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# The Wizards

## *Good evening*

***Welcome to The Wizards.*** There are a few content things we wanted you to know about. In this production, there are:

Blood	Racial Violence
Flashing Lights	Sexual Violence and Depictions of Sexual Activity
Gun/Gun Shots	Use of Racial and Homophobic Slurs
Lit Sage	Vomit Sounds
Loud Sounds	
Partial Nudity	

This list is non-exhaustive: Everyone is different and may have different triggers not listed here. We have done our best to list the content that stands out to us. We have worked deeply with a violence and intimacy choreography team to ensure that all of the moments above have been choreographed with safety and care of our actors.

**Welcome**

# Play by Ricardo Gamboa Directed by Katrina Dion

The Wizards is an immersive play about the histories and people that haunt us.

The Wizards follows Amado and Sam, a Brown and Black genderqueer couple that move back to Amado's hometown of Chicago after surviving a hate crime in New York the day after the 2016 presidential election. In their new apartment in the city's gentrifying Pilsen neighborhood, the two find a Ouija board that puts them in touch with the ghost of four boys who were members of The Wizards, a Mexican-American Motown cover band on the Southside during the 70s. The Wizards is a supernatural thriller about the histories and people that haunt us.

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October 14th through  
November 19th

Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays  
at 7:30pm

APO Cultural Center  
1438 W. 18th St.  
Chicago, IL 60608

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Thank you to our *production partners:*



Welcome

# Director's Note

You are here at the APO Cultural Center for the world premiere of *The Wizards*. Bringing this play to life has been a journey.

After seeing the reading of “*The Wizards*” at The Goodman in 2018, I immediately thought, “Wow, whoever gets to direct this is extremely lucky!” As always, I was struck by Ricky’s ability to create a play intertwined conversations of justice, violence, white supremacy, queerness and spirituality, had literal murder, and made me laugh, cry, and feel called to do something.

Ricky and I have worked together since 2013, when we met at our artistic home Free Street Theater, a social justice theater company in Chicago. They were my first mentor outside of my educational institution and the first to give me “director” credit and the chance to run a room by myself. Ricky has done nothing but support my work. Yet, I was still surprised when they texted that they wanted me to direct *The Wizards*.

Over the past decade, since meeting Ricky, my directing practice has focused on creating radical universes where we can embody, rehearse, and witness the world we want to live in. I have honed my practice directing the youth ensemble at Free Street Theater. There, I’ve developed a devising, rehearsal and social practice process that involves playing with aesthetics and storytelling mediums while investigating issues affecting Chicagoans. I’ve mentored over 200 Chicago youth, directed over ten original plays, and partnered with organizations like Liberation Library, UIC FreshWater Lab, and Little Village Environmental Justice Organization to make sure the impact of my plays goes beyond the stage.

My work is site-specific, collages artistic forms, and likes to surround its audiences often making them participants in the play to varying degrees. I believe this inclusion of the audience activates the audience rather than allow them to be passive spectators. My aim to create an experience where the audience realizes they must take provocations proposed by the play out into the outside world. I select, craft and direct plays that only seek to impact the world. I understand each play as a call-to-action that requires the theatrical medium itself to evolve to invite

# Katrina Dion

and include the audience as part of the experience.

My surprise by Ricky's invitation to direct was not because I don't align with this work, or because I thought I couldn't do it, but because like so much work that happens outside of big house equity institutions, getting anyone to view my work other than "cute" because it is often devised with youth is difficult. The continued infantilization and delegitimization of work created by, for, and with youth silences contemporary theater that is actually grappling with issues our city faces and that is positing inventive and radical alternatives and invitations to remake our world. This same radical spirit is pervasive in *The Wizards*. Ricky and I work within a practice that sees into the necessity of radical youth work and plays like *The Wizards* into Chicago's theater eco-system.

So, with the invitation to direct, I was excited to bring my practice into the world of *The Wizards*. As someone who works with youth, I felt particularly close to the stories of the young characters: Serafin, Lalo, Neto, Javi, Lorena and Donato. Just like the rest of my work, I wanted the audience to not only feel emotionally moved by the stories of these characters, but to take the provocations of the play into the outside world. Sam and Amado witness the stories of these boys from their apartment in 2016, They are so surrounded, pulled in, and touched by these stories that they have no choice but to seek justice.

As an audience, you find yourself on the spiritual plane of 2022, observing all of these individuals, as they call you into action as well. Just as Sam and Amado were chosen, you are chosen too. This play will weave between your seats, behind your chair, above your head. You are seated at a cabaret table which is not only an ode to the performance world the boys in *The Wizards* yearned for, but also means to ground you as an actual participant of this play, rather than just a viewer.

During this play, you will have to turn your body and you may even be physically uncomfortable. That's on purpose. This story is often very uncomfortable. Resist the urge to sit back and relax, and lean into the activation, and take it with you. Find your Act 2 outside of these walls.

# Playwright's Note

As a writer, I don't believe we pick our creations. I believe our creations pick us. Stories come through us. We are steward of stories.

The Wizards picked me right when I moved back to Chicago from New York after completing coursework in my doctoral program at NYU. I was living with my partner Sean in Pilsen, where three generations of my family have lived since my grandparents migrated from Mexico in the 1950s. But the Pilsen I came home to was transformed by gentrification.

It was disorienting watching people walk into Michelin-star restaurants with meals that cost more than what an immigrant day laborer down the block might make in a day. It was hard to compute new residents walking around care-free oblivious to the violence and struggle that occurred in Pilsen. Pilsen isn't a neighborhood of trendy bars and shops. Pilsen's where people were lost to bullets by gangs and cops, where families struggled to survive, and people had to starve themselves for a school to be built. It's where Chicago's Mexican American community carved a place to affirm and express themselves.

This history was invisible in gentrifying Pilsen. It was a ghost. The Wizards came to me, begging me to explore this situation. But, soon enough, there would be a bigger haunting looming over us that The Wizards would want me to explore. On November 8, 2016, my partner Sean and I sat in Honky Tonk on 18th Street and watched quiet fall over the usually raucous bar as the flatscreen there announced Trump would be the next President, propelled into the White House by racism and all the other "-isms" structuring this country.

