This past spring as the public health and economic realities of the pandemic began to register, we found ourselves in the unimaginable position of having to cancel this season’s performances in Griffith Park. It marks the first summer in 16 years ISC ensemble members haven’t been in a Los Angeles park, revolving Shakespeare’s words in our imaginations and releasing them into the night air. It’s the first summer in 16 years without the joyous, raucous, chaotic communion with the audience. And the existential crises this sets up for us – what is a theater company that can’t make theater? – is mirrored by the existential crisis in our community. Never in my lifetime have I felt so fearful about the future.

But if there is one thing the study of dramatic structure teaches us (as drama students everywhere can tell you—shout out to drama students!), it’s that out of crisis comes the possibility of transformation. So alongside working to effect change in the broader world, we at ISC are using this crisis to forge some transformations closer to home, within the work we do.

Our purpose in creating theater has always been to build stronger bonds within our community, and to help heal the wounds left by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune through laughter, empathy, and shared experiences. It seems to me that, although the world feels like it’s spinning off its axis, this function still matters. Perhaps it matters more than ever. This is what has animated ISC these past months: finding ways of fulfilling our purpose despite the challenges, using those challenges to further our growth as a company, and to expand the ways we address challenges in the wider community. Through this crisis, we are committed to transforming in ways that bring us closer to our ideals.

*Romeo & Juliet* is a play about young people who must navigate a world damaged by irrational decisions made by all-powerful adults. The love that Romeo and Juliet share, and their optimism for a better world, ultimately re-makes their community. Quite literally, the characters take control of their narrative: they defy the stars in order to write their own story. Although their personal end is a tragic one, out of their crisis does indeed come transformation. In the very last moments of the play, weapons can finally be laid down and hurts can be healed. Out of sorrow, a new world becomes possible.

In this production, we’re placing the action in a Verona that looks a whole lot like Los Angeles in 2020 (I mean, did Shakespeare have a crystal ball? Plague and record heat and polarized community divisions? Seriously, Shakespeare, we get it. You have your finger on the pulse of human existence.) Giving the story a contemporary setting allows us to explore the role of technology and media in shaping our identity, relationships, and opinions. We are drawing a direct
connection to young people’s lives today, and how they communicate with one another, creating their own worlds quite separate from those of their parents. It also allows us to explore new modes of storytelling – elements of this production happen live on social media, and we’ve created digital footprints for some of the characters to illuminate and expand their personhood.

If you’ve ever arrived at Griffith Park for a performance at 6:59 on a Saturday, you know you have to spread your blanket way in the back, so far that you can’t quite make out the actors’ faces, and sometimes the sounds of kids playing in the bear caves is louder than the lines. You might feel a bit of disappointment, because the experience isn’t what you were expecting. But then, suddenly, an actor is making a mad dash past you for their entrance, navigating a sea of people to get from one side of the audience to the other. And your eyes meet, and you smile at each other. So many people. All there to experience a play! What a miracle that is!

So, from all of us at ISC, thank you for letting us find you in this odd, distanced, non-corporeal way. For making theater with us in the ether. We hope that this production can bring you comfort, laughter, and connection through crisis. If the universe allows, we’ll meet up with you in the park next summer. We’ll laugh and laugh together, from the sheer relief of survival. And drifting up around us, shimmering and delicate, will be the possibility of a world transformed.

-Melissa Chalsma, Artistic Director

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that Griffith Park is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Gabrielino-Tongva People, who have been the indigenous tribe of the Los Angeles Basin for 7,000 years. We pay respect to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the history of the City we call home: a history that includes violence, displacement, colonization, forced migration, and broken promises. A movement towards justice must start with the facing of truth. To begin a journey towards understanding the complete history of Los Angeles, please visit: www.gabrielinotribe.org.
This play takes place in an imaginary Verona that bears more than a passing resemblance to Los Angeles in 2020.

There is one intermission.
THE 2020 COMPANY OF ARTISTS

RICHARD AZURDIA

ELIZABETH DENNEHY

WILLIAM ELSMAN

PATRICK BATISTE

HENRY ALEXANDER KELLY

DAVID MELVILLE

LUIS GALINDO

AISHA KABIA

DAVID MELVILLE

HARRY ALEXANDER KELLY

DAVID MELVILLE

KELVIN MORALES

BUKOLA OGUNMOLA

NIKHIL PAI

JAVI MORENO

JENNY PARK

KATHERINE POWERS

EVAN LEWIS SMITH

BERNADETTE SULLIVAN

This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Visit www.arts.gov
ABOUT THE COMPANY:

