

European Stages

Little Theatres and Small Casts: Madrid Stage in October 2014

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Las heridas del viento (Wounds from the Wind), written and directed by Juan Carlos Rubio, is also among the plays rated a critical success in Madrid's weekly entertainment guide. The work, a profound psychological study with touches of poetry and humor, was written in 1999 and published by Editorial La Avispa in 2004. It has been performed in Greece, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica and the United States. There was an unsuccessful attempt to translate the poetic text to English in 2002, but stagings in Miami and New York have been in Spanish.

The play, which is performed without an intermission, was written for two male actors but has since been adapted. Rubio has been collaborating for some ten years with Kiti Mánver, the prize-winning woman actor who creates Juan. Recognizing her role, Rubio has added to the original text a silent, cross-dressing scene at the beginning in which a man in drag enters and then changes into male clothing. The transformation in full view of the audience immerses spectators into the concept of gender as a construct.

The father of David (Dani Muriel) has recently died and David's brothers have asked him, an unemployed architect, to go through the deceased lawyer's papers and other belongings. In the process, David discovers love letters hidden away in a locked box. Those letters were written to his straight-laced, methodical, rigid father by a man. The son—who may himself be gay despite his protests to the contrary—is stunned and determines to find the author of the letters. The meetings between the two men are carried out in episodic fashion over a period of time.

The audience quickly forgets that a woman is playing the role of a man who first appears as a woman. Without any noticeable effort to drop the level of her voice, she convincingly portrays Juan, whose deep love of David's father was not reciprocated despite the lawyer's hiding his letters away for years. Eventually Juan shows David blank pages that his father sent Juan in response to his passionate correspondence.



Las heridas del viento (Wounds from the Wind), written and directed by Juan Carlos Rubio. Photo credits: Sergio Parra

The special photo that the author has kindly provided reveals the dual nature of both characters in this two-hander play.

David feels he has never really known his father and still does not at play's end. His only lasting memories are of one moment of tenderness when he is terrified by the movie *Bambi* and a severe punishment for finding and eating some candies. David has also not yet found himself.

I saw Rubio's *Las heridas del viento* on Wednesday, 15 October, after attending the Vargas Llosa play and another two-hander, *La maratón de Nueva York*. Of these three, Rubio's play for me was definitely the most dramatic and theatrical.

The historic, 420-Lara Theatre has long been called "La bonbonera"—literally a candy box—because of its cozy, attractive appearance. *Las heridas del viento* was not held in that main stage. Rather it was in the basement with seating for some hundred people on mismatched chairs. It was sold out the night I attended. The playing space consisted of a bare floor, with decorated columns that apparently support the building, and minimal props. The actors move their two chairs around to convey change of scene and passage of time. There are also modest changes in their costumes. For example, Juan puts on a suit jacket and tie when he goes to see David, who has not returned to visit him. The basic success of the production, however, is dependent upon the high quality acting of Manver and Muriel.

The Lara has changed its approach to programming considerably since I last attended a production there. *Las heridas del viento* was scheduled this fall only on Wednesday from 1 October to 17 December. Fifteen plays were being rotated between the two theatres for one or more nights a week, either in the basement or after the performance on the main stage. The feature attraction was Jordi Galcerán's comedy *Burundanga*, now in its third season, which was scheduled Tuesday through Sunday, with two performances on Saturday. Indeed plays by or adapted by the Catalan playwright Galcerán, author of *El método Grunholm* (See *WES* 19.2, Spring 2007) were being performed at three different theatres in Madrid while I was there.