The specter of violence of the Trump administration and the ghostly history of Pilsen were not separate phenomena but entangled hauntings. At least, this is what The Wizards was telling me, this was what the play wanted to be about.

But The Wizards didn't just want to use the supernatural to speak to Mexican American reality and itinerant hauntings of gentrification and racism or white supremacy. It wanted me to use another proxy: Motown.



# Ricardo Gamboa

Motown became a proxy to explore the essential condition of Mexican Americans (and Latinos) in the U.S. more profoundly. Motown was in my house everyday growing up. It was the music my parents listened to when they were growing up.

It should be no surprise that first generation Mexican Americans in Chicago would gravitate toward Motown, the musical expression of another diasporic, racialized and oppressed urban population crooning for the thing oppression deprives us of: “love.” It always struck me how Mexican Americans gravitated toward U.S. Black cultural expression in a nation founded in white supremacy on land stolen from Natives. To me, this triangulation spoke to the ontological status of Mexican Americans as liminal beings, in the middle of a U.S. racial binary, alienated from homeland, trying to make home in a land where they’re targeted for premature death by the power structure.

I wrote *The Wizards* while a member of the Goodman Theater’s Playwrights Unit. I brought in a deejay and half the South Side to hear it at a sold out reading at The Goodman. Bob Falls told me the play was “so smart” and “brilliant.” The Goodman selected it for further development for their New Stages Festival. I was sure they would produce *The Wizards*. But, ultimately, they did not. I believe they were scared. The play is radical. Perhaps “too radical.”

I thought that was it for *The Wizards*. But Goodman did share the play with an executive from A24, Zack Vargas Sullivan. He loved it, we had drinks, and he passed it on to Yira Vilaro, an executive at Macro at the time. She passed it on to Max Goldfarb and Tony Gil, two talent managers. They read it, reached out, offered to represent me and I accepted. *The Wizards* found an unexpected second life. It became my calling card in Hollywood, a writing sample that helped me land jobs writing for Showtime, Amazon, HBOMax, and FX.

I had spent most of my life determined to never engage with the dominant culture industry. But my decision to work in Hollywood resonated with my decision to do a residency at the Goodman. By 2018,

the Trump administration, social movements, and the success of films like “Get Out” had suddenly made Chicago theater and Hollywood want to talk about issues that I had been addressing in my work for over a decade. Suddenly, artists could perform “radical” and make careers for themselves while actual radical arts activists remained on the margins. I figured if such dominant channels were going to co-opt, I’d make sure they co-opt the means of their own destruction.

The Wizards created opportunities for me that allowed me to make a living as a writer. For the first time, I bought dishware that didn’t come from a thrift store. The Wizards hasn’t just benefitted me, but also others as I’ve used earnings to support other Black and Brown artists. The Wizards has given me and others so much. It was time I gave back to The Wizards and make sure it is seen by the city and theatrical medium that birth it. It takes a village to make a play and I am grateful for the people who have rallied around this play and made it happen. I hope it haunts and transforms you, the way it has me.







# Cast & Crew



## **Katrina Dion**

Director, Producer,  
Production Manager

Katrina is a Chicago based director and producer, known for her radical youth work at Free Street Theater where she acts as Director of Education. In her 7 years at Free Street, Katrina has directed over 10 original plays, mentored over 200 youth, and produced over 40 shows. Focused on building and supporting creative universes, where new futures feel undeniable, Katrina has also had work featured with The New Coordinates, The Fly Honey Show, and through “the band,” a performance art collective in Chicago. In addition, Dion acts as an adjunct professor at The Theatre School at DePaul University, her alma mater, where she teaches directing and production. In 2019, Dion was listed as one of the top “50 People Performing for Chicago Theatre.” Her work has been featured in magazines such as Teen Vogue, and she has facilitated workshops across the country at places such as The National Civil Rights Museum, the Obama Foundation, University of Chicago Lab Schools, ProPublic Illinois, and more.



## Ricardo Gamboa

Amado, Playwright, Producer

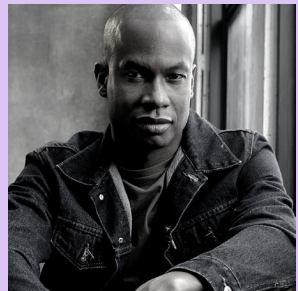
Ricardo is an award-winning artist, activist, cultural producer, and academic based in their native Chicago, creating cutting-edge theater and cultural infrastructure for the city's Latinx community outside the city's mainstream.

In Chicago, Ricardo is a member of the Free Street Theater, the Goodman Theater Playwrights Unit, a resident playwright at Chicago Dramatists, and founding adult partner of the controversial ensemble The Young Fugitives. They are finishing their doctorate degree at New York University's renowned American Studies program and received their M.A. in Arts Politics from Tisch School of the Arts (2013). Ricardo has won several awards including a Joyce Award and an International Connections Award from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. They have worked with over 5,000 young people in the hemisphere. In 2019, Gamboa began working in Hollywood to accumulate the resources and network to further his mission of developing Chicago South Side Latino arts. Since then, Gamboa has written and produced for Showtime, HBO Max and Amazon Prime.

## Sean JW Paris

Sam, Producer

Sean is an actor, writer, and professor. He was born in Los Angeles and raised in Miami and Georgia. Sean has been featured in plays at Steppenwolf Theater, The Goodman Theater, Free Street Theater, and regionally at the Armory and Syracuse Stage. Sean has also starred in television shows including Chicago P.D., The Chi, Brujos and the film Christmas Again on Disney Plus. He has worked with Free Street Theater as a vocal coach and director and has had an artist residency with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago at Curie High School. He is currently a professor of acting at DePaul University, where he received his MFA, and has previously taught at BlackBox Acting Academy.