RICHARD AZURDIA (Lord Capulet) is a proud Angeleno, born and raised in L.A. His theater credits include: Human Interest Story (Fountain Theatre), Señor Plummer's Final Fiesta (Rogue Artists Ensemble), This Land (Company of Angels), My Mañana Comes (Fountain Theatre), Just Like Us (Denver Center Theatre Co.), Backyard (Echo Theater Co.), Love & Information (Son of Semele Ensemble), American Night: The Ballad of Juan Jose (Denver Center Theatre Co.), Bill & Joan (Sacred Fools Theater), Chinese Massacre [Annotated] (Circle X Theatre Co.), Living Out (Mark Taper Forum), La Posada Magica (Odyssey Theater), Stranger (Bootleg Theater) & Tropical America (24th Street Theater). He worked on 8 seasons with Independent Shakespeare Co.'s Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titus Andronicus, Much Ado About Nothing, The Comedy of Errors & many others). He's received nominations from the Ovation Awards, Stage Raw Awards, Colorado Theatre Guild's Henry Awards & Broadway World Awards. Film/TV: Grace & Frankie, Southland, Hulu's EastLosHigh (recurring Guest Star), Weeds (recurring), America 101, and Lionsgate's acclaimed Spanish film Ladron Que Roba A Ladron. He's a recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Artistic Leaders Fellowship and was named one of L.A. Weekly's 54 Fascinating People of 2015. www.RichardAzurdia.com.

MAYA BARBON (Community Engagement Intern) is a senior at Pitzer College studying Theatre and Political Studies. In addition to serving as the Artistic Director of The Green Room theatre company, she has recently trained at the British American Drama Academy in London, and as an Acting Apprentice at the Great River Shakespeare Festival. Maya has been seen as Rosaline in Love's Labour's Lost, Hermia in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Angelica in The Rover. She is thrilled to be working with ISC, and hopes to (virtually) interact with as many of you as possible! www.mayabarbon.com

PATRICK BATISTE, JR (Paris) ISC credits: Anita Berber is Dead!, Twelfth Night, Pericles, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titus Andronicus, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Measure for Measure, Tempest and Much Ado About Nothing. Other favorite stage credits include: Ragtime (3D Theatricals), Parade (3D Theatricals) Hair the Musical (Tribe Prod.). He has shot over 20 SAG national commercials, co-starred in NBC's Trauma, and recently starred in a couple movies that are now available on DVD, and sends Love to family and friends. IG: @PatB2Real

MELISSA CHALSLMA (Adaptation & Direction) is the co-founder and Artistic Director of ISC, and directs many of its productions, including last summer's Pericles. Other ISC directing credits are A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Doctor Faustus and many more. Most recently on stage, she played Olivia in Twelfth Night, the Countess in All's Well That Ends Well, and Elizabeth Gasing in The Snow Goose (a West Coast premiere in the ISC Studio). She has also performed in theaters and Shakespeare festivals across the country, on Broadway (including the American premiere of Harold Pinter's Moonlight), and in the UK, including
at the Derby Playhouse and London’s Battersea Arts Center. She wrote the book for the ISC original musical *Anita Berber is Dead!* She is married to ISC co-founder David Melville. Together they have produced two children and eighty-nine theatrical works.

CHRISS COMEAU (Editor) Credits include too many reality shows to count. Currently working in the land of roses and overnight dates. Thanks to Melissa and David for letting me pitch in on this project. Go Mercutio!

ELIZABETH DENNEHY (Montague), originally from New York, is a graduate of Hofstra University and LAMDA. She teaches and directs Shakespeare at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. Elizabeth has performed at the San Diego Rep, Antaeus, South Coast Rep, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Shakespeare & Co, The New York Shakespeare Festival with Kevin Kline, the Kennedy Center, is an original creator and cast member of Tony and Tina’s Wedding. Elizabeth also performed with Charles Busch in Vampire Lesbians of Sodom, and was in Cyrano at ISC. Her screen credits include: Film: Hancock, Red Dragon,Gattaca, The Game. TV: Masters of Sex, The Mentalist, Charmed, Seinfeld, and Star Trek the Next Generation.

