



MEXODUS

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY
BRIAN QUIJADA AND NYGEL D. ROBINSON
DIRECTED BY DAVID MENDIZÁBAL

THE JOURNEY OF MEXODUS

Mosaic Theater is dedicated to providing a platform for emerging and established playwrights to develop new work in a supportive and artistically rigorous environment through our incubator program, the Catalyst Series. Learn more about *Mexodus*' unique journey to the Mosaic stage.

“*Mexodus* is a show we wrote during the height of the pandemic shutdown. We wrote it during America’s racial reckoning. We came together to write a show about sticking together in uncertain times. We hope people leave with the hope of possibility of what happens when we stand in solidarity.”

—Brian Quijada



June 2020:

New York Stage and Film supports Brian Quijada and Nygel D. Robinson writing the initial draft while social-distanced. Then, New York Stage and Film hosts the initial in-person workshop of *Mexodus* in Summer 2021.



December 2022:

Workshop of *Mexodus* at Mosaic Theater.

February 2024:

First Rehearsal of *Mexodus* at Baltimore Center Stage.

Photo by Chris Banks.



Spring 2024:

World Premiere of *Mexodus*.

Photo by J Fannon Photography.



FUTURE:

MEXODUS GOES TO BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE!

WELCOME FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Reg

Welcome to ***Mexodus***! This world premiere musical pushes form and content to tell a story of our shared American History in a wholly original way. Every time I encounter *Mexodus*, I am blown away by the creativity and craft of our co-creators **Brian Quijada** and **Nygel D. Robinson** and the play's urgent themes of solidarity and hope. It is especially meaningful to me to welcome this talented group of artists to Mosaic Theater as I've known and worked with many of them for several years. This marks the third project that Brian and I have collaborated on since first meeting in 2018. **Tony Award-winning sound designer Mikhail Fiksel** and I have worked on everything from bold folk musicals by Pig Pen Theatre Company to audio plays for Audible since 2017. Director **David Mendizábal** and I cut our teeth as director-producers together in New York City and here we are now 15 years later. What a joy it is to welcome these dear friends and their brilliant collaborators to Mosaic Theater!

We are especially proud that *Mexodus* was the first workshop in our Catalyst Series of New Play Development in December 2022. When we hosted the team for a week of new play development back then, it was abundantly clear to all of us on staff and in the audience that we were witnessing the birth of an important and inspiring new American musical. I am so honored that Mosaic is now producing the world premiere of *Mexodus*, in partnership with the wonderful team at Baltimore Center Stage, and to share the breaking news with you that the show will next run at Berkeley Rep in California this fall! I joined Mosaic with a mission to support diverse artists telling thought-provoking stories in exciting new ways and to make our company a local launchpad for nationally acclaimed work. With *Mexodus*, we have truly delivered!

Thank you for believing in Mosaic's mission and supporting our profound growth this year. I am so personally thankful to our dedicated Board, staff, donors, artists, and audiences for making this season a grand success. Here's to Season 10!

—Reginald L. Douglas
Artistic Director

MOSAIC THEATER COMPANY OF DC PRESENTS

Mexodus

A World Premiere Co-Production with Baltimore Center Stage.

By **Brian Quijada** and
Nygel D. Robinson

Directed by
David Mendizábal^o

Scenic Designer
Riw Rakkulchon⁺⁺

Lighting Designer
Mextly Couzin⁺⁺

Costume Designer
David Mendizábal

Sound Designer
Mikhail Fiksel⁺⁺

Stage Manager
Shayna O'Neill^{*}

Mexodus was developed and presented at: Mosaic Theater Company of DC in December 2022; New York Stage and Film, Summer 2021; and Rhinebeck Writers Retreat, Summer 2021. Development support provided by the CRITICAL BREAKS Residency Program at Hi-ARTS.

Mexodus is sponsored by Mosaic Partners Circle: **Visionaries** the Steinglass Family, **Believers** Cathy MacNeil-Hollinger & Mark Hollinger, **Activists** Susan Clampitt & Jeremy Waletzky and **Advocates** John H. Ashley, Michael Singer & James Smith, Dr. Frances & Tom Wills, and Cynthia Wolloch & Joseph Reid.

