

# dallasvoice

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## CUTTING edge

Playwright Kelsey Milbourn brings lost history to life for ATPAC's Elevator Project

By Rich Lopez, page 8



# Duel – identity

## BEYOND THE STAGE

Playwright brings sword fights and queer love front and center in Prism Movement Theater's 'La Maupin'

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Some serendipitous force must have been at play in 2020 for Kelsey Milbourn. During those high COVID times, the artist happened upon a podcast that covered lost history, and one particular episode stuck out to Milbourn so insistently that they could not get out of their mind.

"I even remember where I was when I heard it," they said. "We were rehearsing in my living room, and when this show talked about a bisexual duelist who was a famous opera star and renowned for fighting men, my ears perked up."

That was Milbourn's introduction to Julie d'Aubigny.

Four years later, Milbourn is telling d'Aubigny's story in *La Maupin: The French Abomination*, a movement play which opens July 11 as part of ATTPAC's Elevator Project by Prism Movement Theater.

The idea stirred in Milbourn's head, but at that time, the artist admitted, she was worried about telling such stories.

"Doing queer plays felt like a scary idea at the time. Trump was in office, and people being who they were, I just wondered then if this was the right time," Milbourn said. "Plus, I thought, would anyone see a queer play about this human and their experience living out loud?"

But Milbourn couldn't let d'Aubigny go.

"She was this queer woman who had sword fights, and she also fucked with gender. That wasn't the language at that time, but she was this openly queer human in a different and more oppressive time," they said. "As a transmasculine, nonbinary lesbian who is also a fighter, d'Aub-



Kelsey Milbourn and the cast of *La Maupin: The French Abomination*

### La Maupin: The French Abomination

**Written and directed by:** Kelsey Milbourn

**Cast:**

Nicole Carrano  
Trey Estes  
Kristen Lazarchick  
Ania Lyons  
Kelsey Milbourn  
Carissa Jade Olsen  
Mitchell Stephens  
Shanthany Wilkerson

**Costume Designer:** Aaron Patrick DeClerk

**Fight Coordinator:** Mitchell Stephens

**Light Designer:** Jonah Gutierrez

**Sound Designer:** Kelsey Milbourn

**Stage Manager:** Alexandra Hernandez

**Performances:** July 11-13 at Hamon Hall  
and July 25-Aug. 3 at Latino Cultural Center.  
[PrismMovementTheater.org](http://PrismMovementTheater.org).

igny was too fascinating for me."

Milbourn is an actor. They are a playwright and a director. They are also a fight choreographer who has worked with swords for years, as well. It seemed destined for Milbourn to tell d'Aubigny's story.

The process started as something else entirely, but Prism's artistic director, Jeff Colangelo, had a bigger idea.

"I told Jeff I had started writing about

Milbourn added that because of d'Aubigny, they now feel fearless.

Enough so that not only did they write the show, they direct, sound designed and star in the show as the titular character.

The arc of the show encapsulates d'Aubigny's entire life up to her death in her late 30s. The story includes her love affairs — most prominently with Madame la Marquise. Of course, Milbourn had to include the famed sword fight d'Aubigny had against three men — and won.

But while writing, Milbourn could put themselves into the story as well. Outside of their research, there are no recorded conversations or quotes by d'Aubigny. This gave Milbourn a freedom in their writing.



this woman and had this idea of putting movement and choreography to these fights," they said. "I kept finding so many details about this openly queer human. I had to write about her. Jeff suggested writing a whole play."

This idea seemed to open a floodgate for Milbourn as they uncovered d'Aubigny's story.

"I feel so connected to her, and she's a bit of a mentor to me now. Writing this has helped me come more into my own unapologetic loudness as a queer person," they said.

"All the dialogue was created, so I could put myself into this story. Her bravery was what I connected to and her need to be seen. I see that in myself. I've had to come out in so many different ways.

"I felt like she always needed to prove to be worthy to herself. I get that, but she also gave me courage and inspiration to be my authentic self." ■

The show runs July 11-13 at Hamon Hall (tickets at [ATTPAC.org](http://ATTPAC.org)) and then July 25-Aug. 3 at the Latino Cultural Center (tickets at [PrismMovementTheater.org](http://PrismMovementTheater.org)).