## Luis A. Mora

### Neto

Luis is a Mexican-American actor from the southside of Chicago, IL (Pilsen). Although not raised in -or around- the theater; he has pursued a career in acting since watching his first play (The Flick, Steppenwolf) at the age of 22. By working as a dishwasher, to bartending at the city's best cocktail bars; Luis has been able to finance his own artistic training at the Second City, iO Chicago, and the Acting Studio Chicago. He is currently pursuing a BFA in Acting at DePaul's prestigious Theatre School.

## Eliseo Real

### Serafin

Eliseo is a Mexican American actor hailing from Little Village on Chicago's South Side. Eliseo was introduced into acting through Commercial Free, a performance and media making program formed between a partnership between Ricardo Gamboa and the National Museum of Mexican Art's Yollocalli ArtsReach. Eliseo would co-author and perform in Cold Summer, a "playformance" exploring Chicago's headline youth violence. Cold Summer was censored and banned by funder After School Matters for critiquing then-mayor Rahm Emanuel's school closings, Eliseo was among the youth who performed the play anyway at Free Street Theater under the banner of The Young Fugitives. Eliseo performed in successive remounts of Cold Summer with The Young Fugitives and would later co-author and star in The Young Fugitives production of Track 13, an ensemble devised production about police violence.







## Elijah Ruiz

Lalo

Elijah is a Chicago native hailing from the westside neighborhood of Humboldt Park. Elijah first started acting with Free Street Theater where he starred in multiple productions including *The Real Life Adventures of Jimmy De Las Rosas* as Jimmy, and *Track 13* as himself. Additionally, Elijah has done screen acting, making his first on-screen debut on Netflix's *Easy* and most recently starring in the short film *The Mixtape* as Carlos. He has also worked with Free Street Theater as a teaching artist and co-director. Currently, Elijah works at the UChicago Inclusive Economy Lab conducting research that aims to end intergenerational poverty. Elijah has a deep passion for acting and plans to apply for an MFA at Juilliard and Yale in the fall. Elijah thanks his mom, his sibling Coda, and his ancestors for their unwavering love and support.

## Alvaro Noel Padilla Jr.

Javi

Alvaro is a father, actor, and rapper. He was born and raised in Chicago, in the city's Pilsen neighborhood, the heart of Chicago. Alvaro has been featured in readings and plays at The Goodman Theater, Free Street Theater, and Yollocalli Arts Reach. Alvaro starred in an episode of the Netflix original series *Easy* and was the lead in a short film, "Milwaukee." He is looking to pursue his dream of acting and mentoring as well.





## Sam Sage

Dan

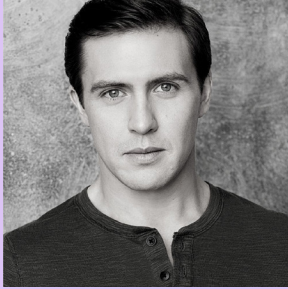
Dan is an actor based out of Chicago. He has performed sketch comedy at The Second City, appeared in Chicago Fire and is a proud graduate of The ACADEMY at Black Box. When he is not on stage he enjoys traveling, spending time with family, and exploring nature. Gratitude for the entire cast and crew of The Wizards. All his love for Sophia.

## Joe Bushell

Steve



Joe is a home-grown Chicago actor and improviser with training at the Black Box ACADEMY, Second City, and Annoyance Theatre. Some of his recent theater credits include My Ideal Match at the Yellow Rose Theatre (where he's an ensemble member), It's a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play at Oil Lamp Theater, and Beauty and the Beast at the Beverly Arts Center. Joe has also acted in a number of independent films - Domesticated Animals, Zero Mile Mark, The Worm - and the FOX TV show The Big Leap. He's very grateful for the opportunity to help tell a story as powerful as The Wizards. Outside of work, Joe loves to spend time with his lovely wife Elizabeth and their dog Bella. He is represented by Dream Team Talent.



## Felipe Carrasco

Mike

Felipe is an actor, collaborator, and musician. He has worked with a number of Chicago theatres, including Goodman Theatre, Teatro Vista, 16th Street Theater, Adventure Stage Chicago, Tympanic Theatre Co., Babes with Blades Theatre. Co, and Filament Theatre. Regionally, he has worked with Dallas Theater Center, Theatre Three, Undermain Theatre, Riverside Theatre, and Iowa Theatre Artist Company. TV Credits: Chicago Fire. Felipe has just recently relocated back to Chicago after receiving his MFA in Dallas, Texas at SMU, and is represented by Grossman and Jack Talent.

## Freddy Mauricio

Donato, Wakanda, Sonny

Freddy is a Chicano Chicago-based actor. He grew up as a child of migrant farm workers living between borderland Texas and the rural outskirts of central Illinois. He and his family moved to Chicago 13 years ago. He graduated from Northwestern University in 2020. Credits there included: A Chorus Line (Paul), Water by the Spoonful (Elliot), and Macbeth (Macbeth). During the pandemic, he participated in multiple virtual readings across the country with producers such as: San Diego REP's 'Latinx New Play Festival', Lime Arts Production's 'Fringe', and theREP's 'New Play Summit' to name a few. He also worked with the local Sideshow Theatre Company and their virtual 'House Party Series.' This past spring he appeared as an alum guest artist in the Chicago Academy for the Arts production of A Chorus Line (Zach) at the Theatre Wit. As for The Wizards, Freddy is excited for his official postgrad in-person debut.





## **Daniela Martinez**

Lorena, Nurse Rosie

Daniela is an Orlando, Florida native earned her BFA in Acting with International studies from Columbia College Chicago. She is a proud Ensemble Member of VisionLatino Theatre Company. Her favorite credits include Laced (Minnow), In The Heights (Carla), As You Like It (Celia), and her commercial work with Percy & Scout for Amtrak, Good Counsel Homes and No Stigma. Additionally she is currently Brujeria Consulting and Assistant directing a production with Steep Theatre. You can follow her journey @Imagining\_daniela. With all the love in her heart, this ones for Yulie, Andrew, Becca, her partner, Katie, T & AV, and Jasmika.