Mosaic Theater's 2023-2024 Season is sponsored by Co-Founder Dan Logan & the Revada Foundation of the Logan Family of Virginia, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Humanities DC, Eugene M. Lang Foundation, Share Fund, Shubert Foundation, the Vradenburg Foundation and Mosaic Partners Circle members including: **Visionaries** David O. & Joan P. Maxwell and the Steinglass Family and **Champions** Deborah Carliner & Robert Remes and Cathy & Bob Solomon.



^o Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

^{*} Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

⁺⁺ Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE.

Mexodus is a professional production employing members of Actors' Equity Association, United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of IATSE, and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society. The video and/or audio recording of these performances by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited. Please turn off all electronic devices.





Brian Quijada and Nygel D. Robinson in *Mexodus*.
Photo by J Fannon Photography.

"We're living in an age of intense and deliberate division. Power structures know the danger of solidarity so they will stop at nothing to make sure we don't know our collective history. With *Mexodus*, we hope to shed light on a little known and very specific moment of Black and Brown solidarity with the hope that it will make us realize that we have always been fighting against white supremacy side by side. I hope this piece will help bring us together and one step closer to collective liberation. No one is free until everyone is free." —Nygel D. Robinson

DID YOU KNOW THIS ISH? WE DIDN'T KNOW THIS ISH.

BY TLALOC RIVAS

One of the most brilliant aspects of *Mexodus* is how much untold history it packs into every lyric, every song, and every scene. We reached out to dramaturg Tlaloc Rivas to give us more insight into the complex stories woven into the musical.



Gopher John,
Seminole Interpreter.



"Texas must be a slave country."

(S. F. AUSTIN, 1831)

It is important to pause and reflect on what happened at the Coahuila-Texas borderlands

in the period between Mexican Independence from Spain in 1821 and the establishment of the Republic of Texas in 1836. Although Coahuila y Tejas developed as a single region, colonization would eventually lead to its separation, not only in terms of administration and territory but also in terms of racial regimes.

U.S. nationals entered Mexico as a result of the Colonization Laws of 1821 (issued by Spain and ratified by

Independent Mexico), which allowed the entry of immigrants **if they converted to Catholicism**. Under these laws, Moses Austin negotiated the establishment of a colony, and when he died his son, Stephen Austin, obtained a license to take 300 families to Tejas in 1825 and later became the founder of the Republic of Texas. Appealing to U.S. owners of the enslaved while trying not to alienate abolitionist Mexico, *Coahuila y Tejas* passed a decree of lifetime indentured servitude (later reduced to 10 years), in an attempt to mask the persistence of slavery.

The choice to flee to Mexico rather than Canada was a practical one

due to distance, but it was no less dangerous. Texans loyal to the Republic ranged from indifferent to outright hostile to Blacks attempting to cross the Rio Grande. Enslavers employed posses to capture those who were attempting to escape. Often without footwear, escapees had to traverse across rugged and scalding terrain. Flash flooding and mudslides were common. Predatorial animals such as wolves and mountain lions, as well as poisonous rattlesnakes and scorpions could fell unprotected runaways. And of

course, the final threat: crossing the Rio Grande, a picturesque river with deceptively powerful currents fed by the snowpacks of the Rocky Mountains.

While there was no guarantee making a life in Mexico would be any better, it did not deter thousands of Blacks and African-Americans to seek their freedom. Many of them did have assistance from sympathetic 'Texicans', Native Americans, and of course, the *Mascogos* on the other side of Rio Grande providing sustenance and shelter to those arriving to their settlements in the region.



\$25 REWARD. RAN AWAY on the 19th of April, from W.T. Stevens' plantation, seven miles below Wharton, a Mulatto Boy, named Tom, about 28 years old, 5 feet, 8 inches high, heavy build, with deep set eyes and heavy brows. Was raised in Milam county, Texas, by Joseph Harlan, and he is supposed to be there or on his way to Mexico. The above reward will be paid on his arrest and confinement in any jail until delivered to the undersigned, or fifty dollars if taken in Wharton or adjoining counties and delivered to him at home.

W.T. STEVENS.



Los Mascogos

In the town of *Nacimiento de los Negros*, located in the Coahuila region of Mexico, resides the descendants of the *Mascogos*, a group consisting of formerly enslaved African-Americans who escaped the Southern United States and found refuge among the Seminole Native Americans in Florida during the early 19th century.

