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HEY FOODIES! Meet us at the Bite Club!

Our next tasting event will be at

THE GRAPE
Tuesday, May 11

Join Folio Weekly's Bite Club to be eligible for our next meet, greet and eat at The Grape at St. Johns Town Center!

Bite Club members selected for this free tasting will be treated to a special menu, and will be invited to comment about the experience afterward in our community of online foodies.

The Grape believes the world of wine is ripe for exploration, and wants to help you discover your next favorite. In addition to 70+ wines by the glass, 140+ by the bottle and 30+ beers, all selected for you by General Manager/Certified Sommelier Kris Chislett, The Grape specializes in a selection of small plates and entrees. Fresh, seasonal and wine-friendly ingredients and menu created by Head Chef Lavender Dilley, and attentive staff urge customers to share, explore new tastes or create a traditional cased menu.

To join the party, sign up for Folio Weekly's Bite Club at www.biteclubblog.com



#grape



Folio Weekly's
BITE CLUB BLOG
BY ASHLEE WETHERINGTON



Self-portrait of Rodríguez DeSilva, lead character in the original play "Handmaid."

Maid For Each Other Jacksonville playwright and musician Jennifer Chase finds modern inspiration in the work of a 350-year-old artist

"HANDMAID"

Thursday, April 29 at 2 p.m. (student and faculty preview); Friday, April 30 and Saturday, May 1 at 8 p.m.
Kent Campus Auditorium, FSCJ,

3939 Roosevelt Blvd., Jacksonville
Tickets are \$10
632-3373

A few years ago, Jennifer Chase was studying for her master of fine arts in creative writing at University of New Orleans, unsure where to spend her mandatory summer abroad. A trusted mentor suggested Madrid.

"I didn't have any preconceived notion of what I was gonna do," says the Jacksonville playwright, musician and English professor at Florida State College at Jacksonville. But Chase was told there was a "phenomenal" playwright who was going to be teaching there that summer, so she signed up. "I didn't speak Spanish and I didn't know anything about Spain and I never had any idea that I wanted to go there."

It proved a fateful decision. It was while in Madrid that Chase found the inspiration for her new play, "Handmaid." Directed by Roxanna Lewis and produced by Jacksonville Artist Company at Kent (JACK) and Kent Campus Student Life & Leadership, it opens at the end of this month at FSCJ.

In her first of two summer residencies, Chase was told to go to the Museo del Prado and observe the painting "Las Meninas" by Diego Velázquez, considered to be one of Spain's greatest baroque artists. That night Chase had a dream that led her to write "Handmaid." Folio Weekly recently caught up with the artist to chat about the play, and the artist who inspired it.

Folio Weekly: What is it about "Las Meninas" that spoke to you?

Jennifer Chase: I guess it was the fact that it's premeditated. [Diego] Velázquez was cognizant of the fact that he was screwing with all of our heads about 350 years ago, when he was painting it. My play is a play within a play. And his painting is a painting within a painting of a painting. He was really aware. He painted

himself in the painting — looking out at us.

F.W.: Is the main character — Cuban immigrant and artist Rodríguez DeSilva — modeled after anyone you know?

J.C.: Um, yeah — he's modeled after my husband. He's from Madrid. I got a husband and a Masters degree out of that trip. I'm a great poster child for the [semester abroad] program. I wasn't looking for one of those two things [laughs], but he's here now.

F.W.: In "Handmaid," DeSilva is easily distracted while trying to finish a commissioned painting. Tell me about that.

J.C.: Rodríguez, my main character, is commissioned to paint a replica. First of all, he doesn't agree with that [painting a replica] at all and so he's unable to even consider approaching that idea of painting a replica. There are all kinds of influences on an artist's ability to create. Whether you're Velázquez in 17th-century Spain ... or you have mouths to feed or you have a political statement that doesn't match the statement of the people that are paying you to work. All of those influences aren't so different and they affect Rodríguez, so he's able to paint everything else. He's able to paint throughout the whole play, which takes place in 24 hours of life.

F.W.: Does that ring true to your own creative process?

J.C.: At the time that I was writing — it was 22 months that I worked on this play — I was also working on a film, a PBS documentary [about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings] called, "In Marjorie's Wake." I was supposed to be writing the music for the film — I had promised seven to 10 songs — and I just couldn't get myself there. I was being really productive, writing everything else — all kinds of other songs — just not the songs I was supposed to be writing.

F.W.: Where would you like to see the play go?
J.C.: We would eventually like to see the play get to New York's Public Theater. □

Kara Pound
themail@folioweekly.com

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