

## Performing Arts JULY 1, 2015

# Storytelling in many forms ignited Joann Maria Yarrow's imagination



Joann Maria Yarrow, artistic director of Teatro Prometeo, remembers falling in love with literature in her grandfather's Colombian library. | post processing by Bradley Marsh

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Joann Maria Yarrow is a theater artist with an expansive world view, and no wonder. Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, she traveled the globe with her parents while growing up and lived for a time in Singapore. Serving since 2006 as artistic director of Teatro Prometeo, an enduring South Florida theater based at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus, Yarrow also

runs the only Spanish-language acting conservatory in the country.

Her work as a director and choreographer — she once dreamed of being a dancer — has been presented in Miami, Denmark, London, Madrid, Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Brazil and, later this summer, in Chicago. She's getting ready to open *Cena para seis* (*Dinner for Six*) by Cristina Rebull, which she describes as "a very dark comedy-murder mystery," which she's co-directing with the playwright. It will run July 10-11 as one of the XXX International Hispanic Theatre Festival's opening weekend shows, then play through July 26 (in Spanish, with English supertitles) in Prometeo's theater at 300 NE Second Ave.



Storytellers: Prometeo's Joann Maria Yarrow, actress Vivian Ruiz and Teatro Avante founder Mario Ernesto Sánchez talk theater. | PEDRO PORTAL / EL NUEVO HERALD

Yarrow's passion for storytelling in many forms was born during summer visits to her grandfather's "amazing library" in Colombia.

"I picked up his copy of the complete works of Shakespeare — I was 8 — and thought that the poetic way he described things was so beautiful," Yarrow says. "I love literature, I love stories, I love good writing and how really good literature can ignite the imagination, whether as a story or as something adapted into theater. ... It invites us as dreamers to relate to each other, so that not only has it ignited my imagination but, hopefully, it will ignite yours. For me, that's the magic. ... I can be as affected by a Japanese folk tale as I am by Shakespeare or Gabriel García Márquez."

One of her most vivid arts memories?

"I got into performance through dance. When I was in high school, Rudolf Nureyev performed at the Jackie Gleason Theater in a modern adaptation of Eugène Ionesco's *The Lesson*. He played a ballet teacher, and I remember his energy was tremendous," Yarrow recalls. "I was a dance student then, and I went backstage and begged him to sign my toe shoes. He did."

*Christine Dolen*



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