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Press Release

HUGO MEDRANO, PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GALA Hispanic Theatre
DC's Hottest Stage for Latino Arts
Presents

EL BOLA ~ CUBA'S KING OF SONG
World Premiere by Héctor Quintero (Cuba)
Directed by Hugo Medrano

Washington, DC - **GALA** Hispanic Theatre closes its 34th season, *¡A todo corazón!*, with the world premiere of the commissioned musical **El Bola ~ Cuba's King of Song** by Cuban playwright **Héctor Quintero**. **El Bola** is directed by **Hugo Medrano**, **GALA**'s founder and Artistic Director. The production will run **June 3 through June 27, 2010** at **GALA Theatre**, 3333 14th Street, NW. Parking is available at a discount in the Giant Food parking garage on Park Road, NW, directly behind the theater, and **GALA Theatre** is one block from the Columbia Heights metro station on the Green line.

The legendary Cuban singer Ignacio Jacinto Villa, affectionately known as **Bola de Nieve** (*Snowball*), stormed the international music scene in the 1940s and stole hearts around the world for the next three decades. This original musical follows the backstage antics of a director, a flamboyant "diva" and a santera who are staging a musical revue about Bola's life. Audiences will swoon to the songs he interpreted so uniquely --- "El Manisero," "La Vie en Rose," "Babalú," and "Flor de la Canela."

El Bola will be performed Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 pm, and Sundays at 3 pm **in Spanish with English surtitles**. **Press Night and Noche de GALA is on Saturday, June 5, 2010**, hosted by M&T Bank.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT AND PLAY

Héctor Quintero is a playwright, actor, director, dramaturg, and theater critic who lives in Havana, Cuba. Known as Cuba's "dramatic biographer," his plays poignantly capture the Cuban character and changing circumstances of the nation. His first play, *Contigo pan y cebolla* (1962), was awarded an Honorable Mention for the Casa de la Américas Prize. Among other plays he has written are the award winning *El premio flaco*, *Los siete pecados capitales*, *Mambrú*, *Si llueve te mojas como los demás*, *La última carta de la baraja*, *Esto no tiene nombre*, *Algo muy serio*, *Aquello está buenísimo*, *Te sigo esperando* and *El lugar ideal*. He also has written and directed for Cuban television. He was the founder and director of the Havana Musical Theatre for 12 years, and vice president of the Asociación de Artistas Escénicas de la UNEAC, and for two years was the Director of the Havana Center for Theater and Dance. Among his awards are the 1982 Distinción por la Cultura Nacional Award, 1995 Alejo Carpentier Medal, and the 1996 Omar Valdés Award. Mr. Quintero has appeared at international festivals and conferences in Romania, Holland, France, Russia, Spain, and Finland. **GALA** has previously produced Quintero's *Contigo pan y cebolla*, *El lugar ideal*, and *Raíces cubanas 2*, a compilation of scenes from his works.

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ABOUT BOLA DE NIEVE

Bola de Nieve (*Snowball*) was born Ignacio Jacinto Villa in Guanabacoa, Cuba on September 11, 1911. He was a successful Cuban singer-pianist and songwriter, whose round face earned him the nickname “Bola de Nieve.” Bola studied at the Mateu Conservatory of Havana, was a chauffeur, and played piano for silent films. In the early 1930s, he began to accompany his friend the actress and singer Rita Montaner on her tours. After Montaner returned to Cuba, Bola remained in Mexico, developed an original performance style as a pianist and singer, and performed on some of the most popular Mexican stages. He became known for his ironic patter, subtle musical interpretation, and a repertoire that included songs in French, English, Catalan, Portuguese and Italian. While in Mexico, Bola also began to accompany acclaimed Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona and later joined him in Cuba performing on stage and radio. With Lecuona and as a solo artist, Bola toured widely to Buenos Aires, Paris, Madrid, Caracas, and New York. His concert in Philadelphia was so well received that he performed nine encores. Bola also appeared in two Argentine films.

