WORLD PREMIERE

WRITTEN BY
RICARDO PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ

DIRECTED BY
DAVID MENDIZÁBAL

FEB 26 | MAR 22

DON’T EAT THE MANGOS
from the desk of

**Loretta Greco**

**WELCOME TO MAGIC. WE'RE SO HAPPY YOU'RE HERE.**

I can think of no better way to begin the New Year than by introducing Ricardo Pérez González as we unveil the world premiere of his wickedly funny tragedy, *Don't Eat the Mangos*, with you, the Bay's most adventurous new play audience!

*Don’t Eat the Mangos* is a quintessential Magic play. It is brave. It insists on seeking and speaking truths that few dare to acknowledge, let alone speak aloud so that we may heal. It embraces the messy and never-ending business of growing up and learning to be true to oneself, while wrestling with the ever-evolving idea of home and our obligation to it. It is a play that manages to vividly introduce us to a whole new world—at the same time enabling us to recognize ourselves anew.

I was captivated by this coexistence of the new and the familiar within only the first few pages, as Ricardo transported me to his family neighborhood in Carolina, Puerto Rico, as three grown sisters argue as only sisters can—tag-teaming over shared history as rapidly as they shift from Spanish to English. I knew these women down to my core. I recognized their restlessness, no holds barred criticism of one another, and, yes, their complicated love—for each other, for familia, for home. I was fascinated by Ricardo’s interrogation of our patriarchal paradigms and the way he explores the reliability of memory—especially our perceptions of shared experiences and the the que individual truths we forge in order to survive. “Cálmate, ‘mana, no one’s saying it didn’t happen,” Yinoelle chides her sister Lamelda early in the play,” It just didn’t happen to the rest of us.”

With this excavation of his familial legacy, Ricardo embarks on a new fertile odyssey. In *Mangos*, he reminds me of both Sam Shepard and Nilo Cruz, two Pulitzer Prize-winning Magic writers whose plays reached new depths and new heights when they returned to their roots for the first time—Shepard when he returned to Illinois with *Buried Child* and Cruz when he returned to Cuba with *A Park in Our House*. We look forward to hearing your response to *Mangos* and to the impact of Ricardo’s insightful work in future seasons at Magic and throughout the country—as he undoubtedly will elevate the canon for years to come.

We are forever indebted to David Mendizábal, our wonderful director, who has been at Ricardo’s side since the play’s inception and who brought this beautiful writer to our attention, and to Jacob Padron, the founder of The Sol Project, who cajoled Ricardo to tell his story, then developed and championed the play as he and The Sol Project have for so many thrilling Latinx plays and playwrights across the country. As it takes a village, we also want to thank our friends at Sundance Theatre Institute, especially the incomparable Chris Hibma, who supported Ricardo and David’s further development of this play; the beloved Tournesol Foundation, for providing us with an additional developmental workshop before we began rehearsals; and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, for our playwright residencies as well as their constant support of Virgin Play Festival, from which this play sprung.

Late-breaking news: a week before this program went to press, two of our esteemed National New Play colleagues—Portland’s Milagro Theatre and Cleveland Public Theatre—have joined in the adventure, making *Don’t Eat the Mangos* an official NNPN Rolling World premiere and providing Ricardo with the invaluable opportunity to have three creative teams work on his new play in three world premiere productions across the country all within the same year! We are exceedingly grateful to Nan Barnett and Jordana Fraider at NNPN for their fellowship, leadership and undying support of new work.

Finally, I’d like to take a moment to celebrate Nancy Livingston who unthinkably passed away this November. Nancy was an absolute force of nature who wholeheartedly relished, championed and supported the Arts. I don’t believe there is a person living in the Bay area who hasn’t benefited from that passion. A lot of you knew Nancy from her unparalled board leadership at ACT. She and Fred Levin, her husband and best friend of 40 years, adopted me (as they are wont to do) when I came to direct *Blackbird* and *Speed the Plow* at ACT another life ago. After I received the offer to helm Magic, they whisked me off to Le Colonial and over dinner made a list of pros and cons. They have supported Magic ever since, from the very first *Oedipus el Rey* to this fall’s *The Chinese Lady*. I always teased Nancy about being on the wrong board, calling her a closeted lover of new plays. She was fascinated by the crazy beautiful gestation of a new work for the stage. I feel so lucky to have had a long lunch with her and Fred and the playwright Lloyd Suh just weeks before she passed. Nancy, in her usual fashion, peppered Lloyd with all sorts of questions about his views of China and the making of his latest play. She was even then full of life. We were so privileged to know her. Our thoughts and prayers extend to Fred and their beautiful family.

**THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE.**

With passion,

Loretta

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Photo by Bruce Damonte
Magic Theatre

presents

The National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere of

DON’T EAT THE MANGOS

written by Ricardo Pérez González

directed by David Mendizábal

Opening Night
March 4, 2020

Season Producers
John F. Marx and Nikki Beach
Toni Rembe and Arthur Rock
Clay Foundation West
Sandra Hess
Kathryn Kersey
Larry Goldfarb

Don’t Eat the Mangos Producers
Mike and Lea Ann Fleming
Valerie Barth

Associate Producers
Courtland and Donna LaVallee

Don’t Eat the Mangos was developed and supported through a partnership between The Sol Project and Magic Theatre.

Don’t Eat the Mangos was developed, in part, at the 2019 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab.

CAST

Ismelda Yetta Gottesman*
Yinoelle Elena Estér
Wicha Marilet Martinez*
Mami Wilma Bonet*
Papi Julian López-Morillas*

CREATIVE TEAM

Scenic Design Tanya Orellana
Costume Design Brynn Almli**
Lighting Design Chris Lundahl
Sound Design Sara Huddleston
Dramaturg/Casting Sonia Fernandez
Stage Manager Shane Spaulding*
Props Design Libby Martinez
Fight Director Dave Maier
Scenery engineered and built by ACME Scenery Company
David Gardner

* Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.
** Member of United Scenic Artists local 829, which represents the designers and scenic painters for the American theatre.

The video and/or sound recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.

This theatre operates under an agreement with Actor’s Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
biographies

RICARDO PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ
PLAYWRIGHT

(he/him/she/her) is a queer Puerto Rican writer with bacalao on his breath and Salsa on his hips, recently finished writing on the third season of Netflix’s Designated Survivor. After developing Don’t Eat the Mangos at Sundance, his play, On the Grounds of Belonging, about racially segregated gay bars in 1950s Houston, the first in a trilogy, premiered at Long Wharf fall of 2019. Long Wharf has since commissioned the second in the trilogy. He is also working on commissions for The Public Theater and Manhattan Theatre Club. Other upcoming projects include Orlando, a pilot with Nina Tassler about the Puerto Rican diaspora after Hurricane María.