## **Jordan Pilato**

Understudy  
for Dan, Mike, Steve

Jordan is an actor, writer and improviser. He studied sociology and history at The New School in New York City. After a few false starts in a few different cities, he eventually found his way to Chicago to pursue comedy. He is currently a teacher at Black Box Acting in Humboldt Park and a co-producer on New Team Show at Logan Square Improv.





## **Matthew Molina**

Understudy for  
Serafin, Neto, Lalo, Javi

Matthew is an independent Boricua actor, singer, rapper, and writer from Brighton Park on the South Side of Chicago. He has been featured “Mariposa” by Britney Quiroz produced by Gage Park Latinx Council and and “Ritual,” a musical by Terence Morrow. Matthew cares about uplifting Latinx communities, empowering youth of color to tell their stories, and supporting original work in Chicago. I would like to give a special thanks to Britney Quiroz for always pushing me to evolve, learn, grow, and for making me a better actor and person.

## **Marilyn Carteño**

Understudy for  
Lorena, Nurse Rosie

Marilyn is a mover, director, educator and theater artist. Born and raised in Chicago and a proud child of immigrants. Marilyn's acting and theater experiences have mostly been through devised and ethnographic theater. They are a former ensemble member of the Albany Park Theater Project where they were involved in various productions such as Home/Land, I Will Kiss These Walls and God's Work. In 2019 they also participated in Free Streets production of Still/Here. They have been a teaching artist and director at Free Street since 2019 and recently co-directed 57 Blocks. Marilyn is dedicated to creating work that continues to honor the work and legacy of Chicagoans, as creating artistic work that is inviting to bilingual (spanish/english/spanglish) audiences. Outside of artistic practices Marilyn serves as City Bureau's Events and Outreach Coordinator where they are committed to creating spaces where folks feel welcomed and heard.





## **Anastar Alvarez**

### **Stage Manager**

Anastar is a self and community taught stage manager and production manager born and raised in Chicago. Stage management credits include Red Bowl at the Jeffs (The Sound), Meet Juan(ito) Doe, The Real Life Adventures of Jimmy de las Rosas (Free Street Theatre), Wake Up! Brother Bear, This Ability!, The Beatrix Potter Holiday Tea Party, Carmela Full of Wishes (Chicago Children's Theatre), Refrigerator, I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard, Vape Naysh, House of Audacity (First Floor Theater), and The Fly Honey Show at Thalia Hall. They are also the company production manager for First Floor Theater. They are committed to creating an equitable, safe, and inviting collaboration space.

## **Eleanor Kahn**

### **Scenic Designer**

Eleanor has worked extensively as a scenic and details designer, as well as an experiential, immersive, event and community-focused artist and designer. Career highlights include: scenic design for Iron & Wine on the Outside Problems tour; creative director + designer for a lobby installation at Harris Theater; first artist-in-residence in Des Moines, IA, followed by creative directing + designing a block-long lighting experience in the same neighborhood; designer for a 2019 installation in Millennium Park; details designer for Hebru Brantley's Nevermore Park, and scenic designer for The Fly Honey Show. Her full portfolio can be viewed at [www.eleanorkahn.com](http://www.eleanorkahn.com).





## **Conchita Avitia**

### Lighting Designer

Conchita is a freelance Mexican - American Lighting Designer based in Chicago; she holds her BA in Theatre Design from Columbia College Chicago. Recent design credits are with Steep Theater (Paris; Co-Designed), Free Street Theater (57 Blocks,) Broken Nose Theatre (This Is Only A Test), WildClaw Theatre (Hell Followed With Her), and Water People Theater (The Delicate Tears of the Waning Moon). When she isn't designing, she is serving as an ALD throughout the city; recent Assistant Lighting Designer credits are with TimeLine Theater (Relentless), Chicago Shakes (As You Like It), Steppenwolf Theatre (Dance Nation), and Court Theatre (For Colored Girls). For production photos and updates visit [www.avitalighting.com](http://www.avitalighting.com).

## **Ellie Terrell**

### Props Designer

Ellie is an educator, designer, fabricator, object and installation builder, painter, and teaching artist working out of Chicago. Her



favorite works to create are immersive spaces and surreal sculptural art. She is passionate about using art to connect humans in play. She weaves elements of the natural world into her designs, and often uses discarded or found objects in new and inspiring ways. Her work ranges from theatrical to realistic, and often centers on themes of joy, surprise, and transformation.



## **Bran Moorhead**

### Sound Designer

Bran is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Chicago. They have designed productions with Erin Kilmurray, John Cicora, Jackalope, El Bear, the Grant Park Music Festival and more.

They have served as technical director for The Physical Festival, Davenport's Piano Bar & Cabaret, Jackalope Theatre, and First Floor Theater, to name a few. As a vocalist and performer, they have appeared in hundreds of productions in Chicagoland over the past 11 years, including shows with/at The Fly Honeys, The Paramount Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, The Chopin, The Hideout, The Den, and The Inconvenience. Recent favorite projects include: the function (Museum of Contemporary Art), The Fly Honeys (Thalia Hall), Kasey Foster Presents (Red Tape Theatre), Chi. Int'l. Puppet Thtr. Fest (Chopin Theatre), & Destinos 2021 (National Mexican Museum of Art). They currently work as the Production Manager for Thalia Hall here in Pilsen.

## **Mallory Talty**

### Costume Designer

Mallory is a Midwest native who has used her imagination and unique perspective to establish herself as a



photographer, stylist, editor and creative director. Inspired by design, film and fashion, she is able to build worlds for her subjects to be immersed in. Her versatility has allowed her the opportunity to work with an array of clients such as Finish Line, Refinery 29, Motorola and the Discovery Network.





