

# It's a Miracle!

MILAGRO TELLS THE STORY OF A EUGENE GIRL'S MIRACULOUS BICULTURAL LIFE

By Bob Keefer

**O**K, show of hands: Who in the arts world hasn't ever daydreamed of writing a musical and having it go to Broadway? Eugene singer Evynne Hollens has certainly entertained that fantasy. On Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 23 and 24, Hollens takes her dream a step closer to reality as part of a cast that includes Latin Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Gaby Moreno when The Shedd mounts a concert performance of songs from

her bilingual musical to be, *Milagro*.

"*Milagro*" means "miracle" in Spanish, and after working on the show for the past five years with Moreno and Portland singer-songwriter Anna Gilbert (who was dubbed *Eugene Weekly's* Next Big Thing a decade ago when she lived in Eugene), Hollens agrees that it's going to feel miraculous to perform some of its songs in public. The musical will tell a story based on the life of Adriana Ripley, a phenomenal young Eugene singer herself, who survived her two-months premature birth in Guatemala and came back to the U.S. with her mother, a U.S. citizen who had been working in Guatemala.

Ripley, now 18, went off this fall to study music at the University of Colorado, Boulder, though she's coming back to town for the performance of *Milagro*. She came to the sudden attention of Eugene theater audiences in a different "miracle" show in 2015, when Radio Redux's executive director, Fred Crafts, cast her as Susan Walker in a holiday production of *Miracle on 34th Street*. The 12-year-old Ripley knocked out a dazzlingly mature rendition of "O Holy Night," which Crafts added to the show just for her, and drew a standing ovation from a starstruck crowd.

In *Milagro*, Ripley will play the character Gabriela, who is based on herself. Reached by phone in Colorado, Ripley says the challenge to playing Gabriela is that the fictional character keeps changing as the play develops and has morphed into someone quite different from her real-life self.

"I am very cautious, and always will be. Gabriela's goal

is to find her independence," Ripley says. "She reminds me of Jo in *Little Women*. I'm more of a Beth."

Hollens drafted Moreno into helping out with *Milagro* simply by reaching out. "Gaby was always a dream," Hollens says. "I started following her on social media and saw she was coming to Portland." Hollens messaged Moreno and said she was working on a musical about a girl born in Guatemala, Moreno's own country of origin. "Right away she said, 'Yes,'" Hollens says.

Hollens and her husband, Peter, have long been staples on Eugene's musical scene, performing at The Shedd and other venues around town. Her Broadway aspirations for *Milagro* were sharpened in 2017, when she and Peter made their own Broadway debuts in the holiday special *Home For the Holidays, Live on Broadway* at the August Wilson Theatre in New York.

*Milagro*, which has gone through years of development and workshopping, remains a work in progress. The Shedd production will feature 14 songs from the show; a handful more have yet to be written. Songs are credited to Gilbert and Moreno; book is by Hollens and Seattle playwright Rebecca Tourino Collinsworth.

Hollens admits Broadway is a dream that might or might not come true for her and her musical. "Some days I see it very clearly," she says. "I see the Tony Award for this musical. And then the next day I don't know if we're ever going to pull it off."

*Milagro runs 7:30 pm Saturday, Oct. 23, and 3 pm Sunday, Oct. 24, at The John G. Shedd Institute for the Arts. Tickets are \$18-\$28 at TheShedd.org; more information on the show at MilagroMusical.com.*

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## Jonesin' Crossword BY MATT JONES

- 2021 JONESIN' CROSSWORDS (EDITOR@JONESINCROSSWORDS.COM)
- Across**
- 1 Brit's WWII weapon
  - 5 Eight, to Teo
  - 9 Tiny tastes
  - 13 Chance for change, maybe?
  - 14 Bratwurst topper
  - 15 Spike's demon friend, on "Buffy"
  - 16 Opera highlight
  - 17 Flower in a Texas song
  - 19 Genre for Michael McDonald and Rupert Holmes
  - 21 "\_\_\_ la vista, baby!"
  - 22 Raphael's weapon, in "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles"
  - 23 Chess piece, at times
  - 24 Getaways with a focus on poses
  - 30 Commander
  - 31 "The Hangover" actor Ed
  - 32 Progressive character
  - 35 Otter relative
  - 36 Car brand that translates to "I roll"
  - 37 Galumph
  - 38 Play the quizmaster
  - 39 "Aladdin" character
  - 40 "Real Housewives" channel
  - 41 Longest waterway in China
  - 43 Toward the rear of a boat
  - 46 Objective
  - 47 Prized instrument, for short
  - 48 "I'm serious"
  - 54 "No argument here"
  - 56 "Empire" actor Diggs
  - 57 Like two, but not too?
  - 58 Cardiologist's procedure, for short
  - 59 Reason d'\_\_\_ (justification)
  - 60 Hardy title character
  - 61 Abbr. on a cognac bottle
  - 62 Ticket specification
- Down**
- 1 Hang around
  - 2 "America's Next Top Model" host Banks
  - 3 Impressive in scope
  - 4 Vessel crammed full of wildlife
  - 5 McFlurry variety
  - 6 A.P. math subject
  - 7 Smashing fellow?
  - 8 Prefix meaning "ear-related"
  - 9 Cancels
  - 10 "Have \_\_\_ my mind?"
  - 11 Bucatini sauce
  - 12 Lipstick smudge
  - 14 NBA star Irving in the news for refusing to get vaccinated
  - 18 Word often used by "Jeopardy!" champ Matt Amodio
  - 20 It covers a lot of ground
  - 23 It's hard to distinguish, for short
  - 24 "3:10 to \_\_\_"
  - 25 Conditional suffix?
  - 26 Eugene buildup
  - 27 Minimal beachwear
  - 28 Fired up again
  - 29 Presley-inspired Mexican-American singer with the albums "Graciasland" and "Merry Mex-mas"
  - 32 Chuck D's Public Enemy partner, for short
  - 33 Zero, for Nadal
  - 34 Dumpster emanation
  - 36 \_\_\_ diagram (logic illustration)
  - 37 Order for humans
  - 39 "En \_\_\_" (fencing command)
  - 40 Runny cheese
  - 41 Longs (for)
  - 42 Keep an \_\_\_ the ground
  - 43 Until now
  - 44 Cooking appliance
  - 45 Squares up
  - 48 Yangs' counterparts
  - 49 Haffle brand that somehow has a cereal version
  - 50 Propose a romantic connection, in fanfic
  - 51 Like some bloomers
  - 52 Constellation named for a stringed instrument
  - 53 Chuck as far away as possible, in modern slang
  - 55 Toyota \_\_\_4 (SUV model)

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LANCE LEDES MTV  
STOOP ANISE URI  
ANIMAL STYLE SIN  
TORE EIRE OPINE  
BEAKER OFACIO  
STAYS NFT  
ARI TARAJI ESAU  
GONZO JOURNALISM  
ANTE VESSEL LIP  
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