DAVID MENDIZÁBAL*
DIRECTOR

(he/him) is a NY-based director, designer, and one of the Producing Artistic Leaders of the Obie Award winning The Movement Theatre Company. He is also the Associate Artistic Director of The Sol Project. Select directing credits include: On The Grounds of Belonging (Long Wharf), the bandaged place (NYSAF), Then They Forgot About The Rest (INTAR), The Maturation of an Inconvenient Negro (Cherry Lane Mentor Project), And She Would Stand Like This, Look Upon Our Lowliness, and Bintou (The Movement), and Tell Hector I Miss Him (Atlantic / Drama League Nomination). Member of Latinx Theatre Commons. Alumnus of Drama League, Lincoln Center Director’s Lab, NALAC, & artEquity. BFA NYU/Tisch. www.davidmendizabal.com

YECHA GOTTESMAN*
ISMELDA (she/her) had the pleasure of workshopping Don’t Eat the Mangos at the Sundance Theatre Lab in Utah in July 2019. She is thrilled to be making her Magic Theatre Debut! New York credits include: Recent Alien Abductions (PlayCo, written and dir. by Jorge Ignacio Cortiñas), The Last Days of Judas Iscariot (World Premiere, The Public Theater written by Stephen Adly Guirgis/dir. Philip Seymour Hoffman), Touch (Women’s Project, written by Toni Press-Coffman / dir. Loretta Greco), Where’s My Money? (World Premiere, LAByrinth Theater Company and Manhattan Theatre Club, written and dir. by John Patrick Shanley), Underneath My Bed (Rattlestick Theatre, written by Florencia Lozano/dir. Pedro Pascal), Regional Theater: Geffen Playhouse, The Fountain Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, where she received an Ovation Award Nomination for her portrayal of the title character in Mariela in the Desert, Seattle Rep, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, Arena Stage, Alliance Theatre, and the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Film/TV credits: Chick Fight, The Last Thing He Wanted, Driven, Attraction, Sex, Death and Bowling, Rabbit Hole, 27 Dresses, Lucky You, The Oath, Startup, Sex, Death and Bowling, Rabbit Hole, 27 Dresses, Lucky You, The Oath, Startup, Sex, Death and Bowling, Rabbit Hole, 27 Dresses, Lucky You, The Oath, Startup, Sex, Death and Bowling, Rabbit Hole, 27 Dresses, Lucky You, The Oath, Startup.

ELENA ESTÉR
YINOELLE (she/her) is absolutely thrilled to make her Magic Theatre debut as Yinoelle! A native New Yorker and hardcore salsa, she grew up surrounded by Puerto Rican culture, music, and friends/family. She credits much of her love of salsa to growing up listening to Nuyorican/Puerto Rican soneros at family parties. Elena’s theatrical credits include: Olivia in the TBA Awards-Recommended production of Ageless at Quantum Dragon Theatre, Carla in Custom Made Theatre’s In the Heights; and Veronica in The Motherfucker with the Hat. She was also involved in promoting Spanish-language theatre by playing Conchita in La Lengua Teatro en Español’s inaugural production of a staged reading of Ana en el Trópico. Elena has also starred in two feature films, numerous short films, and commercials. Elena studies dance and has performed/taught internationally as a salsa dancer/instructor. Passionate about languages and traveling, Elena speaks Spanish, Portuguese, French, basic Mandarin Chinese, and is just beginning German. She will also learn her native Quechua and would love to work in each of the languages she speaks. She studies at Beverly Hills Playhouse/SF.

MARILET MARTÍNEZ*
WICHÁ (she/they) makes her Magic Theatre debut in Don’t Eat the Mangos. Recently relocated to Chicago, Marilet is a San Francisco native, actor, improviser, teaching artist with an emphasis in trauma-informed practice, and fight choreographer. Bay Area credits include: Walls (Zaniyah), San Francisco Mime Troupe; Heart Shaped Nebula (Dahlia), Shotgun Players; The Taming (Blanca) and Forever Never Comes (Sandra), Crowded Fire; Learn To Be Latina (Blanca), Romeo and Juliet (Mercutio), Mutt (Various), Impact Theatre; Mud (Mae), Tontiawald (Lona), Ondine (Mist), A Dream Play (Gatekeeper), Ubu Roi (Various), Cutting Ball Theater; Santos and Santos (Nena), Teatrovision. In Chicago, Marilet is one-fourth of the ALTA (Alliance for Latinx Theatre Artists) award-winning, all-Latina improv and sketch team Ratas de Dos Patas. Ratas has played festivals across the country and last year debuted their sold-out sketch show The Invocation of Selena, inspired by la reina Selena Quintanilla-Pérez. Marilet is an ensemble member of Comedy Sportz Chicago. Follow her on Instagram: @mariletmartinezsf and @ratas_de_2_patas

WILMA BONET*
MAMI (she/her) is happy to be back at the Magic where she last appeared in This Golden State Part One: Delano and Bruja, both by Luis Alfaro. Recently she appeared in Ruben Grijalva’s Anna Considers Mars at Playground and in Tony Kushner’s Mother Courage and Her Children at Ubuntu Theater. Acting credits include, Little Erik at Aurora Theater, A Streetcar Named Desire and Tanya Saracho’s The Tenth Muse, both...
at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Luis Alfaro’s Electricidad at the Mark Taper Forum and Jose Cruz Gonzalez’s September Shoes at the Denver Center Theatre Company, for which she received an award for outstanding performance. She has also appeared on the stages of the American Conservatory Theatre, Campo Santo, California Shakespeare Theatre, Thick Description, Marin Theatre Company, the Old Globe, and Dallas Theatre Center. She toured with El Teatro Campesino and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Film and television credits include COCO, What Dreams May Come, SMM, Underwraps, Jack, Radio Flyer, and Nash Bridges. Awards: Bay Area Theatre Critics Award, Los Angeles Drama-Logue Award, and Goodman Award for Outstanding Performance.

JULIAN LÓPEZ-MORILLAS*

PAPI (he/him) has lived and worked as an actor, director, and teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1973. His widely spaced appearances at Magic Theatre have included The Wild Goose (1978), Jacques and His Master (1989) and The American in Me (2001). Julian was for many years an actor and director with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival (now California Shakespeare Theatre) and has also appeared at ACT, Berkeley Rep, San Jose Rep, San Jose Stage, and the Aurora Theatre among many others. He has taught Shakespeare and dramatic literature at UC Berkeley, San Jose State, Mills College, and elsewhere. Julian has appeared professionally in every play in the Shakespeare canon and was also a two-day winner on Jeopardy!

TANYA ORELLANA

SCENIC DESIGNER

(she/her) designs performance spaces for Theater, Dance, Opera and Puppetry. Originally from San Francisco, she is a core member of the award-winning ensemble Campo Santo, participating in their intimate New Work Process, conceptualizing and designing sets alongside the writing process. Her design collaborations include the Mexico Premiere of Angels in America directed by Martin Acosta at Teatro Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, SAPO by Culture Clash at The Getty Villa, Casa de Espíritus written and directed by Roger Guenveur Smith at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum (San Francisco, CA), the world premiere of The Heath, by Lauren Gunderson directed by Sean Daniels at Merrimack Repertory Theatre (Lowell, MA), and Dry Powder directed by Jennifer King at Aurora Theatre. Tanya received her MFA in Scenic Design from CalArts (’17) and is the 2016 recipient of the Princess Grace Fabergé Theatre Award. Her design work on Angels in America was presented in the US Emerging Designers Exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial 2019.

