

## TROPICAL LIFE

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TEATRO PROMETEO

## PACKS A PUNCH

Luis Fuentes, left, and Anthony Bless go head to head in Oliver Mayer's 'Filo al fuego', part of the International Hispanic Theatre Festival of Miami, running through

Aug. 1. The play about professional boxing is set in 1960s Miami. Review, Page 6E.

## THEATER REVIEW

## Boxers go rounds with all kinds of conflicts

BY CHRISTINE DOLEN  
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Oliver Mayer's *Blade to the Heat* has undergone several transformations since its 1994 debut at New York's Public Theater, where George C. Wolfe's thrilling staging made theatergoers feel as though they had an all-access pass into the violent, sexually charged world of boxing.

Mayer kept refining his script for subsequent productions, but the version that debuted on Friday during the XXV International Hispanic Theatre Festival is more reinvention than revision.

Now titled *Filo al fuego*, the play unfolds in Spanish, with judicious bits of "Spanglish" and English to reflect multicultural Miami circa 1962, the drama's

## If you go

**What:** 'Filo al fuego' ('Blade to the Heat') by Oliver Mayer

**Where:** Teatro Prometeo production in Bldg. 1 auditorium (second floor) at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus, 300 NE Second Ave., Miami, through Saturday

**When:** 8:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday

**Cost:** \$25 (discounts for groups, students and seniors)

**Info:** 305-237-3262; prometeo theatre.com

new setting and time period. (For those with little or shaky Spanish, supertitles projected at either side of the stage provide good-enough translations,

though some of the spelling borders on hilarious: "mang" for "man" and "okey" for "OK," for example.)

What hasn't changed are the violence, machismo, sensuality and homophobia coursing through Mayer's story.

Produced by Teatro Prometeo, a Spanish-language acting conservatory program based at Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus, *Filo al fuego* captures the physical danger, bravado and violent thrills of the boxer's world. Working with a large cast of students of varying abilities and ages, director Joann María Yarrow is able to go all out in terms of design, turning a second-floor auditorium into an authentically detailed place where bouts and bullying can play out.

Working with real-life trainer Mickey Demos, lead actors Luis Fuentes and Anthony Bless sell themselves as toned, trained boxers. The play begins on an adrenaline high, with the less-than-flashy Pedro Quinn (Fuentes) taking the middleweight title from cocky champ Mantequilla Décima (Bless), a defeat that will gall Décima until he can reverse it.

Décima has a way-hot girlfriend, Sarita (Sarah Córdoba), who also happens to be an old friend of Quinn. Though Sarita's passion for Décima continues unabated after his defeat — as a nude shower scene attests — she also tries piquing Quinn's interest, but he takes a pass. His heart, you see, belongs to Garnet (Michael Angelo González), a performer who scrapes out a liv-

ing impersonating Cuban singer Beny Moré.

A gay fighter wrestling with his sexual orientation is the true conflict that pulses through *Filo al fuego*. The fight becomes loud, public and crushing when another boxer, Wilfred Vinal (a terrific Boris Roa, who gives the most provocative performance), baits Quinn by calling him *maricón* and trying to unnerve him by coming on to him.

Truth be told, Mayer's revamped *Filo al fuego* could go farther in exploring its place, time and the brutal realities Quinn faces. Yet despite the disparate abilities of its actors, Teatro Prometeo's production is like its boxers: hot, sweaty and intermittently thrilling.

Christine Dolen is *The Miami Herald's* theater critic.