In 1949, Bola returned to Cuba and began playing at the Tropicana cabaret. Later during the 1960s, he appeared at the renowned “Monseñor” restaurant in Havana. He died in Mexico on October 2, 1971, en route to Lima to attend a tribute to him by Chabuca Granda, the famous Peruvian singer and songwriter.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

El Bola will feature guest artists **Enrique Divine** and **Marcelino Valdés** from Miami. Mr. Divine, originally from Venezuela, appeared in *Jesus Christ Superstar* in Caracas, in *Cronicas desquiciadas* in Miami, and in the popular telenovela *Dáme chocolate* on Telemundo and numerous other television presentations. Mr. Valdés, who was born in Havana, is of the renowned Cuban musical family of the celebrated Vicentico Valdés. He has performed in Miami, with the musical group La Dada, and at the Apollo Theater in New York. Also appearing are **Carlos Castillo** and **Anamer Castrello**, who last appeared together at **GALA** in *Agustín Lara ~ Bolero & Blues*, and **Karen Morales**, who performed in *Bodas de sangre*. Appearing for the first time in a **GALA** production are **Gino Tassara** and **Jonas Minino**. Dancers include **Jesús González**, who appeared in *Raíces cubanas 1 and 2*, **Arialmis Hernández Meyers** and **Alvaro Palau Palomino**. The band is **Sin Miedo** with **Didier Prossaird** at piano, **Antonio Orta** on saxophone and flute, **Mark Merella** on drums, and **Steve Sachse** on bass.

Director Hugo Medrano is **GALA**'s Founding Producing Artistic Director and has directed and performed in musicals and classical and contemporary plays in Argentina, Spain, Costa Rica, El Salvador, New York, Miami, and Washington. He has directed more than 100 productions, including the musicals *Caribeña Imperia*, *Candome: Tango Negro*, and *Raíces cubanas*; and *Yerma*; *La casa de Bernarda Alba*; *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*; *Valor, agravio y mujer*; *Cervantes: maestro del entremés*; *La verdad sospechosa*; and *El rufián Castrucho*. He was nominated for a 2000 Helen Hayes Award for his direction of *La dama boba*, received a Helen Hayes Award nomination for his performance in *El protagonista*, and received the 1994 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actor for his role in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. He studied at the Escuela de Teatro de La Plata in Buenos Aires and with Spanish directors José Luis Alonso, José Tamayo and Miguel Narros. He directed and toured with his own children's theatre company in Spain and throughout Europe.

Scenic Design is by **Osbel Susman-Peña** and Light Design is by **Klyph Stanford**, who was nominated for a 2010 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Set Design. Costumes are by **Dan Iwaniec**, and Sound Design is by **Matt Otto**, who recently designed *El retablillo de Don Cristóbal*, and **Mariana Fernández** is Properties Designer. Musical Direction and Arrangements are by **Didier Prossaird**, and **Jesús González** is the Choreographer. **Lorena Sabogal** is Stage Manager. **Mariana Osorio** is Production Manager, **Eric Lucas** is Technical Director, and **Abel Lopez** is the Producer.

ON EXHIBIT IN THE LOBBY AND KREEGER ART WALK

Raíces, an exhibition of oil paintings by Lázaro Batista, will be on display during the production of **El Bola**. The exhibition explores the life and vitality of Havana, its people, culture and rhythms.

Lázaro Batista was born in Havana, Cuba, where he used to paint murals with his father. He came to the United States in 1996 and continued painting. Mr. Batista works primarily in oil on canvas and his work explores the journey of how one gets to a place and feels once there. “My work,” states Mr. Batista, “allows me to leave footprints that cannot easily be erased.”


In Washington, DC, he has exhibited at the American Poetry Museum, the Folger Shakespeare Library, Pope John Paul II Cultural Museum, and the Pascal Center for the Performing Arts Gallery in Maryland. He also has exhibited in Miami, Florida and Portland, Oregon.

TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets are \$34 on Thursday and Sunday; and \$38 on Friday and Saturday. Tickets for students, senior citizens (65+) and military are \$20 (Thurs/Sun) and \$26 (Fri/Sat). Additional discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Tickets are also available at **TICKETplace**. Tickets for **Noche de GALA and Reception** are \$50.00 per individual, \$90.00 per couple.

FOR TICKETS: Call (800) 494-8497 or (202) 234-7174, or visit www.galatheatre.org

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