BRYNN ALMLI**

COSTUME DESIGNER

(she/her) is a Bay Area-based costume designer working in theater, film, television and special events. Originally from Minneapolis, MN, she studied English literature, sculpture and fashion design before earning an MFA in Design for Stage and Film from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Recent theater credits include The Breath of Life (Portland Center Stage), Sagittarius Ponderosa (NAATCO), Birdbath (Kitchen Table Works), Plenty (NYU Graduate Acting), and Alphabetical (Columbia University). She has assisted on productions for Broadway, Hartford Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, New York Musical Theatre Festival, Aspen Music Festival and The Williamstown Theatre Festival.

CHRIS LUNDAHL

LIGHTING DESIGNER

(he/him) is a Lighting Designer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Recent Lighting Design credits include: Mother of the Maid, (Marin Theatre Company), Rhinoceros (American Conservatory Theater), Mama Mia (Berkeley Playhouse), The Daughters (San Francisco Playhouse), Bright Star (Palo Alto Players), Kings (Shotgun Players), The Gentleman Caller (New Conservatory Theatre) and Transfers (Crowded Fire Theatre). Other credits include: La Serva Padrona, Savitri, The Bear (Merola Opera), Rock of Ages, The Little Mermaid, Titanic, the Musical (Rocky Mountain Repertory Theater). Lundahldesigns.com

SARA HUDDLESTON

SOUND DESIGNER

(she/her) is pleased to return to Magic where she most recently designed sound for The Chinese Lady. Favorite Magic credits include In Old Age, The Gangster of Love, Reel to Reel, Grandeur, Fool for Love, Dogeaters, And I And Silence, Every Five Minutes, Hir, Arlington, Terminus, Se Llama Cristina, Any Given Day, Mrs. Whitney, and Goldfish.

Recent Bay Area sound design credits include Mother of the Maid, Sovereignty, and Oslo (Marin Theatre Company), We Swim, We Talk, We Go To War (Golden Thread Productions), Kiss (Shotgun Players), and Ripped (2 Space).

DAVE MAIER

FIGHT DIRECTOR

(he/him) has choreographed violence for nineteen previous Magic Theatre productions including Fool For Love, Dogeaters, A Lie of the Mind and Oedipus el Rey. He is the resident fight director at San Francisco Opera and California Shakespeare Theatre. His work has been seen at many Bay Area

SONIA FERNANDEZ

DRAMATURG/CASTING

(she/her) is a dramaturg, casting director and producer, specializing in new work. She has dramaturged the world premiers of Reel to Reel by John Kolvenbach, The Eva Trilogy by Barbara Hammond, Grandeur by Han Ong and runboyrun by Mitoniso Udforia at Magic as well as Quijote Nuevo by Octavio Solís at CalShakes. She is a longtime resident artist with Crowded Fire Theatre, where she recently dramaturged Church by Young Jean Lee. As Magic’s Associate Artistic Director, Sonia produces the annual Virgin Play Festival featuring workshops and readings of new plays in development every December and has cast the last five seasons of plays. A PhD candidate at UC San Diego, Sonia’s research focuses on audience experience of racial humor. She received an AB from Princeton and Master’s from San Francisco State.

SHANE SPAULDING

STAGE MANAGER

(he/him) is very excited to be working at the Magic Theater for the first time. Relatively new to the Bay Area, Shane most recently worked at Cutting Ball Theatre on projects featuring emerging playwrights and directors. Shane served for five years as the Resident Stage Manager at Victory Gardens Theatre (Tony recipient for Outstanding Regional Theatre during his final season there). Other Chicago credits: Tour Manager for the Second City; Stage Manager for The Vagina Monologues; Production Manager and Director of Operations for the Chicago Center for the Performing Arts; and promotions producer for WICKED. He has also worked in “business theater,” as a non-profit and corporate event planner, festival producer and tour manager for musicians, including Bonnie “Prince” Billie. He served as the Events and Festival Planner at Actors Theatre of Louisville and more recently as an Artistic Associate at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul, Minnesota. Thank you for attending live theater!
biographies

theatres including Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., Marin Theatre Company, Ubuntu Theatre Project and Shotgun Players. He is recognized as a Master Fight Director with Dueling Arts International and has won several awards for his work including a sweep of all three tiers of the 2019 Theatre Bay Area Awards for Outstanding Fight Choreography.

LORETTA GRECO
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

is celebrating her twelfth and final season as Magic Theatre’s sixth Artistic Director. Ms. Greco is proud to have developed, premiered, and championed the country’s most innovative and cutting-edge writers, including Taylor Mac, Mfoniso Udofia, Lloyd Suh, Luis Alfaro, John Kolvenbach, Jessica Hagedorn, Linda McLean, Han Org, and Octavio Solis. Under her watch, twenty of the twenty-six world premieres produced here have gone on to have between two and seventy-one productions each throughout the country and beyond. Magic directing credits include the world premieres of Barbara Harmony’s Eva Trilogy, Ong’s Grandeur, Hagedom’s Gangster of Love, Sharr White’s Annapurna, and Octavio Solis’s Se Llama Cristina. She has also reimagined west coast premieres such as Sharr White’s The Other Place, Liz Duffy Adams’ Or, and Theresa Rebeck’s Mauritius, among many others.

At Magic, Greco is grateful for her longstanding collaborations with playwrights Sam Shepard, Luis Alfaro and Taylor Mac. Greco worked closely with Shepard on Magic’s five-year Bay Area Sheparding America series and directed the critically acclaimed legacy revivals of Buried Child and Fool for Love. She developed and directed the world premieres of Alfaro’s Oedipus el Rey, Bruja, and This Golden State: Delano. She produced Taylor Mac’s five-hour The Lily’s Revenge, the world premiere of Hir, and Associate Produced the West Coast premiere (with Curran, Pomegranate Arts, and Stanford Live) A 24-Decade History of Popular Music. She has commissioned and will direct Mac’s upcoming premiere, JOY, for 2021.

Her New York directing credits include the premieres of: runboyrun and A Park in Our House at New York Theatre Workshop; The Story, Lackawanna Blues, and Two Sisters and a Piano at The Public Theater; Meshugah at Naked Angels: Mercy at The Vineyard; Under a Western Sky at INTAR; and Victoria Martin Math Team Queen, Touch, and Gum at Women’s Project. Her regional directing credits include; Sweat, The Realistic Joneses, Speed-the-Plow, and Blackbird at American Conservatory Theater; Life is a Dream at California Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet and Stop Kiss at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and productions for McCarter Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Long Wharf, La Jolla Playhouse, Intiman Theatre, Williamstown, Coconut Grove Playhouse, Repertory Theatre of St Louis, Cincinnati Playhouse, and Playmakers Rep, among many others. Ms. Greco directed the National Tour of Emily Mann’s Having Our Say, as well as the international premiere at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Off stage, Ms. Greco is dedicated to the Bay Area community and developing the next generation of theater leaders through Making Magic: Arts and Community, which includes a decade-long robust cross-curricular partnership with Oakland’s Laney College, a season-long competitive professional apprenticeship program now in its twelfth year, and multi-generational residencies throughout San Francisco’s underserved Tenderloin neighborhood focusing on legacy, literacy, and performance, now in its third year. Free Magic matinee performances can be seen at both Laney College and the Tenderloin Museum. With the generosity of developer Group i, Ms. Greco has acquired an additional flexible theater space for Magic to further serve the community due to open as part of 950-974 Market in July 2021.