## **Greg Geffrard** Fight Choreographer/ Intimacy Choreographer

Greg is an Associate Faculty Member with Theatrical Intimacy Education and is certified in Mental Health First Aid. His work, broadly speaking, focuses on empowering historically dehumanized populations and being self generators of radical joy. Credits: Joe Turners Come and Gone (Huntington Theatre); The Color Purple (Signature Theatre); Choir Boy (Steppenwolf Theatre; Intimacy & Fight Choreographer); Sister Act (Metropolis Theatre Center: Assistant Intimacy Choreographer); Passage (Remy Bumppo Theatre; Consultant); In Every Generation (Victory Gardens: Assistant Intimacy Choreographer); Gloria (Roosevelt University); Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams, Hooded or Being Black for Dummies, Phadras Love & Daffodils (Columbia College Chicago); White Noise (Studio Theatre; Assistant Intimacy Choreographer); Choir Boy (Philadelphia Theatre Company; Consultant).

## **Sheryl Williams** Fight Choreographer/ Intimacy Choreographer

Sheryl is originally from Phoenix, AZ and expanded to Stage Combat training when attending Columbia College Chicago. While also having

Musical Theater training, she has been using her multiple skill sets to enhance herself as an Intimacy Professional since 2017. Since shifting gears from performing, she has choreographed and consulted on What Happened Here/ (North Central College/over Zoom), Mamma Mia, La Cage featuring Ginger Minj, and Zorro: The Musical(Music Theater Works). She also works within the Chicago film scene as well. Find out more at: [iamsherylwilliams.com](http://iamsherylwilliams.com) @Sher\_the\_fun.





## Sebastian Olayo

Assistant Director

Sebastian is a nonbinary, queer, Mexican-American writer, performer, director, and teaching artist based in Chicago, IL. They received a B.A in General Theater from Columbia College

Chicago and have graduated from the Black Box Acting Studio's 2019 Academy. They are a Co-Founder and Artist in Community with DIVINE Art Book. Their directing credits include *Wasted* and *57 Blocks* (Free Street Theater). They can be found performing in drag as Cindy Nero around Chicago.

## Yasmin Zacaria Mikhaiel

Dramaturg

Yasmin is a dramaturg, journalist, and oral historian with roots in and around Chicago. As a queer, fat, brown femme, they endeavor to amplify and archive stories that go lost/stolen/forgotten. Their writing and research



explores possibility models for a more inclusive and sustainable theatre culture and industry. Mikhaiel holds a M.A. in Performance as Public Practice from The University of Texas at Austin and a B.E.A. in Dramaturgy/Criticism from The Theatre School at DePaul University. They are City Bureau's digital producer and teach as part-time faculty at TTS DePaul. They have also served as a Guest Respondent for the Kennedy Center College American Theater Festival (R3 Journalism, R5 Dramaturgy). Select bylines include *American Theatre*, *The Austin Chronicle*, *Sightlines*, *Chicago Reader*, and *Teen Vogue*. Follow them on Twitter @yasminzacaria (dramaturgically it tracks) or learn more at [www.yasminzacaria.com](http://www.yasminzacaria.com).



## **Gina Montalvo**

Assistant Stage Manager

Gina was born in Chicago and raised in a Puerto-Rican/Italian family of dancers. She started acting through comedy and improv in 2013 at The Second City and transitioned into theatre in 2014. She has been studying voice, acting, dance, and production since then and is currently a student at DePaul University majoring in Theatre Arts with a concentration in Directing at The Theater School and double minoring in Mandarin and Music Recording. She was recently involved in a production through Free Street Theatre called 57 Blocks as the dance captain and swing, and helped devise a queer variety show called Welcome to the Fruit Basket through The Theatre School.

## **Eduardo Lopez**

Muralist

Eduardo is a first generation Mexican-American who studied at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and



was accepted into the advanced painting program his senior year. He graduated with a BFA in 2009. Since then, he has exhibited paintings, drawings, and murals in various galleries and locations here in Illinois and California. He currently works from his home studio in Brookfield, IL.



## **Josiah Croegaert**

Assistant Lighting  
Designer

Josiah made his lighting design debut this year on Last Hermanos at A Red Orchid Theatre. He recently was the assistant designer for Godspell at Theo Ubique. Learn more at: [josiahcrodesign.com](http://josiahcrodesign.com).

## **Éva Castillo**

Graphic Designer

Eva is a Black and Mexican multidisciplinary designer born and bred in Logan Square, Chicago. After graduating the Chicago High School for the Arts and majoring in Graphic Design in 2013, she began her freelance journey and has honed in on her workflows, skills, and style. She crafts remarkable brand identities and produces compelling content for organizations of various sizes – from small non-profits and startups to reputable companies. You can reach her at [hey@evacastillo.studio](mailto:hey@evacastillo.studio)



## **Quinn Chisenhall**

Master Electrician

Quinn is a lighting designer, electrician, and recent CCC grad. You can find him at [quinnchisenhall.com](http://quinnchisenhall.com).



## **Kyle McDermott**

Technical Director

*This production of The Wizards is dedicated to the memory of*

# Myrna Salazar

Myrna was the founder of the Chicago Latino Theater Alliance and the Destinos, Chicago International Latino Theater Festival. Myrna was a fierce advocate for Latino arts and culture, in particular theater.

A native of Puerto Rico and raised in Chicago, Myrna Salazar began her career as an Economic Development Specialist at the West Town Economic Development Corporation. Salazar would go on to become a marketing and advertising expert and would become Founder and President of Salazar & Navas Talent Agency. From 2007 through 2011, Salazar acted as the Director of Development & Marketing at the International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago (ILCC), which produces the Annual Chicago Latino Film Festival (CLFF), among other programs. In 2016, Salazar co-founded and became the executive director of the Chicago Latino Theater Alliance with the aim to boost the city's local Latino theater community by giving local groups organizational and financial support.

This production of The Wizards would not be possible without the support of Chicago Latino Theater Alliance; the 5th Destinos, Chicago International Latino Theater Festival; and Myrna Salazar herself.