WILLIAM ELSMAN (Apothecary) has performed in five past seasons with LA’s Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival. Favorite roles include Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Simonides in *Pericles*, Saturninus in *Titus Andronicus*, Quince in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. Regional credits include work with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (School Visit Program), Santa Cruz Shakespeare, Sierra Madre Playhouse, A Noise Within (understudy, Macbeth), Sacramento Theater Company, The Mountain Play, Capital Stage, Sierra Rep, SF Playhouse, Marin Shakespeare Company and the Pennsylvania and Texas Shakespeare Festivals. He has also taught acting at New York Film Academy, and as a private coach or guest instructor. BFA, Rutgers University, MFA, University of Delaware. www.williamelsman.com

LUIS GALINDO (Prince Escalus) is an actor and poet. He is the author of two volumes of poetry: *Electric Rats in a Neon Gutter* and *The Roaring Dawn the Silent Mountain*. Luis is one of the founding members of Gravity Players. MFA University of Delaware (Professional Theatre Training Program.)


HENRY ALEXANDER KELLY (Peter) is excited to partake in this new and exciting take on Romeo and Juliet. He was last seen in ISC’s production of *Anita Berber is Dead*. He can be seen in the upcoming dark comedic thriller *Murder Bury Win* coming soon. He has worked with Downtown Repertory Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre LA, Latino Theatre Company, Hero Theatre, and Palos Versdes Performing Arts. Enjoy the show! #Yas More info at www.henryalexanderkelly.com

RUOXUAN LI (Costume Designer) is an active costume designer for both stage and screen productions currently based in LA. She is the costume designer in residence for ACB since 2017, and is the recipient of Swarovski Award for Excellence in Costume Design 2014. She received her MFA in Costume Design for Entertainment Media from UCLA, and BA in Costume Design from Wimbledon College of Art, UAL. ISC credits include: *The Snow Geese* (2017), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2017), *All’s Well that Ends Well* (2018), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (2018). Notable credits include: *Aubergine* (South Coast Repertory), *Hannah And The Dread Gazebo* (Fountain Theater 2019),
In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, Independent Shakespeare Co. is committed to exploring digital content creation in our new program called Art Break!

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**The Nutcracker Suite** (American Contemporary Ballet), **The Great Wall Musical: One Woman’s Journey** (Drama Center Theatre Singapore 2017), **Judgement of Nuremberg** (LA Theater Work 2016), **Distant Vision** (American Zoetrope 2016), **Spring Awakening** (NoHo Arts Center 2015). www.ruoxuanli.com

DAVID MELVILLE (Friar Laurence & Sound Design) Last summer, David played Feste in *Twelfth Night*, which he also directed, and multiple characters in *Pericles*. Other roles over the last fifteen years: Bottom, Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Stephano, Feste, Friar Lawrence, Benedick, Touchstone, Dr. Pinch, Leontes, Hamlet, Master Ford, Iago, Henry V, Sir Toby, Prince Hal, Macbeth, Richard II, and Proteus. ISC indoors includes: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (director), *Strange Eventful History* (writer & performer), *Solemn Mockeries*, and fourteen years of *A Christmas Carol with Charles Dickens* (Dickens). Other theatre: *Discord* (Geffen Playhouse), *Hamlet* (Broadway) and *Ivanov* (Almeida Theatre). TV and film: *Stargate Origins*, *Lawrence of America*, *Ironclad*, *The Understudy*, *Perfection*. David also writes the lyrics and music for many ISC productions including the original musical *Red Barn*, and *Anita Berber is Dead!* which had a workshop production in the ISC Studio in October, 2019. He trained at the Webber-Douglas Academy, London.

KELVIN MORALES (Tybalt) is thrilled to be working with ISC again this year. The Los Angeles native started his professional journey with Shakespeare at Will Geer’s Theatricum Botanicum. Appearing on stage as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Snug in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Solanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Clown in *Titus Andronicus*. He has most recently been seen in the Wallis Studio Ensembles episodic zoom play *Fairyland Foibles*.

XAVI MORENO (Newscaster) is a native Angeleno, born, raised, and staged in Boyle Heights. This year would have been Xavi’s ninth season with Independent Shakespeare Co. at the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival. Recent credits include Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, Antiochus...
JOINING THE TEAM IN THE GRIFFITH PARK FREE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL -- LIVING ROOM EDITION!

She stage managed the ISC productions of *Anita Berber is Dead!, Twelfth Night, Julius Caesar, Letters from Home, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Othello, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Snow Geese*. She has also stage managed for other productions around Los Angeles, such as *Gunshot Medley, Part 1* and *The Giant Void in My Soul*. She graduated from Cal State University, Northridge with a BA in Theatre.

