphia-area theatres. Favorite roles include Amalia in She Loves Me, Rosalind in As You Like It and Ivy in August Osage County. Recent directing credits include the 2022 Villanova Theatre Student Studio Show Do You Feel Anger? and Silent Sky at Playcrafters Theater. Her one-woman cabaret show To Life -The Music of Sheldon Harnick was performed at the Red Room in Philadelphia. She is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. She is looking forward to playing Maria Sybilla Merian in the new play Chrysalis next in the Villanova Theatre season.

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ (Playwright) was a 17th-century nun, philosopher, poet and playwright in Mexico City, Mexico. Her works are myriad, and she is today considered one of the most important figures in Mexico’s history. She wrote on topics of women’s equality and the proper role of the church and clergy, and her outspoken views eventually angered those in the archdiocese of New Spain. Though she was forced to renounce writing, and shortly after died at the age of forty-one, she left behind a substantial body of work. Sor Juana’s dramatic works, including House of Desires, The Divine Narcissus, and Love is the Greater Labyrinth have been translated to English for the stage largely in only the past thirty years. Now, however, there are multiple translations of her work, and regional theaters and colleges across England and the US have started including her work in their repertoires.

JAMES IJAMES (Director, he/him) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, a director and educator. Ijames’s plays have been produced by The Public Theater, The National Black Theatre (NYC); Steppenwolf Theatre, Definition Theatre (Chicago IL); Shotgun Players (Berkeley, CA); Flashpoint Theater Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon, The Wilma Theater (Philadelphia, PA), among many others, and have received development with PlayPenn New Play Conference, The Lark, Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theatre, The Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre and Victory Gardens. https://www.jamesijames.com/


JORDAN McCREE (Sound Designer) is a percussionist, producer, composer, recording engineer, sound designer, and teaching artist in Philadelphia. His most recent works and collaborations include: *TOWN* (Theatre Horizon), *This Is The Week That Is* (1812 Productions), *Backing Track* (Arden Theatre Company), *Citizen* (New Light Theatre), *Peril’s Island* (Shakespeare In Clark Park), *Fat Ham* (The Wilma Theater), *My General Tubman* (Arden Theatre Company), *An Iliad* (Arden Theatre Company), *Romeo and Juliet* (The Wilma Theater), and *Red Bike* (Simpatico Theater). Recently, he has become one of the grants recipients to the 1/52 Project. He is also a member of Philly-based hip hop collective, ILL DOOTS. ILL DOOTS’ latest album, *The Message*, is available now on Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, and more! #ILLMOVEMENT | ILLDOOTS.COM

THOM WEAVER (Set Design) is a set and lighting designer based out of Philadelphia. He has designed for the Roundabout Theatre Company, The Joyce, Signature Theatre Company (NY), Arden Theatre, New Paradise Laboratories, Wilma Theater, Theatre Exile, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Walnut Street Theatre, Curtis Institute, Headlong, The Kimmel Center, Milwaukee Rep, Huntington Theatre Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, Shakespeare Theater, among many others. His designs have been nominated for 27 Barrymores, winning in 2011 (*In the Next Room*), 2012 (*Knives in Hens*), 2014 (*Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq*), 2017 (*The Seagull*, scenery), and 2019 (*Gem of the Ocean*, scenery and lighting). He is also a 2-time Jeff Award Winner (*The Tempest*, 2016, *Macbeth*, 2018), a 4-time Helen Hayes Award nominee, and a 4-time AUDELCO Award nominee, winning for his work on Signature Theatre’s *King Hedley II* in 2007 and for *How I Learned What I Learned* in 2014, also at the Signature. He is a member Wingspace Theatrical Design, an Associate Artist for The Wilma Theater, and the co-founder of Die-Cast with collaborator Brenna Geffers. He received his B.F.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and his M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama.

ALISON HYDE PASCALE (Dramaturg, she/her) is a playwright, actor, theatre scholar, and art historian who holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from Fairfield University and a BA in Art History from the University of Saint Joseph. She is a second-year MA in Theatre student and the marketing and PR assistant for Villanova Theatre. She was a 2022 Villanova University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Graduate Summer Research Fellowship recipient. A chapter about her work on *House of Desires* entitled “Punk Nuns and Early Modern Vacationlands: Bringing Sor Juana to the 21st Century” will be published in the forthcoming anthology *Dramaturgy and History: Staging the Archive* as part of the Routledge Press *Focus on Dramaturgy* collection. She has appeared on the Villanova Theatre stage in *Men on Boats*, *Curtains*, and *Beckett Bites*. Favorite previous roles include Prudence in *Beyond Therapy*, Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* and Peggy in *Godspell*.

BRENDAN T. COCHRAN (Stage Manager) is a second-year MA in Theatre student and costume assistant. He has appeared on the Villanova Theatre stage as Grady in *Curtains* and M in *Play* as part of *Beckett Bites*. He has worked previously as an actor and director in western Colorado. Favorite roles include Nicky Giblan in *The Seafarer* and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter* with the Sopris Theatre Company and Adam in *Yankee Tavern* with Thunder River Theatre Company. He holds a BA in anthropology with a minor in history from the University of Colorado.
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