

The University of Alabama

University of Alabama News

UA's Alabama-Cuba Initiative Continues With Play

June 10, 2013 - Filed under: [Events](#), [Faculty & Staff](#), [Research](#) | Tagged: [Alabama-Cuba Initiative](#), [College of Arts & Sciences](#), [Theatre & Dance](#)

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Seth Panitch, associate professor of theatre at The University of Alabama, will take his play “Alcestis Ascending” on the road this summer to New York City, Havana and Alabama as part of his participation in creative research with the actors and dancers from UA and the Cuban El Instituto Superior de Arte.

The exercise in creative research is part of UA's [College of Arts and Sciences Alabama-Cuba Initiative](#).

“Alcestis Ascending” will be performed off-off Broadway at the Harold Clurman Theatre on Theatre Row in New York City from Tuesday, July 9, to Sunday, July 21. Thereafter, the play will run for two weeks in Havana for the grand opening of the Raquel Revuelta Theatre. In addition, the play will preview at 7:30 p.m. Monday, July 1, through Friday, July 5, at the Allen Bales Theatre on the UA campus.

The play is performed in both English and Spanish, with Cuban performers speaking in their native tongue answered in English by the American performers. “Alcestis Ascending” adapts Euripides’ Greek tragedy as a rock-infused tale of fate, self-absorption and sacrifice. UA and Cuban performers will perform in the production in Tuscaloosa, New York and Havana .

“As the Cuban actors are so physical in their approach, I wanted to create a production that incorporated dance and movement as well as text, to provide a stage to utilize the greatest advantage Cuban performers possess — absolute freedom of physical expression,” Panitch said. “I think the combination of that eloquent physicality with the specificity of American text work will be thrilling for an audience.”



Seth Panitch, left, Alianne Portuondo and Jeffrey Horger in “Alcestis Ascending.”

King Admetus and his wife, Alcestis, see the paper thin façade of their picture-perfect lives shatter when news arrives that Admetus’ thread has run out on the wheel of Fate. If he can find a willing replacement to take his unenviable place, he lives; if not, he dies. Admetus’ initial relief gives way to terror as, one by one, his subjects, friends and family desert him.

Yet Admetus is so narcissistic that he doesn’t blink when Alcestis offers to take his place at the moment of reckoning. His eyes now open to the shadows that had formerly been lit by the love of his wife, Admetus finds himself at the lowest point one can descend to on this side of the River Styx.

And so, with his dim, dear friend Hercules, he sets out after his wife, battling the bony specter of Death, Cerberus the three-headed hound of hell and the dark lord Hades himself, ultimately finding himself face to face in combat with the most terrifying force in the Universe – his own crippling self-absorption.

Renowned dance teacher Osnel Delgado will pursue creative research in the areas of performance and choreography. Tom Wolfe, associate dean of the UA’s College of Arts and Sciences, will compose and perform the live score.

Company HavanaBama has the support of UA's Office of the Provost, the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, The College of Arts and Sciences' Alabama-Cuba Initiative and the UA department of theatre and dance.

To buy tickets for the New York production, go to <http://www.alcestisascending.com>, or contact Panitch at spanitch@ua.edu or 205/348-3845. To buy tickets for the Tuscaloosa preview runs, email spanitch@ua.edu or phone 205/348-3845.

The Alabama-Cuba Initiative at The University of Alabama was established in 2002 to develop significant academic and scientific exchanges between the University and its counterparts in Cuba. The Cuba Initiative serves as the latest illustration of the long-standing interest in the Latin America both at UA, where it has been a program of study for more than 45 years, and throughout the state.

The University of Alabama, a student-centered research university, is experiencing significant growth in both enrollment and academic quality. This growth, which is positively impacting the campus and the state's economy, is in keeping with UA's vision to be the university of choice for the best and brightest students. UA, the state's flagship university, is an academic community united in its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Alabamians.

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