NIKHIL PAI (Romeo) has been a company member of the Independent Shakespeare Co. for ten years and currently serves on the Board of Directors. With ISC he has had the privilege of playing such characters as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, Arnold in the West Coast Premiere of *The Snow Geese*, Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and Lucio in *Measure for Measure*, among many others. In addition to ISC, he has worked with dance-based theatre companies like Theatre Movement Bazaar and Critical Mass Group. He is also a frequent collaborator with one of LA’s premier immersive theatre companies, The Speakeasy Society, where he played F. Scott Fitzgerald in *Wild* and Tik Tok in their 10-part, *Wizard of Oz*-inspired series, *The Kansas Collection*. He has also appeared on several television and film projects including *Grace and Frankie, Westworld, Superstore, Fresh Off the Boat, Castle*, and many others. He currently teaches acting and movement at California State University, Northridge and New York Film Academy. He received his Master of Fine Arts from California Institute of the Arts.

JENNY PARK (Stage Manager) is the Independent Shakespeare Co. Resident Stage Manager. She is very excited to be joining the team in the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival -- Living Room Edition! She stage managed the ISC productions of *Anita Berber is Dead!, Twelfth Night, Julius Caesar, Letters from Home, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Othello, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Snow Geese*. She has also stage managed for other productions around Los Angeles, such as *Gunshot Medley, Part 1* and *The Giant Void in My Soul*. She graduated from Cal State University, Northridge with a BA in Theatre.

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CARY REYNOLDS (Production Coordinator) Originally from Barrington, Illinois, Cary holds a BA in theatre from University of Southern California. She has been involved with the ISC community since 2016, and most recently served as the Production Coordinator for the 2019 GPFSF. Cary is thrilled to work on the virtual festival this year, and while she misses seeing all of our wonderful artists and audience members in the park every day, she hopes everyone is staying safe and well.

ANGELA ROMO (Virtual Production Intern) is a senior undergraduate student at the University of La Verne. She is studying Broadcasting with a Television and Film emphasis. She has performed in over fourteen productions including Cabaret, Machinal, The Crucible, and The Wizard of Oz. She has also directed and participated in numerous videos through her university. Angela claims that interning for ISC has been a dream come true, and plans to be immersed in filmmaking and digital theatre in the years to come.

EVAN LEWIS SMITH (Mercutio) is very excited to be returning (virtually) to ISC. Recent ISC credits include: Aaron in Titus Andronicus, Oberon in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Proteus in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Claudio in Measure for Measure, Othello in Othello, to name a few. Other recent credits include Citizen Barlow in August Wilson’s Gem of the Ocean and Idmon in Argonautika at A Noise Within Theater, and Adam Canning in Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me at the Group Repertory Theater. He hails from Bloomfield Hills, MI and received his MFA in acting from the University of Southern California.

BERNADETTE SULLIVAN (Nurse) is a voice over talent and actress, and has worked in regional theatres around the country including the Mark Taper in LA, the Guthrie in Minneapolis and Actors’ Theatre of Louisville. She has spent twelve seasons with Los Angeles’ Independent Shakespeare Co., proudly performing free Shakespeare for thousands of Angelenos in Griffith Park.
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by David Melville
Performed by Mary Goodchild

MIDDLE OF THE MOMENT
by Melissa Chalsma & David Melville
Performed by Darian Ramirez

HEAVEN HAS ALL (Instrumental)
Written & Performed by David Melville, Ashley D., William Elsman & Jack Lancaster

Additional Incidental Music
by Dave Beukers

This project is supported in part by the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles.
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Festival Event guests: Luis Galindo, André Martin, Sean Pritchett, Lorenzo Gonzalez, Kalean Ung, Elizabeth Dennehy, Aisha Kabia, Dominic Taylor, Bruce Lemon Jr., Sabra Williams, Sophina Brown, Natalie Morales, Erwin Tuazon, Garry Lennon, & Sanford Robbins.

Our medical team: Heather Hong & Daniel Brousseau. Dr. Daniel Brousseau, DO, Paracelsus Natural Family Health Center

Jeffrey Bloom & Pie Town Productions, Vanishing Angle, Christopher Tjalsma, Janet Lê, Amy Urbina & Blancaware, Barbara Monderine & The Village Bakery & Cafe, Grettel Cortes Photography, Reynaldo Macias Photography.

Most of all, John Hemmings & Henry Condell. We are forever in your debt.

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Over the past twelve months, we have been very grateful recipients of several essential foundation and government grants. However, the majority of our funding comes from donations, small and large, from audience members such as yourself. We hope your lives are enriched by the theater company you are such a vital part of creating.

The following people and organizations made financial donations in support of the Griffith Park Free Shakespeare Festival from June 17, 2019 - August 18, 2020. Without them, we would not be here tonight.

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