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OPINIONATED JUDGE

BY JUDGE
 DARLEEN ORTEGA



PHOTO BY JENNY GRAHAM/OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Jesusa (Vivia Font), Manuela (Alejandra Escalante) and Tomasita (Sabina Zuniga Varela) discuss a radical course of action in 'The Tenth Muse,' a play about a 17th century nun who was regarded as the first published feminist of the New World, now playing at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

A Rigid Order

Gender oppression and class confronted in 'The Tenth Muse'

Every so often, I'll learn of some historical figure who inspires me so profoundly, I can't quite forgive my education for not introducing me to him or her sooner. I have the Oregon

Shakespeare Festival to thank for introducing me to Sister ("Sor" in Spanish) Juana Inés de la Cruz, a 17th-century nun who is regarded as the first published feminist of the

New World. Sor Juana is famous in Mexico (her face appears on the 200 pesos bill), but has not been the subject of major study in English.

"The Tenth Muse," playing at

the Oregon Shakespeare Festival through Nov. 2, conveys a sense of Sor Juana's influence and is rich with insights for anyone struggling to find her voice against pressure to

silence it.

The play is set 20 years after Sor Juana's death, in a convent outside

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