The *Mascogos'* history is deeply intertwined with broader narratives of **resistance, migration, and the quest for freedom**. Following the Second Seminole War (1835-42) in Florida, the U.S. government relocated Seminoles and Black Seminoles to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Upon arrival, they remained vulnerable to kidnapping and re-enslavement. Dissatisfied with these persistent threats, some of the Black Seminoles sought and secured asylum in Mexico in 1850, where slavery had been abolished since 1829.



Much of this history is not as well-documented as those narratives of formerly enslaved to the Northern U.S. and Canada, but it is no less worthy of our re-examination and remembrance. It exists in testimonials of *Mascogo* descendants. Letters and official documents are sparse but provide a framework from which we can imagine and understand.

June 19th, 1865 marks the day when the last enslaved people in Texas learned of their freedom. This celebration, known as Juneteenth, is a testament to their enduring connection to their African-American descendants and their history of resistance against enslavement.

Despite their rich cultural heritage, the *Mascogos* today face challenges related to identity, land rights, and economic development. They are a small, often overlooked community within Mexico, struggling to preserve their unique heritage in a rapidly changing world.

However in recent years, there has been a growing interest in the history and culture of the *Mascogos*, leading to academic studies and increased media attention. This interest not only highlights the *Mascogos'* unique place in the African diaspora but also emphasizes the interconnected histories of the U.S., Mexico, and the Indigenous nations on both sides of the Rio Grande. The story of the *Mascogos* and other Black Mexicans who were able to reach freedom is a compelling example of resilience, adaptation, and the complex interplay of cultural identities in the Americas.

Tlaloc Rivas is a renowned stage director and instructor of theater, working in a range of disciplines that include acting, playwriting, dramaturgy, and theater history.



Brian Quijada and Nygel D. Robinson in *Mexodus*. Photo by J Fannon Photography.

CAST

Brian Quijada*
Performer

Nygel D. Robinson*
Performer

Mexodus runs approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



Actors' Equity Association (AEA) was founded in 1913 as the first of the American actor unions. Equity's mission is to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Today, Equity represents more than 40,000 actors, singers, dancers and stage managers working in hundreds of theatres across the United States. Equity members are dedicated to working in the theatre as a profession, upholding the highest artistic standards.

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AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. For more information, visit www.actorsequity.org.

CAST



Brian Quijada (Playwright/Performer; he/him) is an Emmy-nominated playwright, actor, composer, and Artistic Director of The Wild Wind Performance Lab for New Play Development. Quijada has spent most of his career acting in Off-Broadway and Regional Theaters including The Public Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, The Playwrights Realm, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. As a playwright/composer, his work spans theater to audio plays to television. His hip hop solo show *Where Did We Sit on the Bus?* has been produced across the country including Teatro Vista, Ensemble Studio Theatre, City Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Geva Theatre, and more. His other works include *Kid Prince and Pablo* and *Somewhere Over The Border*. He is a four-time Jeff Award winner, three-time Drama Desk nominee, and one-time Lucile Lortel winner. brianquijada.com @mrbrianquijada



Nygel D. Robinson (Playwright/Performer; he/him) is a singer, actor, writer, music producer, and multi-instrumentalist based in Chicago, IL. Robinson's select theater credits include Bro. Davis in *The Amen Corner* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, where he was also the music director, Jimmy Powers in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill* at The North Carolina Theatre, Larry in Lincoln Center's concert version of *Beau: The Musical*, Jesus in *Godspell* at Saint Michael's Playhouse, and *The All Night Strut* at Milwaukee Rep.



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CREATIVE TEAM



David Mendizábal

(Director/Costume Designer; they/he) is a director, designer, producer, and the associate artistic director

of Berkeley Repertory Theatre. They are one of the producing artistic leaders of the Obie award-winning The Movement Theatre Company and a founding collective member of the Obie award-winning Sol Project. Directing credits include: *the bandaged place* at Roundabout Theatre Company; *Mushroom* at People's Light; *Sanctuary City* at Berkeley Rep/Arena Stage; *Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Board Members* at Soho Rep/The Sol Project (also costume designer); *This Bitter Earth* at Theaterworks Hartford; and *Don't Eat the Mangos* at Magic Theatre/Sundance. David is an alumnus of the Soho Rep Project Number One Residency, Ars Nova Vision Residency, Drama League Directors Project, Labyrinth Intensive Ensemble, artEquity, NALAC, LCT Directors Lab, and TCG Leadership U. They are the recipient of a 2021 Princess Grace Award Honoraria in Theater. David earned a BFA from the New York University Tisch School of the Arts. davidmendizabal.com

