

# Theater stages Latino culture

BY MERARI CALDERON RUIZ

Moments of laughter, happiness and sadness all occur on stage.

On Feb. 9, Teatro Milagro opened the play "Swimming While Drowning" in Portland, and with it, continued its commitment to bringing a different perspective to the Portland stage for 33 years.

In the play there were two actors; Blake Stone plays the part of Mila and Michel Castillo plays the part of Angelo.

It's a show about two homeless teenagers that struggle to fit in in today's society, and a strong presence of symbolism is demonstrated throughout the play.

"We are in a time when we are trying to accept more different beliefs and people from different walks of life," said Stone after the play. "So to share this story of these two people, we don't even focus on the homosexual aspect of the story."

The play is 70 minutes long but it is rich in dialogue. The language used is in poetry form with some rapping involved.

"The poems are really hard because it's not a monologue and it's not a song," said Castillo. "It's slam poetry and it's something different than just regular poetry. So it's just a mixture of being able to be honest and true and tell a story at the same time, keeping a beat with somebody else's work and not just your own."

"Swimming While Drowning" will continue until Feb.

25, but Teatro Milagro won't stop there.

José Gonzalez and his wife, Dañel Malán, founded Teatro Milagro in 1984. They had just moved to Portland from California and wanted to stay involved in the theater business.

With the help of friends and family, they produced their first play called, "Relatively Speaking." Now, Teatro Milagro is producing its 33rd season and has toured all around the United States in different places and different schools.

"We're doing a lot of things during the course of the season that includes major productions, children's shows, touring productions and then creative engagement activities," said Gonzalez. "So people of all backgrounds can have an opportunity to experience arts and culture 'a la Latino'."

Depending on the show, in the course of a year, they can hire anywhere from 75 to 100 different actors, artists, designers and technicians.

Half of the work that they produce, they create themselves, but sometimes playwrights send in their work to Teatro Milagro. In all, they try to connect ideas to current situations around us.

"We're trying to tell stories about things that are important to us, and in our storytelling we try to tell it from a Latino perspective," said Gonzalez.

Part of that Latino perspective has to do with

experiencing the diverse culture and being bilingual. Some of their productions are either in English or Spanish, depending on the playwright, but many dive into the bilingual aspect.

According to Gonzalez, they sometimes work with people who either just speak English or just speak Spanish. So apart from using strong body language in theater, they also use language as a way to tell the story so that everyone can have a positive experience.

Teatro Milagro is a place to see art, music, dance and poetry incorporated in different ways to the public.

photo contributed by Teatro Milagro



Angelo (left), played by Michel Castillo, cowers as Mila, played by Blake Stone, yells at him.

## B.A. in English Literature & Writing

TOP-RANKED PROGRAM  
ON-CAMPUS OR 100% ONLINE



### CLACKAMAS STUDENTS:

Want a career that builds on your passion for literature and creative writing?

Transfer your Clackamas credits to Marylhurst and complete your bachelor's degree in English Literature & Writing. We offer a top-ranked program in an accessible, flexible format (online or on campus). Curriculum is both relevant and career-focused taught by exceptional English faculty in small classes.



Transfer & Phi Theta Kappa scholarships



Campus 10 miles south of Portland



Earn credit for prior learning, including writing experience



Well-networked English faculty

Get started today: [marylhurst.edu/cc-elw](http://marylhurst.edu/cc-elw)

**MARYLHURST**  
UNIVERSITY

INSPIRE  
CHANGE