Prior to her Magic post, Greco served as Producing Artistic Director of New York’s The Women’s Project, where she was proud to help launch the careers of Liesl Tommy, Anne Kaufman, Lisa D’Amour, and Annie Dorsen, and as the Associate Director/ Resident Producer at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton. She received her MFA from Catholic University, her BA from Loyola University, New Orleans. She is the recipient of Bay Area Critic’s Association Awards, two Drama League Fellowships, a Princess Grace Award, a Sundance/Luma Director’s fellowship, and the 2016 Zelda Fichandler Award.

Toni Rembe grew up in Seattle, and did her undergraduate work at the University of Washington and the University of Geneva in Switzerland. After receiving a law degree from the University of Washington and a master’s degree in taxation at New York University School of Law, she joined the law firm of Chadbourne & Parke in New York. In 1984 she returned to the West Coast and joined the law firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman (formerly Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro), specializing in international and tax law, and served for many years as the managing partner of the firm’s tax practice. She also served as a member of Pillsbury’s governing executive committee. Now, a retired partner at the Pillsbury firm, she is President of the van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, a private foundation focusing in the area of public interest law, and a board member of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. She is a co-founder and member of the board of the Rock Center for Corporate Governance at Stanford University. Toni formerly served on the boards of AT&T, Pottlach, Transamerica, Pacific Telesis, Safeco, APL Ltd., and AEGON N.V. (a Dutch company). She is a member of the advisory board and a past chair of the American Conservatory Theatre, and past president of the Commonwealth Club of California. She is also a member of Theatre Communications Group’s National Council for the American Theatre.

JOHN F. MARX & NIKKI BEACH
SEASON PRODUCERS

Began coming to Magic in 1981 and have enjoyed its intensity and independence ever since. John joined the Magic Theatre board in 2009. In 1999, John co-founded Form4 Architecture, a SF-based firm that produces award-winning architecture ranging from a 2,000-square-foot penthouse in SF to a 4 million-square-foot IT campus in Pune, India. Other projects include the headquarters for Netflix, nvidia, and VMware. A monograph of John’s work, entitled Wandering the Garden of Technology and Passion, was published by Balcony Press. Nikki Beach makes model trees for architects worldwide. John and Nikki are honored to have been producers of Tir na nOg, Mauritius, Oedipus el Rey, The Lily’s Revenge, Bruja, Se Llama Cristina, and Buried Child. They find the behind-the-scenes access and relationships they have formed from producing to be unforgettable.

CLAY FOUNDATION WEST
SEASON PRODUCER

Is a small charitable foundation that provides grants to a variety of organizations that work to enrich the lives of those in their communities, particularly theaters. Its President, Buffington Clay Miller, has attended Magic Theatre productions for a number of years and appreciates the ability of terrific actors, directors, set designers, and all to bring plays to life on the stage and engage their audiences. She has in the past served on the Boards of Directors of several theaters, an art museum, and several educational institutions, utilizing her business skills in financial management, strategic planning, and business development.
LARRY GOLDFARB
SEASON PRODUCER
Larry is a Boston native. He was educated at Northeastern University and Brown University Graduate School. He relocated to the Bay Area from Providence, Rhode Island in 1966. He worked for Stanford Research Institute and DiGiorgio in San Francisco. In 1974 he worked as an Information Technology headhunter. In 1983 he co-founded GW Consulting, a firm that marketed contract information technology personnel. He sold the company in 1995 and retired to Paris and London. Larry was on the Magic Board from 1977 to 1993 and is presently on the Board again.

KATHRYN KERSEY
SEASON PRODUCER
Kathryn is Co-Chair of the Magic Theatre Board of Trustees. Her love of the arts began as a child in Toronto, going to the Shaw and Stratford Festivals and later to the symphony, opera, ballet and of course, theatre in Toronto. She was thrilled to discover the bold new plays at the Magic Theatre and feels privileged to be able to gain greater insight into how the Magic nourishes playwrights, the development of plays and how they are brought to life on the stage. Kathryn has been involved in clinical drug development for 30 years and currently works in Liver Disease Clinical Research at Gilead Sciences.

MIKE AND LEA ANN FLEMING
SEASON PRODUCERS
Mike and Lea Ann are delighted to produce this new play by Ricardo Pérez González. They have been subscribers and Magic audience members since 1980. Mike served on the Board from 2010—2016. They love the intimate and risky new plays that have always been the signature of the theatre, watching many spread from their birth here to theaters across the country and beyond. Because of Magic, we have had the privilege of meeting many wonderful playwrights including Luis Alfaro, Linda McLean (Any Given Day), John Kolvenbach (Goldfish, Mrs. Whitney), Tarell Alvin McCraney (Brothers Size) and Sam Shepard. They have proudly produced a number of wonderful plays including Taylor Mac’s The Lily’s Revenge and Lloyd Suh’s Jesus in India and we look forward to enjoying many more new works in the new decade.

VALERIE BARTH
PRODUCER
Valerie Barth is an avid fan of live theater, both classical and contemporary. She particularly enjoys supporting new theatrical voices, and playwrights of color. Valerie is a former public school teacher, school librarian, and book editor. She currently serves on the board of the California Shakespeare Theater.

THE SOL PROJECT
Launched in 2016, The Sol Project is a national theater initiative dedicated to producing the work of Latinx playwrights in New York City and beyond. Guided by the values of joy, rigor and generosity, The Sol Project works in partnership with leading theaters around the country to amplify Latinx voices and build artistic homes for artists of color. Through the writers we champion, The Sol Project aspires to create a bold, powerful, and kaleidoscopic body of work for the new American theater. www.solproject.org

NATIONAL NEW PLAY NETWORK
National New Play Network is an alliance of professional theaters that collaborate in innovative ways to develop, produce, and extend the life of new plays. Since its founding in 1998, NNPN has supported more than 250 productions nationwide through its innovative National New Play Network Rolling World Première program, which provides playwright and production support for new works at its 125 Member theaters. NNPN also strives to pioneer, implement, and disseminate ideas and programs that revolutionize the way theaters collaborate to support new plays and playwrights. Its most recent project, the New Play Exchange, is changing the way playwrights share their work and others discover it by providing immediate access to information on more than 30,000 new plays by living writers.

