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# ART U Basketball Grad Helena Orts Debuts at Brisk FESTIVAL

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**LOS ANGELES** – Putting the skills she learned at Academy of Art University right to work, recent women's basketball and School of Acting graduate Helena Orts wrote, produced, and starred in a play called *Fandango* as part of the Brisk FESTIVAL earlier this month.

Beyond her athletic success, Orts built her acting skills while earning two D2 ADA Academic Awards over the course of her career at ART U. After her [graduation in May](#), she moved to Los Angeles and contacted a Catalan actor named Christian Rodrigo with extensive background in theatre and film in Spain. He pointed her to the Brisk FESTIVAL, a place for international theater that features short plays with a maximum of 10 minutes in length, which he founded in 2018. Collaborating with actresses Karissa Montaner and Sarah Kruger, Orts created the story of *Fandango*, a tale of two estranged sisters forced to unite and discuss the fate of their father's beloved Spanish tapas restaurant.

"I am super thankful for all the knowledge and training I had at Academy of Art," said Orts. "I was able to have many different instructors and every single one of them taught me very important lessons about acting and the industry. I was very honored to have two Academy of Art instructors, Anthony Montes and Diane Baker, come and support me at our Opening Night. Both have had such a big impact teaching me about creating my own projects, the power of listening, bringing our naturalisms into scene, being truthful, and always letting our partner affect us. I am so thankful to have had teachers that really care for me and want to see me grow."

In *Fandango*, Orts takes the role of Ana, one of the two estranged sisters and blood daughter of Felipe Castellon, the restaurant owner. She challenges her sister Cristina (Karissa Montaner) with singing and dancing enhancing the confrontation.

"Ana is a very ambitious woman whose life has not been easy due to the lack of money for her college education," said Orts. "She has always felt left out of the family and there is a lot of resentment towards her sister Cristina for having had the chance to go to an Ivy League university and having had the resources for it."

Beyond her specific role, *Fandango* is enhanced by theatrical elements. Flamenco dance is introduced as Sarah Kruger performs as "El Duende," an evil Spanish fairy,



speaking as the characters' consciousness and eventually hypnotizing Cristina and Ana into life-or-death fight for the restaurant's heritage. A waiter and guitarist played by Paul Antico provides music throughout the entire play as it would have been in the restaurant.



"Coming up with a story that has a beginning, middle, and end all in 10 minutes was way more challenging than we expected," said Orts. "We wanted all the characters to have an arch and change through the story and we wanted more than anything to be creative, different, and give the audience something that has not been seen before. I am happy to say that I think we succeeded on that."

Spanning July-August, the Brisk FESTIVAL itself is composed of 54 10-minute plays with 32 in English and 20 in Spanish. Along with *Fandango*, Orts was cast in a Spanish play was called "*I-Judge*" that was directed by the actor, director, writer, and composer Marc Timón. From the 130 actors, 50 writers, and 50 directors who start, the talent is narrowed down to an Aug. 10-11 final by a professional Jury made up of casting directors, producers, directors, actors, managers, and agents. The best play in English and the best play in Spanish receive an award of \$500.

"What I love the most about the festival is all the people I have met," said Orts. "I have had the opportunity to watch other artist's work and create beautiful relationships with other artists who are hungry to create projects together. There is a lot of talent in the festival and it really encourages me to learn as much as I can from these fellow artists."

With her debut performance now behind her, Orts eagerly awaits the next opportunity Hollywood will offer.

"I find myself asking, 'What projects do I want to be involved with?' instead of 'What roles would I like to play?'" said Orts. "My focus as an artist is to be able to inform the audience about different stories and have the power to give a voice to those without and be able to touch the audience with the purpose of making a change in our society."

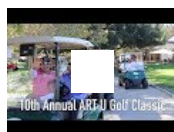


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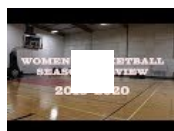
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