Pear Theatre Presents

Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue
by
Quiara Alegría Hudes

Original production produced by Page Seventy-Three Productions Inc.
About the Play

In writing *Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue*, Quiara Alegría Hudes (b. 1977) has drawn on her musical training as well as her Puerto Rican family and the Latinx community of her youth in West Philadelphia. As a child, Hudes went to Philadelphia’s Settlement Music School, took piano lessons, and composed music. Later she earned a B.A. in music at Yale and an M.F.A. in playwriting at Brown. Her Puerto Rican background is central to her writing, but she became acquainted with other Latinx cultures when working in the Hispanic Playwrights Project at South Coast Repertory. Besides plays, she has written musicals, essays, and the book for Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *In the Heights*.

*Elliot, A Soldier’s Fugue* is the first of three plays about Elliot Ortiz, a character based on Hudes’s cousin Elliot. This play was a Pulitzer finalist in 2007, and its sequel, *Water by the Spoonful* (produced locally by TheatreWorks in 2014) won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The final play of the trilogy, *The Happiest Song Plays Last* (2013), opened at the Goodman in Chicago before moving to the Second Stage Theatre in New York.

The structure of *Elliot* is inspired by the pattern of a Bach fugue. As Grandpop explains, a fugue “starts in one voice,” but later “Voice two responds to voice one” and they “tangle together,” working toward a resolution “about untying the knots.” In the play Grandpop, Pop, and Elliot recount their parallel experiences in the American army in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, while Ginny’s stories provide a healing perspective. The characters’ backgrounds also suggest fugal variation: Grandpop and Ginny were born and raised in Puerto Rico; Pop, though born in Puerto Rico, was raised in the Bronx; and Elliot grew up in Philadelphia. In addition to four scenes identified in the script as fugues and consisting of interwoven voices, three of the play’s sections consist of several scenes labeled preludes. Each section begins with a media interview, while the following prelude scenes supply background for the next fugue.

Director Tessa Corrie identifies a key theme of *Elliot* as “transgenerational trauma.” While serving in the armed forces, the men suffer deprivation, terror, and grief and are wounded, but they resist telling their family about the worst experiences, so the sons are largely ignorant of their fathers’ suffering. Most obviously, Elliot realizes that when Pop talked about his army service in Vietnam, it was mainly about funny things that happened, not the pain, the fear, and the guilt. Perhaps because he idealizes army life, Elliot originally enlists as a way to connect more fully with his father, but he undergoes similar traumatizing experiences. For her part, Ginny does what she can to care for the wounded and, later, to make a home with a vibrant garden that reinforces the family’s connection to Puerto Rico. On the stage, the garden’s lush colors stand in stark contrast with the drab, bare, dark space where the soldiers’ experiences are related. Elliot learns about that dark
place from his father’s letters as well as through his own experience of war, but we should ask ourselves how well Elliot, at this point in his life, is able to understand and deal with his own trauma.

—Susan Petit

Cast

Elliot: Marco Neves
Pop: Francisco Rodriguez
Grandpop: Gabriel Montoya
Ginny: Carolina Morones

Production Team

Producer: Sinjin Jones
Director: Tessa Corrie
Assistant Director: Amy Lizardo
Stage Manager: Kelly Weber Barraza
Set and Props Designer: Kevin Davies
Lighting Designer: Edward Hunter
Costume Designer: Marisely Cortés Fonseca
Sound Designer: David Hobbs
Military Consultant: Tom Shamrell
Publicity Director: Stephanie Crowley
Program Consultant: Susan Petit
Production Manager: Kelly Weber Barraza
Pear Technical Director: Kevin Davies
Videographer: John Beamer

Note

Elliot was filmed under the most strict safety, testing, and social distancing protocols with all rehearsals taking place on Zoom. The Pear takes COVID-19 seriously and recommends all patrons stay safe and healthy under these extraordinary circumstances. As we continually strive to be better and safer, we will pursue outdoor theatre for our next production of Lysistrata.
Who’s Who in This Production

Actors

Gabriel Montoya (GRANDPOP)
Gabriel Montoya is honored to make his debut with the Pear Theatre as the “Boriqueneer” Grandpop. Mr. Montoya last appeared as Octavio Solis, Sr. & Jr., in Word for Word’s 2020 production of Solis’s *Retablos: Stories from a Life Lived along the Border*. In the Bay Area, he’s acted for Berkeley Rep, Magic Theatre, Custom Made Theatre Company, Central Works, SF Playhouse, Brava Theater, SF Shakespeare on Tour, Beverly Hills Playhouse SF, Theater Madcap, and Boxcar Theatre. Gabriel and his wife Robin’s production company, The Department of Badassery, made theatre history in 2015 at San Francisco’s Pianofight by premiering Ben Fisher’s *Don’t Be Evil* simultaneously onstage and in virtual reality. “For my friends on The Island.”