MAGIC THEATRE
Magic Theatre is dedicated to the cultivation of bold new plays, playwrights, and audiences – and to producing explosive, entertaining, and ideologically-robust plays that ask substantive questions about, and reflect the rich diversity of, the world in which we live. For 53 years, Magic’s belief in supporting the writer’s vision has manifested in a rigorous artistic home where a full body of work can be imagined, developed, and produced. By adding innovative, challenging new voices to the canon, Magic ensures the future vibrancy of the American theatre.

Since the company’s founding in 1967 by visionary John Lion, Magic has identified and cultivated writers on the cutting edge of American theatre, serving as a vital center for the creation and performance of new American plays. The hiring of scholar Martin Esslin as the first resident dramaturg at an American theatre company had a resounding impact on the field. Beat poet-playwright Michael McClure created 22 works for Magic. Sam Shepard developed and premiered his Pulitzer Prize-winning Buried Child, True West, and Fool for Love during his decade-long Magic residency (1974-84), forever altering the shape of American drama. Paula Vogel, Soon 3, Athol Fugard, Mark O’Rowe, Nilo Cruz, Octavio Solis, Claire Chafee, Jon Robin Baitz, Anne Bogart, Stephen Belber, Basil Twist, Rebecca Gilman, and many others also called Magic home through the 1990s and 2000s.


Magic remains a national leader in new play development through Greco’s commitment to a core group of writers as they build their groundbreaking bodies of work. These writers currently include Lloyd Suh, Taylor Mac, Linda McLean, Jessica Hagedorn, John Kolvenbach, Sharr White, Christina Anderson, Joshua Harmon, Mfon Udofia, Barbara Hammond, and Luis Alfaro.

Magic plays have received numerous honors, including the Pulitzer Prize, Obie Awards, Kennedy Center Awards, PEN-West Awards for Drama, Glickman Awards, Bay Area Critics Circle Awards, Los Angeles Drama-Logue Awards, and NAAACP Image Awards. Magic playwrights have gone on to be recognized with MacArthur Genius Grants, Tony Awards, Outer Critics Circle Awards, the Herb Alpert Award, Drama Desk Awards, Harper Lee Awards, Academy Awards, New York Drama Critics Circle Awards, Drama League Awards, Guggenheim Fellowships, Rockefeller Grants, NEA Grants, Alfred Jarry Awards, and many more.

Beyond the walls of our San Francisco performance space, Magic conducts a robust educational program, Making Magic: Arts and Community. A cornerstone of the program is Magic’s more-than-decade-long partnership with Oakland’s Laney College, which establishes a bridge between the college theater curriculum and professional theater practice: Laney students attend designer presentations, rehearsals, and performances at Magic, and Magic playwrights and directors visit Laney classrooms to discuss play content and production. Each Magic production is
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presented at a free matinee performance at Laney that is open to the community. Since 2018, Making Magic has also worked in partnership with Tenderloin Elementary School, Southeast Asian Development Center, Code Tenderloin, Antonia Manor, and Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, extending the program’s reach to engage underserved community members of all ages with curriculum that centers around mindfulness, self-esteem, legacy, literacy, writing, and performance. More recently, Magic has added community performances of both main stage productions and additional plays in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood, at Exit Theatre and the Tenderloin Museum, expanding access to Magic’s artistic programming.

**SEASON APPRENTICES**

**SEAN DUNNINGTON**
LITERARY APPRENTICE
(he/him) from the Big Island of Hawaii,
recently received his bachelor of arts in Applied Playwriting from the University of Redlands. Recent playwriting credits include Flat Fish (NYC Fresh Grind Festival), Zap (Lounge Theatre), Bankers for Bonkers (NYC Gay Pride Plays), The Undocumented (Manhattan Repertory Theatre), and Small Minds (The Worms).

**KYLIE JOERGER**
ARTISTIC APPRENTICE
(ASSISTANT DIRECTOR)
(she/her) recently graduated from Santa Clara University with a degree in Theatre Arts and a focus in Directing. Recent directing credits: A Kind of Alaska (Fess Parker Studio Theatre), world premiere of The Night the Fireworks Happened (Fess Parker Studio Theatre) and asst. director of Legally Blonde (Louis B. Mayor Theatre).

**HANNAH MEYER**
LITERARY APPRENTICE
(PRODUCTION ASSISTANT)
(she/her) recently graduated with a BA in Theatre and English from Muhlenberg College. Recent dramaturgy credits: Cabaret (SF Playhouse), Mr. Burns, a post electric play, Passion Play, and Ubu Roi (Muhlenberg College). Recent directing credits: Sam Shepard’s Red Cross (Muhlenberg College) and Face Forward (Jewish and Christian Institute of Understanding). Hannah will be the dramaturg for The Revolutionists (Human Race Theatre Company) and assistant director of Escaped Alone at Magic Theatre. She has previously interned at Playwrights Foundation and SF Playhouse.

**HUNTER NELSON**
LITERARY APPRENTICE
(ASSISTANT DRAMATURG)
(he/him) is a dramaturg from Topeka, Kansas. Recent credits: Bernhardt/Hamlet, Apologia, Usual Girls (Roundabout Theatre Company), world premiere of 21st Century Carnival (KSU), Straight White Men (KSU), and Candide (KU). He is a reader for Kitchen Dog Theatre, Unicorn Theatre, and Campfire Theatre Festival. hunternelson.org

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** Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SDC)

**+ Member of United Scenic Artists local 829. United Scenic Artists represents the designers and scenic painters for the American theatre.
Sonia Fernandez: How did you get started writing Don’t Eat the Mangos.

Ricardo Pérez González: I wrote the first scene of this play seven years ago. I was inspired by conversations I’d had with some Puerto Rican friends about a legacy of trauma in their families and it hit me that that was the story of my family. That there has been this legacy of abuse. My mother was very physically and emotionally abusive and I remember stories she would tell about the things that happened in her family and to her mami and it always felt like we were just recycling the same abuse. There was one particular bisabuela whose story is similar to the one in the play. And that stuck with me all my life. That story has always been a part of my personal mythology—the landscape of my nightmares.

Anyhow, the first scene of the play just came fully formed—it hasn’t changed that much. It feels like it was born out of some fever rage dream. It served as a springboard. It told me who these women were. Who this family was. I wrote it and it stayed in my drawer—my metaphorical drawer, a folder on my desktop—for years.

Then, two and a half years ago, Jacob Padron at the Sol Project asked me if I had any stories I was interested in telling. I had been writing a lot of plays about people who weren’t like me or my family and I thought, well you know what, maybe it’s time to do this, and I pitched it to the Sol Project with David and they said—“do whatever you want.” And I wrote this misshapen 50-page draft that we did a little workshop on, and we got to do a reading of it, and it became this 90-minute proper play. It launched from there.

SF: I imagine you as a kid scribbling stories.

RPG: YES! Have I told you that story?! As a brown boy growing up in Nebraska and Virginia, I used to write stories based on Greek mythology. I still know so many of the myths. And what was interesting about the stories I would write is that I would always write them from the point of view of the monster or the outcast.