Tribute to Myrna Salazar

# Tribute to *Myrna Salazar*

*The following is a tribute written by The Wizards actor, playwright, and producer Ricardo Gamboa shared in the wake of Myrna's passing on their social media. It appears slightly edited here.*

It was hard to comprehend that Myrna is gone. She had endless energy through the years. Since I've known Myrna, she exuded "girl boss" decades before the phrase came to be. I first met Myrna when I signed with her talent agency, Salazar & Navas, as a child. Ultimately, I'd go to high school and away for college. When I returned, I'd steer away from mainstream theater and the commercial industry to make activist theater and not see Myrna for some time.

I reunited with Myrna in 2016, when I won the Joyce Award to produce my play "Meet Juan(ito) Doe" (MJD) with Free Street Theater and wanted to include MJD in the first Destinos festival. She remembered me immediately: "Wow, you've grown up, bombon." We had several meetings, were on panels together, and even interviewed together on WGN about the festival. That day at the news studio we took selfies together and she congratulated me like a proud tía. She provided support for MJD.

I am not the only one who benefitted from Myrna's work. I'd say in the five years that Destinos has existed, Myrna has done more for cultivating Chicago Latino theater than any other local Latino theater festival, leader or organization. While others reserve resources for credentialized artists, "elite" theaters or theaters from everywhere but Chicago, Myrna secured thousands of dollars for Destinos to invest in grassroots, new, and overlooked



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theaters so they could make work. Myrna was a condition of possibility for contemporary and more diverse Latino theater in Chicago.

Myrna put her money where her mouth was — and Myrna had a mouth. It was my favorite thing about her. She never held back a critique and would go in on anyone or anywhere when needed. I'll miss the occasional problematic comment, like "I'm too old for pronouns," or how she'd interrupt me 100 times during any discussion. Like a true Latina tía she always made sure my looks were the first things she'd comment on.

The last time I saw Myrna was to discuss "The Wizards." We barely talked about the play. We caught up on life. She talked about recent health complications and bemoaned how because of them she had to wear flats. I remember I was struck when Myrna began sharing stories about Chicago's Latino theater history. It's not that she hadn't done this before, but it felt different this time. I told her we needed to have her provide an oral history. She brushed off the idea and then spent 20 minutes telling me what I should name my theater company and admonishing me that my ideas for a name were not in Spanish.

My favorite memory of Myrna was at the 2018 ALTA Awards when Ana Velasquez and I won for "Best Director of a Play" for MJD. After our acceptance speeches as I was walking off the stage, Myrna reached out from her front row seat and drew me near to say, "You forgot to thank me. We gave you money for the play too!" I did forget to thank her and regretted it. I still can't help but laugh when I think about that memory. I may have forgotten to thank Myrna that night, but never again. Thank you for everything, Myrna.





# Un poco de la historia de Pilsen

The Wizards takes place in Pilsen. In 2018, Forbes ranked Pilsen among the “12 coolest neighborhoods around the world.” Forbes celebrated Pilsen’s “hip galleries” and “trendy bars” ushered in by gentrification. But, the reality is Pilsen is more than “cool.” It is a historic site of Mexican American and Latino social struggles. This history of Pilsen as a contested territory and hotbed for Brown activism is something Forbes and gentrification stand to erase. It is a history The Wizards hopes to recall.

In the 1840s, Eastern European immigrants moved to the neighborhood for job opportunities. The name Pilsen even comes from what is one of the largest cities in the Czech Republic. Paired with affordable housing, many German, Irish, and Czech workers made a home amongst manufacturing and woodworking companies.

But by the late 1950’s, neighborhoods destroyed by the expansion of the University of Illinois at Chicago triggered a migration of the Mexican immigrants who had been living west of Halsted Street between Roosevelt and Taylor. Local grassroots civic organizations like the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC) welcomed the new residents and even shifted focus into community organizing. Although founded by Eastern European immigrants, the PNCC started offering Mexican food during street carnivals, alongside the expected Czech dishes. Local buildings were embellished with vibrant murals as signs in Spanish popped up in shop windows.

A shared fierceness for cultural pride bonded these neighbors even as the newest residents became the majority and the visual character shifted. With a huge immigrant contingent and legacy in Pilsen, many advocacy organizations mobilized to advance the rights and resources of these communities.

In the education sphere, parents, mothers specifically, were frustrated with the lack of suitable high schools in Pilsen as well as expansive cultural education. The 1960s saw much activism including protests and manifestos demanding curriculum that included Latin American history. By the 1970s, protests led to walkouts and a march to the Board of Education. Schools were overcrowded and lacked adequate bilingual resources and staff to

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support an increasingly Latino population. In 1977, Benito Juarez High School was founded in response to the decade-long organizing efforts of mothers and students.

These actions had lasting impacts and did much to imbue a sense of responsibility to the community among youth. One notable student activist who was a part of these walkouts and protests went on to support worker unionization efforts and lost his life for it. Rudy Lozano was murdered in his Little Village home in 1983. Known as a political mobilizer of Chicago's Latino community, Lozano was an ally to Harold Washington. The Rudy Lozano Library in Pilsen was named in his honor and speaks to the importance of nurturing community spaces with community history in mind.

Community members in Pilsen continue to fight for their educational and cultural spaces in the face of gentrification and disinvestment. Casa Aztlán was one of the legacy settlement houses that provided immigrants social services and artistic outlets between 1970 and 2015. Much to the consternation of residents, the building was converted to luxury apartments in 2017, with historic murals ruined in the process. What was once a site of a community clinic, theater, activist spaces and more was all lost when funding for the upkeep of the building and its programs dried up. Community members didn't want history to repeat itself when the A.P.O. Cultural Center seemed to be taking a turn as the building and programming similarly suffered from lack of funding. After some years of dormancy, in 2017, community leaders and activists like Friends of A.P.O. were nervous about what could happen to this cultural anchor as developers scouted the neighborhood. Today, A.P.O. is still home to artist exhibitions and performances.

What's clear is the fortitude of Pilsen residents paired with such a fierce legacy of community activism bodes well for the future of the neighborhood. Local collectives and organizations are still committed to resourcing residents with the services they need to support their families, careers, and spirits.