Riw Rakkulchon (Scenic Designer; he/they; pronounced Ree-you) is a Set & Costume Designer, Animator and Chef from Bangkok, Thailand. He/They has worked at Yale Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage, The Old Globe, Drury Lane Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, The Acting Company, 59E59, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Primary Stages, Hartford Stage, The Public Theater and Brooklyn Academy of Music, amongst others. Broadway

Associate Set Design: *Pass Over*, & *Juliet, Parade*. He/They also works with designers Wilson Chin, Riccardo Hernandez, Jason Ardizzone-West, Donyale Werle, Santo Loquasto, Dane Laffrey, Clint Ramos and Walt Spangler. Board member of WithAll, a non-profit organization on a fight to end eating disorders. B.F.A. Ithaca College, M.F.A Yale School of Drama (Donald & Zorca Oenslager Fellowship Award in Design recipient). Connecticut Critics Circle Award—Best Set Design—2023. Member of United Scenic Artist 829. @riwrdesign

Mextly Couzin's (Lighting Designer; she/her) recent design credits include NYC: *A Good Day to Me Not To You*, *JOB*, *Straight Line Crazy*, *peerless*, and *Tambo & Bones*. Regional: *Das Rheingold* at Seattle Opera; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at The Old Globe; *Incendiary* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; *West Side Story* at Centro de Bellas Artes Puerto Rico; and *La Belle et la Bête* at Opera Parallèle. She is a 2023 recipient of The 1/52 Project grant. She received her MFA at the University of California, San Diego in 2020. mextlycouzin.com

Mikhail Fiksel (Sound Designer; he/him) is an award-winning designer, composer, dj and audio producer, residing on airplanes traveling between New York and Chicago. Recent and upcoming collaborations include: *Uncle Vanya* at Lincoln Center Theatre; *I Love You So Much I Could Die* at New York Theatre Workshop; *Little Bear Ridge Road* at Steppenwolf Theatre; and various projects with The Guthrie Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Public, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, La Jolla Playhouse, Third Rail Projects and Albany Park Theater

(continued)

CREATIVE TEAM (CONTINUED)

Project, as well as various original film scores and multiple original audio productions with Audible Originals and Make Believe Association (where he is Head of Audio). Recent awards include the 2023 Signal Award for Original Music and the 2022 Tony Award for Sound Design. Currently, Fiksel is a Practitioner-In-Residence at Columbia College Chicago and is a proud member of USA and TSDCA.

Shayna O'Neill (Stage Manager; pronoun inclusive) is in their second season as the Resident Stage Manager and Production Manager at Mosaic Theater Company. Off-Broadway credits include MCC Theater, Fault Line Theatre (Artistic Associate), Classical Theatre of Harlem, Page 73, National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, HERE Arts Center, The Tank, Atlantic Theater Company, Ensemble Studio

Theatre, The Acting Company, and Theatre for a New Audience. Regional credits include Studio Theatre, Rep Stage, Folger Theatre, Imagination Stage, Elm Shakespeare Company, International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Trinity Rep, Dorset Theatre Festival, and Delaware REP. At The Kennedy Center, Shayna worked on the National Symphony Orchestra's *Pops!* Series, including concerts featuring Diana Ross, Leslie Odom Jr., Babyface, Ingrid Michaelson, and will.i.am. They were the Production & Operations Manager/PSM of the Yale Baroque Opera Project; co-produced fundraisers for Immigrant Families Together and the Ali Forney Center; and co-produced the podcast *Dirty Laundry: Unpacking The Costume Closet*. Shayna has a BFA in Stage Management from DePaul University. For J.A.S.O.N.

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Manager
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Laura Valenti

Assistant Costume
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Associate Lighting
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Director
Isaac DeMarchi

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Special Thanks

Baltimore Center Stage, Intellux Lighting, Hope Villanueva, Ian Vespermann, Arts Institute for Creative Advancement: Muttaqi Daniels, Rose Hull, James Hundley, Daniel Interiano, Troy Johnson, and Makayla Smith.



Mosaic Theater is a member of DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative, and its Intergenerational Matinee program is offered and supported in partnership with both organizations.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The Atlas Performing Arts Center stands on the traditional land of the Nacotchtank people and neighbors the ancestral lands of the Piscataway and Pamunkey peoples. This acknowledgment is in tribute to those peoples, past and present.