So, you know, there was Odysseus and Odysseus killed the Cyclops, Polyphemus. I wrote this story about this lonely cyclops who’d had everything taken from him and who was in the land of humans and needed to find his way home. So he built a raft to get back home to the land of the cyclopes and that was one of the first stories I ever wrote.

SF: Did he make it?

RPG: He made it. There was even a little picture of him going in, because I illustrated it, him on his raft sailing into the sun to the island with the other cyclopes waiting for him. He made it home. So I’ve always loved writing stories. I once made my father a birthday set of poems called Ricky’s Poems of Absolute Death. I always had a macabre sense of humor.

SF: Did your father like it?

RPG: He loved it. He laughed so hard. The first poem was like how you’re turning 42 and the reaper is coming for you.

SF: That is hilarious.

RPG: I drew a grim reaper on the cover and bedazzled it. Wow, I was a weird gay little macabre kid. I was always a strong academic writer and I loved writing skits for English class like pastiches. I decided to pursue acting in college, and I was talking about my writing and how much I loved it and I remember somebody saying “Hey. Keep your first passion as a hobby and your second passion as a job.” So that your first passion can always be —

SF: A passion.

RPG: You can always love it. And I remember thinking “Oh, well, I always have my writing. And that will always be my first passion, my first love. And I’ll keep it safe in a box and it will be there and I’ll go out and be an actor.” I just couldn’t keep it in a box, I guess!

SF: Has it changed your relationship to your writing?

RPG: Yes and no. In some ways, when it flows, it flows in the way it did when I was a kid. Honestly. This is the story I want to tell, this is why I want to tell it, it’s clear, it’s Polyphemus all over again. The story of the Cyclops comes to me again and again and again in various forms. I can see that character in all of my plays in some ways. In some ways, that’s Ismelda.

SF: I wanted to ask you about your relationship to Puerto Rico. You were born in the Midwest, right?

RPG: Yeah. So, I was born in a little trailer park in Ames, Iowa. My father was, he’s retired now, an engineer with Federal Highway Administration, so we moved around a lot.
The island has been traumatized. And yet there is still a sense of moving forward and continuing—of fighting and struggling.”

—Ricardo Pérez González
Both of my parents are from San Juan. My father is from El Comandante. The house in Don't Eat the Mangos is based on my father's house growing up. To be clear, the house is from my father's side but the trauma is from my mother's side. We would visit Puerto Rico in the summers. My abuelo was paralyzed in a wheelchair but there was still a very strict hierarchy, a strict patriarchy, in his household. He didn't commit the crimes in the play, but he did inspire this patriarchal figure who rules his home despite his failing health.

SF: So you'd go every summer?

RPG: Up until I was about 10, and then we stopped. I think there were some financial problems and we couldn't afford to go. It was also about that time we moved to California and it was a farther journey. So there was a period of like 10 years where I didn't go, and then I decided, as an adult, to go back. There is so much of my family and my life in this play it's ridiculous. This is really...

SF: Close to home

There are so many ways that my family in Puerto Rico makes its way into this play.

RPG: Yeah. There are so many ways that my family in Puerto Rico makes its way into this play. I finished writing Mangos under a flamboyan tree at the library of la IUPI. It's of the island. Those women's stories were told to me on the island. In many ways, the story of the play is a metaphor for the island. This colonial relationship, this paternalistic relationship that the U.S. has with Puerto Rico. This frankly abusive, paternalistic relationship.

SF: Americans on the mainland don't really know much about Puerto Rico besides what the press covers, which is primarily natural disasters. Our view of Puerto Rico is skewed and incomplete. What should we know about Puerto Rico?

RPG: There are so many silly misconceptions. First off, we are U.S. citizens by birth. We were made U.S. citizens in 1917. And the reason was so that we could fight in U.S. wars, we could be drafted, they could use us for cannon fodder. There is a misconception, "what a great gift the U.S. gave Puerto Rico." It's not a gift; it was part of a colonial plan to use us as human resources in foreign wars. It really sets a precedent for how we've always been treated by the U.S. and is also an example of how we're still a colony. Because a colonial relationship is all about extracting resources from one place for the benefit of the other.

There's also this complaint, "Puerto Ricans don't pay income taxes!" First off we can't vote for president or representatives, so that whole "we are a nation founded on no taxation without representation," doesn't seem to apply to the island. Also, Puerto Ricans pay plenty of other types of taxes and have to pay into the federal system in a lot of different ways.

There's a law still on the books that doesn't allow us to trade with other nations. We can't negotiate or trade with our nearest neighbors. We are forced to have everything come in under the banner of the U.S., so even the simplest things have to be shipped to the mainland then shipped to Puerto Rico. That just makes things way more expensive. This convoluted means of getting things in and out has infantilized our own production of goods, our own production of food, our own economy.

The U.S. has many other stories that we have all heard, the "mythology of our greatness"—and there's truth to that. There are lovely things the U.S. has accomplished. What we tend to forget sometimes is that many of those accomplishments were achieved as a result of slave labor, as a result of colonial imperialism, on the backs of Black people, on the backs of Puerto Ricans and indigenous folk. Also Black folk, Puerto Ricans, indigenous folks are part of the story of U.S. greatness, not always in a negative way, not always in an exploitative way. I don't want to only tell that story because then we're just kind of locked into—

SF: Victimhood.

RPG: of seeing ourselves in history that way, right. And that's something that's important for me even with the characters in the play. Shit has happened. The island has been traumatized. And yet there is still a sense of moving forward and continuing)—of fighting and struggling. In Puerto Rico right now we are seeing all of these young folks who are like "No! You're not going to defund our universities. You're not going to take this money, spend it on God knows what, and then say we owe it to you". There are all of these movements coming up in Puerto Rico and we see that with the ousting of Ricky. I only hope that its a preview of things to come, that the Puerto Rican people will continue to speak out, speak up for ourselves, because we deserve more. It is important that people know that there's still an exploitative colonial relationship going on and that it has to change. As Mami says in the play, "I am not pro-independence. I'm not pro-statehood, I am pro-Puerto Rico. I want what is best for mi isla, for my island." I feel that!

SF: I know the play has no direct reference to Three Sisters by Chekhov, but the stakes of staying or going, in this case, to the U.S. mainland is also at play in Chekhov with the idea of Moscow. Given the recent natural disasters, there are larger waves of people leaving Puerto Rico. So I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about what it means to leave or to stay and the movement of "No me quito."

RPG: Yeah, it's 100% in the play. And it's interesting for me, as a child of the diaspora, because I never lived in Puerto Rico. There will be Puerto Ricans who look at me as a gringo, as a mainlander. My primo, my cousin who's on the island, talks about us being the lost children, the stolen children of the diaspora because of the various pressures to leave the island our families suffered. The economy has always been one of the pressures there and that was why my father left, why so many others have left. We are the children of that. We were born into this kind of broken system. I was raised in the U.S. as a result of that. Diasporic movements are rarely by choice.