# A.P.O. Cultural Center

## *An interview with Letty Guerrero*

You're sitting amongst history in the A.P.O. Cultural Center. Built in 1883 as a Czech community center, the building functioned as a site for resources and events. A.P.O., or the Asociación Pro Derechos Obreros which translates to the Association of Workers' Rights had began operating in the space in the 1960s when it had already come under possession of the Latino American Council of Christian Churches. The Council would give the space A.P.O. in 2000. In this building, through the decades, A.P.O. fought for the Latino workforce and their families, advocating for equal opportunities in a variety of career paths. Increasingly through the years, "the A.P.O building" as many in the neighborhood refer to it became not just a site for Latino labor activism but also arts and culture.

Running the organization and taking care of the building is a family endeavor, currently in the hands of Letty Guerrero. In this interview, she speaks of A.P.O.'s legacy and dreams of what the center can become.

*Running the A.P.O. Cultural Center has been a family affair. How did it begin?*

Well, my mother and father purchased the building in 1962. During that time, I mean we've been going to the schools here in Pilsen. My mother was very active in bringing a lot of resources to the community. You know, even programming for us and then also putting an inclusion of Mexican culture.

*What did those initial programs look like?*

My mother, Raquel Sanchez Guerrero, did the workers rights component in there. They used to have workshops on workers rights. They would invite companies to come in and interview with the community to get them jobs.

My mother also worked with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development.

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She had a program which involved the youth of the community in maintenance—it was like home maintenance—so that they would be able to maintain their homes. You know, just basic stuff. They taught them how to paint. They also did some carpentry. They taught them a little bit of plumbing. So they brought a lot of those trades to the community through her program that was through the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development.

***A.P.O. later transitioned into a cultural organization in the 1990s. Can you tell me about that shift?***

That transition started in 1997, in which at the time it was basically abandoned by all of the members except for three of us. My mother basically told me, "M'ija, go and see what you can do at A.P.O."

And at that time we did a bunch of different things. We did rock en español. We did theatre. We did a lot of different things. We also worked with the daycare centers, like El Hogar Del Niño. We used to facilitate their chorus and violin classes as well.

***How did the A.P.O. Cultural Center function as a community gathering spot?***

Oh, community loved it. They still love it. We can't open our doors without people just trying to come in and explore. See what the building is about, you know, see the various areas of the building.

I would describe the building as a community gem that could provide all the resources necessary for this community. I'm not talking about, like, Thalia Hall. I'm talking about programming in the arts. Like dance, music, theatre, all the different components in the arts arena.

# A.P.O. Cultural Center

## *An interview with Letty Guerrero*

### *What are your dreams for the A.P.O. Cultural Center?*

My dream for the A.P.O is for it to be a fully functioning art school. In reality, that's what I would like. Where students of all ages, including adults, who come and learn in the arts and then also exhibit their artistry. You know, just like we used to do back in the day when we used to have assemblies.

After school we did tap dancing, gymnastics. We did all kinds of different things there. That was all through our parents' efforts. Because they didn't just offer them programs—they demanded them. We wanted other resources for the kids. Also, we used to have after school programming that was something to do as opposed to being out in the street, creating havoc. You know, how children are, including myself.

They would have an after school program in which you would learn. You would do your homework assignments at that time, and then once you finish your homework assignments, you would go into different classrooms. They had art. They had the gym where you can get rid of all that energy you had, you know. Then they would also give you a snack. I would really like that type of environment for A.P.O. and for its community.

When I look at our building, I see education. I think of how can we educate our community? Because I've been in there, volunteering for all this time. I work. And, I've invested my own money just maintaining and upkeeping it. I would love to be able to offer jobs. You know, just to maintain it and have a personnel in there. People that work there on a day to day basis, but currently we're not able to do that because of funding. I'm passionate about that building and the people. It's been a struggle all these years, but we're still here.



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# Moments and Memories

## *An interview with Pedro Gamboa*

Pedro Gamboa (father to the playwright) grew up in and around Pilsen and Little Village. Moments and memories throughout *The Wizards* pull from Gamboa's experiences as a working class Mexican finding contentment in block parties and softball. In an interview with Gamboa, he recalls his youth of the 1960s, moving between neighborhoods, and passing the time with friends.

*What are some of your first memories of living in Chicago?*

My earliest memories are living in an apartment building on what was then Skid Row, on Madison Avenue, and starting school in Chicago. We used to live on the second floor. When you're that age, you don't realize you don't have much. We didn't notice.

And, you know, I was a happy kid. I was happy playing all the time and everything. And the store across the street, my father would have credit there. There was a guy named Charlie—we always called it Charlie's—and he would have like a ledger and say, "Okay, you paid me this much. Now you owe me that much." My father always looked back and credits that store owner's kindness for keeping us fed back in those days.

*I love how that speaks to how neighbors looked out for each other. How else would you describe Pilsen during this time?*

When we were growing up in Pilsen back and up in the '60s, I would call it like a town. And, we were more much more attuned to and assimilated into the American way of living, I would say. We ate our food and everything, but the Mexican community wasn't as big as it is now. Pilsen was a Mexican community, but there were a lot of white people still living in the area and you interacted with a lot more white people then

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you have to now.

Tell me more about the neighborhood parties and the music y'all would listen to.

The preponderance of the music that we listened to was mostly Motown music. It was more of the Black music than the rock and roll music there. Especially like Santana, which came a little bit later. It was more like a Mexican influence from the West Coast—you know, Oakland's Tower of Power was another band.

But back in the earlier days, like in high school, we were really big on the Motown music, a lot of slow dancing. What used to happen a lot was like almost every weekend there was a party at somebody's house,





# Moments & Memories

## *An interview with Pedro Gamboa*



or somebody's basement and the word would spread around. People would show up, you get invited through somebody else. They got invited. Sometimes you weren't even directly invited, but you would just go in and it was like accepted. Some dances were at like dance halls or some of the gymnasiums in the area, actually, right across the street from where I live now.

At some of those places, they would sell drinks, you know, like \$1, not even \$1 or 50 cents a beer, and it would be like, no license or nothing. They just do it, you know. It was a fun time. But it could be a dangerous time because there were a lot of gangsters.