MEET MOSAIC

Mosaic Leadership



Artistic Director **Reginald L. Douglas** (he/him) is dedicated to creating new work and supporting new voices. He has directed at Round House Theatre, Everyman Theatre, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, TheaterWorks Hartford, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Weston Theater Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Audible, Bard at the Gate, Profile Theatre, Playwrights Realm, The Kennedy Center, Pittsburgh CLO, Arizona Theatre Company, Barrington Stage, Cape Cod Theatre Project, Negro Ensemble Company, TheatreSquared, Playwrights' Center, McCarter Theatre Center, Florida Rep, The Lark, New York Theatre Workshop, Spooky Action, City Theatre (where he served as Artistic Producer), Studio Theatre (where he served as Associate Artistic Director), and many other national companies. Reginald has developed and directed work by nationally recognized writers including Dominique Morisseau, Lynn Nottage, Suzan-Lori Parks, Psalmayene 24, Idris Goodwin, Cori Thomas, Angelica Chéri, Nikkole Salter, Dael Orlandersmith, Kemp Powers, Jen Silverman, Ngozi Anyanwu, R. Eric Thomas, Brian Quijada, Matt Schatz, Amy Evans, Zakiyyah Alexander, Imani Uzuri, Dave Harris, Francisca Da Silveira, Khalil Kain, Chisa Hutchinson, Tarrance Chisholm, Josh Wilder, Larry Powell, Kareem Fahmy, Harrison David Rivers, and Donja R. Love. A proud graduate of Georgetown University, Reginald is a member of the Board of Directors of Theatre Washington and of the National New Play Network. He received the National Theatre Conference's Emerging Professional Award in 2020 and the Georgetown University Legacy of a Dream Award in 2024.



Managing Director **Serge Seiden** (he/him) helped found Mosaic Theater Company in 2015 and has held leadership positions with the company since then. From 1990 to 2015, Serge held many positions at Studio Theatre, including Stage Manager, Literary Manager, and Producing Director. Serge was a key player in Studio's 1996 and 2004 expansions—developments crucial to the reemergence of 14th Street NW as a DC cultural hub. He is also an acting teacher and director. For Mosaic, he most recently directed *Birds of North America*. Other Mosaic credits include *Eureka Day*, *Ulysses on Bottles*, and *Hooded, or Being Black for Dummies*, which received the Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding Original New Play. In 2013, Serge received the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Director/Resident Musical for *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris...* at MetroStage. His production of *Bad Jews* at Studio Theatre was nominated for four 2015 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Director. Serge also directed Studio's acclaimed *The Apple Family Cycle*. More directing credits include Everett Quinton's *A Tale of Two Cities* at Synetic Theater, *Freud's Last Session* at Theater J, and *Awake and Sing!* at Olney Theatre Center. Serge has been a member of the faculty at Studio Acting Conservatory for 28 years and serves on the Conservatory's Board.

MEET MOSAIC

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*Education &
Engagement Manager*

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Thank you to our many loyal donors, who have made it possible for Mosaic Theater Company to produce independent, intercultural, and entertaining theater. We are grateful for the many individuals, foundations, government agencies, and organizations who made generous contributions or pledges between **January 1, 2023** and **May 1, 2024** listed below. We regret any unintentional errors or omission to this list. Please contact the Development Department at dina@mosaictheater.org with corrections. Thank you for being a part of our mosaic.

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JOIN PARTNERS CIRCLE FOR MOSAIC'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON



Donors, Staff, Reflection Series Partners, and Artists at Partners Circle Welcome Party for *Confederates*. Photo by Chris Banks.

More Than Donors, Partners in Our Mission

Mosaic Theater's Partners Circle is a distinguished group of individuals and organizations who make the magic happen on and off stage. They help us produce bold, culturally diverse theater that illuminates critical issues, elevates fresh voices, and sparks connections. Members give \$1,000 or more and enjoy benefits such as premier recognition and invitations to events.

Thank you to the following Partner Circle members who have already signed up to support our 10th anniversary season!

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All eyes are on Mosaic Theater as we continue to burst beyond our H Street walls, serving as a catalyst for conversation, social change, and community building across the DMV region. Join us in this important work!



BECOME A PARTNER

For more information on giving levels or to become a member of the Partners Circle for our 2024-2025 season, please contact Donor Relations Manager Dina Soltan at dina@mosaictheater.org.

SEPTEMBER 5 - OCTOBER 6, 2024

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