Another conversation I had in Puerto Rico with a gentleman I was dating at the time. He was in Puerto Rico, I was in New York, and we were trying to see if things could work out. He said, "Well, you're never going to live in Puerto Rico and I'm never going to live in New York." He's a theatre artist and I said, "Well, there's work for you in New York and things are really difficult in Puerto Rico but you can always come back," and he said, "Well, you know things are hard here, things are difficult. And I don't know how to make things better. But I do know you don't make them better by leaving." And I put the line right in the play with his blessing. That's always stuck with me.

There are children of the diaspora who have very intentionally gone back. And others who go back because our parents followed the resources that had been extracted from Puerto Rico and used them to raise us and we feel it is incumbent upon us to take those resources back to our home. I haven't made a move to Puerto Rico yet but I try to spend as much time as I can there. Part of me writing about Puerto Rico is trying to take those resources back. I also have a TV pilot.
I’m developing about Puerto Rico. I have other work I’m trying to set on the island to literally create work there and also just to get focus and attention on this place beyond Hurricane Maria and the recent earthquakes. There is this tension on the island of “do I stay or do I go.” For those who have made the move, there is this sense of loss. You hear it in our music, “yo no me quedo, me voy para Borinquén.” So many of our salsas are about returning to the island. You actually can never really go back. It’s not going to be the same, it’s not the Puerto Rico you created in your head when you were away. And that’s something I would talk to my father about. At one point he said, “I don’t think I can go back because it’s just not what it was,” and so he lost his island in a way. It’s a place of nostalgia.

SF: Being a visitor is very different. You don’t necessarily have to deal with the reality of living in a place.

RPG: We were talking about what would be best for Puerto Rico, statehood or independence, and there’s a piece of me that feels I have no right to an opinion in that debate because I don’t live in Puerto Rico, but I don’t think that’s 100% accurate, I think I actually have a responsibility to engage in that debate and to leverage my power as somebody who is in the U.S. on behalf of Puerto Rico. The entire diaspora has that responsibility and if we banded together we could make some changes. That’s another reason why I love Alexandra Ocasio Cortez, because she’s a Puerto Rican who knows what’s up and she’s wielding power in a way that we haven’t seen in awhile and I think that’s really important.

SF: It’s refreshing. When we first reached out to you in 2018 to come for our Virgin Play Festival, you had just started writing for TV. I’m wondering how that has affected your writing. How do those two types of writing work together? Or do they?

RPG: I feel that playwriting and screenwriting go hand-in-hand in some ways. You’re writing a whole bunch of dialogue in either case. It’s started to attune my ears to when I write too much. In TV you don’t get many monologues. You get little snippets of dialogue that really have to say a whole lot. Mangos was actually the first play that reflects that shift in my writing.

RPG: I’m glad I waited 10 years to mature as a writer about yourself was self-indulgent. And I’m happy to see that and there aren’t that many Puerto Rican characters on television. So it allows me to see the power and the influence writing for television affords one and the way that you can open doors with it. I got to talk about Puerto Rico in this political White House show.

SF: I wanted to ask about your work in general and the stories you’re drawn to. The play that you just had produced at Long Wharf, On the Grounds of Belonging, is part of a trilogy you’re writing about an interracial gay couple over decades, and several of your other plays are focused on queer stories, on people of color. How do you feel Don’t Eat the Mangos fits within or contributes to your oeuvre.

RPG: My oeuvre…[laughing], it fits in a beautiful way in terms of my trajectory as a playwright and also in terms of thematics. I began writing things that were very far away from me.

SF: The World War One play

RPG: And cyclopes. I always thought writing about yourself was self-indulgent. And I’m glad I waited 10 years to mature as a writer to write this play because I was able to do it in a way that doesn’t feel self-indulgent. I’m finally able to write Puerto Rican stories. For me, Mangos is an entree into what I call my Puerto Rican plays. They deal more with my people, my family, my stories. In terms of trajectory, all of the other plays I wrote were preparing me to write this one. That’s not to say they’re lesser plays. But they allowed me to see that I can write about these themes.

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### SELECTED SPANISH WORDS AND PHRASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A MÍ, PLIN</td>
<td>I don’t care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENDICIÓN</td>
<td>Literally translates as “blessing,” a Puerto Rican greeting signifying love and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CÁLMATE</td>
<td>Calm yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COÑO</td>
<td>Very common as a fairly mild expletive, equivalent to “damn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESTADISTA</td>
<td>Proponent of statehood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIJA DE LA GRANDÍSIMA PERRA</td>
<td>Daughter of the biggest bitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIJO DE PUTA</td>
<td>Son of a whore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA IUPI</td>
<td>University of Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘MANA</td>
<td>Sister, short for hermana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME ENTIENDES</td>
<td>You understand me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIERDA</td>
<td>Shit</td>
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<tr>
<td>TE TOCA A TI</td>
<td>It’s your turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIENES LOS OJOS EN LAS NALGAS</td>
<td>You have your eyes in your ass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBANIZACIÓN</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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### TERMS AND REFERENCES

- **Bomba**: Afro-Caribbean rhythm played on drums guided by the feet of a dancer; popular dance in Puerto Rico.
- **Boricua/Borinquén**: The Taíno name for Puerto Rico/Puerto Ricans, still used colloquially.
- **El coquí**: Small frogs native to the forests of Puerto Rico, symbolic of Puerto Rico.
- **Hurricane Maria**: A strong category 4 hurricane that made landfall in Puerto Rico at approximately 6:15 am, September 20, 2017. Left Puerto Rico without power, an estimated death toll of over 3,000, and widely considered the worst natural disaster in recorded history to strike the island.
- **Plena**: Dance style popular in Puerto Rico; an even quicker pace than the bomba, often danced with a partner, with emphasis on the lyrics and melody.
- **PROMESA**: Controversial set of economic reforms, including a Congress-appointed seven-member Fiscal Control Board, imposed on Puerto Rico by the Obama administration in 2016 to restructure the island’s debt.
- **Scotiabank en Puerto Rico (or Scotia)**: An international bank with twenty branches throughout Puerto Rico.
- **Taino**: Indigenous people of Puerto Rico, descended from the Arawak Indians, devastated by disease and exploitation from European settlers.
- **Vieques**: An offshore municipality of Puerto Rico (east of the main island), home to the famous bioluminescent Mosquito Bay.
- **Yanqui**: Literally the yankee) a person from the United States.
- **Yemaya**: A Yoruban deity whose name means “Mother whose children are the fish.”
Colonialism has plagued Puerto Rico (literally “Rich Port”) since long before Spain ceded its four centuries-long control of the island to the United States as part of the Treaty of Paris in 1898. An exploitative relationship between the European conquistadors and the indigenous Taino people began immediately after Christopher Columbus “discovered” the island on his second voyage to the New World in 1493, mistaking it for China. In 1517, with the Taino population dramatically reduced due to slavery and an influx of European diseases, the Spanish Crown authorized the importation of African slaves to Puerto Rico. Over time, U.S. officials began to consider the economic opportunities afforded by Puerto Rico’s tropical climate and lush geography, and production of agricultural exports like coffee, sugar, and tobacco increased.