*How did that part of the neighborhood culture impact how you and your friends spent your time?*

Now for me and my friends, we weren't heavily involved in gangs. We were more into sports. I wanted to be a major league baseball player

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growing up. So we always played baseball and when football season came around, we played football at the park. So it's a short way of saying that I knew guys that were in different gangs, you know, that they were rivals. But they left me alone and my friends alone because they knew we were into sports.

## *What did unity look like across families and neighbors?*

A lot of family gatherings or parties, quinceañeras, you know and things like that, where a lot of people would get invited and not necessarily all relatives. It was more of a lot of people's friends that will get together and throw a party. That's the real unity thing that used to happen. That I think is lost kind of now is that back in those days to living in Pilsen.

There's so many apartment buildings. And matter of fact, if your family was doing better you would all try to move to a home in Little Village—not all but a lot of them. They would aspire to have a backyard, which you were considered to be doing better if you live in those areas. Because you didn't have anywhere to like really congregate with family and friends in large numbers, gatherings in parks were a big deal.

We would have gatherings at McKinley Park and you know, it would be for five families getting together and bringing food and bringing their grills and their tables. They've got the men playing cards and all the young people would just hang out and play baseball, play softball, whatever it was that you would do to amuse yourself while you're at the park. There was a lot of conversation and everything and that was really a joyous time.

# Mural of Mictecacihuatl

## *Painted by Eduardo Lopez*

For our set, scenic designer Eleanor Kahn imagined a mural on the large east wall of the room. So, The Wizards commissioned an original mural from Eduardo Lopez. Lopez imagined a mural that drew from imagery and the palette of the late 1960s and 70s when Chicano muralism exploded, not just in L.A. but also in Pilsen. Lopez's mural also speaks to themes explored in The Wizards, namely haunting, death, and radical spirituality.

In design meetings, Lopez explained the imagery of the mural. The mural is of "Mictecacihuatl", the goddess of the underworld in Aztec mythology and religion. She is known for guarding the bones of the dead which are the



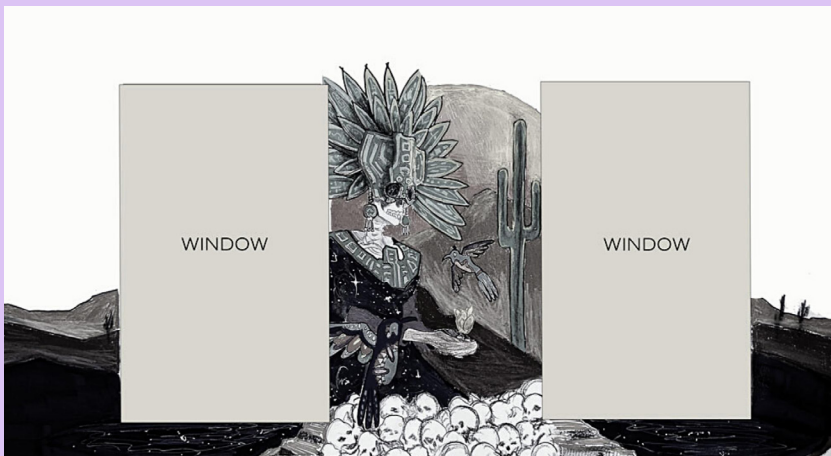
Mural of Mictecacihuatl



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source of life for the Aztecs, and presides over ancient festivals of the dead. She is one of the reasons that the Day of the Dead festivals are represented with iconic painted faces as skulls. She appears in relics as a face without flesh with her mouth open to consume the night and stars, so they are invisible during the day.

With this play geared towards the supernatural and haunting, Lopez thought it fitting to make a mural dedicated to the goddess of the underworld. Below are the sketches for the design of the mural:



Mural of Mictecacihuatl

# Acknowledgements

## Thank you

*Our production partners*



*We'd like to give a very special thank you to our contributors who really put out the pocket to help make this play happen...*

Armando Alvarado  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Michael & Mona Heath  
Hector Herrera Yopez  
Salina & Matthew Lopez  
Yvette Mayorga  
Elsa Muñoz  
Moises Salazar  
Lilly Wachowski  
Shaye Ogbonna  
Belli's Juice Bar  
Jon Jon Augustavo

*A thank you to all who contributed to this show, every dollar counts...*

Alyssa Ramos  
Fataah Dihaan  
Ivy Hurwit  
Eric Lyons  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Eddie Gamboa  
Chloe Johnston  
Theodore Talma  
Coya Paz  
Emily Getner  
Chrystal Sherill Webb  
Celeste M Cooper  
Mary Lopez  
Audrey Francis  
M C Castelle  
Mia Carbajal  
Javier Navarrete  
Christine Davila  
Allison Koehler

Acknowledgements

# Concrete Content and The Wizards

Janina Cipres Tun  
Jordan Weber  
Omari Bernard  
David Mendizabal  
Suzanne Griffith  
Anonymous  
Tracey Turnbow  
Azar Kazemi  
Anonymous  
Molly Adams  
Ariella Contreras  
Liz Dumler  
NiJaal Mottley  
Lillian Jimenez  
Darlyn Barrientos  
Devon Viramontes  
Reshmi Rustebakke  
Nikitha Menon  
Asher Goldstein  
Sarah Boyle  
Colin Sphar  
Maricarmen Herrera

Dagoberto Soto  
Tanuja Jagernauth  
Jonathan Green  
Meghan Perdue  
Tanya Palmer  
Victoria Golden  
Michelle Lopez Rios  
Caroline O'Boyle  
Jonathan Arias  
Anonymous  
Alice de Cunha  
Gina Mejia  
Gerardo Rodriguez  
Anthony Lara  
Valerie Garcia  
Anonymous

*We would also like to thank Free Street Theater and Loyola University for loaning technical equipment and Alexa Wiljanen for scenic installation support.*



[thewizardsplay.com](http://thewizardsplay.com)