Carolina Morones (GINNY)
Carolina Morones is an Actor and Bilingual Teaching Artist focused on stories that empower through poetry and movement. This year she was honored to be the choreographer and cultural consultant for Octavio Solis’s *Retablos* with Word for Word at ZSpace. She returns to the Bay Area after seven seasons in residence at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Most recently she was cast in a virtual classical play reading series with Shakespeare in Detroit. Other credits include *She Persisted, the Musical* and *El Gato Ensombrerado* at Bay Area Children’s Theatre; *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* at Townhall Theatre; *Much Ado Para Nada* at Shakespeare in Detroit; and *Chekhov’s WARD 6* at Central Works.

Marco Neves (ELLIOT)
Marco Neves is a Bay Area native who is thrilled to be returning to the Pear Theatre. This is his third professional production as a featured actor. His previous credits are for *This Street and the Next* (Pear), and *The Circuit*.

Francisco Rodriguez (POP)
Francisco Rodriguez is a theatre-maker, primarily as an actor and educator. He has worked with a number of theatre companies and schools in the Bay Area and the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Jalisco. He is the founder and Artistic Director of The Mexican American Conservatory Theatre (M.A.C.T.). His work focuses on spreading and uniting the diverse and rich art of Mexico and Latin America by translating MEXICAN and LATIN AMERICAN plays into English for North American audiences. See more at FranciscoTeatro.com.
Production Team

Kelly Weber Barazza (Stage Manager)
This is Kelly’s fourth go-round with the Pear Theatre’s Digital content, having previously worked on Curious Incident..., Pear Slices: 2020, and This Street and the Next. Other Pear favorite productions include What You Will, Uncle Vanya, August: Osage County, and Taking Steps. She has also worked on The Bridges of Madison County (South Bay Musical Theatre), Yellow Face (Los Altos Stage Company), Bright Star (Palo Alto Players), and The Oskar Education Tour (TheatreWorks), as well as with “The Misfit of Magic,” magician Ed Alonzo from “Saved By the Bell.” Kelly is always grateful for the love and support of her theatre widowed husband, Michael, and their fur babies: Chumo, Kiyap, and Sopaipilla.

Tessa Corrie (Director)
Tessa Corrie is a queer Latinx director and arts advocate based in the Bay Area. Her work is grounded in creating space for marginalized and underrepresented communities and narratives. She is a company member at PlayGround SF, and her credits include work at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Center REPertory Company, Hillbarn Theatre, TheatreFirst, Shotgun Players, PianoFight, and AmiosWest.

Marisely Cortés Fonseca (Costume Designer)
Marisely Cortés Fonseca is a freelance costume designer. She graduated from Academy of Art University in 2020 with an M.F.A. in costume design. Theatre credits include productions for the Custom Made Theatre and 42nd Street Moon in San Francisco, UC Santa Cruz, and Academy of Art University. As a costume designer, she has collaborated with other students across different majors, such as motion picture, television, and acting by taking part in short films. In the past year she had her first experience with opera, designing the operetta The Pirates of Penzance for UC Santa Cruz.

Kevin Davies (Set Designer)
Kevin Davies is pumped to be working on this show with all the amazing people who have been assembled for this project. He is the resident Tech Director at the Pear. When he isn’t at the Pear, you can find him at Silicon Valley Shakespeare, McNulty Speed Shop, or one of the many other Bay Area theatres. Local build credits include Once on This Island and Mamma Mia at Mt. Eden H.S. and Avenue Q, La Cage, Grease, and Cabaret at Sunnyvale Community Players. All work is dedicated to the memory of SFC James Grissom.
David L. Hobbs (Sound Designer)
David Hobbs previously contributed sound to the Pear’s productions of *Pear Slices 2020*, *Taking Steps*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Tribes*. He shared a 2016 TBA Award for sound co-design of Stage 1’s *Ragtime*. He has appeared onstage in the roles of Hamlet and Einstein and in the 1776 Continental Congress alongside sometime playwright Paul Braverman. He admires the courage of writers, particularly in allowing us to interpret their words. "Hail, poetry, thou heav’n-born maid!"

Edward Hunter (Lighting Designer)
Edward Hunter has worked as a lighting designer with many companies in the South Bay, including Palo Alto Players, the Pear, Lyric Theatre, Santa Clara Players, TheatreWorks, South Bay Musical Theatre and West Valley Light Opera. Recent designs: *Jekyll & Hyde; Bye, Bye, Birdie;* and *Urinetown* (all SCP) and *Shakespeare in Love* (PAP). His most recent design is for *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (SBMT). By day he is an engineering leader at Netflix.

Amy Lizardo (Assistant Director)
Amy Lizardo is an actor, singer, teaching artist, and director formerly based in the Bay Area. Amy is currently a company member with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, appearing last year in the world premiere of *Mother Road* and *La Comedia of Errors*. In the Bay Area Amy has worked for numerous theatre companies, including American Conservatory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Francisco Playhouse, California Shakespeare Theatre, and many more. Regionally, Amy appeared in Octavio Solis’s *Mother Road*. Amy received her master’s degree from San Jose State University in 2010.

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