In 1900, shortly after gaining control of Puerto Rico in the Spanish-American War, U.S. Congress set forth a new democratic government on the island: a House of Representatives, elected by Puerto Ricans, and a Senate and Governor appointed by the United States. The U.S. Congress, however, maintains power over the P.R. Congress. Strains of this paternal relationship continue to affect the everyday lives of Puerto Ricans.

The island has faced economic crises, exacerbated by restrictive U.S. policies, for years. In 2006, U.S. Congress ended special tax breaks that were bolstering the island’s economy. Bondholders continued to extend credit to Puerto Rico with little chance of recouping funds into the 2010s and yet, Puerto Rico cannot file for bankruptcy. Additionally, record numbers of Puerto Ricans were leaving the island even before Hurricane Maria in September 2017. With those numbers increasing every year (4.4% of the island’s population fled from 2017 to 2018), the island is losing its taxpayers, making it harder to fill yearly budget deficits, let alone pay back bondholders or rebuild after hurricanes and earthquakes that struck the island in January 2020. While most Puerto Ricans who stay on the island understand the desire to leave, many fear a continued exodus will jeopardize the island’s future.

Aid from FEMA, which was slow to be released after Maria, is restricted to rebuilding infrastructure only, not improving it, so the electric grid was especially vulnerable by the time of the earthquakes. The cost of living on the island remains high, partially as a result of the Jones Act of 1917, requiring trade between U.S. ports to be handled with American-built ships and operated by American crews, increasing the cost of foreign-originating goods. Harsh austerity measures aimed at mismanagement of government funds, which many Puerto Ricans see as stifling the opportunity for economic growth and contributing to flight, were placed on the island after Maria. Foreclosure rates are high, living conditions for many are poor, and communities are battling severe disinvestment. Among the counties with the most vacant housing units: San Juan and Carolina. From 2009 to 2017, median home value had decreased 16%; home values in Carolina, where González has set this play, plummeted another 18% from 2016 to 2018. Mental health issues, too, cannot be ignored: less than a year after Maria, the suicide rate on the island spiked to 30% higher than the year before Maria.

There is a rising chorus of voices on both sides calling for change, founded upon the belief that Puerto Rico—a thriving home of culture, art and extraordinary humanity—can flourish if given the chance.

by Hunter Nelson

In 1917, Puerto Rico officially became a territory and its citizens were granted U.S. citizenship (making them eligible for the draft desperately needed for World War I). The five inhabited U.S. territories are Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As a U.S. territory, Puerto Rico and its citizens:

• are under U.S. sovereignty with some degree of self-rule.
• can travel to the U.S. without a passport.
• have no voting representative in the U.S. Congress.
• cannot vote for the President of the United States.
• have a local constitution, though it does not change the status of their relationship with the U.S. politically, socially, or economically.
• receives less Medicaid funding than it would if it were a U.S. state, and P.R. Medicare providers receive reimbursements at lower than the state rate, though its beneficiaries pay at the full rate.
• are not usually required to file federal income taxes unless they are employed by the federal government or earn income outside of Puerto Rico.
• do pay payroll taxes, social security taxes, business taxes and estate taxes.
and subjects, and also these themes and subjects are not that far from my own story and the story of my people.

Mangos is about a marginalized abused individual and a story we haven’t heard. It’s also, to me, very queer. There are queer characters but I also have a queer sensibility that I think is part of what connected me to these women. And the fact that I feel that I am Yinoelle—that is queerness personified. There’s a queer sensibility about the play that isn’t just about gay characters.

SF: I know you’ve mentioned your theatrical inspirations—Lorca is one of them. This connects to what you’ve said about a queer sensibility. Another inspiration you’ve talked about is Tennessee Williams. I’m wondering if you could share why these writers inspire you and who else you go to to fill the well, artistically.

RPG: Yeah. So Lorca. I thought of this and I’m glad you circled back to it when you mentioned Three Sisters, I was actually inspired by La Casa de Bernarda Alba.

SF: Ah, yes. Five sisters.

RPG: Yeah, exactly. And there’s not a man on that stage. And Lorca, a man, wrote a play about five women, six women.

SF: His plays are all about women.

RPG: Absolutely and this particular one there’s only one man offstage. I wanted Mangos to be that, to have these sisters and this one man offstage who was calling the shots and the way the patriarchy then reinscribes itself even without a man physically present. So, Lorca very much directly influences me. Also the poesia, the poetry, of his writing was so rich and that to me also connects to Tennessee Williams. I love me some purple prose. There’s also that thing about Tennessee Williams being so gay. So gay. So queer in his life, definitely, and in his writings. And people, straight folk, love these plays and connect to these plays which are products of queer culture.

These incredibly beautiful masterpieces of literature that are also queer. It’s James Baldwin also. When I really need to fill the well, I just think of James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room. Because he was an activist, obviously, but also he is one of the greatest American writers that has ever lived—certainly of the last century. He was always so passionate and yet never backed down from calling people out on their shit. He was unabashedly queer and unabashedly Black and poor. And that connects to me being born in a trailer park and being Puerto Rican, being the “brown boy” in Iowa and Nebraska. That’s what I was called. I remember there was an interview with him, where some host said, “So how do you feel? You come from poverty. And being a homosexual and being a black man its really kind of a tough lot.” And Baldwin responded, “Well, being born poor and black and queer, I actually felt like I hit the jackpot because what else do you do with that but be great?” That celebration of things that other people look down on is so important for me in my life and in my writing.

SF: You do have this macabre sense of humor going back to when you were a kid, and this play came out of what you call a “fever rage dream” and yet there’s so much heart inside your plays. You’re talking about trauma, but there’s light inside of it.

RPG: I don’t think you can write about trauma without that light. I think it’s irresponsible for one, and two, it’s been my life. I’m a child of abuse. I’m a child of trauma and a child of a racist society that didn’t think I could read. That didn’t think I could speak English. That tried to block off educational opportunities because I’m Puerto Rican. I’ve been physically attacked three times for being queer—I’ve literally been beat up. And yet look at where I am. I am blessed to be able to tell stories with amazing collaborators in amazing places like the Magic.

There is always hope.

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1. El Comandante, Carolina: a small neighborhood about ten miles outside of San Juan, historically working class 2. El Yunque National Forest: 45 minutes east of San Juan and the only tropical rainforest in the U.S. National Forest Service, home to el coquí frog 3. Guaynabo: an affluent metro hub on the island’s northern coast, the first area settled by the Spanish 4. San Juan: the capital city of Puerto Rico and its center of tourism, finance, culture, and manufacturing 5. Isla Verde: (literally “Green Island”) the most luxurious neighborhood in Carolina. Boasts some of the most exclusive hotels in Northern Puerto Rico

*The governor of Puerto Rico Ricardo Rosselló resigned in July 2019 after an enormous popular uprising following revelations of rampant corruption.

*From “Lejos de ti” by Angel Canales
September 26, 2018 – January 31, 2020

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